

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION (1995) AND OUTCOME OF THE 23rd SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ITALY

Part I

Overview of achievement and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

The Italian Government, over the years, has strongly supported the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PfA) and has reaffirmed its commitment to a full and effective implementation of these important instruments, through the promotion of policies and actions at a national level, in order to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including those of the Millennium Declaration.

The activities of the Minister for Equal Opportunities have been focused on a wider concept of equal opportunities with the main aim of removing any form of discrimination and elaborating gender sensitive policies in many different sectors such as immigration, childcare policies, employment, gender based violence, education and the fight against stereotypes, health, equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, women's participation at the political and economic decision-making level.

The **National Code of Equal Opportunities between women and men**, which has been instituted by the law decree number 198 of 2006, is considered the Italian legislative framework on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Code collects eleven laws on equal opportunities in a single text and is composed of 59 articles, with the purpose of rationalizing and harmonizing the current legislative provisions on gender equality and having a more effective knowledge and dissemination of these rules.

The Code regulates the promotion of equal opportunities between women and men, in ethical, social and economic relations and in civil and political rights. It aims to promote not only women's empowerment, but also to recognise and guarantee freedom of choice and a better quality of life for both women and men.

For the first time, the Code has introduced the principle of *gender mainstreaming*, having obliged the Government to take into account the gender perspective from a more binding point of view, in the drafting of laws, regulations and administrative acts, in all policies and activities.

The main goal of the Code has been to create legislative homogeneity on gender equality in order to better implement and achieve both a *de iure* and *de facto* equality between men and women.

The Code is divided into four books:

- The Ist Book is entitled “Rules for the promotion of equal opportunities between men and women”;
- The IInd Book is entitled “Equal opportunities between men and women in ethic and social relationships”;
- The IIIrd Book is entitled “Equal opportunities between men and women in economic relationships”;
- The IVrth Book is entitled “Equal opportunities between men and women in civil and political relationships”.

Contribution by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies

In the month of April 2006, legislative decree *number 198/2006 - the Equal Opportunities Code* - was passed. This decree regards the reorganization of the regulations in force, and under it, the previous regulations on the prevention and elimination of every form of discrimination based on gender were regrouped and coordinated; furthermore, the necessary amendments were made for guaranteeing logical and systematic coherence between all the regulations. A further aim was to adapt and simplify the language.

Consequently, all the regulations governing the various national equal opportunity bodies were gathered together into one single text, and in this case: the Commission for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women, instituted in the Department for Equal Opportunities; the National Committee for the implementation of the principles of equal treatment and equal opportunity between male and female workers, instituted in the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies, male and female Advisories on equality, instituted nationally (in the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies), at the regional and provincial levels, operating respectively within the Regional and Provincial governments; and the Committee for Women's Entrepreneurship operating within the Department for Equal Opportunities.

The regulation under examination, beyond proceeding to the redefinition and reorganization of the equality bodies, carried out a concrete coordination action between the various regulations in force, redefining the notions of direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace, determining the fields of application for the prohibition of discrimination. It is particularly important to emphasize that the prohibition on discrimination regards access to jobs, job conditions and performance, career progress, professional training and promotion, wages, access to social insurance benefits, access to government offices and employment, enlistment in the Armed Forces, military careers, matrimony, and individual and family conditions.

The protection instruments that can be activated in gender discrimination cases, and their beneficiaries -to whom reference will be made in the third part- assume greater relevance in the national regulatory system. Finally, staying within the field of activating the principle of equality treatment for men and women, the legislative decree number 196, covering implementation of the *Equal Opportunity Code*, was passed over the course of 2007. This regards the prohibition of discrimination in the access to goods and services and their supply. In this case, the right to equal treatment in the following sectors was sanctioned: access to insurance and financial services, and supply of services of various types; to this end, protection instruments were provided for eventual injured parties.

Many of the regulations contained within the laws passed on the theme of man-woman equality up to now, found a place. Some examples of these are law number 66 of 1963, "Admission of women to public office and the professions;" law number 903 of 1977 on the "Equality of treatment between men and women in the workplace; law number 125 of 1991 on the "Positive actions for equality between men and women in the workplace," law number 215 of 1992 on the "Positive actions for women's entrepreneurship;" law number 196 of 2000 on the "Regulation on the equality of female advisory activities;" law number 226 of 2003 on the "Institution of the National Commission for Equality between Men and Women," and law number 90 of 2004 on the "Regulations governing the elections of members to the European Parliament."

More particularly with this decree, the EC Directive 2004/113 was activated. This directive puts into practice the principle of equality between men and women regarding access to goods and services and their supply.

Future prospects in the evolution of the Italian regulatory framework include the possibility of passing a further legal measure to absorb EC Directive 2006/54, which deals with putting into practice the equal opportunity and equality of treatment principle between men and women in employment and job positions (recasting), and which involves numerous Ministries. Currently, work is being done on a text which, putting together indications from the Directive, proposes the objective of reordering in a single law the principal regulations in this area, taking into account the development and results of the jurisprudence of the European Community Court of Justice, on issues of equality treatment - Proposed COM (Council of ministers) Directive (2008)426 - retained to be a basic principle of community law by the Italian Constitution.

The reorganization of the equality bodies in their complimentary and subsidiary roles was to create a streamlined network of inter-ministerial mainstreaming tools, targeted at new and differentiated functions, the related costs, operational expenditures, territorial decentralization and evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness: useful elements for simplifying regulations, and supporting the proactive development of equality policies.

The achievement of equal opportunity comes under the strategy adopted by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies, which, in the preparation of the *White Paper on the future of the social model- the good life in an active society-* emphasizes the importance of centralizing the person or individual, who is recognized by the constitutional charter and guaranteed inviolable rights.

Starting by recognizing the dignity of the person, both women and men, the proposed objective is to rebuild a flexible and secure Welfare system based on the principle of subsidiarity between the public and private sectors and the relationship with the territory, also as a response to the requests of the EU. The prospective implementation of services for individuals falls into this sphere, and is also a tool to support equal opportunity policies which must also embrace questions on the influence of taxation policies, policies for family and individual support, policies on access to education, professional training, active employment and insurance policies, and social and educational policies with a special focus on improving working and living timetables. In brief, the White Paper proposes reforms to the social state, or rather, indicates the way to gradually arrive at a new Welfare model which avoids the disorder, waste, and the costs of the present model.

This is the objective of the White Paper, which, in contrast to the *White Paper* of 2001, not only deals with the employment market, but also all the areas that could be considered social welfare issues, because central to the reform is the individual as part of an integrated protection system, from health to employment, from training to social insurance benefits. But the intention with the White Paper is to draft new policies that are not limited to delivering protection and financial aid, whether in terms of damages or welfare benefits, but wherever possible, protection must be granted on the condition that there will be active participation in society, in such a way as to guarantee ongoing opportunities and stimuli, and at the same time, responsibility of the individual. Briefly, it is the idea that the person should be assisted in the development of their own resources in the different aspects of life.

The current economic-financial crisis makes this change even more necessary, and has only served to further highlight the inadequacies in our social welfare system. The worst result of the traditional system is the fracture between the good models of a developed Northern Italy well-connected to the most advanced regions of Europe, and the systemic inefficiencies of a backward Southern Italy lacking in opportunities and protection, above all, for its weakest individuals, beginning with the women, young people, and the disabled.

Today, social expenditure is characterized by a clear imbalance weighing on the side of the pension component, which, after expenditure for education, makes up more than 60 per cent. The other two most relevant areas of expenditure are health (24 per cent) and welfare (8.1 per cent). The excessive weight of expenditure for pensions particularly penalizes the area of health expenditure and poses sustainability issues.

In 2050, if no policies are made to correct the balance, health spending could more than double. In fact, in 2045, due to the low birth rate and aging of the population, it is estimated that people of sixty-five and over will make up 30 per cent of the population, and people of eighty or over, 12 per cent. The burden of chronic disease, which already affects 25 per cent of the population and represents 70 per cent of the expenditure, will weigh even more heavily on the Welfare system budget.

As for employment, since 1997, more than three million jobs have been created and the employment rate, so crucial to the sustainability of the Welfare system and the foundations of an active society, has slowly come close to the European average, growing by almost 10 percentage points, also thanks to a progressive increase in the female labour forces. Furthermore, the use of part time and other forms of flexible scheduling has become widespread- though not widely enough- and this allows for greater conciliation between paid employment and care work, offering opportunities for social inclusion to people who would otherwise be excluded from the labour market.

Southern Italy and the employment of women are still particularly undervalued in the overall picture of human capital. Moreover, young people enter the labour market late and poorly – at a more advanced age than their European contemporaries and with few marketable skills – and consequently, often remain trapped on the fringes of the employment market in low level jobs.

The chapter dedicated to equal opportunity policies is particularly significant, since women are forced into occasional work due to the persistent difficulties in reconciling working schedules and domestic care schedules.

They are the victims of discrimination in careers, in access to employment, in the wage-equality issue and above all, there is a structural lack of services for infancy and people who are not self-sufficient.

It is equally necessary to bridge the territorial gap between North and South, with an increase in the employment rate, above all female, in the south, where three in four women of employable age are without work.

In this sense fiscal federalism appears to be the most significant institutional reform for thoroughly developing the territory, and in each territory the responsibility of the local administrators, starting with Southern Italy.

The task set out in the *White Paper* is that of an integrated gender approach which is transversal to all the public and employment policies. The content of the guidelines and the definition of new rules for cohabitation were undoubtedly assisted by social dialogue: integrated policies to support families, young people and above all employment for women.

The resource of a structure with a system of active policies, subsidiary and fiscal policies for employment and social inclusion with a special focus on women through support for maternity and paternity, time-sharing work and life, and above all, flexibility in working schedules, determines concrete tools for active policies that respond to the merits and needs of individuals, allowing us to match the needs of sustainability, equity, and equal opportunity.

In the Italian government's attention to gender policies, mainstreaming, and the integration of adopted initiatives, the implementation measures and job safety and prevention tools, with a special focus on women, are absorbed, at the national level, into

the Single Text (legislative decree n. 81/2008). In conformity with the Community Directives, the Single Text contains new elements, in as much as for the first time, focus is placed on the need to conceive a safety system that takes gender problems into account. In fact, article 46 states, among other things, *“to promote the consideration of gender difference in relation to the evaluation of risks and the creation of preventative measures.”*

Following the regulation was the adoption by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies of concrete initiatives aimed at putting the established theories effectively into practice. In the first months of 2009, with the aim of giving *“new pulse to equality tools and to adapt them to the new factual and regulatory realities to ensure that the equal opportunity and equal treatment principle between men and women in the workplace is activated,”* a Technical Roundtable was instituted, made up of representatives of the National Network’s male and female Equality Advisors, and representatives of the General Management of the Ministry of Labour Inspectorate.

The Roundtable posed the objective of intervening in the following issues:

- 1) Resignation of working mothers: working more thoroughly on the function of validation of resignation, with the aim of setting up a permanent Observer whose task would be to acquire homogenous data on the phenomenon.
- 2) Document of risk evaluation: provided for by the Legislative Decree 81/2008 on health and safety in the workplace, an auxiliary tool for determining risk to pregnant workers/employees.
- 3) Indirect discrimination: standardization of elements and/or indexes to determine types of discrimination that appear to be more difficult to ascertain than direct types of discrimination.

Part II

Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and action identified in the 23rd special session of the General Assembly

The Italian Government is strongly committed to preventing, opposing, and eliminating any form of discrimination against women, through the elaboration of legislative provisions, initiatives, projects and good practices to promote, implement and achieve equal opportunities in all sectors of women's professional and private life, according to the 12 critical areas of concern of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.

II.1 Women in the labour market

Sixty per cent of poor people in the world are women¹. One of the main reasons for women's poverty in the world is female unemployment. The female employment rate in Italy is currently equal to 46.7%, a percentage which has increased in the last four years, but still remains one of the lowest in Europe². In Italy, 15% of employed prime-age women had a temporary job in 2005, against only 9% of prime-age men. In addition, the hourly wage of prime-age women with a full-time job is about 18% lower than that of full-time prime-age men, with this difference soaring to 22% in the case of employees with University qualification³.

The Italian situation is characterised by a greater number of women graduates in comparison to men. During 2006 about 161,445 students received a bachelor's degree and 57.3% of them were women.

It is necessary to underline that the female employment rate has increased from 41% in 2001 to 46.7% in 2008, with an increment of 5 percentage points.⁴

One of the most relevant obstacles for women in entering the labour market is the lack of social infrastructures for reconciling work and family life. There is a severe shortage of kindergartens and child and elderly care services, especially in the Southern regions. Moreover, after the maternity period, one woman out of nine leaves the labour market, and from 2005 to 2006 the jobs with a short-term contract for women decreased by 4.7%, while the jobs with a permanent work contract have increased by 3.2%⁵. Furthermore, one woman out of five reports discrimination or harassment related to her part-time job and return from maternity leave.

¹ Source: ONU -Italy

² Report CNEL.2007

³ Employment Outlook 2008-OECD

⁴ Employment Outlook 2008-OECD

⁵ Isfol Survey, 2007

The Italian Government has drafted new provisions to increase female employment, such as tax benefits, projects and programmes co-financed by structural funds of the European Union which have played an important role in improving women's employment and promoting reconciliation between work and family responsibilities.

The Italian Government is committed to seeing 60% of women employed by 2010, as established by the EU Lisbon Strategy, drafting provisions and initiatives to increase the female employment rate, promote gender sensitive welfare policies and reconciliation systems (childcare), combat gender stereotypes, increase female entrepreneurship and women's access to public offices, especially in the high-level positions.

An important provision to promote and support employment has been the institution of the Fund to finance the Protocol on public welfare, work and competitiveness for an equal and sustainable growth.

The main aims of the Protocol are:

- to protect female occupation, fighting job discontinuity and strengthening the social shock absorbers, especially for women;
- to promote incentives for the reconciliation between work and private life (part-time job, flexitime);
- to give priority to micro-credit programmes and Community funds destined for women.

The Fund has been provided with 1,264,000 Euros for 2008, 1,520,000 Euros for 2009, 3,048,000 Euros for 2010-2011 and 1,898,000 Euros starting from 2012.

For the first time in Italy the law number 244 dated December 24, 2007 (2008 Financial Law) has introduced some incentives to promote female employment, through tax breaks for the enterprises that employ women.

During 2008, employers who employed workers with temporary contracts in the areas of the Regions of Calabria, Campania, Puglia, Sicily, Basilicata, Sardinia, Abruzzo and Molise, received a tax deduction of 333 Euros for each person employed for each month during the years 2008, 2009 and 2010.

In the case of women workers, considered as disadvantaged workers, the tax deduction (the so-called "*credito di imposta*") of 416 Euros for each woman for each month employed until 2010 (moreover the IRAP⁶ tax deduction has been confirmed for 3 years for women employed during 2007 in the Regions belonging to the former Community Objective n.1).

This provision has been applied in the disadvantaged areas such as the South of Italy where the female unemployment rate is quite high. Concretely, for every new employed woman, an enterprise can save from 150 to 170 Euros monthly.

⁶ IRAP -Regional Tax on productive activities, is a tax on the net value of production of enterprises.

Moreover, a Fund of 200 million Euros for the years 2008, 2009 and 2010, based on the Fund for disadvantaged areas, has been instituted within the Ministry for Economic Development.

In Italy, a high rate of “hidden labour” still persists, especially in the field of home care services.

The Department for Equal Opportunities has financed a research study on the best practices carried out by local and regional authorities and associations in the field of legalization of hidden labour in order to collect information, to promote cooperation among all players involved in the fight against illegal labour and to transfer such best practices to all of Italy.

Moreover, this operative network has produced a final document containing:

- a) the best practices in the field of legalization of hidden labour;
- b) the analysis of the tools to guarantee the quality of home care services;
- c) a list of the rights to be recognized for the home care workers;
- d) the intervention models aimed at qualifying such services.

This action called “*Donne Sommerse*” (“Hidden women”) has produced an important legislative and political result, consisting in the publication (in 2008) of a public notice for the funding of pilot projects aimed at legalizing the phenomenon of hidden work in the field of home care services. The Department for Equal Opportunities has allocated 5,000,000 Euros to finance 30 projects which have been implemented at the regional and local levels.

One of the priority goals of the above-mentioned 2008 financial law has been to finance the creation of new female enterprises and consolidate small and medium female enterprises which have been located in disadvantaged areas, especially in the Southern Italian regions (former “EU Objective 1 and 2 areas”).

Moreover, the 2008 financial law has extended the beneficiaries of the financial resources devoted to the Fund for enterprises, which can be allocated even for the creation or the consolidation of female enterprises.

Furthermore, a Committee for women’s entrepreneurship (see Part III) has been instituted at the Department for Equal Opportunities in order to give support and assistance to women’s enterprises, through financing and incentives for women entrepreneurs.

Since 2000, the Italian Government has launched gender perspective integration experiences in the processes of budget building.

These experiences have been and are conducted mainly at local and regional levels, involving therefore, municipalities, provinces, and regions and, in rare cases in Northern Italy and mountain communities, under the supervision of the Department for Equal Opportunities.

Since 2002, these experiences at the local level have created a Network of provinces and municipalities for the dissemination of gender balance and good practices for equal opportunities, coordinated by the Province of Genoa, with the main aim of disseminating the gender budgeting and all initiatives to achieve equal opportunities and equality between women and men.

This Network is composed of several provinces and municipalities, in particular in Northern Italy, with various levels of involvement and commitment to the implementation of gender budgeting: some of these institutions have promoted a gender perspective analysis of the budget documents; others, in addition to this kind of analysis, have promoted new measures in order to develop the distribution of resources to women., Some have implemented these initiatives with some regularity over the years, some have drawn up guidelines and training modules on the topic addressed to town councillors, managers and officials, some have defined gender-sensitive expenditure indicators, but all of them have increased awareness and involvement of key players on the issue.

The main responsibilities of the local authorities involved are the following: local planning, environment, agriculture, manufacturing, public works, vocational training, education, social policies, culture, sport, the internal organization of the institution. Several of these institutions have also tested how to integrate gender budgeting with social budgeting.

It is important to underline the following legislative acts:

- the law of the Region of Puglia, 21 March 2007, number 7 “Rules for gender policies and services of reconciliation between private and working life in Puglia”.

Article 19, paragraph 1 of this law states “... *gender budgeting as a tool for monitoring and evaluation of the impact of regional policies on men and women*” and paragraph 3 states “*the spread of gender budgeting in local government, for this purpose it recognizes as an indicator for the granting of incentives for the management associate as stated by Article 7 of Law 19/2006, the principle of gender equality*”;

- The regional law recently enacted by the Piedmont Region on 18 March 2009, entitled “Integration of gender equality policies in the Region of Piedmont and provisions for the creation of gender budgets”.

Article 3 of this laws states “... *gender sensitive controls in all stages of planning, and implementation of the budget and a system of monitoring and evaluation*”, and article 4 plans to encourage local authorities to comply within two years to article 3 and to provide training for the governmental staff, article 5 defines the preconditions required for the implementation of gender budgeting in the territory.

Gender – sensitive indicators on work⁷

Improving the collection on women’s contribution to the economy, including their participation in the informal sector, was one of the goals set at the World Conference on

⁷ Source: ISTAT, 2009.

Women in Beijing underwritten by all the Governments. We are still far from reaching this goal. It is very important to develop gender sensitive indicators.

An example of the negative consequences on policies that could come from the choice of an indicator which is not adequate for measuring gender differences could be the case of Calabria in Italy.

In Italy, barriers to female access to the labour market are still strong and the situation is particularly critical in the South of the country. In this area, female employment rates are just above 30%, approximately half of the rate registered among men living in the same area.

Moreover, Italian employment rates are strongly influenced by women's role within the family: it goes from 59.7% among all single women (56.9% among Italian single women, 82.2% among foreign single women) to 47.9% among all women who are part of a couple with children (48.3% among the Italians; 41.5% among foreigners).

Since last year, a law has established incentives for enterprises that employ women. This law applied only to women living in areas defined at the European level as disadvantaged. In particular, as stated in the European regulations, it defined a disadvantaged woman as every woman living in a region where the average unemployment rate has exceeded 100% of the EU rate for at least the last 2 years, and where female unemployment has exceeded 150% of the male rate in the area in at least two of the last three years (EC regulation 2204/2002).

What happened after the estimation of these two indicators? A region like Calabria, that is, particularly critical in terms of female employment (the female employment rate in 2006 was 31.7%), was not included in this classification of disadvantaged areas.

This is due to the indicator chosen to identify the disadvantaged area and the gender differences.

In fact, in recent years, in Calabria as in other Italian Southern regions, the unemployment rate has decreased, reaching its lowest peak, but this happened at the cost of the growth of female inactivity, that is, women gave up looking for a job also because they were discouraged. The unemployment rate does not take into account the discouragement.

The definition of unemployment includes the active search for a job and the availability to begin work within two weeks.

Therefore, in spite of the positive efforts to adopt a gender approach at the European level, because there is a disadvantage due to gender, the choice of the indicator was not very accurate. If the indicator used had been employment rates, the outcomes would have been quite different.

In particular, when considering a ratio of 60% between female and male employment, Calabria would have been included among the regions that could receive the incentives, together with other regions in the South of the country.

It is therefore fundamental, not only to adopt a gender approach, but also to identify appropriate methodologies to define indicators that really can help measure the phenomenon.

The female unemployment rate is a weak indicator that could lead to a distorted picture of gender differences in the labour market. It is not the most important indicator and it should be accompanied by others because the borders between female unemployment and the choice not to work are very wide, and therefore there could be periods in which even with decreasing unemployment, there is no parallel increase (or sufficient increase) in employment because of the increase in inactivity.

The unemployment rate cannot be considered the most relevant indicator, because it is particularly weak when the situation of women is considered. Italy brought this problem to the attention of the European Commission but the European regulation is still unchanged. Italy will continue to support the selection of different indicators to measure gender difference in the labour market.

Income⁸

Adopting a gender perspective in income statistics means not only analysing the income distribution and the level of inequalities, but also understanding what proportion of income is produced by women.

During the last decades, Western countries have been witnesses to an increasing participation of women in the labour force. The traditional partners' specialisation either in domestic or paid work has become less commonly adopted, leaving room for the diffusion of dual-earning couples. At the same time, attitudes and values towards greater gender equality have been spreading, men have become more involved in household related activities, and partners have increasingly opted for a more egalitarian division of labour and domestic work.

Italy is developing analyses and setting up **indicators** in this domain on the basis of European SILC survey results.

In Italy, geographic differences are very strong between the Centre-North and the South. When considering some couples in which both partners are aged between 25 and 54, that is those who are less likely to include individuals who chose not to work because they were students or retired, it can be noted that in the Centre-North, in 74% of the cases both partners contribute with income from employment to the global income of the couple, while this percentage decreases to 47% in the South. What is most interesting is that, when considering only the couples in which both partners produce income from employment, North-South differences in the proportion in which women contribute to the income from employment of the couple decrease strongly.

In particular, when distinguishing between

- couples in which the woman contributes less than her partner to the income of the couple (producing less than 40% of the income of the couple),
- couples in which the woman contributes to the income of the couple in a proportion similar to that of the partner (producing between 40% and 60% of the income of the couple)

⁸ Source: ISTAT, 2009.

- couples in which the woman contributes more than her partner to the income of the couple (producing more than 60% of the income of the couple)

It can be noted that the distribution of these three types of couples is very similar in the Centre-North and in the South.

In particular, couples in which women contribute in a smaller proportion than their partner to the income of the couple are the majority, 48% in the Centre-North and 50% in the South; those in which women contribute in a similar proportion represent a considerable 44% in the Centre-North and 38% in the South; finally couples in which women contribute more than their partner to the income of the couple are a minority, 8% in the Centre-North and 12% in the South.

A similar situation can be observed comparing data from the European countries which carried out an EU-SILC survey in 2004. There are important differences between countries in the distribution of women contributing to the income from employment of the couple. In particular, the lowest percentages of women not producing income from employment are registered in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, and they are lower than 10%. In Italy this percentage is 35%, and the only countries with a higher percentage are Spain, Greece and Luxembourg.

However, even in the European comparison, when considering only couples with both partners producing income from employment, differences among countries are much smaller. This means that differences between areas are mainly due to a different participation of women in the labour market, but the relative economic contribution of women also living in the most developed areas of the country is unchanged. This, for instance, could be due to the higher spread of part-time among women and to the smaller diffusion of overtime or other forms of additional payment.

The outcome is a subordinate position of women within the family, even when living in a developed area where in the majority of the couples both partners work. It is interesting what happens to couples living in the South of Italy. As already highlighted, in the South there are more couples in which women contribute to the household income in a higher proportion than men (12% against 8%). However the profile of these couples is totally different in the South as compared to the North. While in the Centre-North of the country the majority of these couples have a high total income, in the South couples in which women contribute more than their partner are those that are more disadvantaged economically.

Contribution by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies

Due to the effect of the financial crisis on the promotion of equal opportunity in the field of employment, progress in the employment rate (data taken in March 2009), is evaluated before moving on to examine measures to reduce the possible negative impact of the crisis on job access and job stability for women.

Women's employment continues to grow (+1.2%, +111 thousand) although the dynamic is less sustained than in the past; men's employment, on the other hand, dropped by 88 thousand units (-0.6%). At the national level, the positive result for Central (+1.5%, + 71

thousand) and Northern Italy (+0.7%, +79 thousand), is countered by a strong reduction in employment in the South (-1.9%, -126 thousand). In this territory the reduction in employment not only regards the men (-2.6%) but also the female component (-0.6%).

Growth in the supply of employment on an annual basis summarizes a limited increase in the male component (0.2 per cent, equal to 30,000 units) and sustained growth by the female component (1.1 per cent, equal to 113,000 units). The positive dynamic recorded in the northern regions (+1.3 per cent, equal to 157,000 units) and to a greater degree in the central regions (+1.8 per cent, equal to 91,000 units) is countered by the reduction in Southern Italy. In that area, the decrease involves both the supply of employment for men (-1.2 per cent, equal to -59,000 units) and the supply for women (-1.7 per cent, equal to -45,000 units).

In reference to the population of employable age (15-64 years) the activity rate in the fourth trimester of 2008 was positioned at 63.0 per cent, unvaried from the year before. Although there was a drop in the activity level of the male component (from 74.6 per cent in the fourth trimester of 2007 to 74.4 per cent) growth was seen in the female component (from 51.4 per cent to 51.6 per cent). At the national level, an increase in the activity rate in Northern and Central Italy is countered by the drop in activity rate in Southern Italy (from 53.0 to 52.0 per cent) involving both gender components.

The substantial interruption in the employment growth trend summarizes the decline of the male component (-0.6 per cent, equal to -88,000 units) and the increase in the female component (1.2 per cent, equal to 111,000 units).

Furthermore, both gender components, and above all the male component, experience the reduction in Italian employment (-228,000 and -28,000 units, respectively for the men and women) in the face of persistent development in employment for foreigners (140,000 units in both cases). At the national level, the increase in Northern and Central Italy counters the reduction in Southern Italy, particularly for the male component.

Moreover, the data from Unemployment Insurance- both ordinary and extraordinary- with respect to the previous year, does not report any increasing trend in applications and benefits awarded to men. The same can be said for data supplied by the General Management of the Technological Innovation and Communication Department of the Ministry of Labour, in which layoffs or resignations have not increased for the male component.

With respect to the financial crisis, the government provisions contained in the Decree to offset the crisis pursue the objectives of simplifying and deregulating as an alternative to incentives, through suitable tools to produce a higher employment rate, suitable measures aimed at raising the activity rate in sectors that have repeatedly been indicated as highly critical, starting with young people, people between the ages of 55 and 64, women, according to the European Union indications, and strategies aimed at more employment for women.

- The extension of social buffers to create an active safety network in the overall employment market, in order to face the transformations in the economic and productive system;

- The full use of training courses in prevention and safety in the workplace, using and coordinating the public institutions in charge, and strong involvement on the part of labour and management and bilateral bodies;
- The new order of relationships between labour and management based on participation in negotiation practices, above all at the local level as for the integration of social/health policies and a better and rational use of community and institutional resources.

Among those provisions on the condition and employment of women, there are tools to encourage flexibility in the organization of working time, particularly the re-qualification of part time, the possibility of parental leave to reconcile the needs of the workers with those of the employers, the promotion of active political tools to ensure access and stability for women in the employment market.

Tax breaks applied to the family rates are being specially considered as support tools for businesses that promote employment and that develop new and better practices in the area of regulation and contracts, also through the National Work Fund, which provides for development of the national information system for the employment market.

Finally, there is the possibility of starting up a plan to encourage the demand for services by families, by introducing vouchers as simplified terms of payment, and a tax deduction on costs.

The crisis is undoubtedly creating negative consequences for employment, in Italy as well as in Europe. The statistics – above all those regarding the EU – are not always accurate or timely in providing evidence on the processes taking place. Particular consideration should be given to the employment trend for women which, in the Lisbon 2000 target, is one of the most important challenges for the Union. Italy will be unable to reach, by 2010, the objective set at Lisbon 2000. Two reasons of a structural nature weigh on this delay: a) territorial dualism, in as much as the employment rate for women in the southern regions, in 2007, was equal to 31.1%; b) the poor working presence (21.9% in 2006) of older women (55-64 years) due to requirements in force for people approaching retirement age (60 years of age and at least 20 years of contributions). And yet even this last statistic is interesting. The increase in employment for the age group 55 to 64 years (another strategic target for the EU at Lisbon 2000, the objective being a rate equal to 50% by 2010) turned out to be greater for women than for men. From 2001 to 2006 this segment of the employed population passed, in the EU-27, from 28.2% to 34.8% in statistics regarding women; from 47.7% to 52.6% in the case of men. In Italy, on the other hand, the trends were the following: employed women went from 16.2% to 21.9%, men from 40.4% to 43.7%. This shows that the measures regarding retirement age (more consistent in recent years for women than for men) have also helped in increasing employment. Again in the considered period, the unemployment rate decreased more significantly for female employees than for male employees: the first group went from 13% to 8.8%; the second group from 7.4% to 5.4%; the gender gap from 5.6 to 3.4. Another interesting statistic regards the development of *part time* work (which is a basic measure to increase employment for women: in the Netherlands, for example, 75% of the women work part time in the face of an employment rate greater than 67%). In Italy, the women who have moved into this type of work have gone from 16.7% in 2001 to 26.6%

in 2006 (today still 5 points beneath the EU average). There is also a gender gap as regards the so called flexibility.

In 2006, the quota of short-term contracts regarded 15.8% of women (11.9% in 2001) and 11.2% of men (8.3% in 2001). But the real gender gap (in Italy and in the EU) can be found by observing the employment rate of men or women with or without children. In Italy, working women without children make up 66.7% (the statistic is from 2006); the men make up 80.7%. If they have children, the quota of men rises to 93.8%, while that of women drops to 54.6%. An analogous phenomenon can be seen in the EU-27. Employed women without children make up 76% (men make up 80.8%); if they have children the percentage drops to 62.4 (for men it rises to 91.4). Substantially, in Italy, almost one woman out of two (with children) does not enter or leave the labour market, while men who are fathers are urged to enter it, if they are still excluded from it. Therefore the problem of conciliation is crucial. The gender distribution among managers, on the other hand, is encouraging. In Italy in 2001, women made up 17.8%; in 2006 the female quota rose to 32.9%, while the male quota dropped from 82.2% to 67.1%. The statistic is substantially in line with that of the EU 27. The distribution by gender of the members of national parliaments is more complicated. From 2004 to 2007, in the EU-27, the respective quotas of 23% for the women and 77% for the men remain unchanged. In Italy the women passed from 12% to 17%.

On the subject of salaries, according to the Eurostat data the difference in salaries is 9%, but this rises to 16% according to Eurispes, to 23% in a Banca d'Italia survey on families, and to 26.8% according to Ugl (General Labour Union) processing of Istat data.

Women's salaries are penalized by more than a third where children are present: up to 70% of family care, according to Istat, is performed by women, even though men participate more now than in the past. There is no time to work overtime hours, no bonuses related to dedication of extra time to the employer or company, and very few benefits. The situation is analogous in industry and the public sector. Reading the processed data, the most notable differences regard specialized workers (-20.8% for women). The chasm is huge in the intellectual, scientific (-18.8%) and technical professions (-17.7%). In 2009, the issue is in the spotlight: last November European Parliament assigned the Commission the task of putting forward a proposal by December 31 for legislation on wage equality. The EU is pushing for three principals: the role of flexsecurity, contract bargaining and the concept of job value, reviewing the entire system of skills and classifications on the basis of a meritocracy. A cultural measure but one with important practical implications: another component of the female wage difference is the "segregation" of women in lower paying jobs. Traditionally, women's work has been a continuation of the work done in the home: in education they make up 77%, while in the National Health Services they make up more than 60%. In public administration offices, they make up the majority, 54.7%. And even though there is an increase in the number of university degrees, female managers in Italy make up barely 23.3% of the total, and that number drops to 10% in private industry. The knot which must be untied therefore, in order to improve employment for women is called "conciliation or sharing." Support policies are concentrating on this aspect, according to two large groups already provided for by the initiatives of the Italian government: a) those that intervene on the flexibility of the job organization regime, and from which

arise, among the different types of flexible contracts, a broader use of part time scheduling (in the EU, levels of employment for women are higher where there is greater use of part time); b) those that offer assistance to families with small children and elderly members, particularly in terms of access to services. In fact, the high costs of child and elderly care in relation to the woman's salary often mean more economic viability in the woman choosing not to work but to stay at home and look after the children and elderly members herself. Finally there is the problem of a fairer tax policy based on the family's income. On the basis of this method, each taxpaying member is subject to tax on revenue on the overall revenues and assets for every family member (spouses, children of minor age, invalid members of the same household). The aim is to help larger family nuclei, on the assumption that it is more appropriate to tax the family as a whole rather than the individual.

II.2 Reconciliation between working and private life

The issue of reconciliation between working and private life is a fundamental step toward sustaining and improving employment for women.

In Italy, sharing responsibility within the family between women and men in terms of running the household, has still not reached equality, as 76.1% of domestic work is done by women, and in caring for children and the elderly, women work many more hours than men.⁹

Starting with the assumption that the lack of conciliation tools is one of the main causes of the low birth rate and employment for women in Italy, and that employment for women has a beneficial effect on the production of wealth of the nation, the Italian government is preparing a "plan for the conciliation of living and working times for women." A framework law is also being presented on conciliation between work and family, ensuring women the possibility of saying yes to both, to a private and working life, and introducing measures to support the family, which ensure that working women will be able to take care of their own private lives without having to sacrifice their careers.

In particular, the framework for the objective "index of places for children/population 33%, suggested by the Lisbon strategy, will support the spread of a series of infancy services aimed at guaranteeing an increase in company day care centres and places in the classic day care centres, together with the introduction of new figures such as the *tagesmutter*, or the condominium based babysitter."

From another point of view, with the Financial Law of 2007, a special plan for the development of social and educational services for early infancy has already been launched. It has the double aim of pursuing the objective of increasing territorial coverage by 2010 (from the present 9.9% to 33% by 2010, objective established by the

⁹ ISTAT Survey 2008

European Council of Lisbon) and to even out the imbalances existing between the various areas of the country.

The national plan is differentiated by territory in terms of coverage and the supply of services for early infancy, and aims at creating an “integrated, extended, qualified and differentiated” network throughout the country of day care centres, innovative and integrative services in the workplace, aimed at promoting the well being and development of the child, supporting the parent’s role as educator, and promoting conciliation between working and care giving.

Therefore, up until today, in the 2007-2009 period, the resources that have been globally dedicated to the development of the social educational sector of services for early infancy amount to more than 747 million: 446.4 million in state resources to finance the special triennial plan, 281 million of local administrations’ resources to co-finance the plan and a further 20 million in state resources allotted to finance early infancy daycare services.

The Department for Equal Opportunities, in the sphere of the European Social Fund, is responsible for the system actions aimed at supporting the Regions of the so-called “Convergence Objective” (Sicily, Puglia, Calabria, Campania) on the subjects of conciliation and employment for women through the use of European Resources, such as, for example, harmonization between professional and private life by promoting teleworking, part time, job sharing, the organization of city schedules, and supporting the company best practices on gender issues.

The Department for Equal Opportunities promoted, under the Community Strategy for equal opportunity action, the project **P.A.R.I** (Participation of Fathers in Family life and Responsibilities).

The project’s main objective was to promote and spread a non-stereotypical image of the roles of father and mother. It has been a useful tool for fighting the traditional gender stereotypes in the fair sharing of domestic and family responsibilities between men and women, promoting the active and fundamental role of fathers.

Family support measures

The Government maintains the importance of promoting actions and measures to support families and minors, and has provided for series of measures aimed at supporting the needs of disadvantaged families. It maintains that political commitment, also in terms of economic commitment, lavished on the integration processes, should be considered not only an ethical and civil need, but an investment in future generations. .

In particular, the Government action was developed with a view to transversality between the measures, regarding, on the one hand, the development of infancy services, and on the other, financial support for families with special bonuses and family allowances, 1 facilitations for children (loans for newborns and the purchase of diapers), special terms and fixed prices for services.

Regarding recent income support measures, provided for by the Decree law of November 29, 2008, number 185, coordinated with the conversion law of January 28, 2009, number 2, containing: «urgent measures for support to families, work, employment and enterprise

and for reworking the national strategic framework to offset the crisis, the following should be remembered above all else:

- Family bonuses: 2.4 billion Euros allotted for the distribution of bonuses of between 200 and 1,000 Euros for families, employees and pensioners with an income of between 15 thousand and 22 thousand Euros;
- Special financial terms for newborns: 25 million allotted for a credit fund for newborns. These are bank guarantees offered to parents with a newborn or child adopted in the reference year, who apply for a loan requiring bank guarantees. For 2009, 10 million Euros increase to go to families with children, and adopted children with rare diseases;
- Home Plan: A further 100 million for the more urgent measures that support low income categories with housing problems. A further 20 million Euros for the National Fund for support in access to rental housing.

II.3 Health and access to services

The increase in migratory flows toward the Western world has made the **dramatic phenomenon of female genital mutilation** visible in European countries as well. This practice is still perpetuated in at least 28 African countries and some Asian countries, and it involves approximately 130 million girls and women on the planet. Italy, heavily affected by these migratory flows, sadly holds first place among European countries for the highest number of infibulated women, for the most part of Somalian or Nigerian origin.

In line with the Declaration and the Action Programme adopted in Beijing in 1995, Italy launched a specific regulation aimed not only at suppressing the phenomenon but also at prevention, through information and awareness campaigns and training and refresher courses. **The law of January 9, 2006, number 7, containing “Provisions concerning the prevention and prohibition of female genital mutilation practices,”** was passed with the objective of preventing, assisting and rehabilitating women and girls subjected to the practice of genital mutilation. Thus a sanction was put on intolerable practices that affect girls, adolescents and women. With the new regulations, whoever practices infibulation will be punished by a prison sentence of 4 to 12 years: the sentence is increased by a third if the mutilation is carried out on a minor, as well as in all cases where the scope is financial gain.

The law number 7/2006 provides for various initiatives, including a series of information campaigns directed at residents of the immigrant communities in our country, the establishing of a toll-free number, the drafting of guidelines for health professionals as well as other professionals working in communities of immigrants from countries where such practices are carried out, to provide prevention, assistance, and rehabilitation for girls already subjected to such practices.

More particularly, article 583-bis was added to the penal code. This article delivers a prison sentence of four to twelve years for anyone practising, for non-medical purposes,

the mutilation of female genital organs such as a clitoridectomy, excision and infibulation. Anyone inflicting lesions on the female genital organs other than those indicated, but from which may be derived diseases of the body and the mind, may be punishable with a prison sentence of three to seven years. The regulation provides more severe punishment when the mutilation practices are committed on a minor or committed with the scope of financial gain.

The provision for a specific criminal case fills a regulatory void with the provision governing *contra legem* behaviours, which previously fell under the criminal offence of personal injury sanctioned by article 582 of the penal code; today the new regulation makes it possible to differentiate a particular form of conduct and above all to make provision for a particularly severe edict. Article 583 –ter also provides for sentencing of a health professional who is responsible for such a crime, with the additional sentence that they will be banned from practising their profession from three to ten years.

The law on this strictly repressive phenomenon involves three Administrations in actions to prevent the practice of genital mutilation:

- For the training of health personnel, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies, in coordination with the other Ministries involved was assigned the task of defining guidelines aimed at health professionals, as well as professionals working in the communities of immigrants from those countries where there is risk of female genital mutilation to provide prevention, assistance and rehabilitation for women and girls subjected to those practices. With the Guidelines, approved by the Ministry of Health with the decree of December 17, 2007, the aim is to provide a first response, though not exhaustive, to a need for knowledge and information concerning these problems, unfamiliar to universities in Italy, but in which National Health Service workers and private workers are called to intervene;
- At the Ministry of the Interior, a toll-free number will be activated to receive information from anyone with knowledge of genital mutilation being carried out in the national territorial, as well as to supply information on voluntary organizations and health structures working in communities of immigrants from those countries where these practices are carried out;
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the auspices of the programmes for cooperation in development, in the countries where female genital mutilation is still practised despite national legislation which prohibits it, runs training and information projects directed at discouraging such practices, as well as creating antiviolence centres to provide shelter for women who want to take refuge from it;
- The Ministry for Equal Opportunities has been assigned by the law a strategic role in prevention and the fight against female genital mutilation practices. His task, in accordance with the other administrations, is to arrange information campaigns on the basic rights of the person and particularly those of women and children (girls), aimed at foreigners coming to our country, emphasising the prohibition on such practices in Italy. In enforcing this provision (article 3, first paragraph letter a) the Ministry for Equal Opportunities prepared, in 2006, an information pamphlet and a poster aimed at discouraging the practice of female genital mutilation by

appealing not only to the laws in force in Italy but also to the international laws that sanction the inviolability of the individual's right to physical integrity. To compose the text in the pamphlet, which was distributed to Prefectures, the Police offices of the Border Patrol, centres offering shelter and Immigration Offices in the Central Police Stations, the authors consulted immigrant associations and NGOs that deal with the human rights of women, and as well as doctors and anthropologists who supplied valuable suggestions for a concise and effective draft that would have immediate impact.

Furthermore, the law assigns the Ministry for Equal Opportunities the task of promoting awareness initiatives in collaboration with the health structures, the volunteer organizations and the non-profit organizations, and information courses for infibulated women who are pregnant. The refresher courses for teachers are particularly important, considering the role that the school can play in promoting and spreading the knowledge of female children's rights..

The Ministry for Equal Opportunities, in order to perform the numerous tasks assigned by the law, has provided for, with the Ministerial Decree of November 16, 2006 and later reshaped with Ministerial Decree of June 9, 2009, the institution of the **Commission for the prevention and fight against female genital mutilation practices** (see Part III).

On the basis of such guidelines, the Ministry for Equal Opportunities has issued a Public Notice (August 2007) on the financing of projects aimed at preventing and fighting female genital mutilation practices with three different areas of intervention: research-action projects, information and awareness campaigns, training and refresher courses. Among the subjects entitled to present project by the public notice, were the Regions, the Local Bodies, and the Administrations of the National Health Service, as well as organizations in the Third Sector (community and volunteer groups) without the scope of financial gain, and whose aims are to protect the health or rights of immigrants. As for the allotted funds for the financing of the projects presented, examined by a special Evaluation Commission, the resources amounted to 3,546,290.00 Euros, to be taken by the funds allotted to the Department of Equal Opportunities in compliance with the law number 7/2006. The resources were divided as follows : 793,890.00 Euros for the research-action projects, 1,160,382 Euros for the information and awareness campaigns, 1,592.018 Euros for the training and refresher courses. At the conclusion of the Commission's work, the bodies receiving financing signed a special deed of concession, which formalized their commitment to carry out projects in conformity with the technical and economic contents approved in the evaluation sessions, and to adhere to specific deadlines for the work which must be concluded by September 30, 2009 (Public Notice August 2007).

The Ministry for Equal Opportunities has also instituted a **Study Commission for the right to health**, with the objective of monitoring the present situation and formulating proposals aimed at ensuring equal treatment conditions for citizens and access to Health Services, eliminating every type of discrimination. The Commission's task is to indicate positive actions to promote equal opportunity for immigrant women, to formulate

proposals for activating protection programmes for infancy and the woman, to guarantee the right to health for weak subjects such as the elderly or individuals with cancer; the commission will also be studying and taking action in the area of organ transplants. It also deals with promoting a culture of health and prevention, using information and awareness actions and campaigns.

Currently, **three study and analysis projects** are being developed on the theme of health, financed by the Department for Equal Opportunities and commissioned to research bodies according to requests formulated by the Study Commission for the right to health.

The research projects examine respectively:

- access to health for immigrant women;
- protection of infancy for mothers and containment of the caesarean section;
- stigma over anxiety and other psychiatric pathologies.

Recently the Ministry for Equal Opportunities also launched **the awareness campaign called “if you love someone (give them weight) take them seriously”** for the prevention and fight against eating disorders among women and adolescents.

In application of Heading V of the Italian Constitution, it is necessary to take into account the so-called **health federalism**. It is necessary to remember that the legal context is based on Heading V of the Constitution, as reformed by the constitutional law of October 18, 2001, number 3 and by the D.P.C.M. (Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers) of November 29, 2001, and further amendments, relative to the determination of Essential Levels of Assistance. The health sector of the period under consideration in the Report is based on the State-Regional Agreement of March 23, 2005 (ex article 1, paragraph 173, of the law of December 30, 2004, number 311).

The premise of the agreement is the guarantee of respect for the principle of the uniform distribution of Essential Levels of Assistance in appropriate conditions, with adequate levels of quality and efficiency, coherently with the programmed resources of the National Health Service. These provisions draw on the DPCM 29.11.2001, which went into force in February 23, 2002, and which defines the Essential Levels of Assistance, that is National Health services that must be provided to all citizens, free or through payment of a quota (ticket), with public resources collected from general taxation.

The Essential Levels of Assistance are organized into three large areas: collective health assistance in the spheres of life and work, which includes all the prevention activities aimed at society and individuals; municipal assistance, which are those activities and Health Services and social health services with various branches throughout the territory, from basic medicine to home and consultation services; hospital services.

The Regions, exclusively responsible for the locations of the facilities and Health Services, are directly responsible for ensuring the effective supply of Essential Levels of Assistance on the basis of those specific needs of the regional territory. The Regions can however provide other services, besides those already programmed, some of which may be financed by their own resources.

From the administrative point of view, in the reorganization of government institutions, the new present government has reduced, in compliance with the Bassanini law, the number of offices, unifying the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity. Therefore, from the second semester of 2008 we have a single Minister which deals with labour, health and social policies.

Following the **gender approach**, already outlined by the international Conferences (see conference of Beijing 1995) and by the EU and WHO Resolutions on the subject, among the priority health objectives of the period 2005-2008, it is important to remember: cardiovascular disease prevention (subdivided into the following initiatives: distribution of cardiovascular risk chart to groups of subjects); the prevention of obesity in women of reproductive age and in the child; prevention screenings: for breast cancer and cancer of the cervix; accident prevention: road; home; on the job; vaccinations: implementation of vaccination coverage; implementation of vaccinations for groups in higher risk categories; improvement in the quality of services and vaccinating activities.

These objectives must be read jointly with other national demographic data. Italy is now characterized by a higher life expectancy, by an increase in the number of elderly and very elderly and a slight recovery in the birth rate, primarily attributed to the births of foreign babies. The increase in life expectancy at birth is now consolidated in our country: currently the life expectancy for women goes beyond 82.9 years. This means a notable increase in the elderly population which however, is not homogeneously distributed in all the regions, with the consequence that there are different modulation needs in the supply of health services.

Reliable demographic forecasts demonstrate a continuous increase in the number of elderly people (over 65) and very elderly people (over 85). Life expectancy of women in Italy has been continually rising and has reached 84, 6 years more than the age for men. This value, however, hides differences between the various regions, varying from 85 years in the Marche to 82.6 years in Campania. In Italy 53% of women claim to feel “well” or “very well.” This percentage varies depending on the region: from 63% in Friuli Venezia Giulia to 51% in Umbria (excluding the special data from the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, 75%). The percentage drops to 20% over 65, where 3% of the women and 2% of the men between 65 and 69 need daily assistance: this percentage drops to 25% in women above 80 years and to 18% of the men.

Consequently, the prevalence of **chronic disease** in the elderly has increased by approximately 50% in the last 10 years. The diseases of aging and diseases with a high morbidity for which exist prospects for prevention, treatments or ways to delay the appearance and the related disabilities are: osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, depression, Alzheimer’s disease; dementia, Parkinson’s disease, cancers (breast, cervical-uterine, colon-rectum), COPD, physical, psychic and mental disabilities. It is difficult to provide reliable data on the frequency of these pathologies, but we know, for example, that dementia is a condition that affects from 1 to 5 per cent of the population over 65 years of age, with a prevalence that then doubles every four years, reaching a percentage of approximately 30 per cent at the age of 80 years. In Italy, it is estimated that there are approximately 500 thousand victims of Alzheimer’s disease. The data, though not recent but from 2000, reveals that 12.1 women in 100 suffer from at least one serious chronic disease.ⁱ

Countering this in Italy, as in many other countries with advanced economies, in the last few years we have seen a marked decrease of the birth rate: currently the average number of children per Italian woman is 1.2, one of the lowest birth rates in the world.

It is clear that these demographic changes have an influence on the health needs because the subsequent epidemiological picture shows the prevalence of certain types of diseases, such as chronic-degenerative diseases, cardiovascular diseases, cancers, other diseases of aging, as well as those related to social and economic conditions.

New needs have arisen that lie somewhere between the social and the health sphere, in relation to the social economic revolution, the increase in immigration and the general mobility of the population. Clear characteristics in Italy such as the aging of the population, the reduced birth rate, the need to control preventable infectious outbreaks with special strategies, show that the area of cardiovascular disease is a high priority (the main cause of death and use of health resourcesⁱⁱ), cancers (first cause of potential years of life lost), the other diseases of aging, and infancy.

With the aim of promoting **preventative health** for women, between 2005 and 2008, four particularly critical social health profiles were singled out:

- Women with an addiction deriving from a psychophysical pathology, elderly women who depend on others as for their own bodies; women with an addiction to substances (nicotine addiction, alcohol addiction, drug addiction...) or to other people.
- Women and post partum depression, women who suffer from this disorder are another of the profiles at risk that were singled out; this type of disorder not only seriously damages the woman but can also have serious health consequences for the child. For this problem, there are some regional programmes such as the project “Mamme oltre il blu (mothers beyond the blue),” aimed at overcoming post partum disorder, developed within the action for the prevention of depression of the Emilia-Romagna Region in collaboration with the Department for Equal Opportunities.
- Women who have been victims of violence of various types (particularly victims of sexual crimes, victims of mobbing: women can be victims of various types and various degrees of violence: physical and sexual violence, but also psychic violence, there is also an increase in violence for cultural motives among immigrant women. Recent data shows a decrease in the reports of violence but no decrease in the violence itself (violence towards women has serious health consequences, as the WHO has also emphasized, which are often underestimated: these are physical damage, temporary and permanent disability, unwanted pregnancies, gynaecological problems, sexually transmitted diseases, gastrointestinal problems, cardiovascular problems and self-injurious behaviours.
- Immigrant women, the profile of the immigrant women is particularly at risk, as the bicultural nature of the subject has many social health consequences, such as, for example, the diversity in the training of the doctor and the immigrant woman, the social health conditions of the immigration process, the different perception of symptoms in relation to the culture, the conditions of the female children (second generation), sexual freedom and the right to free and responsible procreation,

maternity. Relevant problems are prostitution, poor knowledge of contraceptive methods, the spread of AIDS. According to Istat data, presented on March 2, 2007, 8.3% of Italian women report a bad state of health with respect to the 5.3% of men; however women take more care in looking after their health and undergo preventative examinations more frequently than men.

Women are in first place for the **consumption of pharmaceuticals** (the ISTAT data - 2005 gives the following percentages on the consumption of pharmaceuticals: 42.1% for women and 32.3% for men, other data to remember is: adverse reactions to pharmaceuticals are more frequent in females: 1.5-1.7 compared to males), but they are scarcely represented in clinical or pharmacological studies. Until now, gender prejudices have been an influence, and hormonal changes almost exclusively tend to be blamed as the cause of the disease. These prejudices slow the course of both pharmacological research and research into social environmental risk factors and early prevention, which could mean removal of the risk factors and causes. Until just a few years ago, women were rarely recruited for clinical studies. The examination of the change in attitude has only come in recent months, at least as far as the number of women recruited is concerned, even though the gender analysis is still lacking, probably because this would entail higher costs and more complex experimentation.

Adequately surveying the effect of pharmaceuticals on women would mean studying their effectiveness and safety in terms of the full cycle of the woman's productive life (menstrual cycle, pregnancy, breastfeeding, menopause etc). In recent years, along with the change in women's role in society, we have seen a variation in the pathologies of women. The ever greater level of commitment demanded of women has led to an increase in stress and depression. Pathologies that once affected the male population to a greater degree, such as cardiovascular diseases and some cancers, such as lung cancer, are becoming important causes of death in the female universe.

From the "**Report on Cancers in Italy 2005**" it is clear that the incidence and mortality rate due to malign tumours in women are on the rise, although to a lesser degree with respect to the previous year, while they are decreasing among men. Cardiovascular pathologies are the first cause of death among women as well. In Italy, 33,000 women per year die of myocardial infarction alone; therefore triple the number of deaths caused by breast cancer. Furthermore, the number of lethal coronary cases throughout Italy is relevant, as it is worse for women between the ages of 35 and 74. Three men in 10 and four women in 10 die within 28 days of the appearance of the symptoms. Furthermore, comparing the rates of coronary and cerebral-vascular attacks, it emerges that the first type of attack is more prevalent among men and the second among women (National Centre for Epidemiology, Health Prevention and Promotion – Higher Health Institute-Rome).

- According to the international statistics, **cardiovascular disease**, considered the more frequent disease among men, is the number one killer of women between the ages of 44 and 59 years and greatly surpasses all the other causes of death. There is still a gender prejudice regarding the approach to cardiovascular problems in women. Women are diagnosed in a more advanced state than men, and the prognosis is more severe for the same age.

- **Osteoporosis**, following the increase in the average life expectancy, emerges as another disease for which women are at risk and therefore at risk of breaking bones. The trend appears to be increasing inexorably.
- As we mentioned before, each year in Italy, approximately **240 thousand new cases of cancer and 140 thousand become deaths (28% overall mortality rate)**. There are nearly a million and a half people affected by cancer, including recovered patients, new cases and those in treatment. The incidence of these pathologies is constantly on the rise due to aging of the population, exposure to known and unknown risk factors and carcinogenic substances, such as cigarette smoke, and some environmental pollutants. It is estimated that in 2010 there will be approximately 270 thousand new cases of cancer every year and 145 thousand deaths. In the data from the Italian cancer registries, lung cancer is the most frequent, followed by breast cancer, followed by colon-rectum and stomach cancers. The distribution of cancer in Italy is characterized by the high difference in incidents and mortality between the large areas of the country, particularly between the north, where there is a greater risk of getting ill, and the south.

Breast cancer is the most frequent neoplasia and the most important cause of death by cancer for women. The National Prevention Plan and the organization of screening programmes have achieved relevant results, but strong territorial differences and social inequalities still persist: in Southern Italy more than 60% of the women, in the target population, still do not have the option of a mammogram within the organized programmes.

Cancer of the uterine cervix is a pathology related to infection by the human papilloma virus (HPV). In a percentage of cases the infection lingers on and can become uterine cervix cancer. Today the neoplasia can be discovered in a very early phase with the PAP test and eventually with the HPV-test. To these two weapons the vaccine has been added, which is advised for the age groups between 9 and 26 years.

With a view to protecting women's health, there was the launch in 2008 of a **vaccination campaign for cervical cancer, aimed at all women, but guaranteed free of charge to all young Italian women between the ages of 11 and 12 years**: beginning in the month of March 2008, the campaign offering the active vaccine free of charge was aimed uniformly at girls of the ages 11 and 12 throughout the Italian Territory (beginning with those born in 1997), producing over the years a progressive immunization of the young adult population exposed to the risk of infection.

To foster the spread of public vaccination against cancer of the uterine cervix throughout the country, in the Budget of 2008, 30 million Euros were allotted as an additional contribution to the resources already provided for under the funds for pharmaceutical assistance. Another 40 million Euros were found in the budget of the Ministry of Health in charge at the time. Nonetheless, the present Minister for Equal Opportunities intends to start an information campaign on the importance of the prevention of women's cancers, further examining the long-term effects both from a biological and social point of view, with the aim of determining effective rehabilitation measures for the reintegration of the women into the working world and society.

In the light of the demographic dynamic just described, it should be remembered that the decrease in the average number of children per woman – and consequently of births – the tendency to postpone the beginning of the reproductive life, and in part, the recovery of fertility in a mature age, has pushed the Italian authorities, in the period covered by the Report, to give more attention to pregnancy and the childbirth process. **The protection of maternal and infant health** has led to an analysis of salient data revealing that expectant mothers have an average of four checkups during the pregnancy (which increases where the pregnancy is at risk): the obstetric sonogram is the most widely used technique for the study of foetal well-being, while amniocentesis, the most widely used invasive prenatal exam technique, is used to different degrees depending on the region, and is more widely used in the north.

Within this framework, there are some territorial differences that should be considered. The southern and insular regions of the country show worse data than the central and northern regions. In these regions, the possibilities for women to take prenatal courses, or choose the childbirth methods, are more limited. In the biennium 2004-2005, 23.4% of women in Southern Italy and 21.8% in the insular regions of Italy stated that they had taken no prenatal courses because none were organized by their local health facilities or they were inaccessible. 45.9% of women in Southern Italy and 42.8% in the more insular regions stated that they were alone at the time of childbirth because the health facility did not permit the presence of other people. Analogous data is also found concerning: recourse to the caesarean section and general anesthetic, newborn and infant mortality rate, low weight at birth, and choice of breastfeeding.

In the face of such data and, in the period under consideration, some initiatives are worth noting: 1. the adoption, in **October 2006, by the Council of Ministers, of the bill, entitled “Regulations for the protection of the rights of women in labour, the promotion of physiological childbirth and the protection of the newborn’s health”** and assigned to the XII “Social Affairs” Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, on September 5, 2008. The aim of such bill, once approved by the Parliament, will be to protect the rights and health of expectant mothers and unborn children through the promotion of information on the types of social health assistance available, the use of pain control methods during labour and childbirth, the reduction of disease risk at birth, promoting physiological childbirth, reducing recourse to the caesarean section, promotion of breastfeeding by the mother, the guarantee of fairness in access to services for mother-infant protection, for the immigrant population as well, promotion of ongoing assistance before and after childbirth.

To equally encourage **breastfeeding**, various initiatives were adopted, including: an agreement at the State-Regions Conference where the first national Guide-lines on protection of the rights of women in labour, promotion of physiological childbirth, and the protection of the newborn’s health, were approved. On December 20, 2007, the Ministry of Health reached an agreement, on behalf of the Italian Government, with the Italian Regions under special statuteⁱⁱⁱ and more generally with the so-called Conference State-Regions, on “The National Guide-lines on the protection and promotion of the breast-feeding practice.” This text provides specific nation-wide guidance on breast-feeding. Specifically, it recommends breast-feeding as the sole method of feeding

children up to six months of age. It also envisages the support for continuing such a practice as long as mothers can manage. An ad hoc Committee was set up to deal with the theme of breast-feeding. The Committee was instituted by ministerial Decree in April 2008, with the following goals: to organize a smoothly-running national network for the protection, promotion and support of the breast-feeding practice, which pursues the objectives indicated in the national *Guide-lines on the protection, promotion and support of the breast-feeding practice*, including that of promoting homogenous means for gathering data on the prevalence of breast-feeding according to WHO criteria; the publication and distribution of the pamphlet “Breast-feeding – a drop of wisdom, a great opportunity,” drafted in collaboration with the erstwhile Ministry of Health, the Higher Health Institute, and the Centre for Child Health. Accordingly, at the national level, various campaigns have been launched: “Achieving health, making healthy choices easy,” by the Ministry of Health. This programme aims to involve all relevant institutional stakeholders in promoting awareness-raising campaigns on how to change “incorrect approaches.” It provides specific support for the above project on the “Friends of Children’s Hospitals,” by developing relevant activities and ensuring the compliance with the relevant international Code. “Parents and more” is a national awareness-raising campaign promoted by the Ministry of Health. With this campaign, originally developed by the Veneto Region under the UNICEF-Italia auspices and soon to be extended nationwide, the Ministry of Health has been addressing parents nationwide. It aims at highlighting, for the sake of children’s health, the importance of solely breast-feeding for up to six months of age. “Promotion and evaluation of the quality of operative childbirth models” is a programme launched by the Ministry of Health jointly with the National Institute of Health, with the aim of implementing specific actions to promote breast-feeding. To this end, at the regional level, while recalling the Italian constitutional framework and system, within which Italian Regions enjoy specific autonomy in this area, pursuant to Art. 117 of the Italian Constitution, specific regional initiatives are worthy of mention. An ad hoc Inter-regional Working Group has been established, composed of the regional competent Divisions; UNICEF-Italia has concluded specific memoranda of understanding, on the promotion of breast-feeding, with some Regions, namely Abruzzo, Tuscany, Val d’Aosta and Veneto.

Within this framework, the **maternal mortality rate** in Italy has gone down progressively, passing from 490 deaths in the ‘70s to the order of fifteen or so in the first years of the twenty-first century. Though, it is recognized that the situation must be monitored, especially in the areas of Italy where the social economic conditions are less favourable and there are more immigrant women.

Considering maternal-infant health means considering themes of infertility and above all, remembering the legislation on **Medically Assisted Procreation (MAP)** as introduced by Law 40 of February 19, 2004, then supplemented by the Decree of October 7, 2005 (Official Gazette number 282 of December 3, 2005) which instituted the National Registry of facilities authorized for the application of medically assisted procreation techniques, of formed embryos and of births following the application of those same techniques.”

This law establishes that in order to solve sterility or infertility problems, recourse to medically assisted procreation is permitted. Recourse to such a method is possible when

there are no other effective therapeutic methods to treat the causes of sterility or infertility. At a programming level, the Ministry of Health has defined the guidelines containing indications on the medically assisted procreation procedures and techniques. Pursuant to the provisions of Law number 40/04, the guidelines are periodically updated, at least every three years, in relation to the technical scientific evolution.

MAP techniques presently consist of a range of therapeutic options of various degrees of invasiveness, both technical and psychological (techniques of first, second and third level). Over the years, in light of the criticism that has arisen over this Law, the Ministry of Health has undertaken a study for a specific programme of actions, defined “National Plan for the Prevention of Infertility.” Established within this framework are such public health objectives as early prevention of the causes of infertility, correct information campaigns aimed at women and couples turning to MAP techniques, and information for the general population starting with young people. However this context has proved to be insufficient for the protection of the rights of couples and women, and in particular, of parenthood. Moreover, the Constitutional Court, since 2006 (bylaw 369/2006) has begun to intervene in some of the laws and the relative guidelines, recognizing the lack of conformity to the criterion of reasonableness ex article 3, Italian Constitution, and the right to health, ex article 32, Italian Constitution.^{iv} While waiting for legislative physiological developments that must follow the Constitutional Court’s decisions, it should be noted that in Italy there are 276 centres authorized by their regions to practice the application of the MAP techniques. It should also be noted that the Law 40 guidelines (guidelines containing indications on the medically assisted procreation procedures and techniques) emphasize the importance of offering couples counselling service before beginning the individual treatments. This type of counselling should be available before each treatment, as well as a support, with the aim of providing support to couples in stressful and difficult moments.

Within the framework of reproductive health, the data on the **voluntary interruption of pregnancy** proves to be positive. From 2005 a decrease of 6.7% in the rate of abortions has been recorded (number of VIPs per 1000 women of fertile age, 15-49 years). The reduction appears to be more rapid among educated, employed and married women. More generally, we have seen a constant decline in the rate of abortions that since the eighties up to today has descended by 43.5%. Italy has one of the lowest abortion rates in the world (11.1%), preceded only by Germany (7.4%)^v.

Furthermore, in Italy, the rate of teenage pregnancy is one of the lowest in Europe and continues to diminish: fewer than 2% of all births involve women younger than 20. The pregnancy interruption rate for minors for the year 2006 turns out to be equal to 4.9 per 1000, similar to that of the previous years, with higher values in northern and Central Italy. Consent for the operation was given in 69.3% of the cases by parents and in 29.8 of the cases there was recourse to a guardianship judge. As in previous years, there is less recourse to abortion among young Italians with respect to statistics reported in other western countries. We retain that family counselling services play an important role in this area. In 2004 there were 2157 public family counselling units and 112 private ones. However, this data does not describe the situation of immigrant women. If in 1995, only

7% of the VIPs were performed on foreign citizens, in 2005, this figure has risen to 30%; the abortion rate for foreign women (primarily very young and unmarried) is four times greater than that of Italian women.

The situation is different where **spontaneous abortion** is concerned. In this case the data shows an increase: at the beginning of the eighties 89.2 in 1000 live births, and in the first few years following 2000 the figure is approximately 127.6. Some of the causes can be found in the increase in the mother's age at the time of childbirth or the spread of environmental factors or factors on the job with a negative influence on the development of the foetus. In this sector, the north has a greater number of spontaneous abortions than the south, where unfortunately, among other things, the phenomenon is particularly frequent among the very young (15-19 years).

Women's health requires specific attention when dealing with themes of **mental pathologies and addictions**, which are growing prevalently among women: depression is the main cause of disability in women between 15 and 44 years of age; schizophrenia is normally underestimated. The National Health Plan 2006-2008 has programmed a series of actions aimed at fighting the consequences of lifestyles heavily conditioned by specific forms of addiction, and which are relevant health risk factors especially in the cases of alcohol and drug abuse.

In these last few years, **health policies in the alcoholic field have been consolidated in our country**, as can be seen in the Paper recently presented by the Minister of Health in Parliament – pursuant to article 8 of the law of March 30, 2001, number 125. In Italy, already in the National Health Plan 2003- 2005, the reduction of health and social damages due to alcohol was recognized as one of the most important objectives for public health, primarily in relation to the protection of the younger generations' health. The consolidation of our country's policies reflects the orientations of the EU's alcoholic policies, which in the last few years have had a strong push with the integration into the new Programme of public health community actions for the years 2003-2008, on health problems connected to the use and abuse of alcohol.

Despite the visible progress in the NHS services and measures, there are still problems and shortages that require specially targeted planning measures and tools: increase in the overall consumer population and the subsequent exposure to the risk of related social and health damages, particularly in the alcohol related high risk social-demographic category, such as women and young people. Starting in 1998, the number of consumers appears to be on the rise among young women between 18 and 24 years of age; increase in high risk consumption behaviours, like drinking between meals, excessive drinking and inebriation, particularly in the young population of both sexes and the female population. Furthermore, 50% of women continue to drink while pregnant. It is difficult to guarantee, especially in some territories, adequate therapy to deal with the problems of full blown alcohol abuse.

According to ISTAT statistics of 2006, there is more high risk behaviour among those that spend time in discoteques, both male and female. One of the Ministry's objectives for health protection of young people and women is the adoption of policies and actions for information campaigns regarding the cultural perception on drinking, to highlight the

various risks connected to the different behaviours, and give suitable and universal directions.

The situation is different for **drugs**. The “strategy” is essentially based on an integrated, multidisciplinary and balanced contribution between reduction in the demand and reduction in the supply of drugs. The EU plan of action 2005-2008 for the fight against drugs (EU Official Gazette 8.7.2005 C 168/1) also emphasizes a series of transversal themes, such as international cooperation, research, information and evaluation. However, there is little information supplied by national sources, currently limited to public service activities. In our country there are 541 public services for drug addiction (SERT); and 1230 rehabilitation facilities (data from Ministry of the Interior). Their most critical problems are related to difficulties in guaranteeing therapeutic and rehabilitative continuity, lack of valid scientific knowledge based on therapeutic protocols involving the use of cannabis, cocaine and methamphetamine, and difficulties in dealing with the psychiatric problems and morbidity rates of chronic patients, (generally heroin users). Some of the objectives include reconsidering the flow of national information for epidemiological and programming purposes.

The **smoking** habit is still far too wide spread, above all among the very young and women, especially those of reproductive age and pregnant women, where there is risk of health damage to the newborn, possible inhibition of respiratory development, and a significant quota of so-called “crib deaths.” In recent years there has been an increase in the number of women affected by smoke-related diseases such as lung cancer or myocardial infarction. The number of smokers who quit is still too low and refers to subjects of adult age who in many cases already suffer from tobacco-related diseases. It is calculated that 17% of Italian women are habitual smokers, and 3.4% are heavy smokers, in comparison with the respective 29.2% and 10.1% of men. Therefore, among the prefigured objectives of the Italian Authorities are: prevention of the start of smoking among young people, using integrated health education measures aimed at school age children (middle school and the first years of secondary school), promoting the suspension of smoking while pregnant through information, education, assistance organizations for women who smoke while pregnant, and women of reproduction age in the sphere of those facilities working in the sector.

The issue of **obesity** is also important. In Italy the information on obesity is incomplete because there is no surveillance system for this phenomenon. However the data released by ISTAT shows that 8.7% of women are obese, and prevalently housewives. In some regions, the focus and awareness of public health administrators and operators in the various sectors involved have begun some interesting initiatives and projects that could be adopted at the national level. In some Local Health Unit (ASL), together with the initiative of Food and Nutritional Health Services (SIAN) or the initiatives of other facilities, food and nutrition projects have been started in the schools for both students and teachers as well as workers in the food sector. Other local projects regard the drafting of guidelines for school catering and experiments in control of the school menu (Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto and Lombardy for example) and meal variation through monitoring of the menus and nutritional surveillance in the extended care homes for the elderly (RSA) (Lombardy, Lazio). Furthermore, through social marketing, and food

vending machines, the associations of the sector have become involved (Emilia-Romagna).

As described in the section on **violence against women, another relevant health phenomenon is violence against women (sexual, physical, mental and economic)** because of the immediate consequences, related to physical injury and secondary effects such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks, food disorders, addictions, sexual and gynaecological disorders, sexually transmitted diseases, gastrointestinal and cardiovascular disorders. The 2006 ISTAT data shows that in Italy the women between 16 and 70 years who are victims of violence over their lifetime are estimated to be nearly 7 million in number.

Violence against women, especially in the domestic environment, has a multifaceted genesis which creates the base for various forms of violence, then perpetuated against the weaker groups in society. The knowledge of the methods of violence within the dynamics of the couple is considered a starting point for effective prevention within the public health facility. The number of victims who turn to Hospital Emergency services is constantly increasing. Abused women use health services four to five times more than women who are not abused. The number of victims who turn to Hospital Emergency is considerably greater than that of women who turn to the Police, family counseling units, social and voluntary services. The abuser is rarely reported by the doctor on duty at Hospital Emergency (more often the clinical chart reads “violence by a known person”), which makes it difficult to determine the extent of the phenomenon.

As well as emergency health treatment for sexual violence, Hospital Emergency is where evidence of domestic sexual violence emerges, and there needs to be a network through which the territory to deal with this problem on the mental-social level as well.

For years in Italy, there have been a few different groups working in the various health facilities (Emergency Sexual Violence Centres, Listening Centres, Centres for Sexual Abuse and Abuse of Minors, Counselling Spaces, Youth Centres, etc).

It is clear that there needs to be a homogenous development of suitable services for victims of sexual and domestic violence in the Hospital Emergency wards, the preferred environment for starting dedicated help desks and promoting the training of health personnel in this area.

One of the most relevant problems today in starting up a universal system is the variability of the population due to the long-increasing mobility of people in Europe and abroad. It is known that in some areas of the country, the foreign population, legally or illegally resident, is large enough to make a considerable difference in the economic development and social services of the country.

In 2006, of the more than 2 million legal immigrants in the country, half were women. To promote access for the immigrant population, particularly women, to social and health services, and promote the development of information activities and social health orientation within the Italian public health system, with the law number 296/06, the erstwhile Minister of Health authorized the expenditure of 25 million Euros for the triennial 2007/09, aimed at creating a National Institute for promoting Immigrant Health

and fighting the diseases of poverty. The ministerial Decree of August 3, 2007, article 1, places the Institute under the auspices of the Ministry of Health^{vi}.

Since 1996, the reference Centre of the Lazio Region for the promotion of health of the immigrant population, merged with the INMP (National Institute for the Promotion of Health), was open to all citizens, Italian or foreign. The services were also offered free of charge to clandestine or illegal immigrants. Every day from 150 to 200 people are received. The facility makes use of cultural and linguistic mediators who work in the social sector and guarantee interviews with patients in their language of origin. Currently in the Centre there are approximately 20 main languages used by the cultural mediators. Yearly, approximately 8,000 people, including women who are victims of genital mutilation, are given medical checkups in the following specialized areas: dermatology, allergology, oncology, plastic surgery, internal medicine, infectious diseases, urology, tropical diseases, sexology, sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS.

A total of 24,000 patients in the years 2005, 2006 and 2007, used the centre, and approximately half of them were immigrant women.

Another situation where some discrimination is seen is in the case of **Romany women**, for whom a precarious state of health is recorded, above all in the mothers. One of the critical aspects, for which there are specific measures, although not targeting the Romany population, is that of the sexual and reproductive health of women. The focus given to the re-evaluation of the family counselling units is to create a protection and listening space for Romany women, in order to anticipate the guardianship of minors at the time pregnancy and birth. The Romany women usually go to hospital for childbirth, though usually do not go for the checkups required by Italian law over the course of the pregnancy. Furthermore, access to clinics could help deal with the problems of matrimony, but above all of pregnancy in young girls and the health consequences for very young mothers and their children. The problem is creating contact between the community that lives in the territory and the Health Service.

A training program for women on this subject, in the Romany camps where some of these problems for young people were dealt with by the Local Health Unit (ASL)-Na1, managed to establish a relationship over a period of time and provide access for Romany women to the public Local Health Unit (ASL) clinics . In the Local Health Unit (ASL)-Na2 family units as well some prenatal courses for disadvantaged mothers were offered, creating a bridge between the territory and the hospital where the childbirth would take place.

HIV-Aids pays no attention to race. Though, the available data shows that the phenomenon is growing among immigrants. A change in the characteristics of people with AIDS has been recorded. There is an increase in the number of foreigners (more than 20% of the cases seen in the last year). On the other hand, though the average age is higher for both men (43) and women (40), the cases of HIV among drug addicts are decreasing.

In 2006, the citizens resident in Italy who live with HIV numbered from 110-130,000 thousand. The cases with the full blown disease are approximately 25,000. The death rate

has decreased drastically and the number of cases has dropped significantly over the last 10 years, thanks to prevention, early diagnosis and drug therapies. For 2007, the estimates show stability in the number of new cases of Aids with respect to 2006. Regarding women with HIV, the Authorities have launched a proper monitoring campaign, particularly for pregnant women with HIV.

At the end of 2001, the Higher Health Institute started a national surveillance project for the problem, open to obstetricians, infectivologists and pediatricians throughout the country. In December 2007, demographic data was collected for more than 1,200 cases. The demographic data confirmed some characteristics common to western countries: the population of pregnant women with HIV tends to be of an average age of over 30, with good clinical immunological conditions, a growing percentage of non Italian women (40 - 45% in recent years), primarily of African origin, a high percentage of unplanned pregnancies (not less than 50%), and a relatively high percentage of cases in which the diagnosis of the HIV infection takes place during pregnancy (23%).

It is recognized that regarding working conditions and with respect to injuries on the job, it is exclusively the characteristics of the male worker that have been considered. Women are only considered when they are pregnant, exclusively in terms of risk to the unborn child. The protection of the fertility of the couple with respect to possible employment risks has also had little attention.

Injuries on the job and job related diseases which concern women (such as dermatitis and muscular skeletal disorders) are not taken into enough consideration. Little attention is still given to diseases connected to domestic work, and in particular, injuries. There is still little attention given to the biological response of women to common working risks such as heavy work, shift work, and toxicokinetics. Pathological stress is exclusively associated with production work, without considering the greater mental-social risk that affects women when they have a double workload.

As far as associations are concerned, it should be remembered that in 2006, **O.N.D.A. – National Observatory on Women’s Health**, was instituted, with the objective of promoting a gender health culture to create awareness of what it means to belong to the female or male gender affects on one’s health and the perception of it , and that all disease prevention policies should carefully consider these differences to achieve fairness and equal opportunity. The national observatory on women’s health intends to stimulate research on the main diseases that affect the female universe, and on their economic, political and social implications, contributing to the communication of medical and scientific information and culturally promoting the social role of women in the development of research and scientific knowledge.

II. 4 Women in Elective Bodies and Public Offices

The United Nations Survey on *Women in Politics, 2008* shows that Italy has still not reached a high position in the world ranking of women’s presence in politics, but it is necessary to emphasize that, also thanks to targeted legislative provisions, the percentages have increased in the last four years and the current percentage of women in

ministerial positions is 24% (world ranking 30th) and women in Parliament is 17.3% (world ranking 68th).

The shortage of female representatives in the Italian political world (see the table 1)¹⁰ is mainly due to two factors which are deeply rooted in the Italian culture. The first is linked to the fact that women are generally victims of stereotypes which show them as weak and needing protection, a representation which causes disaffection among women themselves and makes them feel unfit for the environment where power is exercised.

The second factor has strong political connotations. Today, there are still numerous obstacles for women wishing to take part in political life, due to the difficulties of reconciling the female role between professional - politics and work - and family life.

The strong commitment of the Italian Government to women's participation in politics is basically reflected, at the legislative level, in the amendment of article 51 of the national Constitution in 2003, which introduced the principle of gender equality in the access to public and elective offices.

Furthermore the Italian Government has set up new provisions in order to increase the presence of women in politics such as law number 90 of 2004. This important law establishes at least one third of candidates from either sex for elections to the European Parliament and it has created a substantial increase in women elected in June 2004 (19.23 per cent of the total as compared to 11.5 per cent in 1999)¹¹.

| | SENATE | CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES | EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT |
|-------|--------|---------------------|---------------------|
| WOMEN | 17,85% | 21,27 % | 19,3% |
| MEN | 82,15% | 78.73% | 80,8% |

The Department for Equal Opportunities has also promoted a training project entitled **“Women, politics and institutions - educational processes for a gender and equal opportunities culture”**, which started in the academic year 2005 and has been developed in further editions.

The objective of the project was to process practical and theoretical information, in order to disseminate a gender sensitive culture and to allow women, of every age, workers or not, to approach politics and to promote their success and their participation in the national political and social life.

The project was addressed to all women with a secondary-school diploma and to male and female university students.

The main themes analysed during the courses were the following:

- the functioning of the main Italian institutional bodies and the political parties;
- political and social participation;
- the organization and functioning of the European Parliament;
- national and community jurisprudence regarding gender policy techniques and tools.

¹⁰ www.senato.it
www.camera.it

¹¹ www.europarl.it

Another important initiative created with the aim of guaranteeing fair access for women to public offices is the “**Directive on measures to achieve equality and equal opportunity between men and women in Public Administration**” signed on May 23, 2007 by the Minister for Equal Opportunities jointly with the erstwhile Minister for Reforms and Innovations in Public Administration.

This directive is aimed at central authorities and non economic public bodies, but also at Regions and local bodies.

The directive provides indications for areas where the authorities should intervene and determine critical points or possible direct and indirect discrimination, using surveys, studies and monitoring activities. There are 6 areas:

- elimination and prevention of discrimination;
- adoption of triennial positive action plans;
- work organization;
- personnel recruitment and personnel management policies;
- equal opportunity committee (EOC)
- organizational training and culture.

For every one of the areas, furthermore, the directive supplies precise instructions for the administrations, appealing to them, for example, to make legal and contractual provisions regarding flexible work and to take care that appointments are conferred taking into account the principle of equal opportunity.

To monitor the directive, each year the departments of equal opportunity prepare a summary report that analyzes the data provided by the individual administrations.

The first report, an experiment using a contained survey sample composed of 113,452 long-term contract employees and 7,346 employees with flexible short term contracts from 29 central administrations, made it possible to define the trends, described as follows.

The first observation regards the nature of the most occasional and unprogrammed equal opportunity measures.

In the face of a legislation that instructs the administrations to draft positive action plans (article 48 legislative Decree number 198 of 2006), 42% of the administrations (10 in 244) declared that they had drafted at least one plan of actions, and of these only 4 stated that they had drafted more than one plan. In that context, the social insurance bodies appear to be the most virtuous administrations: National Social Security Institute (INPS), starting in 2001, has drafted 4, National Workers’ Compensation Institute (INAIL) has drafted 3, while (National Institute for Public Employees’ Social Security (INPDAP) has drafted 2. Most of those (8 administrations in 10), who drafted a triennial plan allotted funds for it. From this we can assume that, despite the programming needs provided for in various legislations (article 39 of the law number 449 of 1997, article 7bis of the legislative Decree number 165 of 2001), the culture of programming in the public sector has still not taken root.

The actions for “equal rights” are still marginal in administrations programming. Despite the fact that all the administrations have carried out a certain number of projects (134 initiatives, 60 of which are relative to 2007 and 74 to 2008) which directly or indirectly regard themes related to enhancing personnel and differences, projects remain within the

areas of the organizations and personnel who deal with equality issues. Of the projects analysed, apart from those for day care centres and teleworking, there are no initiatives with broader themes or dedicated resources. Often the measures are small, and take the form of training sessions.

Some significant information regards the percentage of flexible job schedules in reference to gender.

Judging by the responses, it would appear that 80% of the part-time long-term jobs are held by female personnel. This could be a symptomatic indicator of the social custom that sees the woman as primarily involved in caring for the family and, therefore, has less time to dedicate to her job. This consideration appears to be confirmed by the results of data on the use of parental leave. In fact, the average duration of the leave taken by female workers is double that of male workers even though the number of male and female employees in the survey is fairly even (respectively 46% and 54%).

There does not appear to be a significant gap between male and female workers in the analysis of data on flexible job schedules different from part-time long-term jobs.

The male personnel with short-term flexible job schedules make up 6% of the total of male personnel and the female personnel with short-term flexible job schedules makes up 6.1% of the total of female personnel with long-term contracts. This is due to the regulations on the methods by which personnel is recruited in public administrations, which include competitions or impartial selection procedures that are obliged to ignore gender.

Again on the subject of flexible job contracts, teleworking (from a home computer) which could be a very useful tool for reconciling professional and private life, is not yet particularly widespread throughout the administrations.

Only 9 projects of this type have been activated. Of these, the project started up by National Workers' Compensation Institute (INAIL) over the course of 2006 was significant because of the number of people involved (280).

Some consideration should be given to professional management positions.

Out of a total of 326 first level managers under examination, only 23.9% (78) are women. The statistic is significant even if put into relationship with the number of long-term employees in these administrations: out of 78,238 overall units in service in 2007, 52.8% is female personnel and of 1,905 directors and managers of the first and second levels, 605 (equal to 31.7%) are women. If we look at the data regarding the number of first level appointments to the number of second level managers, it turns out that in a total of 83 appointments, only 26, equal to 31.3% were assigned to women managers. Analyzing the data, only 18% of the women managers had a first level position, against 23% for male managers. Generally, therefore, regarding management positions, the situation still weighs unevenly to the side of male workers.

The Department for Equal Opportunities is presently evaluating annual reports from public administrations in order to draft a final report that will be presented at the end of each year.

They are also updating the mapping of the Committees for Equal Opportunities present in the professional orders and public administrations to create a database of the organizations that deal with equal opportunities (central public administrations, regions, professional orders) and begin a fruitful collaboration with them.

In 2008 the Department for Equal Opportunities also promoted and coordinated the project **“PER.FOR.MA.GE - Training Courses on gender mainstreaming”**, whose aim was to promote the gender perspective in all central public administrations in Italy.

The project involved 12 national Ministries in workshops and specific training courses which focused on the integration of the gender perspective in different sectors and policies at all levels.

In particular the project focused on:

- supporting the drafting of economic planning policies and administrative actions ;
- supporting the Government choices of social and economic policies in favour of gender equality;
- supporting the development and harmonisation of professional competences for the integration of gender equality in the planning processes and in policy definition.

Another important result of the project has been the valorisation of gender differences as a quality factor of the administrative action. Implementing equal opportunities means also offering a more effective and efficient level of services provided by public administrations, according to the needs of male and female citizens.

Women’s representation in economic decision-making bodies¹²

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes that equality in decision-making is essential to the empowerment of women and that *"Women's equal participation in decision making is not only a request for simple justice or democracy, but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account"* (paragraph 181, Beijing Platform for Action). In this context, the women’s participation in high level economic decision-making is a fundamental condition for giving women and men an equal share of power and influence in policy making processes.

The effective participation of women in economic and financial decision-making is not only very low, but also the gender dimension has been absent from macroeconomic policies and decisions regarding resources distribution, wealth creation and exchange.

In order to achieve the strategic objective of the Beijing Platform, it is necessary to adopt adequate measures, taking into consideration the most appropriate monitoring indicators. Policy concerns are the driving force of indicators. Clear and well-defined policy concerns, specific goals and targets are the key parameters to defining adequate indicators as well as understanding the relevance and the limits of the indicators in relation to the goals. In this area the goals and policy concerns have been expressed in a rather generic form. The difficulties in identifying the exact features of the policy concerns prevent national capacity from being oriented towards the elaboration of indicators relevant for political decisions.

¹² Source: ISTAT, 2009.

The review of the national case studies demonstrates that investigation and documentation on this issue is relatively new, often country-specific and widely dispersed. Indicators and procedures for the data collection in the area of economic decision-making at the national level are still in a development stage. In other words, monitoring women's participation in economic decision-making creates a new challenge for statistical systems.

Most of the relevant data are held by decision-making institutions which do not usually compile and collect the information and that are not formally required to report it. Even considering resource constraints, countries need to maximize the use of existing data sources. In particular, administrative statistics based on data collected outside the national statistics offices, by government agencies and major economic institutions.

In order to expand the use of administrative data for monitoring and planning in the area of economic decision-making, formal requirements to collect and provide data by sex should be institutionalized. In any case, in order to ensure the quality of data, the National Statistical Institutes should be responsible for pretesting and revising the data collection instruments, designing and supervising the data collection process as well as the data validation and analysis.

The study and data collection on female representation in economic decision-making positions was started in 2003 by the Greek Presidency of the Council of the European Union and continued by the Italian Presidency. It represented a particularly interesting project that has made it possible to define and recommend a set of appropriate indicators in this important area of gender equality.

Institutions selected for the study were institutional bodies/organizations which may be either directly responsible for the formulation of macroeconomic policy, or exert considerable indirect influence on the outcome of the decision-making process in the member states, as well as analogous EU institutions. Some questionnaires were sent to the Central Bank and to the economic Ministries, as the bodies formally responsible for macroeconomic policies in each member state of the European Union, but also to other Ministries considered to exert an indirect impact. In addition, Labour and Employer Confederations were included, as they influence policies through their deliberation and bargaining process with government authorities.

Macroeconomic policy making, since it is confined to the public sector, is clearly delineated in terms of centres of decision-making, as well as the players involved, so, the focus on macroeconomic decision making reduced the difficulties that would have been otherwise encountered in the data collection. The questionnaire included questions on the gender composition of decision-making bodies, highest position levels, advisory committees and selection committees. Finally, member states were also asked to provide information on the gender composition of the executive boards of the 50 top firms quoted in their national stock exchange.

The 2003 Italian Presidency has developed a series of nine quantitative indicators, reliable in terms of data comparison, devoted to the measurement of the representation of women and men in economic decision-making centres. They have been selected for their relevance in describing the situation of gender equality in this area, also taking into account the availability of comparable data.

The indicators of the study are the following:

The proportion and the number of women and men among

1. governors and deputy/vice-governors of the Central Banks
2. members of the decision- making bodies of the Central Banks
3. ministers and deputy ministers/vice- ministers of the Economic Ministries
4. presidents and vice-presidents of the Labour Unions
5. total governing bodies of the Labour Confederations
6. presidents and vice-presidents of the Employer Confederations
7. members of total governing bodies of the Employer Confederations
8. chiefs of executive boards of the 50 top firms publicly on the national stock exchange
9. members of executive boards of the 50 top firms quoted on the national stock exchange.

These indicators are an essential basis for the systematic recording and monitoring of the existing level of gender equality in macro-economic centres of decision-making which is the starting point for implementing this kind of gender statistics and guaranteeing a significant contribution to our knowledge of women in decision-making.

II.5 Equal treatment between women and men in access to resources

In 2007, the Office for the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between men and women in access to and supply of goods and services was instituted within the Department for Equal Opportunities, according to the European Directive number 2004/113 on “*Implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services*”, through the national law number 196/2007.

The Office, which is under a General Directorate, has the main tasks of promoting, analysing, controlling and supporting the equal treatment between women and men in the access to and supply of goods and services, in particular:

- providing independent assistance to the victims of discrimination;
- promoting, respecting the prerogative of the national judicial authority, independent inquiry in order to verify the existence of cases of discrimination;
- promoting the adoption of specific measures, projects and positive actions by public and private authorities, including recognised associations;
- promotion of communication and awareness campaigns on the existing instruments on the issue of equal treatment between men and women;
- elaboration of recommendations and opinions about the current legislation on this matter;
- drafting of an annual Report to the Parliament on the effective implementation of the principle of equal treatment between men and women in access to and supply of goods and services and an annual Report to the President of the Council of Ministers on the activities implementation;

- promotion of studies, research, training courses, exchange of experiences, in collaboration with associations, NGOs, Statistical Institutes and experts in this field in order to elaborate guidelines on the fight against discrimination.

II.6 Gender stereotypes

The Department for Equal Opportunities has always demonstrated its strong condemnation of gender stereotypes and during the last few years it has coordinated and participated in several projects to combat this phenomenon which hampers women's full participation both in the economic and political sphere.

The Department for Equal Opportunities has coordinated many projects, awareness campaigns and training courses in collaboration with the major Italian Universities in order to eliminate gender stereotypes which still exist in Italy.

Gender stereotypes refer to stereotyped images and roles of women and men which are strongly rooted in the Italian culture and society and represent a strong barrier for women especially in the labour market and in decision making posts.

The Minister and the Department for Equal Opportunities are working together to achieve a *de facto* equality, respecting feminine differences and specificities as basic elements of women's role in society, facilitating them in the access to traditional exclusive male roles and also through the drafting of legislative and administrative measures that can promote a real women's empowerment.

In January 2008, the Department for Equal Opportunities promoted a public notice to fund the planning and implementation of temporary courses on gender differences in secondary public schools.

The objectives of the project are the following:

- to diffuse gender educational courses in order to develop critical skills on every other difference and to recognize as discriminatory or stereotyped every perspective that can identify historically consolidated roles with innate characteristics of the subjects;
- to promote a *gender sensitive educational system* in order to understand that the gender differences have to be considered as personal resources and not as collective categories;
- to promote the rooting of a *difference-sensitive culture*, in order to achieve a fair and conscious development of gender identities.

Another very important project which was promoted and coordinated by the Department for Equal Opportunities was the **project "Europe pour les femmes,"** which concluded in December of 2005.

The specific objectives were the following:

- identify and develop strategies, mechanisms and tools to facilitate the removal of gender stereotypes and encourage the evolution of the roles of men and women;

- encourage the media to offer an image of women and men that respects human dignity and promotes equality between men and women;
- support the increased presence of women in decision-making posts in politics, finances and economics, fighting gender stereotypes that represent a negative barrier.

II.7 Gender based violence

The Minister and the Department for Equal Opportunities promoted and carried out new studies, surveys and specific bodies to monitor the national situation on gender based violence, which have made it possible to analyse this phenomenon and create new legislative provisions on this matter.

As far as the legislative measures on violence are concerned, the Italian Government has approved the law number 38 on 23rd April 2009 entitled “*Urgent measures in the field of public security and the fight against sexual violence and stalking*”.

Thanks to this law, the phenomenon of **stalking** is now recognised as a crime also in Italy.

The law, strongly promoted by the Minister for Equal Opportunities, is a strong and concrete response to this form of violence.

The law introduces new measures such as sentencing to imprisonment for 6 months to 4 years and even harsher sentencing in cases where the perpetrator is the former partner or the husband and if the crime is perpetrated against weak subjects like minors. Furthermore the victim is allowed to ask to the police commissioner an oral warning order to convince the stalker to stop perpetrating the crime.

The law also prohibits the stalker from approaching the workplace, the house and all the places frequented by the victim. It proposes measures of pre-trial detention for the more serious crimes such as sexual violence, sexual tourism, group sexual assault, child prostitution, paedo-pornography and it introduces measures that prohibit parole or a reduction in the prison sentence of the perpetrator.

The efforts to fight the crime of stalking will be strengthened by the signature of an agreement protocol between the Minister for Equal Opportunities and the Minister of Defence in collaboration with the National Police Force “Carabinieri.”

Many other initiatives such as projects and awareness raising campaigns have been constantly implemented to support the fight against violence and protect the victims.

The project entitled “**ARIANNA - The creation of the National Network against Violence**” was launched in March 2006 with the aim of creating technical/scientific support for the development of the national network on violence against women.

The project aims to realize a specific action in order to fight the phenomenon of gender based violence in the whole national territory through:

- The institution of a **National Public Utility Number – 1522** - for women victims of violence. This toll-free number was instituted to provide emergency

psychological and legal aid to victims of violence and to direct them to the existing public and private facilities for assistance. This national number is an anonymous and multi-language service, available 24 hours, which gives emergency telephonic assistance to the victims, and it encourages identification of the phenomenon of violence. This fundamental service was created more than two years ago and has received 30,354 calls as of September 2008.

- The establishment of the *National Network Against violence*. It involves public administrations, the private sector and associations, to define a common strategy and objectives;
- The signing of agreement protocols between the Department for Equal Opportunities and local authorities such as municipalities and provinces (pilot territories) in order to create targeted actions for women victims of violence. The pilot territories involve centres against violence, shelters for victims of violence, women's associations, social services, health services, courts of justice and the educational services, in the local network;
- Monitoring of the activities of the pilot territories;
- The website *www.antiviolenzadonna.it* which represents the fundamental medium for the dissemination of good practices, experiences and models of intervention.

In order to reinforce the service offered by the 1522 number and the future adoption of the national action plan and also considering the new penal crime of stalking, the Minister for Equal Opportunities signed a *Memorandum of Understanding* with the Minister of the Interior on July 6, 2009, which aims to:

- a) create synergies between the toll-free 1522 number and the police forces which deal with victims of violence;
- b) create training courses for police forces in order to uniformly assist victims of violence;
- c) increase awareness of women and children on this issue through the school system and the organization of self-defence courses;
- d) develop a project to collect and share quantitative and qualitative data on this phenomenon,
- e) disseminate the available services of prevention and contrast of gender based violence, including sexual violence, through the creation of a *web site*.

Between 2008 and 2009, the Department for Equal Opportunities published two public notices for projects which aim to foster measures of prevention and contrast against violence in general, in order to create local networks between public and social- private players to define strategies, actions and integrated multi-disciplinary and inter-sector interventions.

An awareness raising campaign on violence against women was launched by the Department for Equal Opportunities on the occasion of the 2006 International Day of Violence Against Women.

The main message of the campaign is clear in the slogan "*it was the champagne cork*" written under an image of a woman with a "black eye" after being beaten. The slogan shows how very often women try to hide violence, so the campaign aims to change this

attitude, affirming that “*stopping violence is easier than hiding it*” and “*violence against women does not have any excuses*”. The campaign has been broadcast by all the main media (TV, radio and newspapers) and it has also great visibility for promoting the national toll-free 1522 number to denounce the violence towards women that too often is hidden.

Another very important initiative was the establishment a National Observatory on Violence against Women, through the 2007 financial law, with the scope of not only creating a link among local administrations, centres against violence and field experts, but also monitoring all the activities implemented by the administrations to contrast gender based violence.

On 8th March 2009, on the occasion of International women’s Day, the Minister for Equal Opportunities launched a new awareness raising campaign against violence entitled “*1522, time to react*”. During the spot, a clock is marking time, but only when the writing “1522” appears, an out-field voice says that it’s now time to react against violence towards women and exactly in that moment a woman, the spot’s protagonist, stands up and, metaphorically, decides to ask for help. The new campaign is broadcast by all the media such as television, internet and press.

Violence against women is invisible in most countries. Police statistics record only a few cases of violence, as women do not report them. Conducting a survey on violence against women is the only way to know the incidence and prevalence of the various form of violence, to know their dynamics and how they associate with each other, their risk factors and their authors. Data based on reports to police would provide a very biased assessment and the consequences are strong biases of the people’s thoughts about what violence against women is today.

In 2006, the National Statistics Institute (ISTAT) presented the results of a new survey, for the first time fully dedicated to physical and sexual violence against women.

The survey¹³ was conducted on a sample which includes 25,000 women aged between 16 and 70, living in the whole national territory, who were interviewed by telephone in the period from January to October 2006.

The survey represents the result of a partnership between ISTAT, the Institute that conducted the survey, and the Minister and the Department for Equal Opportunities that provided financial support with funds from the National Operative Program “Safety” and ‘system actions’ of the European Social Fund.

The survey on women’s safety gives a measure of three different types of violence against women: physical, sexual and psychological violence, inside the family (from partner or ex-partner) and outside the family (from an unknown person, acquaintances, a friend, a colleague, a family friend, a relative etc.). Physical violence is ranked from the less to the most serious: the threat of being physically hit, pushed, grabbed or yanked, knocked with an object, slapped, kicked, punched or bitten, victim of an attempted strangulation, of a choking, burning and threats with weapons.

¹³ Survey on “Violence and abuse against women inside and outside the family”, ISTAT 2006.

As for sexual violence, it is intended for all situations in which women are forced to do or suffer sexual acts of different natures, against their own will, such as rape, attempted rape, sexual physical harassment, sexual intercourse with a third party, undesired sexual intercourse, endured for fear of consequences, degrading and humiliating sexual activities. Verbal harassment, shadowing, acts of exhibitionism and indecent telephone calls are not surveyed. Psychological violence includes denigration, behaviour control, segregation strategies, intimidation, heavy financial restraint.

The main results of the survey are the following¹⁴ :

Six million 743 thousand women, between 16 and 70 years of age, are estimated as victims of physical or sexual violence during their lifetime (31.9% of women in the considered age group). 5 million women were victims of sexual violence (23.7%), 3 million 961 thousand women were victims of physically violent acts (18,8%). About 1 million women were victims of rape or attempted rape (4.8%). 14,3% of women in a current relationship or in a previous one, were victims of at least one episode of physical or sexual violence by their partner; considering only women with an ex-partner, the percentage rises to 17.3%. 24.7% of women were victims of violent acts by another man. While physical violence is more frequently perpetrated by partners (12% against 9.8%), the opposite happens for sexual violence (6.1% against 20.4%), and this is mainly due to sexual harassment. The difference, indeed, is almost negligible as far as rape and attempted rape is concerned.

In the last 12 months, 1 million 150 thousand women (5.4%) were victims of violence. The highest rates are observed among young women between 16 and 24 (16.3%) and between 25 and 34 (7.9%). 3.5% of women were victims of sexual violence and 2.7% of physical violence. 0.3%, 74 thousand women, were victims of rape or attempted rape. Domestic violence affected 2.4% of women, while violence outside the domestic context reached 3.4%.

In almost all cases, violence is not reported to the police. The hidden part of violence is very high and it reaches 96% of violent acts by non-partners and 93% by partners. Even in the case of rape almost all of them (91.6%) are not reported to the police. The share of women not talking with anyone about the violence endured is substantial (33.9% among violence at the hands of a partner and 24% by a non-partner).

Women are victims of different forms of violence. A third of the victims suffer from both physical and sexual violence. The majority of the victims suffer from several violence episodes. Repeated violence occurs more frequently when the abuser is a partner than when they are a non-partner (67.1% against 52.9%). Among all the physical forms of investigated violence, the most frequent are being pushed, yanked and grabbed, having an arm twisted or hair pulled (56.7%), the threat of being hit (52.0%), slapped, kicked or bitten (36.1%). It follows the use or the threat to use a pistol or knives (8.1%) or the attempted strangulation or choking and burning (5.3%). Among all the forms of sexual violence, the most widespread are physical harassment, being sexually touched against

¹⁴ Survey on "Violence and abuses against women inside and outside family", ISTAT 2006.

one's own will (79.5%), undesired sexual intercourse felt as violence (19.0%), attempted rape (14.0%), rape (9.6%) and degrading and humiliating sexual intercourse (6.1%).

Partners are responsible for the largest part of rapes: 21% of victims suffered violence both in and outside their family, 22.6% only by the partner, 56.4% only by men other than their partner. Partners are responsible for the highest share among all forms of physical violence investigated. Partners are responsible, in a larger extent, also for some kind of sexual violence such as rape and undesired sexual intercourse, endured for fear of consequences. 69.7% of rapes, indeed, are perpetrated by partners, 17.4% by an acquaintance. Only in 6.2% of the cases the abuser is an unknown person. The closer the relationship between perpetrator and victim, the higher the risk of rape, instead of attempted rape. Unknown persons are, above all, authors of physical sexual harassment, followed by acquaintances, colleagues and friends. Unknown persons are perpetrators of rape, only in 0.9% of the cases and perpetrators of attempted rape in 3.6% of the cases, against respectively 11.4% and 9.1% among the partners.

Women with a partner, who is violent also outside the family, are generally more affected by domestic violence. A higher percentage of women report that they have been victim of violence among those with a current partner who is physically violent outside the family (35.6% against 6.5%) or verbally violent outside the family (25.7% against 5.3%); who berates them or does not consider them in daily life (violence rate of 35.9% against 5.7%); who drinks until he is drunk (18.7% against 6.4%) in particular if he gets drunk every day (38.6%) or one or more times per week (38.3%); used to his father beating his wife (30% against 6%) or who in his turn suffered abuse from his own parents. The share of men who use violence against their partners is 30% among those who watched violence acts perpetrated in their family of origin, 34.8% among those who were victims of violence by their father, 42.4% among men who suffered violence by their mothers and 6% among those who were not victims or were not witnesses to acts of violence in their family of origin.

Domestic violence acts are for the most part serious. 34.5% of women reported that they were victims of a very serious violent incident and 29.7% of them declared it was sufficiently serious. 21.3% of women felt her own life was in danger when the violence was perpetrated; but only 18.2% of them consider the domestic violence as a crime. 44% consider it as something wrong and 36% only something that happened. Even in the case of rape or attempted rape, only 26.5% of women considered it a crime. 27.2% of women suffered from injuries as a consequence of the violence. These injuries in 24.1% of cases were so serious that it was necessary to seek medical treatment.

Women who were victims of several episodes of violence perpetrated by their partners, in almost half of the cases, suffered from, as consequences of the violence, a lack of self-esteem and self-confidence, a sensation of impotence (44.9%), sleep disorders (41.5%), anxiety (37.4%), depression (35.1%), difficulty in concentration (24.3%), recurrent pains in different parts of their body (18.5%), difficulty in managing children (14.3%), suicide fantasies and self-punishment (12.3%). Violence perpetrated by a non-partner is perceived as less serious in comparison with that perpetrated by the partner.

Two million 77 thousand women were stalked by partners at the moment of separation or after they split up and were particularly frightened by this (18.8%). Among women who suffered stalking, in particular, 68.5% of partners tried to talk to the woman in a nagging way, against her will, 61.8% repeatedly asked for an appointment to meet her, 57% was waiting for her outside home or at school or at a work place, 55.4% sent messages, phone calls, e-mail, mail or undesired presents, 40.8% followed her or spied on her and 11% adopted other kinds of strategies. Almost 50% of women who were victims of physical or sexual violence from a previous partner, have endured stalking by the same partner, in other words, 937 thousand women. One million 139 thousand women, on the contrary, were only victims of stalking with neither physical nor sexual violence.

Seven million 134 thousand women were or are victims of psychological violence : the most widespread forms are: isolation and attempted isolation (46.7%), control (40.7%), financial violence (30.7%) and berating (23.8%), followed by intimidation (7.8%). 43.2% of women were victims of psychological violence by their current partner; among them, 3 million 477 thousand have always or often suffered this kind of violence (21.1%). 6 million 92 thousand women were only victims of psychological violence by their current partner (36.9% of women living in a couple). 1 million 42 thousand women were also victims of physical or sexual violence, 90.5% among the victims of physical or sexual violence.

1 million 400 thousand women were victims of sexual violence before they were 16, 6.6% of women aged 16-70. Perpetrators of violence are different and most of them known by the victim. Only in 24.8% of cases, was violence perpetrated by an unknown person. A fourth of women reported that the perpetrator was an acquaintance (24.7%), another fourth a relative (23.8%), 9.7% a family friend, 5.3% a friend of the woman herself. Among relatives, perpetrators are more frequently uncles. Silence has been the most frequent response. 53% of women declared that they kept silence about the event. 690 thousand women were victims of repeated violence by partners and they had children at the moment of the violence. 62.4% declared that their own children were present during one or more episodes of violence. In 19.6% of the cases women reported that the children were present rarely, in 20.2% of the cases sometimes, and in 22.6% of the cases often present.

II.8 The protection of human rights of women and female children

Measures against trafficking of human beings

According to article 18 of the legislative decree number 289/98, from 2000 to 2008, the Department for Equal Opportunities published nine public notices to finance projects of assistance and social integration of the victims of human trafficking and exploitation and has co-financed 533 projects in the whole national territory. Through these projects, special permits to stay, established by the legislative decree, will be given.

Moreover, the provisions of the law number 228/2003, article number 13, establish a special Fund to realize assistance programs that can guarantee, if only temporarily, food, accommodation and assistance for the victims of human trafficking and slavery.

From August 2006 to August 2008, the Department for Equal Opportunities published three public notices to allocate funds for projects to realize the above-mentioned activities and it has co-financed another 49 programs.

The **national anti-trafficking toll-free number 800 290 290** is one of the most important initiatives created by the Department for Equal Opportunities to give social protection to trafficking victims- Since January 2007 the toll-free number has also given assistance and information to all the victims of job trafficking, and not only to victims of sexual exploitation.

Furthermore it is important to underline two important initiatives financed by the Department for Equal Opportunities from 2000 to 2005:

- a project coordinated by the Ministry of Justice for the national monitoring of the activities and results of reports against traffickers, with the support of the Research centre on the trans-national crimes (*Transcrime*) of the Department of Law at the University of Trento;
- a project coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on assisted voluntary repatriation and re-integration of women, victims of trafficking, to their country of origin.

National Observatory on the Trafficking of Human Beings

The trafficking of human beings is a serious, unacceptable violation of fundamental human rights. Dealing with the problem means using incisive interwoven strategies of prevention, protection and national and transnational opposition. Two main principles must inform such strategies: an approach of protection and promotion of human rights and a multidisciplinary and integrated approach.

As the traffic of human beings is extremely complex and continually evolving, we believe that it is fundamental to support the legislation, policies and measures with tools for observing and monitoring the phenomenon and actions that can supply an up-to-date and thorough interpretation and consequently contribute to the programming.

In this light, the Department for Equal Opportunities has instituted (ministerial Decree of June 20 2007) the Observatory on the trafficking of human beings. Its task is to develop tools for monitoring and analysing the phenomenon of trafficking and that which gravitates directly around it, both in terms of services and projects.

The Observatory will perform the following tasks:

- Development of tools for monitoring and analysing the phenomenon of the trafficking of human beings;
- Development of tools for monitoring measures implemented under the projects financed in compliance with article 18 legislative Decree 286/98 and article 13 of the law 228/2003;

- Development of tools for monitoring activities involving the national toll free number to report trafficking;
- Collection, processing and interpretation of data and formulation of estimates;
- Development and implementation of an information system that streamlines the gathering, interpretation and processing of data concerning the phenomenon, fully respecting the laws on the guarantee of privacy about sensitive information;
- Research and study projects on the phenomenon of human trafficking at a national and international level.

These are support actions for the activities carried out by the interministerial commission for the support of victims of trafficking, violence and serious exploitation.

To activate the Observatory, the Department for Equal Opportunities felt it necessary to take advantage of outside expertise and skills, and for this reason a European tender was called. For this reason, based on the objectives of the Observatory, the expertise Service will target its activities at:

- gathering quantitative and qualitative data on the phenomenon, by:
- Gathering and processing of data resulting from specific interventions for the protection of victims of trafficking (projects article 18 and article 13, toll free number);
- Gathering and organization of data autonomously produced by different sources, particularly by the various Ministries and national institutions;
- Data collection and estimation on trafficking, using data from subjects working in the field (bodies that implement social measures in prostitution, begging, protection of minors, labour inspection, trade unions etc.)
- Collection and processing of estimates using available data and integrating it through qualitative analysis with that of the subjects involved in acting against the phenomenon (law enforcement, various institutions, services system);
- research on qualitative quantitative aspects of the phenomenon, with special attention to the newest trends;
- Regulation and legislation (international, national, regional and local) complete and updated;
- Collection of updated legal material on the subject;
- Collection of studies, documents and reflections on the policies;
- Database on the system of measures, the subjects involved, the professionalism developed (at national and international levels);
- Collection, organization and development of best practices;
- Repertory of data collection methods on trafficking and the measures, the methods used, available processing techniques, data still to be collected.

National Ombudsman for Childhood and Adolescence

The Council of Ministers has recently approved a draft bill which introduces the National Ombudsman for Childhood and Adolescence.

The draft bill provides, in particular, for the establishment of a figure that could specifically guarantee information, investigations and controls to protect minors' rights and needs, as established by the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights at Strasbourg on the 25th of January 1996 and ratified with the national law number 77 on March 20, 2003.

The establishment of the Ombudsman for Childhood and Adolescence is not only an important step in the field of protection of childhood and adolescence for the Italian legislation, but it also meets European requirements.

In the academic year 2009-2010, the Department for Equal Opportunities also implemented a **Level II Master Degree in “Abuse and sexual abuse of minors: the phenomenon, protection, intervention”** at the Department of Education of the University of Salerno. The Master's programme is to provide a specialization for professionals who in the course of their working experience, because of their profession, could come into contact with children and or adolescents who are victims of abuse and sexual abuse.

Specifically, this Master's programme trains the professional to become an expert in evaluating the trauma, and will operate in various spheres: legal, educational and psychological.

The Master will be subdivided into thematic modules primarily centred on such themes as abuse of minors, and will involve participation of Italian and foreign university professors and expert psychologists, jurists, doctors, social workers and pedagogists.

Ethnic minorities

With specific reference to Romany women, the Department for Equal Opportunities has sponsored a research project entitled "**Gender Identity and the life prospects of Romany women**" in collaboration with the Foundation "Lelio e Lisli Basso".

The research aims to outline a knowledge framework on Romany women's living conditions in the areas of gender identity, individual and collective perspective of life, both within the equipped camps and spontaneous settlements.

The overall objective of the research is divided into the following specific objectives: analysis of the current legislation on the topic, analysis of any existing form of discrimination, ways of social interaction prospected by the current rules, analysis of women's condition in terms of gender differences and critical points such as the protection of health, particularly mothers and children's health, risks of coercion and exploitation.

II.9 Women and armed conflicts

Taking into consideration the **United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 /2000 on “Women, Peace and Security,”** an inter-ministerial working group was instituted with the aim of drafting a National Action Plan on *Women, Peace and Security*.

The Department for Equal Opportunities is one of the national authorities involved in the working group which is coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Plan will aim to achieve the following objectives:

1. to strengthen women's participation in peace missions and in peace missions' decision-making bodies;
2. to promote the inclusion of the gender perspective in all peace-building activities;
3. to ensure specific training for personnel participating in peace operations, on matters of equality and about the different aspects of the Resolution 1325, promoting and disseminating this Resolution;
4. to protect women and girls' human rights in conflict and post-conflict areas (including camps for refugees and displaced persons) and to foster women's empowerment and participation in the processes where peace agreements are negotiated and applied;
5. to incorporate the principle of equal treatment and opportunities for women and men in the planning and execution of activities for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), as well as specialised vocational training addressed to the personnel participating in these processes;
6. to foster awareness raising initiatives and the participation of civil society.

Part III

Institutional mechanisms

The Minister for Equal opportunities

The institutional figure of the Minister for Equal Opportunities was created in 1996. Since 1997, the Minister has been flanked by the Department for Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. The department has the task of promoting and coordinating equal opportunity policies and government actions aimed at preventing and eliminating discrimination.

In the President of the Council's delegation to the Minister for Equal Opportunities, the following tasks are included. To promote the culture of equal rights and opportunity in the information and communication sector with special reference to some rights for women, including those of assisted procreation; to promote and coordinate government Actions aimed at ensuring the full implementation of policies for equal opportunity between men and women in enterprise and in employment; to verify the impact of gender in all the government initiatives; to highlight gender in data from the public administration budget and data pertinent to statistical surveys and research; to coordinate, also in international and community headquarters, government policies for the protection of human rights of women, with particular reference to the objectives indicated in the Beijing Platform of Actions , in agreement with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the entire government.

Thanks to the tasks assigned to the present Minister Honourable Maria Rosaria Carfagna, with the Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers of June 13, 2008, the area of responsibility in the mandate of the Minister for Equal Opportunities was expanded in agreement with the instructions from the international community and the European Union adopted since 2002. Following this expansion of competence, the mandate of the Minister for Equal Opportunities is focused not only on gender equality and the fight against discrimination, but in the wider field, on the promotion of human rights in general.

In particular, the Minister for Equal Opportunities, in relation to the mentioned Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers, was delegated to promote and coordinate government actions aimed at ensuring the implementation of gender rights and equal opportunity with reference to health, research, school and education, environment, family, employment, elected positions and gender representation.

The Minister is also responsible for the prevention and elimination of every form of discrimination for all the factors provided for in the Founding Treaty of the European Community, also presiding over the Committee of Ministers for the strategic guidelines for the protection of human rights at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, with the duties set out by the Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers (D.P.C.M) of 13/04/07, in which the Ministers or the delegated authorities take part as well, and

equality organizations, in relation to their interconnection problems with the immigration phenomenon.

The duties that have always been part of the Ministry's institutional mission are those of promoting and coordinating government actions with the scope of guaranteeing full implementation of policies in the sector of equal opportunity between men and women, in enterprise and in jobs, to examine gender impact in every initiative undertaken by the government, to highlight gender perspectives in data related to the public administration budget and in that data that refers to statistical research, to promote the culture of rights, especially the rights of women, and equal opportunity in the fields of information and communication.

The Minister for Equal Opportunities also has the task of adopting specific initiatives necessary for programming, guiding, coordinating and monitoring the European Structural Funds, taking into consideration the integration of equal opportunity and the gender perspective in community policies.

The direct consequence of assigning tasks involving human rights also implies the promotion and coordination of government actions to fight the exploitation and trafficking of human beings, violence towards women as well as the violation of fundamental rights to physical integrity and health for women and female children.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the Minister for Equal Opportunities coordinates the public administration activities for prevention, social assistance and legal assistance, protection of minors from exploitation and sexual abuse, pursuant to the law number 298/98, as well as those related to fight against paedophilia and child-pornography, as provided by the law 38/2006. She finally coordinates and promotes, in agreement with the Undersecretary of State responsible for family policies, government policies to support conciliation of working schedules and family care schedules.

Department for Equal Opportunities - Presidency of the Council of Ministers

The Department for Equal Opportunities, which was set up by the Prime Minister's Decree number 405/1997, is the institutional structure of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers responsible for the coordination of the policies of equal opportunities and the government's actions to prevent and remove any form of discrimination.

The Department for Equal Opportunities, which is chaired by the **Chief of the Department**, is structured in three main Offices:

- **the Office for interventions in the economic and social field;**
- **the Office for intervention for equality and equal opportunities;**
- **the National Office against racial discrimination.**

The **Office for intervention in the economic and social field** coordinates and monitors actions related to the community planning, the European structural funds for equal opportunities activities and the community thematic funds.

The Office contributes to developing national positions in the European legislative process and to adapting the Italian legal order according to the provisions set up by the European Union.

The Office coordinates international relations among all the Offices of the Department for Equal Opportunities and the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), other European and international organizations and all the foreign competent bodies for equal opportunities issues. It also coordinates all the actions to fight trafficking of human beings and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation.

The **Office for intervention for equality and equal opportunities** coordinates the planning, management and monitoring of all the initiatives related to equal opportunities which are financed by national resources.

The Office coordinates the initiatives related to equal opportunities between men and women and directs the relationships between the Department for Equal Opportunities and all the national bodies and committees for gender equality and equal opportunities. It also coordinates all the initiatives regarding prevention, care and protection of minors from sexual and labour exploitation, the fight against paedophilia and paedo-pornography. The Office also coordinates initiatives related to female entrepreneurship and the fight against discrimination based on disability. It also promotes and controls the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services.

The **National Office against racial discrimination** (UNAR) has a singular structure, since it was established with the legislative decree number 215 of 2003, according to the community directive number 43/2000 whose aim is to create an institutional reference point to control the efficiency of instruments of protection against any form of discrimination based on race or ethnical origin.

The Office's objective is to guarantee, in complete autonomy and impartiality, the effectiveness of the principle of equal treatment, to control the functioning of the protection instruments against discrimination and to remove any form of discrimination based on race and ethnic origin, through the analysis of their different impact and interaction on gender issues and other form of discrimination based on religion and culture.

The Office receives claims from people who have been discriminated against, also through a *call centre*, and it assists them in bringing their cases to the Court of Justice, if necessary.

Another important purpose of the UNAR is the organization of awareness raising campaigns against discrimination and the promotion of studies, research and vocational training courses to create strategies to eliminate any form of discrimination.

Other structures

Inter-ministerial Commission to support victims of trafficking, violence and severe exploitation

The Commission's main tasks are to manage, control and plan resources for any programs of social assistance, integration, first aid, which are implemented by local

authorities or private subjects co-financed by the State, as established by article 18 of the legislative decree 286/1998 and article 13 of the law 228/2003 of the current legislation which protects victims of human trafficking and exploitation.

National Commission for equal opportunities between women and men

The National Commission, governed by article 3 of the legislative decree number 198/2006, is a consultative body that gives assistance and technical-scientific support to the Minister for Equal Opportunities, who is the President of the Commission, in the drafting and elaboration of any policies for equal opportunities between men and women.

In particular the Commission:

- formulates proposals to the Minister in order to modify the current legislation and remove any form of discrimination against women, both direct and indirect, and to introduce the principle of equal opportunity between men and women in the Italian legal order, also giving useful information, documentation, technical and statistical data which are necessary for the drafting of laws;
- coordinates collection, analysis and elaboration of data, in order to control the implementation of policies for equal opportunities in different fields such as political, economical and social life and to suggest any necessary initiatives;
- drafts a yearly report addressed to the Minister on the implementation of equal opportunities policies;
- carries out studies and research on the issue of equal opportunities between women and men.

Observatory against children's sexual abuse and child pornography

The Observatory was established by the law number 38 of February 6, 2006.

The main task of the Observatory is to gather and monitor data and information about the activities which have been carried on by public administrations to prevent and eliminate child abuse and sexual exploitation, both at the national and international level.

The Observatory's objective is to create a database to collect, together with the data provided by other administrations, any information related to cases of abuse and sexual exploitation of children in Italy or perpetrated by Italians abroad.

The database aims not only to monitor the phenomenon of child abuse, sexual exploitation and paedo-pornography but also to remove the focus from the perpetrator to the victim, trying to determine in depth the systems of protection for children, during the process and how the victim is helped to overcome his/her trauma.

Commission for preventing and opposing female genital mutilation

Thanks to the law number 7/2006 entitled “*Provisions regarding prevention and prohibition of practices of female genital mutilation*”, the Italian legal system has been provided with the necessary measures to prevent, combat and eliminate any practices of female genital mutilation as a violation of fundamental rights of the integrity of the human being and of women and girls’ health.

The Department for Equal Opportunities has instituted a Commission which is specifically devoted to implementing the provisions of the law number 7/2006, whose activities are also to provide any measures of prevention, as established by article 3, paragraph.2 of the above-mentioned law.

The Commission for preventing and opposing female genital mutilation, which is chaired by the Minister for Equal Opportunities, has been recently re-established (ministerial decree of June 9, 2009).

Committee for female entrepreneurship

The Committee’s task is to coordinate and plan any interventions on female entrepreneurship, according to the legislative decree number 198/2006 (article 52 and further articles, see the mentioned Code for Equal Opportunities).

It also promotes studies, research and documentation on women entrepreneurs.

National Equality Advisory

For the promotion of equal opportunity and gender equality in the workplace, the already mentioned Equal Opportunities Code has instituted the figure of equality advisor (a woman), working at a national, regional and provincial level in the role of public official. The equality advisor undertakes every initiative to achieve respect for the non-discrimination principle and the promotion of equal opportunity in the work environment, and plays a double role: one of promotion and one of vigilance over gender discrimination. The equality advisor is also the head of the action for judgment of cases of discrimination based on sex, and performs the following roles:

- Determining situations with gender imbalances;
- Promotion of positive action projects, through the use of community, national and local funds allotted for such purposes;
- Promotion of programming coherency in the territorial development policies, by following community, national and regional equal opportunity guidelines;
- Support of active employment policies, including training, under the heading of promotion and creation of equal opportunities;
- Promotion of the implementation of equal opportunity policies on the part of public and private subjects operating in the labour market;
- Collaboration with regional and provincial Labour Managements for the purpose of determining effective procedures for the detection of violations of

law on equality rights, equal opportunity and guarantee against discrimination, also through the planning of special training packets;

- Communication of knowledge and exchange of best practices and information and cultural training activities on problems of equal opportunity and the various forms of discrimination;
- Control of results from the positive action projects;
- Keeping relations and collaborating with the labour departments of local bodies and equality organizations of local bodies.

Provincial and regional network of Equality Women Advisors

The offices of the national, regional and provincial equality women advisors are located respectively in the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies' headquarters, in the regional and provincial governments. They are functionally autonomous, equipped with tools and personnel supplied by the reference administration. Furthermore, the equality women advisories have access to a national fund with the purpose, among other things, of financing actions of financing legal actions promoted or supported by the advisors themselves.

For assistance to victims of discrimination in the working environment the national regulations (articles 36 and 37 of the legislative Decree 198/2006) provides that male and female workers can proceed to a court action through the competent provincial equality advisor, who must first attempt to resolve the question through reconciliation measures in compliance with national contract bargaining and the civil code. The advisor, as well as directly promoting court actions as a delegate of the male or female worker, can also intervene "*ad adiuvandum*" in the legal decisions promoted by interested parties. Furthermore, Italian law appoints the regional and national equality woman counsellor with legitimation in putting forward collective court actions, where there is the existence of acts, pacts or discriminatory behaviours even where the injured parties are not directly and immediately discernible.

Having said that, it should be emphasized the promotional role of the equality woman advisor, mainly for the purposes of promoting any type of positive action projects – including those related to conciliation of living and working schedules and flexible time - ; the triennial positive action plans, with obligatory provisions for the public administrations; the promotion of active labour policies from the national level right down to the local level.

Each year, by December 31, the regional and provincial advisors, male and female, must present – as one of the conditions of their appointment – a report on the activities carried out to all the bodies that nominated them, for the evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the activities carried out.

For the purposes of strengthening the positions of the equality advisors, male and female, to allow for the exchange of information, data, experiences and best practices, and to improve the effectiveness of the action, the national Network of equality advisors was

instituted, coordinated by the national woman advisor. The organization is a point of reference and a meeting point for the advisors appointed at the regional level, and they meet at least twice a year at the convocation of and under the presidency of the national woman advisor.

The women advisors network has programmed a series of priority measures for this year:

- efficient use of European Social Fund resources and the PROGRESS programme;
- monitoring of negotiations related to the European Parliament and Council directive regarding the implementation of the principle of equal opportunity and equality of treatment between men and women in employment and jobs, the directive regarding the definition of standards for the protection of “maternity,” the European Parliament and Council directive regarding the principle of equality of treatment between men and women who work autonomously in their own enterprises, and incorporation of the directive 2006/54 following the sentence by the Court of Justice of 2008 on the subject of pensions of Italian government employees;
- support for integration in collective bargaining and the spread of company best practices that favour equal opportunity.

The governance system adopted by the Italian government in the concertation dialogue with labour and management on equal opportunity policies should also be considered.

In particular, the Italian government, through that dialogue, enhances the institutional equality organizations, the public research bodies, the private research bodies of international renown aimed at gender studies, and finally the universities

The above mentioned relations and dialogue take place through systematic collaboration, groups and work seminars, in every national, community and international headquarter.

The favoured themes for comparison are employment and wage policy, welfare system contracts, social protection, flexsecurity, all for the purposes of reducing gender inequality.

Another tool to encourage partnership in government relations are the industrial relations aimed at spreading company best practices to guarantee equal opportunity in the working world (wage gender gap, gender budget, organizational models, etc.).

Lastly, it should be remembered that the Italian government usually involves all the associations and social partners in drafting the strategy and monitoring reports at the community and international levels (Lisbon Strategy, CEDAW Convention, etc.).

Finally, the Italian government adopts the indications of the 98th session of the International Labour Conference., which are contained in the Report- *Gender equality at the heart of decent work* related to the use of social dialogue as a favoured tool for the use of gender policies aimed at supporting female employment, guaranteeing career progress, fostering self employment and entrepreneurship.

National Council of Economics and Labour – Working Group on gender equality

The National Council of Economics and Labour (CNEL) was established by article 99 of the Italian Constitution as an advisory body for the Parliament, the Government and Regions, in matters concerning economic and labour policies and strategies.

The CNEL can present draft laws as well as contribute to the elaboration of economic and social legislation.

Under the CNEL's 2nd Commission (Labour Policies' Commission), a **working group on Gender Equality** was established, whose members are councillors from different Commissions and experts from the largest trade unions, enterprise organizations and the third sector.

The mission of the Group is to suggest to the Parliament and Government specific legislative and political measures to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. According to this purpose, in June 2008, the Group drafted a proposal of law on *gender oriented statistics* and asked the Parliament to discuss and approve it.

Furthermore, since 2004 the Group has taken part, as a member of the Italian National delegation, in the sessions of the United Nation Commission on the status of Women (CSW).

After the last session, the national delegation, lead by the Minister for Equal Opportunities and consisting of several members from the central government, created a network to continue monitoring and promoting gender equality – in the area of national policies, strategies and action plans - trying to enhance its participation in decision-making processes.

The CNEL's Gender Equality Group recently launched a research project on “Female employment in the third sector” to examine the quantitative data available, the contribution of this sector to the Italian economy, the critical areas and the difficulties for women who are working in this sector.

Part IV

Remaining challenges and actions to be addressed in the next five years

Further actions and initiatives which the Government intends to take to fully implement the Platform for Action and outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly beyond 2010

The Minister for Equal Opportunities is strongly committed both at the political and institutional level to supporting and achieving the implementation of the principles established in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action, elaborating and addressing important strategic interventions to be undertaken in the next few years with the main objective of improving women's status in the country.

In this field and according to the targets of the Lisbon Strategy which also establishes the achievement of a female employment rate equal to 60% within 2010, the Minister for Equal Opportunities, during her mandate, intends to focus heavily on all actions of economic, social and political impact for the country, such as concrete measures to increase women's employment and improving their reconciliation in working, private and family life.

In addition to these measures, the Minister for Equal Opportunities confirms her commitment to the promotion of policies to affirm women's role in social and political high level positions, eliminate any form of discrimination and violence against women and oppose the phenomena of female genital mutilation and trafficking of human beings.

As far as the issue of reconciliation between work and family life is concerned, as previously mentioned and described, the Minister for Equal Opportunities intends to draft a **national Plan for reconciliation between work and family life**, where new provisions on welfare will be considered, and impetus to the growth of Italian economy, offering a range of measures to favour a greater flexibility of work and family time, according to the European standards.

Through this new occupational logic, it is also necessary to promote the strengthening of care services with programmes of re-professionalization of women - workers entering the labour market after years of absence devoted to family and children care.

Moreover, the possibility of establishing a National Fund for reconciliation to finance interventions at national, regional and local level to develop work and family time, is under analysis.

Other provisions in this field regard the creation of the so-called *tagesmutter*, a kind of condominium kindergarten, as a new service for families with children.

Another priority in the current political agenda of the Minister for Equal Opportunities is the **fight against any form of violence against women** which will be focused on

interventions to identify better instruments to guarantee the necessary support to women victims of violence.

In particular, the intention is to deeply analyse the methods which have already been tested by the centres against violence of the National Network against Violence and the strengthening of operational instruments of the law decree number 11 of February 23, 2009 which introduced the crime of stalking into Italian legislation.

The following main strategic objectives will be considered:

- comparative analysis of methods of identification, survey and intervention, which have been tested by the centres of the National Network against Violence, to psychologically and socially support women victims of domestic violence;
- enlargement and adjustment of the toll-free number against violence “1522” to support women victims of violence and persecution acts (stalking).

During her speech at the United Nations in March of 2009, the Minister for Equal Opportunities, Hon. Maria Rosaria Carfagna, also announced the intention to develop, as mentioned before, a **National Plan to oppose any form of violence, including domestic violence**. Last April the Minister for Equal Opportunities promoted a meeting with the Centres against violence from the whole national territory in order to have a real and proactive comparison and acquire useful elements for the drafting of the above-mentioned Plan.

Another priority intervention will be the **prevention and fight against female genital mutilation (FGM)**, a practice which is still widely diffused all over the world.

It is the Minister’s intention to develop the knowledge of this phenomenon and the awareness of social, health and educational operators will be developed so that they can prevent and protect women and girls who are living in our country from countries in which FGM practice is widespread. In particular, through adequate funding, local research projects aimed at the analysis and mapping of the phenomenon at a national level will be supported, together with the organization of institutional information campaigns to promote the national law number 7 / 2006 on the fight against FGM.

The awareness raising campaigns will be directed at not only civil society, but mainly to the communities of immigrants coming from countries where such practices are widespread, in order to develop a socio-cultural integration respecting the fundamental human rights, particularly of women and girls. Great attention will be given to training courses addressing health and school operators, with the collaboration of experienced experts in the field of cultural mediation, to prevent FGM and diffuse women and girls’ rights.

Another important priority in the Minister’s agenda is represented by the actions to combat trafficking in human beings and smuggling of immigrants, since they mainly affect women and children.

The aim is to combat this modern form of slavery through several objectives: in addition to training initiatives, awareness raising and communication projects on the different

types of exploitation (sexual, labour, begging, etc.) to improve the capacity of intervention both of institutional players and the private-social sector are involved in the fight against trafficking, many other initiatives will be undertaken in order to implement, at the community level, a trans-national system of cooperation to protect victims of trafficking, as well as actions to promote communication and information both in the countries of origin and destination of the victims.

Moreover the principle of **equal opportunities in the institutions and in the labour market** will be reinforced in order to increase women's active participation in the strategic sectors of development of the country.

The Minister for Equal Opportunities will be committed to fostering the drafting of policies to diffuse the culture of gender equality, the elimination of gender stereotypes, the promotion of women's advancement in the labour market and their participation in the political and social life of the country, including training initiatives directed at university students, university staff and women in general.

According to the implementation of the Directive of May 23, 2007 entitled "Measures to implement equality and equal opportunities between women and men in public administrations," the Minister for Equal Opportunities also intends to promote women's professional development both in public administrations and private sectors where phenomena such as precariousness and flexibility of work are mostly affecting women.

Finally, the strengthening of the principle of equal opportunities, will also be pursued through the implementation of awareness raising and communication actions to promote dialogue and exchange of good practices between public administrations and, in particular, the regions of Southern Italy (the regions belonging to the Community objective "Convergence")

As far as the future priorities are concerned, the **Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies** generally consider that the objectives of a new welfare system, not only universal but also personal, must take into consideration birth rates, life expectancy, the degree of satisfaction of the demand of infancy and elderly care services, employment rates and activities for youth, women and the elderly, and the effective knowledge level of young people. The new welfare is called upon to play a decisive role in rebuilding the labour market following a logic of subsidiarity recognized by social parties, who must play, through their normal and autonomous network of relationships, an essential role in the protection of the new social rights within a bilateral approach and must acknowledge a primary role to professional training within the company context. It is necessary to determine the situations of absolute poverty requiring priority attention and solicit the help of permanent solidarity networks.

As for jobs in general, as already explained, the objectives are to simplify and deregulate as an alternative to incentives, to expand social buffers in order to create an active safety network in the employment market, training in work safety prevention, with the help and coordination of public institutions, and a strong involvement of management and labour

and bilateral bodies, a new order in relations between labour and management based on participation in negotiations especially at a local level, especially on issues of integration of social health policies and a better and more rational use of community and institutional funds.

In the field of health, the new welfare needs to be directed toward the integrity of the person, with suitable socially and medically integrated emergency services to meet the rising needs of the individual and family over the entire life cycle, and support the weakest members of society. The proposals in the Manifesto for the protection of oncological patients should be highlighted as a priority. Provisions aimed at fostering integration between services, the correct application of the law, alliances between public and private services, are other priorities.

Of those provisions to support employment for women, there are tools that encourage flexible work time, and particularly the requalification of part time, the use of parental leave to reconcile the needs of the worker and employer, the promotion of active political tools to ensure access and stability for women in the employment market. Particular weight is given to tax breaks applied to the family income and expenses – based on this method, each contributor is subject to tax on the overall family income and expenses (spouses, minors, disabled family members, cohabitants), in order to provide an advantage for larger families, on the assumption that taxing the family rather than the individuals is more appropriate. This places the family at the centre, for a model of subsidiarity.

Another provision regards company support tools that promote employment by developing new best practices, also through the use of the National Labour Fund, which makes provisions for the development of a national, integrated, public/private information system for the employment market and a credit system for virtuous companies.

The possibility of starting a plan to encourage the demand for services by families, introducing vouchers as simplified terms of payment and for services, and a tax deduction on costs, are believed to be fundamental measures.

The development of care services should be a priority (children and elderly) promoting conventions and vouchers to reconcile and share working time and private time for male and female workers, and stimulating the diversification of services involving the families, volunteer groups, non-profit organizations, to offer advanced models and support networks not only managed by the public sector. Care and assistance services for children and elderly and flexible working schedules cannot be substituted with financial or tax incentives. Furthermore, there is a need for quality certification and merit tools in business through internal regulation, to guarantee career progress, training and wage equality. It would also be possible to introduce a system of measures managed by bilateral bodies to support maternity leave, part time, and flexible time contracts. For this reason, the need for better welfare protection system is strongly felt, so to ensure greater employment flexibility for women in the more intense family care periods (maternity, childbirth, elderly parents) as well as social security coverage during those period too, by anticipating retirement age for women as a form of “compensation” ex post for the discontinuous working periods.

Analyzing the target characteristics, and the critical points in the employability of women throughout the country, allows for measures aimed at decreasing the rate of female inactivity, throughout the entire lifetime, offering orientation services, education and training, making services accessible (child care and elderly assistance) and special

infrastructures (day care centres, baby parking, day hospice services), promoting family friendly organizations and contracts for better conciliation of work and family, with incentives for the employers to increase and develop the presence of women.

It would be useful to promote a system of services for the person throughout Italy, based on the model adopted in France, which consists of the virtual circle of supply and demand of working opportunities for women, both employment requests and offers, and the system is being perfected with *Italia Lavoro* .

The tools needed to achieve these objectives are a combined mix of services designed for entering or re-entering the employment market, directed at raising the awareness of the individual of their own capacities, and the possible work– life conciliation strategies available to them; access to training and upgrading courses within the company (the need for training courses is mostly seen in women who have been out of the employment world for long periods of time, as well as women who have been inactive); the distribution of support/economic incentives for people who are actively searching for work. In particular, according to the various obstacles that need to be removed, the idea has been put forward to use incentives in differentiated forms: support for people who are actively looking for work, particularly when a woman must contribute to household expenses; “conciliation” vouchers for support services for individual workers or for the company, aimed at awarding those companies that use flexible time schedules, or that enable work- family conciliation in some way (including teleworking); bonuses to encourage the employment of jobless women or who have been unemployed for long periods; the combination of the various tools, the meeting point with different network spokespeople and the use of different types of incentives makes it possible to modulate and specify the measures to more suitably meet the needs of women, by matching their personal and subjective characteristics and their working status, or their condition in the employment market: recipients of social shock absorbers, the unemployed, occasional workers with interrupted careers, women returning to their professions.

Within a unitary framework of reference it is therefore possible to use different types and methods of intervention to meet the different needs of each target, according to their subjective condition and their situation in the employment market. For specific population targets, a more complex approach is necessary, to integrate support policies with income, active labour policies and local development policies, as well as focusing and differentiating the actions with respect to the target and the territory. Zone Plans are the suitable tool for programming and taking active measures for labour and management.

The objective is to consolidate a model and a rational and effective integrated workfare tool for general employment and particularly to help women. The ability to “create a community, with special focus on feminine issues, to develop a proactive policy and support employment for women, taking into account age and territorial differences, developing the local institutional branches and facilities and associations that operate in the employment market, working towards reorganization, streamlining and coordination of the various institutional levels, both regional and provincial. The integrated and subsidiarity policies will have to re-arrange the Employment Centres (Cpi), Employment Services (Spi), the network of intermediary and certification agencies such as universities, equality organizations with special regard for the role of equality women advisors, the bilateral bodies, the Labour Inspectorates, Italia Lavoro (Labour Italy), the National Work Fund in collaboration with the INPS database (information system for online employment

offers and requests) a tool which embodies the virtual circle of the integrated public/private employment market.”

For the future Roadmap for gender equality, the progress chart should make reference to:

- Implementation of services for the person, in the sphere of flexible welfare and based on the principle of subsidiarity between the public and private sectors (with monitoring – but not based on exclusive management – by the public sector) and on a relationship with the territory, also in response to the EU requests.
- Implementation of job prevention and safety measures and tools, with a special focus on women; as incorporated at a national level into the Single Text that, in conformity with the Community Directives, presents innovative elements in as much as for the first time focus is placed on the need to conceive a safety system that takes gender problems into account.
- Development of flexible contract policies, and tax policies that include indexes and indicators determined by the overall income of a family.
- Recognition of merit, both in the public and private sector, which inspired the project of reform on the optimization of productivity in public employment and efficiency and transparency of public administration, currently being developed by the Ministry for Public Administration and Innovation.

ⁱ As for exclusively feminine cancer diseases, the incidence of malign breast tumor was 37,302 cases in 2005, while the prevalence was 415,910 cases. The rate of disability in the female population is almost double than in the male one: 6.12% vs. 3.32%. The most frequent death causes: cardiovascular diseases (46.8%) and cancer (23.8% - where 17% is due to breast cancer).

ⁱⁱ 120 deaths in 100,000 are estimated.

ⁱⁱⁱ Article 116 of the Italian Constitution entitled “Special Forms of Autonomy”, sets forth as follows: “(1) According to their special statutes adopted by constitutional law, particular forms and conditions of autonomy are enjoyed by Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sardinia, Sicily, Southern Trentino, and the Aosta Valley. (2) The Southern Trentino region consists of the autonomous provinces Trento and Bolzano. (3) Upon the initiative of the region concerned, after consultation of local administrations, state law may assign further particular forms and conditions of autonomy to other regions according to the principles laid down in Art. 119; such forms and conditions shall concern the matters specified under Art.117, paragraph. 3, as well as the matters listed in paragraph 2 of the same article under the letters l) - with regard to the organization of the offices of the justices of the peace only -, n), and s). The law, based on an agreement between the state and the region concerned, needs the approval of the Chambers with a majority of their members.

^{iv} With sentence number 151 of April 2009, the Constitutional Court declared the following: “Law [40] admits that the protection of the embryo leaves space to the pursued goal, that of permitting recourse to a medically assisted procreation technique assuring a concrete hope of success. Now, if the aim of the law is to find a fair balance between protection of the embryo and the needs of procreation, the provision that imposes the production of only such a number of embryos as to allow for a single transplant, would be unreasonable, and however a number not exceeding three. Cryoconservation is as well prohibited, and is only permitted in case of reasons beyond our control concerning the woman’s state of health following fertilization..... Law 40 of 2004 should not have

excluded the possibility of ascertaining the many variables that accompany assisted procreation, for example, health and the age of the woman involved and the possibility that she might not produce strong embryos.”

^v Data from 2008, supplied by Center of Epidemiology

^{vi} Among other tasks assigned by the Ministry of Health to the Institute, is the particularly relevant task of ensuring assistance in regional social health facilities for the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of the main pathologies related to immigration and for the fight against diseases of poverty, in close integration with national services, the local NHSs in the regions and volunteer associations active in the area of immigration. Specialized treatment also in collaboration with the other public health facilities regard: a) prevention measures, diagnosis and treatment of patients at risk for sexually transmitted diseases; b) given the lack of preventive habits in some groups of women at risk, prevention programmes on cervical cancer (HPV and cancer of the uterine cervix); c) assistance and protection of women, minors and nomad peoples, by favouring their access to the SSR (Regional Health Service) and supplying help about how to address the regional health services. To ease access to social health services, a project was developed to provide a multidisciplinary and intercultural staff for reception, orientation, health education and support during the diagnostic therapeutic process. The multicultural staff, specially trained, made up of 25 cultural mediators, can offer consultation in the LocalNHSs, thanks to economic support from the INMP.