



BYMBE

Bringing Young Mothers back to education

REPORT ON NATIONAL EDUCATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR YOUNG MOTHERS IN ITALY

Elaborated by CESIE

February 2018

Erasmus+: KA2 – Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange
of Good Practices – Strategic Partnerships for adult education
[Agreement N° 2017-1-AT01-KA204-035007]



Co-funded by the
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Introduction

The aim of this report is to provide the reader with information regarding the Italian national education system and support services for young mothers in Italy.

The reader will be provided with an overview of Italy's education system – from primary and secondary schooling, and on to further vocational education, and higher education systems – and general information about the legal framework and structure of the education system. Afterwards, parts 2, 3 and 4 of the report will describe the main systems of childcare facilities and provide a description of the governmental and not-governmental organisations providing support to families in Sicily and in the area of Palermo.

The report provides a clear outline of the practical, social and economic difficulties an Italian young mother can meet in dealing with responsibilities of childbearing and childrearing, especially when trying to combine these responsibilities with re-entering education and present a set of perspectives on effective possibilities to access education and then the labour market.

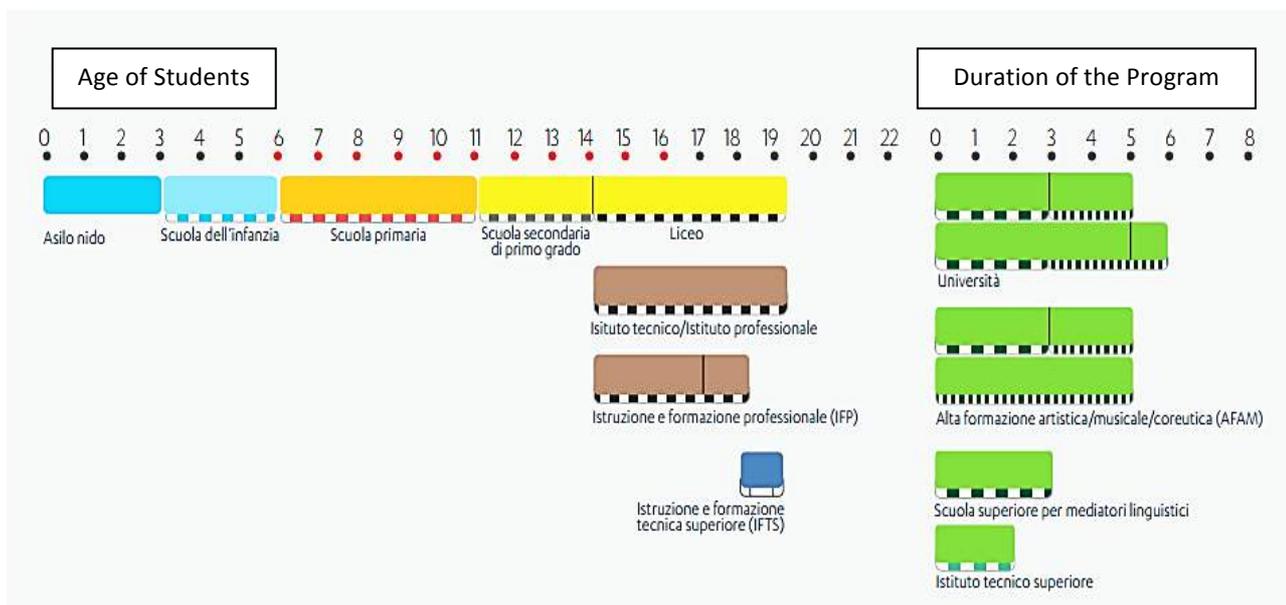
1. Education system

In Italy **all young people must attend school for a minimum of 10 years**, until they are 16 (compulsory education). Before reaching age 18 students are **required to obtain a secondary school certificate or a professional qualification awarded on completion of vocational courses of at least three years' duration** (International Standard Classification of Education – ISCED 3, European Qualifications Framework – EQF level 4); the aim is that young people should not leave education and training without at least a minimum qualification to enter the labour market.

Anyway, this obligation is certainly ambiguous. Italian law provide penalties for parents not providing education to their children, but **there are no penalties for failure to complete the compulsory schooling cycles, so the obligation of obtaining a qualification is merely a moral obligation**: as a matter of fact, students may reach the age of 16 and drop out of school with no qualifications once they have completed 10 years of continuous schooling – despite still being in the first cycle of education, or having repeated grade levels – just because the obligation to stay in education no longer exists.

That's the reason why in Italy even if **the attendance rate in primary and lower-secondary school is among the largest of any OECD country**, standing at about 100%, in upper-secondary education it drops significantly. **The early-school leavers' rate is one of the worst in Europe**: 14% of young people aged 18-24

have completed only the first-cycle of education (24% in Sicily). The share of adults with high educational attainment stands at 18%, one of the lowest of any OECD country.



1.0.1. FIRST CYCLE OF EDUCATION

First cycle of education covers the first 8 years of compulsory education. Children start formal education at the age of 6 (or 5 and a half) at the *Scuola Primaria* (Primary School, ISCED 1) – lasting 5 years – whose aim is to provide pupils with basic learning and the basic tools of active citizenship; afterward they attend the *Scuola Secondaria di Primo Grado* (First Grade or Lower Secondary School – ISCED 2) till they are 14, where they acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills to develop basic cultural competence.

At the end of the Lower Secondary School they have to be admitted and pass a State examination in order to receive the first-cycle State leaving certificate (*Diploma di licenza conclusiva del primo ciclo di istruzione*) (EQF level 1), enabling access to the second cycle of education.

1.0.2. SECOND CYCLE OF EDUCATION (ISCED 3)

Once out of the first cycle of education, young people have the opportunity to choose between general education or Vocational Education and Training.

1.0.2.1. General Upper Secondary Education

General upper secondary education provides five-years programmes directed at students aged 14 to 19 delivered by different types of *licei* (high schools) specialising in the following field of studies: art and crafts (*liceo artistico*), classical studies (*liceo classico*), math and science (*liceo scientifico*), foreign languages (*liceo linguistico*), music and dance (*liceo musicale e coreutico*), human sciences (*liceo delle scienze umane*). **General education is mostly theoretical in nature**, with less attention devoted to technical-practical

education. Work experiences have been recently included in curricula but they are a residual part of the educational programme.

By the fifth year, students are expected to have fully developed the knowledge, competences and skills acquired in the first cycle of education and reached the specific learning objectives for each branch of specialist study. The final evaluation consists in a State examination (*esame di Stato* or *esame di maturità*) which foresees written and oral tests (verifying proficiency in main language, testing of the main subjects of the programme and knowledge of the course programmes). Students who pass the examination receive a *Diploma Liceale* (EQF level 4), recognised as entrance qualification for university and upper post-secondary vocational education and a basic step for access to the labour market.

1.0.2.2. Vocational Education

Students choosing a vocational education may enrol to: State technical institutes (*istituti tecnici*), State vocational institutes (*istituti professionali*), Regional Vocational Education and Training (*istruzione e formazione professionale*).

Technical and vocational institutes offer 5-years courses aimed to provide students with competences specific of a professional sector. Organisation and student assessment and final evaluation follow mostly the same procedures as General education. Students who pass the final State examination receive a technical education diploma (*Diploma di istruzione tecnica*) or a vocational education diploma (*Diploma di istruzione professionale*) (EQF level 4).

Regional VET is addressed to 14/17-year olds who wish to enter the labour market after a short period of training, and it is organised and run by private or public vocational training agencies and upper secondary vocational institutes accredited by the Regions in agreement with the State (thus being different from a Region to another). These organisations issue a vocational qualification for a 3-year course (EQF level 3) or a vocational diploma for a 4-year course (EQF level 4).

1.0.2.3. Apprenticeship-type scheme

At the age of 15 or at the age of 18, young people can opt for an apprenticeship scheme (*apprendistato*), a special employment contract intended to promote hiring of young people between the age of 16 and 29 years old which help them to acquire a professional qualification. Within this contract, the employer (an accredited organisation) is responsible for the salary and the vocational training of a young employee in exchange for their work performance. However, especially in Southern Italy, **there are not many regular apprenticeship schemes**: the Italian economic structure, based almost entirely on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, has not fully grasped the rationale of apprenticeship, especially the fact employees are required to attend training classes held outside the enterprise in regional institutes, so,

when used, it is preferred as a mean of recruiting cheaply (since the required social security and welfare fees are rather small), with no much regards for education. Also, it rarely evolves into a permanent contract.

1.0.3. POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION (ISCED 4)

At post-secondary level, the Italian VET system features 1-year Higher Technical Training (*Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore – IFTS*) offered by institutes issuing a Higher Technical Specialisation Certificate (*Certificato di Specializzazione Tecnica Superiore*) (EQF level 4). Its development is still very uncertain and it has not managed to assert itself as an alternative to tertiary academic education, partly because of the centrality of the university.

Higher VET education is provided by Higher technical institutes (*Istituti Tecnici Superiori – ITS*), highly specialised technical schools set up to meet the demand for new and advanced competences from the labour market, particularly in the following six technological areas: energy efficiency, sustainable mobility, new technologies in life, new technologies for ‘Italian-made goods’, innovative technologies for the arts and cultural activities - tourism, ICT. They provide 2-years courses including theory lessons, laboratories and work placement and issue a Higher Technical Diploma (*Diploma di tecnico superiore*) (EQF level 5).

Regional post-secondary VET includes short-term courses lasting less than 1 year (400/600 hours including work placement) focused on specific competences or job profiles, provided by private or public vocational training agencies accredited by the Region (EQF level 4).

1.0.4. THIRD CYCLE OF EDUCATION (ISCED 5,6)

Higher education in Italy has a limited diversity of organisation due to the underdevelopment of the higher VET education. It is available to all students holding a general or vocational upper secondary school diploma (if a student attended a short secondary school program, additional years of schooling are necessary to qualify).

Current Higher Education offer in Sicily is based on the three-cycle structure of the Bologna structure (EQF level 6-7-8) and provided by:

- state and non-state universities (including polytechnics), leading to bachelor (*laurea*), master (*laurea magistrale*), specialisation and PhD (*dottorato*);
- institutes of Higher Education in Art and Music (*Alta Formazione Artistica e Musicale*), issuing *Diploma accademico di primo livello* (First level academic diploma), *Diploma accademico di secondo livello* (Second level academic diploma), specialisation and *Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca* (Academic Research Diploma).

- other providers in very specific fields issuing qualifications equivalent to those issued by universities (ex. Higher schools for language mediators).

1.1. General Information system

1.1.1. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

Despite the ongoing decentralization and privatisation process affecting most of public services, **the Italian education system is still highly regulated and managed by the State through the Ministry of Education. Standards are not uniform across the country.** Differences across Regions are particularly relevant, and there are severe inequalities and imbalances between the territories. In certain areas options and standards in education, facilities, services can be subject to decline because of socio-economic gaps and/or the different population served.

1.1.1.1. *Primary and secondary education*

School budget involve different public actors, and only a small part of all resources devoted to education is managed directly by the schools:

- the Ministry of Education provide resources to pay teaching and not-teaching staff and their training and for schools' operations and facilities;
- the Provinces (administrative units of the Regions) own the buildings of upper secondary schools, buy part of didactic instruments and furniture and are responsible for utilities;
- the municipalities cover the facilities (such as meals and transports) and – only for nursery, primary and secondary schools – are the owners of the buildings and pay for utilities;
- the Regions provide some resources and can modify the schools' articulation (such as splitting or merging schools, partially determining schools' class average dimension or size) and they can offer scholarships to students;
- European Union (by bidding projects, especially for schools located in less-developed Regions in Southern Italy);
- Families, through sort of “voluntarily based fees” requested by schools.

1.1.1.2. *Higher education*

In Italy the State has the overall co-ordination of the higher education system and its funding, so **public universities rely heavily on state funding, which is lower than other countries.** Allocation of funding has been linked to historical spending, performance in teaching and research, knowledge transfer activities, impact on the productive sector, employment rate of graduates, generating a certain competition while

putting some institutes in severe financial difficulties, forcing them to rise tuition fees and cutting on scholarships, new hiring and services for students.

1.1.2. PRIVATE EDUCATION

While State has the obligation to provide education at all levels for all types of schooling, **private schooling may be set up and offer different cultural orientation and educational teaching approach**, but they must observe the regulations applied to state schools and guarantee equal treatment for all pupils.

Those schools and institutes accepting to strictly adhere to State directives on syllabi and curricula (*scuole e istituti paritari*) may receive funding and obtain legal recognition to issue certificates with the same legal value as qualifications from State schools of the same type and level.

Apart from the price, **there is little difference between the quality of education of state and private primary and secondary schools. Nonetheless, private schools may offer certain benefits** – more emphasis on extra-curricular activities, additional lessons, caring facilities – and some private institutes are specialised in supporting drop-out students or students with a failure background in completing education and gaining an upper-secondary education leaving certificate.

Private universities and higher education provider may be established only with State recognition and authorisation and are essentially private funded. **In Higher Education, differences between public and private are striking**: not suffering from cuts in funding, private university can keep improving their standards and provide an excellent educational offer and better guidance and job placement opportunity to their students.

1.1.3. COSTS FOR STUDENTS

Compulsory education is free for all students, regardless of their nationality, gender, place of birth, socio-economical background. Once students turn 16, they start paying for enrolment, attendance, exam and final certificate. Anyway, textbooks, stationary and other necessary materials and equipment (ex. uniform for Primary School, dictionaries for ancient and foreign languages studies, equipment for Music and Dance studies or Art and Crafts studies, etc..) must be provided by the students, as well as contributions for extra educational projects (ex. workshops, school trips) or services like transport or canteen. After Primary School, whose costs are generally affordable, **costs for necessary school supplies in Secondary School (Lower and Upper) range from around 200 to 500 €/euros a year for each student.**

Exceptions can be made only for the neediest families. Every year the Sicilian region publish calls for different kind of scholarship for all students of primary and lower and upper secondary schools, which are granted to those families in greater economic disadvantage up to the limits of funds available. Besides,

specific measures have been introduced to help parents deal with the cost of textbooks: digital books, rental or free loan of textbooks, as well as partial reimbursement of costs. Anyway, in Sicily families always need to advance money and regularly wait a long time (even years) for the Region to reimburse.

In addition, students may be asked to pay an “educational contribution”, which may reach even 200 €/euros a year. It is officially “voluntary”, but because of the progressive cuts to public funding for education, most schools are in need for money to pay even the most basic products and pressure families – especially those not economically disadvantaged – to pay.

Even though university cost is relatively low compared with the ones of other European and Anglo-Saxon countries, enrolment fees for university are fixed at about 1000 Euros per year (not including books, materials, transports, exam fees), which, because of the financial situation of Italian government and cut to funding for education, are being progressively raised.

Private school fees vary according to the kind of school and the variety of services that are offered. Students pay high enrolment fees and monthly or annual fees which can reach 5000 € for primary and secondary education and more than 10000 € for higher education.

1.2. Re-entering formal education system

People aged **more than 16 not holding a first-cycle leaving certificate** cannot enter schools but need to refer to the Provincial Adult Education Centres (*Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti* – CPIA). As for **re-entering Upper Secondary Education**, despite this cycle being open to all people regardless their age, **admissions to regular day classes is at the discretion of the schools**, which, in general, tend to create classes of students of uniform age. So, people who are considered too old to fit may be asked to refer to the Provincial Adult Education Centres or attend evening classes, with other people whose situation prevents them from attending lessons regularly during the day.

Provincial Adult Education Centres are administered by certain schools and provide qualification opportunities and ease social inclusion and access to the labour market for those Italian and foreign people lacking compulsory education or wishing professional re-conversion. CPIA take charge of a great diversity of training needs, being users mainly vulnerable people “educationally at risk” of low schooling or exclusion: adults with low education, immigrants, detainees, NEETs. Anyway, there are exceptional and justified circumstances which may justify the enrolment also of students aged 15: disadvantaged teenagers and young people at high risk of early school leaving or who already school leavers, unaccompanied foreign minors.

The CPIA offer:

- primary school cultural literacy classes with final assessment,
- lower secondary school classes with State examination,
- upper secondary school classes with State examination,
- literacy courses and Italian language courses mainly addressed to foreigners.

Applications to enrol to the university system can be sent by those students holding a general upper-secondary school diploma, a technical education diploma or a vocational education diploma (EQF level 4) (students from 4-years vocational courses must attend an extra year within special courses or post-secondary education). University students who have interrupted their studies and wish to re-enter university education must pay tuition fees for the years they have not been enrolled to or special fees. The only university in Sicily providing special conditions for young mothers is the university of Messina, which give the possibility to suspend studies to one year after the child's birth.

1.3. Non-formal education opportunities

Informal and non-formal education offer in Italy include cultural amenities (libraries, museums, theatres and cinemas) as well as educational activities offered by social organisation (associations, clubs or movements) and no-profit organisations. The educational offer provided by social and no-profit organisation is too heterogeneous for a comprehensive research. Its main aims are usually related to: enhancement of skills and competences to empower people in personal development; support to stay in labour market; becoming responsible and active citizens in the community, and it is articulated through learning in groups, interactive, participatory and experiential methodologies.

In spite of the various options available, however, there is no non-formal education system providing formally recognised qualifications and certificates.

The Provincial Adult Education Centres (*Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti* – CPIA) are the only recognised models with an effective diversification of methodologies providing formally recognised education. They are the main providers of Second Chance Education in Italy (although they do not meet all 'general' characteristics defined for the scheme and their still being experimental and project-based, relying heavily on local, regional and European funds) and work without predefined training curricula, accordingly to learning units and individual training agreements. The education curriculum is built around learners, considering their previous experiences and formal, informal and non-formal skills. Non-formal

methodologies include: Blended learning, Cooperative learning, Brainstorming, Peer tutoring, Problem solving.

1.4. Special trainings for young mothers

The Italian educational model does not have special trainings for young mothers, neither schools and institutes provide services or have facilities meeting their needs. Support to motherhood may come from no-profit associations, in the framework of their action to foster social inclusion of people having disadvantaged background, or it is foreseen for young mothers suffering of housing deprivation and hosted in public facilities by social welfare.

No-profit association may offer individual empowerment activities as well as support to achieving a first cycle leaving certificate, aid with homework, and counselling about schooling and access to labour market. Nevertheless, these activities are not permanent, being often limited in time and depending on the organisations' internal resources and eventual project-based funding.

Within the Foster Homes for pregnant women and women with children (*Case di accoglienza per gestanti e donne con figli*), young mothers can find a safe and suitable environment to overcome a disadvantage situation. These structures do not directly aim to keep young mothers in education, but they do support personal growth and development of young mothers, also providing cultural and educational activities, counselling, guidance in accommodation and job searching and fostering the acquisition of parenting skills, autonomy and self-management skills.

1.5. Landscape of formal education institutions in Palermo

NAME	TYPE OF INSTITUTION	EDUCATION/TRAINING OFFER	WEBSITE
Liceo Classico "G. Garibaldi"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Classical studies	http://www.liceogaribaldi.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=353&Itemid=1449
Liceo Classico Internazionale Statale "G. Meli"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Classical studies	https://www.liceomeli.gov.it/menu-principale/offerta-formativa
Educandato Statale "Maria Adelaide"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Classical studies	http://www.educandatomariadelaide.it/
Liceo Classico Statale "Umberto I"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Classical studies	http://www.umbertoprimo.it/index.php/il-pof
Liceo Classico	General Upper	- Classical studies	http://www.liceovittori

"Vittorio Emanuele II"	Secondary Education (5 years)		oemanuelepa.it/index.php/piano-dell-offerta-formativa
Liceo Scientifico Statale "Benedetto Croce"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Math and science	http://www.liceocroce.it
Liceo Scientifico Statale "G. Galilei"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Math and science	http://www.liceoggalileipalermo.it/
Liceo Scientifico "Ernesto Basile"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Math and science	http://www.liceobasile.it/
Liceo Scientifico Statale "Albert Einstein"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Math and science	http://www.liceoeinstein.palermo.it/pof
Liceo Scientifico Statale "S. Cannizzaro"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Math and science	http://www.cannizzaro.gov.it/dotnetnuke/it-it/IL-NOSTRO-LICEO/Il-piano-dellofferta-formativa-annuale-e-triennale
Liceo Linguistico Statale "Ninni Cassarà"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Foreign language	http://linguisticocassara.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=117&Itemid=1293
Liceo Statale "G.A. De Cosmi"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Human science - Human science (Economical and Social studies) - Foreign language	http://liceodecosmi.gov.it/
Istituto Magistrale "Camillo Finocchiaro Aprile"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Human science - Human science (Economical and Social studies)	https://www.istitutofinocchiaroaprile.gov.it/didattica-home/curricolo-di-scuola
Liceo delle Scienze Umane e Linguistico "Danilo Dolci"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Human science - Human science (Economical and Social studies) - Foreign language	http://www.liceodanilodolci.it/index.php/istituto/ptof
Istituto Magistrale Statale "Regina Margherita"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Human science - Human science (Economical and Social studies) - Foreign language - Music and dance	http://www.liceoreginamargherita.gov.it/didattica/orientamento.html
Liceo Artistico Statale "E. Catalano"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	- Visual arts - Visual arts – Photo-Video - Visual arts – Illustration, Comic,	http://www.artisticocatano.gov.it/indirizzi

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animation - Visual arts – Digital Graphics - Architecture and environment - Scenography - Design - Design - Restoration 	
Istituto Statale d'Istruzione Superiore "Francesco Ferrara"	VET - Technical Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administration and Marketing * - Business ICT - Tourism - International Relations for Marketing 	https://istitutoferrara2.weebly.com/istituto-economico.html
	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human science - Human science (Economical and Social studies) - Foreign language 	https://istitutoferrara2.weebly.com/liceo.html
	VET – Vocational Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional Technician for business services 	https://istitutoferrara2.weebly.com/professionale.html
	Regional VET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administrative-secretary (3 years) - Business services Technician (4 years) 	
Istituto Superiore Statale "L. Einaudi – V. Pareto"	VET - Technical Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administration and Marketing * - International Relations and Marketing - Business ICT - Agri-food: production and processing 	http://www.iseinaudipareto.gov.it/tecnico.htm http://www.iseinaudipareto.gov.it/tecnologico.htm
	VET – Vocational Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trade promotion and Advertising - Business services * 	http://www.iseinaudipareto.gov.it/promozione.htm http://www.iseinaudipareto.gov.it/professionale.htm
	Regional VET (3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administrative-secretary - Graphic Design 	
Istituto Professionale di Stato per i Servizi di Enogastronomia e l'ospitalità alberghiera "Pietro Piazza"	VET – Vocational Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food and wine * - Hosting and sales - Tourist Hospitality 	http://ipsseoapiazza.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=117:piano-dell-offerta-formativa&catid=80&Itemid=1293
	Regional VET (3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food industry Operator - Food industry Operator – Craft and industrial confectionery products - Promotion and Reception Operator - Hosting and sale operator 	
Istituto Tecnico Settore Tecnologico "Vittorio Emanuele III"	VET - Technical Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Computer and Telecommunication - Electro technical and Electronic* - Mechanical, Mechatronic and Energy * 	http://www.itive3pa.gov.it/index.php/indirizzi-di-studio
Istituto Istruzione Superiore	VET - Technical Institute for Transports and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Logistics - Airplane Pilot - Ship Engineering 	https://www.nauticopa.gov.it/

Nautico "Gioeni-Trabia"	Logistics (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ship Officer - Marine systems and equipment Piloting 	
	VET – Vocational Institute for Business and Handcraft (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recreational craft assembly and maintenance operator - Deep-sea and inland waters operator - Mechanics Operator: means of transport maintenance 	
Istituto d'Istruzione Superiore Statale "Alessandro Volta"	VET – Vocational Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintenance and technical support 	http://www.itivolta.pa.gov.it/istituto-varie/curricoli-ed-indirizzi
	VET - Technical Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mechanical, Mechatronic and Energy - Computer and Telecommunication - Electro technical and Electronic - Transports and logistics - Graphic and communication 	
	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Math and science 	
Liceo Artistico "V. Ragusa, O. Kiyohara,	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visual arts - Architecture and environment - Wood and Furnishing Design - Metal and Jewellery Design 	http://iisragusakiyohara.parlatore.gov.it/
Istituto Tecnico "F. Parlatore"	VET - Technical Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buildings, Environment and Territory - Graphics and Communication 	
Istituto Superiore "Duca Abruzzi – Libero Grassi"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Math and science - Math and science: applied sciences 	http://isducabruzzo-grassi.gov.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=100&Itemid=571
	VET - Technical Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administration and Marketing - Tourism - Buildings, Environment and Territory * 	
Istituto Superiore "Majorana"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Math and science - Math and science: applied sciences - Math and science: sport - Art: Graphics - Art: Audio-visual and multimedia 	http://www.majoranapa.gov.it/index.php/famiglie/pof
	VET - Technical Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chemistry, Materials, Biotechnologies - Agriculture, agri-food and agro-industry - ICT 	
	VET – Vocational Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agro-technician - Services for sales promotion and advertising Technician - Business Services Technician 	
	Regional VET (3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agriculture Operator - Graphics Operator 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion and hosting operator - Administrative-secretary - Sales operator - Logistical Systems and services operator 	
Istituto Superiore Statale "Mario Rutelli"	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Math and science 	http://www.istitutosuperiorerutellipa.it/
	VET - Technical Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourism - Buildings, Environment and Territory * 	
Istituto di Istruzione Superiore "Damiani Almeyda - Crispi"	VET - Technical Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administration and Marketing * - Business ICT - International Relations for Marketing 	http://www.iisdamianiaimeyda-crispi.gov.it/accessibile/index.php
	General Upper Secondary Education (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visual arts - Architecture and Environment - Scenography - Graphics 	
Istituto d'Istruzione Secondaria Superiore "Ernesto Ascione"	VET - Technical Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chemistry and materials - Environmental Biotechnologies - Health Biotechnologies 	http://www.iisernestoascione.gov.it/website/offerta-formativa/corsi-di-studio
	VET – Vocational Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Optician - Dental technician 	
Istituto di Istruzione Superiore Statale "Enrico Medi"	VET – Vocational Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintenance and Technical Support: technical-industrial equipment, systems, services - Maintenance and Technical Support: transports - Industrial and craft production: audiovisual - Industrial and craft production: textile, tailoring - Health and social services 	http://www.iismedi.gov.it/
	Regional VET (3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Electrical operator - Electronic operator - Mechanical operator - Plumbing and heating systems operator - Motor vehicle repair operator - Clothing operator - Graphic operator - Beauty operator: hairdressing - Beauty operator: esthetician 	
	Regional VET (4 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Electrical technician - Electronic technician - Heating systems technician - Automated machinery operation and maintenance technician - Motor vehicle repair technician - Clothing technician - Graphic technician 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hairdresser - Beauty specialist 	
	VET - Technical Institute (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fashion System - Graphic and communication - Electro technical and Electronic - Mechanical, Mechatronic and Energy 	

*The school offers evening classes for those students who cannot attend day classes.

Regional Vocation Education and Training is organised and run also by **private vocational training agencies accredited by the Regions**. According to the result of the Regional call for 2016, in Palermo there are **305** vocational training providers offering specific training about Renewable energy, Tourism and Sport, Personal services, Agri-food, Cultural services, ICT, Business Services, Education and Training, Handcraft, Fashion Design, Wood and furnishing, Building, Printing and publishing, Mechanics and maintenance.

1.6. Challenges of young mothers in re-entering the education system

1.6.1. *DE FACTO* EXCLUSION FROM FORMAL EDUCATION

Staying or re-entering in education in Italy requires time, which young mothers usually do not have. On average, **young Italian mothers are said to had less than 5 hours in a week of free time to devote purely to themselves without any obligation to do something for other people**. Yet, in order to achieve an officially recognised qualification for access to employment, students have to have regular attendance (5 to 6 days a week; 5 to 7 hours a day – depending on the course characteristics – with maximum 50 days of absence) and devote an average of 20 extra hours a week to personal study. This lack of flexibility in the system do not meet the needs of young mothers, especially of those suffering complications during pregnancy and unable to attend classes and becomes one of the main causes of their dropping out.

The Italian welfare system is not particularly generous: in Italy **motherhood and family life are seen as primarily the responsibility of the family members themselves**; policy environment relies on the concept of family as social safety-net, with relatives being the ones considered as ultimately responsible for providing support.

With reference to the target group of BYMBE project – young mothers between 15 and 25 years old – it must be said that **in Italy only the 10,3% of women have a child before reaching the age of 25**, being 31,15 the average age at which Italian women give birth. Because the number of young mothers is relatively small, lack of support to this target group is not seen as a structural problem, so the Italian State and local authorities have not specific plans or items in their financial statements to provide a right amount of services and facilities to ease their access to education.

1.6.2. ECONOMIC CONVENIENCE

The employment rate for women, as well as their chance to stay in education after becoming mothers is a mirror picture of the provision of childcare facilities, but childcare facilities of any kind in Italy are hard to access or expensive, and their opening hours are hardly flexible. So **young mothers from not-wealthier families or young mothers receiving low wages do not usually consider staying in education or securing their job.**

The opportunity cost is indeed very low: flows of lost earnings would be less than what they have to pay for childcare. **Poorer financial situation acts as a barrier:** it is worth to stay home with children and not study or work. **Re-entering rate is higher for young mothers who are from middle and upper-class families.**

1.6.3. MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD AS INDICATORS OF SOCIAL SUCCESS

Because of the not-favourable economic climate the country suffers since the economic crisis of 2007 – which has generally led to a lack of faith in the future – **it is common view in Italy that to create a family it is not possible (or at least risky) to be under 35.** If you can barely afford to be economically independent, you are not even thinking about children. **Those who become parents before being 25 are generally seen as engaging in a big challenge,** reckless, and women are seen as professionally finished.

Indeed, social background still plays a major role. Most of young girls experiencing pregnancies before being 25 come from situations of disadvantage – very large families, family conflicts, economic disadvantage, social hardship, emotional and affective weaknesses, very low educational level – where they have no prospects of social emancipation, especially if they have dropped out of school and have no job. **Pregnancies offer a way out of degradation and are desired as a rite of emancipation,** acting as a short-cut to marriage, repeating what mothers and grandmothers did.

As for pregnancy at an early age (under 19), most common reasons are a **general deprivation of sex education, access to information and effective means of contraception** (35% of young women in Italy usually has unprotected sex and the 60-80% of pregnancies are not planned), and – especially in Sicily – the social phenomenon of *'fuitina'* (elopement).

This term traditionally defines a couple who – in order to be together against the wishes of their families – elope to spend the whole night (or just some hours) together; elopement presents families with the fait accompli of a sexual intercourse, that, according to their social rules, needs to be remedied through a marriage, to restore the reputation of the “kidnapped” girl and of her family. Sometimes this elopement is done with the tacit agreement of one or both families for economic reasons: because of

deprivation, families use this kind of shotgun marriage, stained by shame, to avoid the pomp and circumstance of traditional marriage and the related costs. This phenomenon, though being typical of an ancient culture, is still on use in popular areas, where, despite women having more freedom to choose, a traditionalist mentality remains.

Even though pregnancy experience may be not traumatic, it usually results in just a change from a situation of constraint to an identical or worse one, where women move from taking care of the house and children of their parents to taking care of another house (theirs or of their partner's family), under control of their partner and his family. The economic situation of these couples is usually precarious, with not regular income, depending on social welfare and support of their relatives.

These girls are generally unmotivated and disengaged from education: in their context, social success for a woman still lies uniquely in marriage, and giving birth is seen as the proof of their femininity and of the virility of their partners. Not having a clear education and life plan, these girls are not fully aware of how pregnancy can hamper it, and **they never consider their level of education or job conditions in relation to parenthood**: to them, concern about family income and opportunities for children lie with men as breadwinner.

2. Childcare facilities

In the ranking of the 24 wealthiest countries, Italy came second for lowest private and public childcare (UNICEF 2008). In 2017, situation in Sicily has not much changed, since **the Region features the highest per capita deficit in Italy for number of childcare facilities**, and the number of private child care services has not increased significantly over the years. The scarcity of public childcare for young children is mainly a reflection of the structure of the Italian care regime, which relies on a minimal supply of services, cultural factors as family solidarity and gender division of labour, and financial transfers meant only for those most in need.

2.1 Infrastructure of the childcare facilities

The offer of childcare facilities is regulated by the Region, which set standards for structures, services, human resources, access and quality. Considering only facilities not needing an accompanying person to access, services provided include:

2.2.1 NURSERIES, KINDERGARTEN AND PRE-SCHOOLS

All forms of pre-school education are not compulsory in Italy. Pre-school education in Italy has two levels: nurseries and or kindergarten (*asilo nido*) and pre-school (*scuola materna*). Nurseries and kindergarten are facilities mainly addressed to working parents which host children from 3 months to 3 years of age. Pre-schools are for children from the ages of 3 to 6 and their main goal is to get kids into schooling and make them learn through play. They stay open for 5 days a week and 6 or 8 hours per day from September to June. All facilities can be public or private.

Access to public structures is by entering a ranked list. Seats are reserved for children who enrolled in the previous years. Extra places are given considering family situation – measured by the equivalent financial situation index (ISEE) which takes into account income, wealth and family composition, presence of social disadvantage, handicap, children being in alternative care or living with a lone parent (the parent who: have recognized the child, is widow/widower, is related to a detainee, holds parental responsibility). There are no specific provisions for parents in need of compulsory schooling or wishing to re-enter education. In fact, extra criteria favour children having both or one parent working.

Despite a quota of places in private facilities reserved for public use, public facilities meet the needs of only a very small proportion of children: **in Sicily there are from 10 to 14 places available every 100 children. In 2017, public offer met only the 8,04% of the potential demand.**

With such a low coverage rate, access is basically given only to families in the most need, which benefit from particularly low fees, and most families having an average or medium level income do not even try to apply (despite being considered when formulating the fees).

PUBLIC CHILDCARE COST IN PALERMO				
INCOME ISEE Index*	MONTHLY FEES (Saturday excluded)			
	until 1.30 PM	until 3.30 PM	until 5 PM	until 5.30 PM
Up to € 5,000,00	12,50	16,00	18,00	19,00
€ 5.000,01 - € 10.000	50,00	62,50	71,87	75,00
€ 10.000,01 - € 15.000	110,00	138,00	158,00	165,00
€ 15.000,01 - € 30.000	173,00	212,00	248,00	259,00
€ 30.000,01 - € 60.000	200,00	250,00	287,50	300,00
€ 60.000,01 and more	250,00	312,50	359,37	375,00

* Equivalent financial situation index (ISEE) which takes into account income, wealth and family composition.

When turning towards **private facilities**, which **cover more than the 60% of childcare provision in Italy but still remain insufficient in number**, the average out-of-pocket monthly fee may reach range from 250 € to 400 € per month that, considering 10 months of use of the service, bring the annual cost per family to more than € 3000. Because of the high costs, families are likely to become in default of payment, and in fact in 2016 19% of families left private childcare facilities, withdrawing their children before the end of the educational year or after only 3 months of attendance.

Since 2005, the Sicilian regional law has also open the way for the opening of corporate childcare facilities, but the practical reality has shown that in Sicily – where small and medium-sized firms make up the backbone of the economy – the few providers are only public entities (University, health authorities, the City council).

2.2.2 INFORMAL CHILDCARE

It is the kind of childcare having the highest proportions in Sicily. It is mainly provided by family and relatives, but also by friends or neighbours, and offers different advantages, above all flexibility for particular familiar needs and gratuitousness. Residential proximity between parents and adult children and other relatives is much higher in Southern Italy, and it certainly fosters the idea of children being looked after by grandparents or other relatives.

Anyway, family networks may not be as extensive as in the past, and it is not always possible to rely on the “availability” of those living at a reasonable distance, as well as on their willingness to take care of children. Especially in case of young mothers, parents may still be workers or busy in job seeking, therefore children have to be entrusted to someone else. Anyway, families need to always keep informal childcare

systems as subsidiary being nurseries, kindergarten, pre-schools and schools not able to look after children when they are ill.

2.2.3 “DAY-CARE MOTHERS”

Based on the model of the German *tagesmutter*, they are unemployed people who provide childcare in their own houses. They can be mothers already taking care of their own children, or not-mother who received specially prepared qualifying training. Advantages include flexibility in hours, a familiar environment, customized care and education and less costs if compared to private facilities. However, **the offer for this option is scarce**: day-mothers cannot act independently but need to have a private association signing an agreement with the local authorities to provide them with training and assistance, set and receives fees in their place, check on services and quality standards. Furthermore, this kind of facility is generally unattractive to families: when entrusting an unknown person with their child, they usually focus on specific professional qualifications and competences, regardless of any personal experiences of motherhood that person may have, and Sicily’s regional law has not specified minimal study and professional credentials for the “day-care mothers”.

2.2 Funding system

Prices for childcare are very expensive for families (in Sicily they are 30% more expensive than rest of Italy), and this contributes to disparities between the rich and poor, not only because poorer families cannot afford the cost of childcare but also because **the cost serves as a disincentive for mothers to look for work or re-enter education**.

Subsides are made available for families by the National Institute for Social Welfare (INPS), to be spent in the facilities of their choice. However, request for the bonus has to be submitted online and the only criteria for granting is the date and order of arrival of the application up to the limits of funds available, regardless the socio-economical background of families.

2.2.1 *BONUS ASILO NIDO* (KINDERGARTEN BONUS)

It is open to all resident in Italy (Italians, Europeans, extra-Europeans holding a visa). It consists in reimbursement up to 1000 € for tuitions fees paid to nurseries or kindergarten for children under 3 years old or for childcare provided in the house for those children with chronic diseases who cannot attend kindergartens or nurseries.

2.2.2 *VOUCHER BABY-SITTER AND ASILO NIDO* (BABY-SITTER AND KINDERGARTEN VOUCHER)

It can be requested by those mothers willing to switch optional maternity leave (Italian mothers are entitled to a first leaving period at 100% pay and then further optional time at 30% till the child is 6 years old) with a subsidy of 600 € per month up to 6 months (depending on the kind of job contract) to pay tuition fees for nurseries, kindergarten and pre-school or in-house childcare.

3. Infrastructure of support services

3.1. Landscape of non-governmental organizations

SUPPORT		
ORGANISATION	ACTIVITIES	WEBSITE
Centro Aiuto alla Vita	They support projects addressed to young mothers in need and provide psychological counselling as well as assistance and guidance to address economic problems, job searching, dealing with healthcare.	http://cavpalermo.altervista.org
Associazione Handala	It works with mother and young people of the Z.E.N., a very disadvantaged area of in Palermo. Activities include sports, self-empowerment, support to studying to prevent dropping out.	https://www.facebook.com/associazionehandala/
WeWorld Onlus	They work to promote equal opportunities for women and to fight violence against women. Their services are aimed at fostering women's economic, social and educational inclusion.	https://www.weworld.it/come-e-dove-interveniamo/a-favore-delle-donne/
Spazio Mamme – Save the Children	It supports families living in disadvantaged and out-reach contexts, people at high risk of social exclusion. Activities are aimed empower parents in rising and providing care and support to development of their children through access to cultural offer.	https://www.savethechildren.it/cosa-facciamo/progetti/spazi-o-mamme
Caritas Diocesana di Palermo	Target groups include all vulnerable people. The center provides a listening center and a legal advisory desk as well as a crisis center for women.	www.caritaspalermo.it
Le onde ONLUS	It is an association of women aimed at implementing actions and offering services to fight violence against women and to foster the creation of a concrete path of freedom for women.	www.leonde.org
Sportello Antiviolenza “Diana”	Network of crisis centres for women who have been victims of violence of any kind. The centres offer professional legal and psychological support to victims.	---
Centri di assistenza fiscale (Fiscal Advice Centres)	They provide information about the required documentation and practical assistance in applying to access social welfare and public facilities.	---

EDUCATION		
WeWorld Onlus	They offer courses to complete first cycle of education and develop digital skills.	https://www.weworld.it/come-e-dove-interveniamo/a-favore-delle-donne/

Exodos	It is a group of volunteers offering after-school programs to young people in need.	https://www.facebook.com/comunitaexodos/
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CHILDCARE		
ORGANISATION	ACTIVITIES	WEBSITE
Associazione Kala Onlus / Caritas Palermo, Playgroup space “Il giardino di M. Teresa”	They provide childcare service to answer the need of parents who cannot access appropriate childcare.	www.kalaonlus.org

3.2. Landscape of governmental organizations

EDUCATION			
BODY	UNIT	ACTIVITIES	WEBSITE
MUNICIPALITY OF PALERMO	Ufficio servizi per le scuole (Education services)	Funding for compulsory education	https://www.comune.palermo.it/settori.php?func=sette&set=77
	Unità Organizzativa Centro Sant'Anna	Special unit dealing with teenage issues, schooling, professional guidance, support to parenthood	http://www.attivitasociali.palermo.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18&Itemid=84
REGIONE SICILIANA	Servizio allo studio, buono scuola e alunni svantaggiati	Access to education, scholarships, Research Unit about Early school Leaving	http://pti.regione.sicilia.it/portal/page/portal/PIR_PORTALE/PIR_LaStrutturaRegionale/PIR_AssessoratoIstruzioneeformazioneprofessionale/PIR_Pubblicazione/PIR_APOrganizzazione/PIR_Articolazionedegliuffici/PIR_SERVIZIOXII
Centro Provinciale per l'Istruzione degli Adulti - CPIA		Provincial Adult Education Center	http://www.cpiapalermo1.gov.it/

SUPPORT			
BODY	UNIT	ACTIVITIES	WEBSITE
MUNICIPALITY OF PALERMO	Unità organizzative del servizio sociale di comunità (Social services)	Social services units processing requests for social welfare and inclusion of disadvantaged people through public and private organisations	http://www.attivitasociali.palermo.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4&Itemid=74

	Unità Organizzativa Centro Sant'Anna	Special unit dealing with teenage issues, schooling, professional guidance, support to parenthood	http://www.attivitasociali.palermo.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18&Itemid=84
	Unità Organizzativa Politiche ed Interventi per i Giovani (Youth policies)	Support to parenthood and counselling related to adolescence and youth	http://www.attivitasociali.palermo.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=99&Itemid=198 http://www.attivitasociali.palermo.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=116:consulenza-pedagogica-per-le-famiglie&catid=35:persona-e-famiglia&Itemid=224

CHILDCARE			
BODY	UNIT	ACTIVITIES	WEBSITE
MUNICIPALITY OF PALERMO	Ufficio servizi per l'infanzia (Child support)	Access to public childcare facilities	https://www.comune.palermo.it/settori.php?func=settoreset=75
INPS		Bonus Asilo Nido (Kindergarten Bonus)	https://www.inps.it/nuovoportaleinps/default.aspx?itemdir=51105
		Voucher Baby-Sitter And Asilo Nido (Baby-Sitter And Kindergarten Voucher)	https://www.inps.it/nuovoportaleinps/default.aspx?itemdir=50575

4. Specific aspects for the project in terms of education, child care and support services

The choice of re-entering education after the birth of a child depend not only on educational offer and the opportunity costs related to access to childcare but also on women's preferences and real employment possibilities for them, which are influenced by cultural and social aspects. **When the possibility to pursuing a career is affected by difficulties, it is unlikely that young mother will persevere in their decision to progress in education in order to benefit of better job opportunities.** In particular, **the average probability for Italians mothers under 24 of not working is about 70%** (the average is 49%) and the probability of voluntarily leaving their job is about 25% (twice the average); the latter probability jumps to 53% for those who are not entitled to any help from family or public services.

4.0.1. DISCONTINUOUS AND UNSAFE CAREERS

Because of the strong economic downturn and the effects of the employment crisis that began to appear in Italy at the end of 2007 and still persist, Sicily has suffered sustained economic contraction to a heavier extent than the rest of Italy, resulting in an employment rate of 40,3% (meaning less than 1 person in 2 has a job) and in **a rate of youth unemployment in the 15-24 age bracket of 57,2%**. Even those holding higher education qualifications struggle in finding a job: only the 26,7% of university graduated gets a job within 3 years after graduation.

As part of comprehensive 'exit strategies' for the economic crisis, the original Italian labour law has undergone progressive changes in order to make the labour law more flexible, and indeed it has become, while becoming increasingly dual:

- on the one hand, the stable, protected and increasingly difficult to enter labour segment of those having a full-time job of unlimited duration and enjoy a wide range of benefits (regular income, secured pension payments, insurance against unemployment), and
- on the other hand, those hired on atypical contracts, whose number has increased over the last decade – fixed-term contracts, apprenticeships, coordinated or independent contractors, all characterized by limited duration and lower social security and welfare fees to alleviate the employers' cost burden.

But the greater flexibility has brought with it a high level of uncertainty about personal and professional paths of those who hold atypical contracts.

First of all, not all atypical contracts are a port-of-entry into permanent positions. When this happens, the time needed for transformation is rather long: in most cases, employers use a sequence of temporary contracts – or combinations of different kinds – as a cost-reduction strategy, rather than as a screening device for newly hired workers. **The likelihood to get a satisfactory job after experiencing an atypical contract is approximately 15% in the North of Italy, while it is nil in the South.** Transition among different positions and employers is common, making the chance of having a steady income uncertain, and it does not necessarily imply a career progression.

Secondly, the Italian State has failed in counterbalancing the reduction in the duration of job contract with effective opportunity to find rapidly another job or specific social protection: social security contributions for atypical workers are not relevant and in times of economic hardship, family illness, disability or old age, and even occupational injuries, the support is rather limited.

Thirdly, **atypical contracts generally imply low salaries, regardless of how heavy physical or high intellectual workers' duties can be.** Because of the rise of atypical contracts, the average entry salary has decreased: young people enter the labour market earning the 36% less than the previous generations; the average income of 18 to 34-year-olds is less than half what it was in 1995, and 1/5 of what their parents made.

Young Italians live in a complex reality where they are the weakest category. For people in their thirties, the likelihood of definitive career transition should be maximised. In truth, in Italy it is not. Young people life projects and choices related to first-time housing, starting a family and, of course, parenthood have been severely affected: the lack of opportunities for a long-term career path, the high level of insecurity combined with the high cost of living, alarming reports about insufficient economic growth of the country, threats of undercuts in welfare and rise of the fiscal pressure have produced a psychological climate of depression which have led many young people to regularly postpone long-term plans. **While an external is incline to reinforce the stereotype of the *mammone*, the Italian child who never grows up, and judge young Italians as lazy, choosy, content to mooch off their aging parents rather than strike it out on their own, truth is that their seek for autonomy and independence is frustrated.** You must be cautious, decisions are slowed and postponed to a far future, those experiences and engagements defining adulthood are perceived as risky (especially parenthood); protecting standing and avoiding a lower level of life is the only important thing. It is said that **young people are the social category which is more at risk of poverty** – the rate has gone from just under 2% in 2007 to around 10% today, while among over-65s it fell – and one in ten Italians aged 18 to 34 already lives in extreme poverty.

The situation is particularly difficult for women, who are more likely than men to be offered atypical jobs and therefore are more likely to be trapped in insecure and temporary jobs and have discontinuous careers. It is no surprise that the birth rate of the country is at lowest in history and half of women between 18 and 49 years old, namely women of childbearing potential, have no children. If atypical workers become pregnant, they are less sheltered than typical workers: they have less rights related to maternity leave, no provision to leave to care for sick children, and, above all, a lower probability of working after the birth of the child. **The low attractiveness of such jobs in terms of remuneration, working hours and self-fulfilment may convince young mothers that being employed is not worthwhile.**

4.0.2. A STATIC AND CONSERVATIVE MODEL OF FAMILY LIFE

Modern women's level of education and their appropriation of dimension of choice regarding motherhood and work have certainly grown, but **in Sicily, a family-oriented woman model prevails** deeply encouraged by the strong presence of the Catholic Church which for centuries has always supported motherhood as the essence of womanhood, an "eternal vocation of women", and by the aftermath of an ideology – prevalent until the 70s – emphasising an "intensive mothering" model, where mothers should be the central caregivers of children, generous, submissive, self-sacrificial, always and constantly placing their children wishes and needs ahead of their own convenience, and powerless outside of their house. **Women provides for their children' happiness while fathers are the main breadwinners, providing an example of hard work and success** by being able to provide for the family's economical needs and keep the women at home.

This has resulted in **a quite high proportion of women being culturally oriented to stop studying or working after a child is born**, because they believe extra-domestic work and activities being incompatible with their mission as mothers or perceiving having a paid job as just an instrumental device to raise the overall family income. It is commonly believed that children should not attend childcare facilities until they are at least 2 or even 3 years old, because nothing is better than being under the protection of their family.

4.0.3. MOTHERHOOD PENALTY IN THE ITALIAN LABOUR MARKET

The persistence of the asymmetrical model of the division of familial labour is also fostered by the persistent problems impeding mothers from participating in the labour market. Women's educational level is not relevant: this applies to all women.

Italy still has one of the most advanced protective legislation on women workers in Europe, but most benefits are now limited to those women who holds a full-time job of unlimited duration, and there has been no provision of other policies able to counteract general negative implications.

Motherhood has nearly become a shame and women's employment is often limited to unprotected and/or non-permanent positions, which protect employers from the risk of dealing with challenges related to maternity leave.

4.0.3.1. Employers' vision of motherhood

Women still tend to change their working arrangements more often to suit the needs of their families, while men are not involved in raising their children and more generally in family events. Furthermore, the Italian maternity legislation is costly for the employers (women are entitled to leaving months at 100% pay and additional optional time at 30% till the child is 6 years old), which **makes hiring a woman not convenient**. So, it is common for employers to ask female candidates if they are married or in a relationship, or if they plan having a child and to make clear that women having children or who are about to have one are not appreciated, assuming that, because of their childbearing and childrearing responsibilities, they are less committed to the workplace, unable to keep up with the dual strain, less dependable and more likely to quit. This **attitude affects hiring, promotion, and salary decisions also for non-mothers**, because employers assume they will become mothers eventually. So, job interview automatically fails, or, if already recruited, more or less subtly reprisals begin (forced job transfers, verbal harassment, menaces, denial of flexible hours, demotion, arbitrary reductions in salary): dismissals disguised as independent choices.

4.0.3.2. Scarce access to part-time jobs

Italy is the country where female workers allocate the least time to the care of their children: 37 minutes on a daily basis. Female part-time employment in Italy has increased from 16.7% in 2002 to 31% in 2013, but it still remains infrequent, because **employers fear the organizational costs of shorter working hours and they see requests for part-time job as an indicator of lower labour attachment**. Notwithstanding, the increase does not affect mothers, but mainly women who would like full-time jobs but are unable to obtain it. In fact, these data do not consider those official part-time jobs where employees are asked complete availability regardless their official working hours and thus working full time for the same salary (which is an illegal practise, yet common, because people obey in fear of losing their job and not be able to find another one).

4.0.3.3. Gender pay gap and over-education

According to Eurostat data, Italy ranks below almost any other country in the European Union's for wage equality between men and women. Despite women propensity to work more than men, not only they are more likely to be unemployed or work part-time but also their annual reward is lower than their male co-workers. A woman under 30 usually starts her professional career earning 10% less than her male co-worker of same age; at 35, her salary 1/3 less; between 40 and 50, she still earns 23% less than a man.

In Sicily the pay gap may reach the 46%. It is no surprise in Italy that a woman develops her career less frequently than a man and earns less, or has a low qualify job, despite her qualifications.

Also, motherhood – and related maternity leave – entails a loss of women earnings of 12% (20% for women not having a full-time job of unlimited duration). Women always pay a higher price than men for parenthood: of course, women are the ones giving birth, but parent leave can be taken also by men, and only the 4% of them do.

In these circumstances, **the perspective of proportionally inadequate incomes has a disincentive effect on education** (especially higher one): its low attractiveness makes it unavoidable for young mothers with scarce motivation to avoid useless efforts and turn to inactivity.

5. Summary

Despite having access to a diverse educational offer, Italian students do not have much possibilities when confronted to motherhood. Italian offer is too rigid and standardized, with very little chance of any personalization to suit the social background and peculiar needs of students, especially of young mothers for whom there is no special regulation addressing their issues and no educational policies integrated with social and work policies they could benefit of. Nonetheless, social stigmatising is always placed on young mothers, even in the presence of a frustrated desire to complete education.

Despite a diligent public campaigning to persuade people to have children, Italian State appears inadequate – if not totally uninterested – in helping mother safeguarding the welfare of children and study or work at the same time. It is no surprise that Italy's birth rate has been in decline for several years.

Young mothers are not considered a category of people particularly in need of protection for the Italian State. This attitude results also from a number of young mothers being considerably low: as mentioned earlier, only 10,3% of children have a mother under 25. Yet, they really are in distress when facing the reality of scarce access to childcare facilities and the “lottery” of access to parenthood-related funding. The response of Italian system (Region, Provinces, Municipalities) has been that of not meddling much with their family issues and forcing young mothers to seek support from family, relatives and friends – since interfamilial solidarity and social networks truly are the main welfare providers in Italy – and developing “survival” and “acceptance of the unattainability” skills.

In this framework, non-governmental organisations – through their actual knowledge of the territory and of the economic, social and cultural framework, their actions for social inclusion and prevention of early-school leaving and their commitment as non-formal education providers – are the only actors being pro-active in supporting young mothers.

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