GEAR

Gender Equality and Antidiscrimination for Roma

MODULE 1

Fight forms of discrimination against girls in education skills, development, training, health and nutrition

SUMMARY

Introduction

The fight against discrimination toward girls is a global effort to ensure that girls and boys could be equally treated and enjoy the same rights in all fields (education, development, training, health, and nutrition). Unfortunately, regardless the efforts made, particularly under the legislative point of view, the situation is still very far to be considered as an accomplished goal.

There is the need for a collective and coordinated commitment on behalf of institutions but, most of all, parents, and people's organization. Some perceptions are deeply ingrained in the collective representation, and the habits and common behaviours on this issue have deeply ingrained cultural roots. Such attitudes are not the prerogative of this or that human group but are recorded as being part of common lore at almost every latitude. Possibly, as anthropological studies and research shows, small human group of gatherers and hunters are the only groups where a substantial equality could exist this is due to the living style of these groups, where the ability to hunt and catch preys is not always tied to the male sex. However, even in the simplest of society, the division of tasks has almost invariably reflected the reproductive roles, so that women were almost invariably assigned duties such as childrearing and the care of the family households 'needs (cooking food, herding small animals, tidying, sewing etc.). As much as this is a "natural" job division.

Moreover, even in this time of global diffusion of information, the tendency to portray women and girls in a stereotypical way is still very strong and is often reinforced by traditional cultural stereotypes which are in many cases so strong and rooted, that they end up in creating a double standard which makes the issue to address even more complex.

The language itself is one of the most evident indicators of how this discrimination works in a pervasive way; in English, the expression "Man up" is an exhortation that should encourage boys and men to behave in a "manly" way, as opposed to a "feminine" one considered as weak and puny; the same expression exists also in the Italian language. Although these forms of expression are strongly disapproved and sanctioned in educated milieu, they are still very common among street talk and working classes, where there is less awareness of the stigma that these expressions contain, and the message they deliver.

Gender appears to be a "natural issue", because the way in which we interact with each other appears to be "normal", but to discuss about gender is instead very important because it helps us to understand and challenge several things, we take for granted. Gender defines people's sense of themselves, and it relates to people's social interactions and to how do we look at ourselves and others.

WOMEN IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING: A SHORT TIMELINE

The earliest testimony of women access to education go back to a very early time in history, the first record goes back to the ancient Egypt, where sources records that women had been also educated as scribes; but we must wait until the XVIIth century to have more significant evidence and records of women entering formal education and training pathways, through the establishment of the first schools and colleges for women in Sweden, France and Italy[1]. Later, for the whole XVIIIth and XIXth century there is a continuous and progressive growth of colleges and school institutions and boarding schools. Also, a larger number of female individuals. Maria Agnesi, the marquise du Châtelet, Sophie Germain, and Caroline Hershel were all important mathematicians, although without formal education or degree. In literature in particular in England appear the figure of the "blue stocking lady", a woman who held literary conversations among intellectual circles including men, but in order to have full access to university and higher studies we have to wait the mid XVIIIth and XIXth century.

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[1] Grendler, Paul F. (1988). O'Malley, John W. (ed.). Schools, Seminaries, and Catechetical Instruction, in Catholicism in Early Modern History 1500–1700: A Guide to Research. Center for Information Research. p. 328.

WOMEN IN HEALTH AND NUTRITION

The contribution of women in health and nutrition is also important. Several women such as Ellen Swallow Richard, Agnes Fay Morgan, Elsie Widdowson and Doris Howes Calloway have brought key contribution to dietetics and to healthy and proper intake of protein and vitamins. It is the second half of 1800's and the following century that witness the largest participation, often in connection with the ongoing wars which required applied sciences to reinforce their contribution with practical and empirical solutions.

HOW TO FIGHT FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION TOWARD GIRLS?

Gender awareness is a key element in the building of a healthier, more democratic society, and it is a progressive, ongoing process. The aim of this work is to promote a deeper acknowledgement on gender both at conscious and unconscious level. Gender mechanisms and stereotypes are so very ingrained that it requires an active effort to understand and tackle the way in which we interact and interpret the reality around us. Gender affects all life aspects, particularly in terms of power dynamics, and for all social workers and teachers working with youngster is of paramount importance to understand this and find viable and efficient ways to address this. It must be understood that images, values and normative standards that we automatically assign to others are the product of culturally and socially determined factors, and the consequent privileges and possibilities that some have, and some have not, have an important effect on the progress toward equality in our societies. Clearly it is difficult to counteract and contrast ingrained habits and ways of thinking, but it is necessary to develop new mechanisms for conceptualizing this issue and act accordingly, in a constant learning on the job process dedicated to questioning common beliefs and habits.

Gender is the way we define ourselves as being part of the women or men group. The WHO (World Health Organization) defines sex and gender according to the following definitions: "sex" refers to biological characteristics which differentiates men from women, while "gender" refers to the "socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that society considers appropriate for men and women": gender is not biological and describes a number of qualities and behaviours expected from men and women in our society. We must also keep in mind that the idea of gender can change in the course of time and from one socio geographical context to the other: it is a social construct.

While it is evident that sex characteristics are ascribed at birth and are peculiar to each sex (men have larger bones; women have breasts that can produce milk; men are generally stronger; etc.) there are characteristics inherent to gender (not to sex) that are stereotypically assigned almost without questioning (women are more sensitive.

To fight discrimination against women and girls, many countries and international bodies have agreed and shared several recommendations, some of which legally binding. Among the most important of these documents, we must quote:

The Universal declaration of Human Rights (1948)

The European Convention on Human Rights (1953)

The Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination toward women (CEDAW) (1979)

Moreover, the gender equality aspect has been mainstreamed in many other documents and it is an integral part of school curricula and work legislation; however, to this legislative, formal aspect it has not corresponded an equal practical effect in society, and we witness everyday forms of discrimination against women. Legislation is important because it gives a strong legal framework and acknowledges ways to sanction and tackle the issue, but in real everyday life, it is persisting an attitude toward the use of double standard which in its various forms, still hinders equality and prevent from a critical approach to be implemented as part of the everyday's discourse.

ISSUE:

An interrupted career: family duties are almost invariably assigned to girls. Even if often in school and in training are the ones who brings better results, they are withdrawn earlier because they are expected to support the family (mothers) in their gender traditionally ascribed "women chores" like housekeeping and childcaring for younger siblings. This is reinforced by the gender ascribed roles and by the family and society's expectations: men "defend" the honour of the family, but women are the "official bearer" of this honour. A woman is valued by her ability to satisfy what community requires, and it is not expected to build a life for herself autonomously.

WAYS TO COPE:

Teach males to share responsibilities in the family, make them understand that tasks are not gender originated, and that being positive and helpful in all family chores makes everyone happier. Explain and show through practical examples from everyday's life that there is no reduction in masculinity if tasks are shared, and that recent (in Italy) and EU legislation have all found ways to protect the fatherhood by introducing laws and rights which also allow men to take active part in for example, childcare, allowing paid time out of work. Reinforce this message by showing real life examples demonstrating the usefulness, positivity, and convenience of this approach. For example, for what concern health issues, women are of paramount importance because they cannot allow for themselves the self destructivity of some behaviours which are commonly expected and often justified in men. In most cases, women must remain responsible, not being allowed to indulge in the self destructive, male affirming behaviour that is often publicly displayed by men; one example for all is that of drunkenness. While drinking (even drinking to excess) is considered a "prove of masculinity", same behaviour is strongly sanctioned and disapproved in women. Recklessness in actions like car driving are condoned in man and seen like a behaviour that comes together with masculinity. Underline the difference in the evaluation of "bad" behaviours when concerning the two sexes and stimulate the trainees to find the logic of it (and the usefulness). Why is something encouraged and in other contexts is opposed and shamed? Underline and explain the concept of "what is adaptive". Is this or that action constructive and healthy? Does it bring a successful outcome?

Underline the importance of the crèche/child school. Underline the importance of out group relation, and the ability to learn other and different forms of interaction between sexes.

Policies:

- **Health and Nutrition:**
- **Reproductive Health Education:** Implement comprehensive reproductive health education programs, providing girls with information about their bodies, health, and well-being.
- **Access to Healthcare:** Ensure access to quality healthcare services, with a focus on reproductive health, maternal care, and addressing malnutrition.
- **Menstrual Hygiene Management:** Promote menstrual hygiene management initiatives to eliminate stigma and ensure that girls have access to sanitary products.

Nutrition:

- **Nutrition Programs:** Implement nutrition programs that specifically address the nutritional needs of girls, particularly during critical stages of growth and development.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct awareness campaigns to educate communities about the importance of nutrition for girls' overall well-being and academic performance.
- **Community Gardens:** Promote community gardens and initiatives that enhance food security and provide nutritious food for girls and their families.

Empowerment Programs:

- **Leadership Development:** Establish leadership development programs for girls, fostering their confidence, skills, and abilities to take on leadership roles.
- **Mentorship Initiatives:** Create mentorship initiatives that connect girls with successful women who can provide guidance and support.

Education Equality:

- **Gender Sensitization Programs:** Implement gender sensitization programs in schools and communities to promote understanding and respect for gender diversity.
- **Parental Education:** Conduct programs to educate parents and caregivers about the importance of equal opportunities for girls.
- **Equal Access:** Ensure equal access to education for girls at all levels. Address barriers such as distance, safety concerns, and cultural norms that may hinder girls' enrolment and attendance.
- **Eliminate Gender Bias:** Develop and implement curricula and teaching materials that are free from gender bias and stereotypes, promoting equal opportunities for girls in all subjects.
- **Safe Learning Environments:** Create safe and inclusive learning environments that protect girls from harassment and discrimination.
- **Equal Access:** Advocate for policies and initiatives that ensure equal access to quality education for girls, addressing barriers such as distance, safety concerns, and cultural norms.
- **Gender-Inclusive Curricula:** Promote gender-inclusive curricula that challenge stereotypes and encourage girls to pursue a wide range of subjects, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Practical exercises:

- Analyse and challenge the common stereotypes on gender. Group discussion.
- Indicate forms of discrimination (preferably the less evident): which forms are mainly practiced against girls? For each topic, indicate with examples.
- How is gender learnt? What influences and forms our common concept of different genders? Which values, norms, behaviours can we list in our culture that provide a stereotypical idea of gender? How "grounded" they are?
- Examine some newspapers and magazine articles. Analyse web personal pages: what strikes us as culturally conditioned views? How and through which means our habits and traditions concur to orient us in each situation? Produce a post or other publishing material that does not reinforce prejudices.
- Different cultures, different values, similar outcomes: how to eliminate discrimination in every day's situations? What forms of work and other practices have seen a change in times in how they have been gendered?
- What is the gender identity in your nation and in your in group?
- Inform about the help offered by social services in terms of economic help, orientation, and access to NIDO crèche.
- Illustrate, with practical examples, how to access the services and the advantages in it.
- Advice about the possibility of having time freed to invest in jobs, development, education, and personal growth.

For Public Administrators:

- Design and produce a easy leaflet of information in regard to the access to crèche
- Open a front desk, active in designated day, to welcome and orient parents.
- Periodic but regular visits within the community with the aim of witness with their eye the actual situation and, if needed, being able to set up a coordinated intervention toward the family with a representative of the school or training or professional institute.

- Activate efficient and timely bureaucratic and administrative strategy to provide economic support to the child enrolled. The resources should be appropriate to satisfy all needs (thus eliminating possible excuses arousing)
- Investigate about the possibility of using forms of public and private partnership to economically support the initiatives through forms of tutoring.

Gender Equality and Antidiscrimination for Roma

MODULE 2

Contrast negative cultural practices and attitudes toward girls

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Negative cultural practices toward girls and females in general are widespread and involve every known culture and human group and can be observed in both Roma and non-Roma societies every nation and every class and group.

Religious system has also contributed to this, by creating a narrative where women are "weak", "dangerous", "impure" and prone to sin and errors. No matter how this set of belief was created and perpetuated, the result is under our eyes: even today, in the XXIst century, women are paid less than men, and they have less opportunities in career and in public political life. Laws and regulations have tried to tackle this issue, but it remains a mechanism that is deeply ingrained in popular culture at all levels. Discrimination against women is one of the factors that mostly prevent emancipation and growth. Double standards reinforce this attitude by consolidated attitudes toward "purity" and "impurity". Unveil the necessity of men to control women's actions and to "protect" their honour in terms of marriage choices, behaviour, and reproduction.

Gender relations have historically characterised men as models for normality and rationality, but it must be understood, again, that gender is a social construction; a construction that becomes a pressure to conform and that has important consequences for women and children because the dominant model remains in fact unchallenged.

In classic, traditional, or "ethnographic" groups, role and economic activities are generally strictly gender based, and regulated by the community's expectations and systems of cultural values.

Women's public image is very important for she represents the whole household. Their behaviour is controlled not only by members of their family but also by more familial and kinship relations, where any "deviant" conduct risk to bring shame and dishonour to the family group.

To be a woman requires certain quality: first, that of correctly managing codes and rules of this society. For this reason, women are educated in the obedience to their father and husband and to the accomplishment of their duties as wives and mother.

Masculinity is a contradictory and confusing term, but it is a central key point for anyone that wants to work in the field of equal opportunity and to produce real changes. The model proposed for men is not less problematic than the model proposed to women. It reinforces and constrict men into complying to masculine models considered as "appropriate" by defining what is manly and what is not. A censorship on expressing feelings, the need to deny or to conceal certain personality aspects: men should be brave, in control, powerful, strong, rational. Thus, masculinity becomes an element of separation from one's true self and forces men to enact very different public and private behaviours: the key skill of feeling management is completely overlooked, leaving males in a perennial ambivalence

It is widely assumed that a woman's proper place is her home, but actually she is also encouraged to move outside the encampment towards the inner city to work. While the gathering of discarded goods from the dustbins requires travelling in the area immediately surrounding the encampment, the customary Manghèl practice is generally conducted outside the settlement, in centre town.

All trips are made by feet and by bus, even though many Romnì are perfectly able to drive the family van. When asked whether they have got a driving license they would most indifferentiately answer no, and in fact the official license is lacking, but nearly all of them are as competent drivers.

This behaviour serves to formally preserve men's public image as head and breadwinner of the family. At the same time, it demonstrate's his wife's socially expected qualities like modesty and dependency. This form of dissimulation leaves formally untouched the visible social structure and its roles while revealing other invisible elements left unsaid.

These apparent contradictions in the *Romnì's* expected behaviour have been observed also by Okely (Okely 1995:257) [1] by the English resident's travellers studied during her fieldwork in UK.

An explication of this anomaly has been explained by this author in the light of concepts like purity and contamination and in the double relationship men/women - *Rom*/*Gagì*, in which is the *Romni* who takes the responsibility of the contact with the *Gagi* world, which is conceived as potentially contaminating[2].

But apart from the symbolic-anthropological factor there is another important issue related to this which lies in the different economical activities engaged by men and women and their different relations with the surrounding social context. Through the practices of palm reading and *Manghèl* and the shopping at markets women have the chance of meeting a larger spectre of people. The need to communicate inherent with these activities enable them to learn faster than their husbands the language of the host country (if they are of foreign origin like in Italy), furthermore this jobs include a continuous interaction with the non-Roma.

On the other hand, men also have contacts with other groups, but their interaction is more short and kept simple by the nature of the business, besides men's contacts are generally limited to unskilled workers, porters and other activities of manual labour while women can haul up to a wider range of people.

There's then another peculiarity -also observed by Okely- which is the one related to bravery, courage, and the ability to fight.

As we will see, this peculiar aspect represents a potential resource of strength and energy that can be used in critical times of life. Also, this is an officially unsaid quality, rather alluded than explicitly mentioned but nonetheless considered as an essential character trait for a proper *Romni*.

In the traditional context this capacity can be activated for example to refuse through the escaping an unwanted marriage, but it can also be used in other context, as an engine for new ways of emancipation, like the one which are created through the contact with the *Gagì* world (school, institutions, Ngo's etc.).

Marriage is considered as one of the most important events in a woman's life, and together with births (especially of male children) is solemnly celebrated by the whole extended family. The rule generally observed is that of patrilocal residence, for which the bride goes living with her husband's family, who can sometimes be very far and even in different cities or nations. This issue of separation is often a highly dramatic moment: the young bride will now be separated from family and friends, and must be apt to adapt to the new environment.

In the more traditional settings, the bride is expected to contribute to the wealth of her new family by different means: her ability as a housewife, in work or begging, and, most important of all, her fertility.

Arranged marriages can be quite common. Sometimes things go on well and the couple establishes a good relation forming a new family, but things aren't always that easy. In the case of forced marriages, the woman

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[1] It is the case of the encounters who took place in institutional places like the Municipality Offices or others.
[2] Okely J. (1975), *Gypsy Women: Models in Conflict*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, republished as: *Donne zingare. Modelli in conflitto*. In: "Comunità girovaghe, Comunità zingare", (a cura di) L. Piasere, (1995), Ed. Liguori, Napoli.

can be forced to work and live with a man she doesn't love, cut off from all her friendly and parental relation who could have helped and supported her. However, also in these dramatic cases, there is the chance for a way out. The couple can "run-away" together, and once they come back, often the marriage can be arranged anyway, even if the familiar choice was different

The situation can vary according to the different cultural, economic and social situation: the EU has very diverse declinations: in Italy[3] and Belgium, both EU countries constitute two examples where Roma are "foreigners", even if coming from EU countries like Romania and Bulgaria and in other cases from Western Balkan states.

Other countries like Romania, Bulgaria, Roma are citizens, have regular documents and share the same language of their fellow citizens. In many instances they have representative members in councils and other local and national governments and in international organizations

The contexts could be really different in terms of welfare, state services, investments, social and health system and methodological approach. The difference in the welfare system affects directly the "foreigner", which at least in the beginning of the migratory projects is extremely vulnerable. In Italy there is the well-known phenomenon of the encampments for Roma, and in spite of some interventions in a large scale, the encampment system remains very much in place. The camp is closed and separated from the rest of the city: it is a closed, separated space where the community is very much left on his own. In these ghettoes, it is easier to be under a stricter social control and to live according to the "traditional" community values and principles.

Roma Inclusion

The integration of migrant groups coming from different nations represents one of the tests bed of the true ability for western societies to be inclusive The most prevalent approach to this phenomenon of inclusion, even at an international level, is an interculturation that respects and values differences.

However, this vision is not problem free, because sometimes the value-related–measures used to make comparisons between cultures are so diverse that it becomes impossible to find any true cohesion between the different perspectives. A most interesting example of this difficulty can be found when studying the policies with respect to the Roma community in Europe.

Roma inclusion has long been a matter of interest to nations and wider EU institutions. In the past decade the EU has invested considerable political, financial and intellectual resources to address the challenges of Roma inclusion to wider society. These efforts have produced legislative and financial tools aimed at creating a more upwardly mobile and engaged citizen base within the largely destitute Roma community; In spite of these considerable efforts, the challenge of integrating this predominantly impoverished and disengaged community remains, on balance, unsolved.

The Roma community's population in Europe is estimated to be between 10 and 12 million people. This population figure places them as a relatively small minority group. Then why do government invested so heavily to integrate and elevate this particular community? Why the considerable political and financial effort

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[3] Italian Roma are officially Italian citizens, but the Roma from EU are not and they often have problems with regularizations

has not resulted in more integration; or rather, after such large investment they remain separate from functioning society. What are the continued obstacles that have prevented their full integration?

It seems that a direct result of a number of these interwoven social and government interventions which were designed to create a more inclusive society have brought about the exact opposite outcome to inclusion.

Roma have succeeded in keeping unchanged their social structure and economic practices, helped in this by a residential segregation that is at the same time imposed (for example in Italy, the encampment system has been created by mean of Regional Laws to "protect the nomadic lifestyle") and self-imposed (the residence in the encampment has never been compulsory).

The economic activities practiced, such as the gathering and sale of metal and secondhand objects and garments, are carried on a family basis, and, due to their informality and irregularity of supply they have been an ineffective means towards real inclusion with the wider population. Access to a steady income and regular employment (rather than the traditional Roma informal economic modes) would allow members of the community to plan for non-traditional Roma life-paths. But should members of the community choose to enter more formal employment, Roma traditions would lose their grip and internal power dynamics within their community would be irrevocably changed. It seems clear to me, if members of the Roma community wish to preserve their traditional structures, it is particularly necessary on their part to control the women within the community structures, and to ultimately obstruct women from entering the mainstream employment pool.

To achieve this goal, there are several tools and strategies to use and be enacted to ensure that society's values and structures remains unquestioned from one generation to the other. The key function of some particular forms of behavior is the preservation of the status quo, and its defense against outsiders' intervention. The community is small and very close-knit, and reputation within the group constitutes an invaluable and irreplaceable asset. As in many other geographical and linguistic "traditional" groups, the burden of publicly displaying the "honor" lies on women's shoulder. Their aspect, skills, accomplishments, behaviors, public figure, motherhood, and housemaid capacity are constantly under observation. This constant control is almost unavoidable in a village or in any other concentrated dwelling (even a city neighborhood in many cases) and it displays fully its incredible power of coercion by pushing everyone into conforming. If it happens otherwise, there could be social shaming, isolation, shunning, and this fear of being declared an "outcast", pushes strongly toward abiding.

Here the context could really make a change. If there are social services to go, a good well-functioning health and education system, if housing and occupation are relatively easy to access to, then there is a chance for the individual or the group in "dissent" to make other choices, with the institutional or an NGO support; but often the ties with the community are so strong that individuals try to act in a balance that is not always possible, like in the cases of forced marriages, where the person is challenged with the devastating choice of abandoning forever the community and parents

Honor and shame system

European and Mediterranean anthropology speaks of an *honor and shame system* which can be identified and traced as stretching from India to Maghreb. Within these particular social systems women represent the family honor and they are, therefore, the first group members who must be controlled and restricted. These controls are focused on marital practices and reproduction as forms of domination and thus ensures the perpetuation of restrictive and limiting social structures for women.

The main tool of this system is early marriage, which constitute a reason often given for young girls dropping out of school. Removing young girls from school also affords the opportunity for communities to block exposure to outside ideals and cultures, thus protecting and guaranteeing the continuation of this oppressive system.

Keeping communities isolated make it possible to protect the cultural norms as these ethnic ghettos afford an environment where social controls are immensely strong and the engagement of young women in emancipatory action becomes nearly impossible.

To continue to live in the isolation of the community will allow to adhere to a double register: that of clan and that of citizenship, and in the closely knit group, where social control is immensely strong, is still in place, then it will be very difficult to engage in emancipation processes.

Roma are thus taken in between two sets of contrasting value sets which cannot co-exist as one would represent the end of the other, and the lack of viable alternatives make the adoption of the ethnic package almost compulsory.

The conceptualization of Roma as a "super-diversity" has meant that the intervention was mainly oriented toward cultural protection, mediation, and advocacy, avoiding potentially risky themes such as job inclusion.

To invest on mediation means implying that Roma population needs practicing a continuous work of translation with institutions and the non-Roma, thus reinforcing the image of a group separated from the rest of the population, carrier of specific needs and dependent from a system of welcoming.

For many migrants' mediation is intended as a temporary intervention during the first phase of the arrival, in order for themselves to orient and familiarize with services and institutions. This has been achieved by means of several inclusive tools that host countries can offer ("150" hours course, language courses for foreigners etc.). Only for the Roma mediation has been institutionalized becoming an intervention to be implemented on a national scale. However, the only true successful measure of the efficacy and impact of this mediation project is in the diminished need for the training and support; not in an increased need for these interventions which indicate from their actions a lack of equality and integration.

Societal categories given at birth, those of race and ethnicity, are identity designations that are used to perpetuate a divisive society. These descriptors are used to construct power differences and maintain elite control to prevent interethnic alliances that might challenge the status quo. In fact, similarities between poor whites and poor ethnics remain repressed and invisible, conflict and difference among them is encouraged. The resulting simplistic view of "majoritarian" and "minoritarian" maintains the power dynamic of majority over minority and encourages the perception that the two social categories are egalitarian, immutable and unchangeable.

Failures of Roma community integration and counterbalance the stereotypes

Failures of Roma community integration is blamed on external causes such as institutional neglect, which is undeniable, but there are also internal conservative Romani forces which prevent the development of integration and emancipation towards equality.

This is why the cultural *metissage* is a key tool, and this is why schools, and particularly in early childhood, are so important in order for the child to develop the concept of free choice. The daily meetings with other children from other groups allow and stimulate the capacity and the skill set needed to interact meaningfully with others outside the community, where compliance is the norm and "deviant" behaviors are simply not allowed.

The best way to counterbalance the stereotypes is that of practicing and teaching children to interact in an equal way, and to reveal the hidden reasons behind the need to control women. Unveil men's fear.

We have explained how important, and through which means and strategies is the control of women's relations achieved. The goal is the continuation of the society as it is, and of which women's and girl's discrimination constitute a central, essential part, becoming an "enabling factor".

Being ostracized, labelled negatively, and criticized or even shunned is a terrible experience also with adults. Much more so when the victim represents a society sector more fragile because of age and sex. Relationship between the two sexes is learned by the daily observation of familiar and peer interactions. If the verbal and non-verbal message is that "women will know their place" children of both sexes within the family would be pushed to imitate and reproduce their parents' behaviour.

We, as children, believe our parents to be the best, and the ones who knows best: they feed us, they warm and console us, they protect us from dangers so that it becomes impossible for a child to determine and chose the appropriate behaviour to display, being in the same situation but elsewhere. They learn to respond by watching other people's response, and unless a situation is specifically used to show other possible models of behaviour, the learning process has already done his work, and the child will learn and reiterate as an adult according to the model he has been witnessing in his childhood.

PRACTICAL EXERCISES:

Guide a discussion on a selected topic offering practical instruction as to how to lead a conversation avoiding sexist and male centred approaches. Gentleness and fairness are key skills to support children toward a harmonious growth process. A good start could be for example enacting a real-life situation in the presence of a selected "stranger"; it could be an imaginary professor, or an employer. The key mechanism lies in the task of putting the children in a situation where they must behave according to rules of fairness, a case which not often happens among peers or in families. The simulation has the potential to directly show the effect of maladaptive behaviour.

What happens inside the family in pertinent/relevant occasions? Is the "common sense" accepted by all? Single out, in the focus group, possible "parents' leader roles". Learn the inner society's values; register what is for them important (or, better, expected) and suggest, drawing from practical and if possible, real-life situations, an alternative way of dealing which does not reinforce the practices of the community toward the girl.

- What are the examples of negative cultural practices within your group?
- How do they work in practice? Who enacts/enforces them?
- What is the logic of the practice? What is its use? Which sectors of society benefit the most from adopting certain practices?

Negative cultural practices and attitudes toward girls are detrimental to their well-being and hinder their opportunities for growth and development. Let's contrast these negative practices and attitudes with positive alternatives:

1. **Negative Practice: Gender-Based Violence**
   - **Positive Alternative:** Promote Gender Equality and Safety
     - Advocate for laws and policies that condemn and penalize gender-based violence.
     - Encourage educational programs that teach respect, consent, and healthy relationships.
     - Provide support services for victims of gender-based violence.
2. **Negative Attitude: Discrimination in Education**
   - **Positive Alternative:** Equal Access to Education
     - Advocate for policies that ensure equal access to quality education for girls.
     - Promote awareness campaigns to challenge stereotypes that limit girls' educational choices.
     - Implement scholarship programs and incentives to keep girls in school.
3. **Negative Practice: Child Marriage**
   - **Positive Alternative:** Delayed Marriages and Empowerment
     - Advocate for and enforce laws against child marriage.
     - Provide educational opportunities and skill development programs for girls.
     - Raise awareness about the negative consequences of early marriage on girls' health and well-being.
4. **Negative Attitude: Gender Bias in Healthcare**
   - **Positive Alternative:** Equal Access to Healthcare
     - Ensure equal access to healthcare services for girls.
     - Implement programs that focus on maternal and reproductive health education.
     - Challenge gender biases in medical treatment and research.
5. **Negative Practice: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**
   - **Positive Alternative:** Promote Bodily Autonomy and Health
     - Advocate for strict legal measures against FGM.
     - Provide education on the physical and psychological consequences of FGM.
     - Support communities in developing alternative rites of passage that do not involve harm.
6. **Negative Attitude: Limited Economic Opportunities**
   - **Positive Alternative:** Economic Empowerment
     - Create vocational training programs for girls to develop marketable skills.
     - Promote equal employment opportunities and fair wages.
     - Encourage entrepreneurship initiatives for girls and women.
7. **Negative Practice: Unequal Inheritance Rights**
   - **Positive Alternative:** Equal Property and Inheritance Rights
     - Advocate for legal reforms that grant equal property and inheritance rights to girls.
     - Raise awareness about the benefits of gender equality in property ownership.
     - Provide legal support to girls facing discrimination in inheritance matters.
8. **Negative Attitude: Cultural Stereotypes and Norms**
   - **Positive Alternative:** Cultural Sensitivity and Gender Inclusivity
     - Promote cultural sensitivity that values diversity and challenges harmful stereotypes.

- Encourage positive representations of girls and women in media and cultural expressions.
- Support cultural initiatives that foster gender inclusivity and equality.

9. **Negative Practice: Nutrition Disparities**
   o **Positive Alternative:** Addressing Nutritional Needs
   - Implement nutrition programs that specifically address the unique nutritional needs of girls.
   - Educate communities on the importance of balanced nutrition for girls' health and development.
   - Ensure equitable distribution of resources to address nutritional disparities.

10. **Negative Attitude: Lack of Representation in Decision-Making**
    o **Positive Alternative:** Representation and Participation
    - Advocate for increased representation of girls in decision-making processes.
    - Encourage mentorship programs to empower girls to take on leadership roles.
    - Foster a culture of inclusivity that values the perspectives and contributions of girls.

Addressing negative cultural practices and attitudes toward girls requires a multi-dimensional approach, including legal reforms, education, awareness campaigns, and community engagement. By promoting positive alternatives, societies can work towards creating environments that empower and support the rights of girls.

For social services operators:

Remember how important it is to assess the context and the situation. Visits to the households are strongly encouraged and they can constitute an appropriate baseline for the measurement of inclusion indicators, specifically including also gender mainstreaming indicators. There is much that a social worker can do in this initial moment of observation.

To assess the contest, it is paramount to note the following key questions: Where is he/she living? Are they nationals or non-nationals? How and why, they came in contact with the local services? What is his/her occupation? What is the need arising? Parent involvement and level/knowledge of services and their use. School attendance/truancy if any)

For Public Administrators:

Ensure that the social worker is going to visit in person the families, observing the context and reporting to the office. It is the same procedure used in many other social intervention cases, the difference here is that the theme of gender equality is more subtle, and it is often learned at a very young age, and introjected and re-enacted through the observation and subsequent repetition, of familiar practices.

Design and program periodic public encounters with experts both in institutional places and in the community. Experts should be practical people, can be academics but they must have a strong knowledge of the target because theory has here a very limited impact, and what is more needed are practical examples and case situations.

In public procurements, include a budget voice specifically dedicated to women to engage them concretely in programs and policies.

What studies and research have shown so far? How is it suggested to contrast this phenomenon? Which strategies and policies?

Learn from practice: the methodology of putting theoretic knowledge into practices through the analysis of key cases and situations. Explain why negative attitudes and practices are mainly based on the fear of losing privileges that comes within gender and by the fear of losing power and control.

Preventative education is central because prevention addresses problems before they blow. A key point in preventative education is that the more the knowledge, the better, and more incisive the action. A tool to be used is that of the so called "compensatory pedagogy"; it is a type of affirmative action.

The best way to counterbalance the stereotypes is that of practicing and teaching children to interact in an equal way, and to reveal the hidden reasons behind the need to control women.

We have explained how important, and through which means and strategies is the control of women's relations achieved. The goal is the continuation of the society as it is, and of which women's and girl's discrimination constitute a central, essential part, becoming an "enabling factor".

Being ostracized, labelled negatively, and criticized or even shunned is a terrible experience also with adults. Much more so when the victim represents a society sector more fragile because of age and sex. Relationship between the two sexes is learned by the daily observation of familiar and peer interactions. If the verbal and nonverbal message is that "women will know their place" children of both sexes within the family would be pushed to imitate and reproduce their parents' behaviour.

We, as children, believe our parents to be the best, and the ones who knows best: they feed us, they warm and console us, they protect us from dangers so that it becomes impossible for a child to determine and chose the appropriate behaviour to display, being in the same situation but elsewhere. They learn to respond by watching other people's response, and unless a situation is specifically used to show other possible models of behaviour, the learning process has already done his work, and the child will learn and reiterate as an adult according to the model he has been witnessing in his childhood.

Gender Equality and Antidiscrimination for Roma

MODULE 3
Promotion and awareness raising
on the rights of girls

SUMMARY

A SHORT TIMELINE

After the important achievement of the right to vote in many Western countries in 1920, women's rights have been the subject throughout the 20th century of various conventions and treaties promoted by the UN or by associations and aimed at countering the obvious discrimination and inequalities that undermine women's emancipation. Beginning with the UN's founding act, which in Article 1 enshrines the promotion of and respect for "(...) human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion." the struggle for gender equality has experienced periods of effervescence and mobilization.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the issue of the gender gap, intertwined with counterculture movements and the contestation of patriarchal models, extended to include freedom of reproductive choice, the right to equal employment, the contestation of domestic violence, and equal rights in all spheres of life. In this climate of strong ferment for women's emancipation, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) constituted an instrument aimed at promoting substantive equality between men and women in all fields, from politics to economics, from family to education. Its cardinal principles are equality; non-discrimination; empowerment. Accordingly, the obligations of states that have ratified it concern: the amendment of discriminatory laws, the adoption of concrete measures to promote gender equality, and the measures necessary to ensure equal access for women in all areas of public and private life; in addition, CEDAW places special emphasis on actively promoting cultural change that values women. In this regard, some of its articles specifically address practices related to areas of private and public life through which gender stereotypes can be countered. Examples include the modification of school curricula and the sharing of family responsibilities between men and women, as well as access to family planning services. Among the most significant achievements resulting from the ratification of CEDAW we can include first the increase in female literacy rates and greater representation of women in national parliaments. In addition, this Convention has helped expand women's access to health services including reproductive health and put the issue of gender-based violence on the political agenda of countries that have ratified it.

The cultural climate of the 1990s, resulting from the end of the Cold War and the spread of democratic governments, resulted, also thanks to the introduction of gender quotas sanctioned by the CEDAW, in greater participation of women in political life and their attainment of leadership positions. In this context of renewed focus on human rights and equality, the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995. Despite being a non-binding plan of action and lacking an official monitoring mechanism, as was the case with the CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration, adopted by 189 countries, contributed to further strengthening the principles enshrined in the CEDAW by outlining precise areas of intervention for gender equality.

It focuses on women's empowerment and economic and social rights, addressing critical areas such as economic and political participation, education, and violence against women in armed conflicts, as well as domestic violence. It also recognizes the importance of the intersectional approach to realizing women's rights. Indeed, the barriers to women's full equality and advancement are diverse and intersect with other forms of discrimination (such as those based on race, social class, age, culture, disability, religion, being a migrant, etc.) generating specific experiences of oppression.) generating specific and complex experiences of oppression.

The critical areas of concern on which the document formulates specific proposals for intervention aimed at strategic objectives are twelve in number, namely:

A. *Women and poverty*

B. *Education and training of women*

C. *Women and health*

D. *Violence against women*

E.   *Women and armed conflict*

F.   *Women and the economy*

G.   *Women in power and decision-making*

H.   *Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women*

I.   *Human rights of women*

J.   *Women and the media*

K.   *Women and the environment*

L.   *The girl child*

The Beijing Declaration is therefore a landmark document that has had a significant impact on legislation and policy, helping to outline a distinctive plan of action for gender equality and women's empowerment and, above all, emphasizing that this is an essential prerequisite for human society.

"Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development, and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people centered sustainable development."[1]

Awareness-raising about the crucial importance of women's rights and the principle of gender equality, which is now considered a customary norm in international law, has resulted in several other initiatives at the international, national, and local level to promote gender equality and equality. For instance, the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, adopted in Istanbul in 2011, is a landmark international treaty for the protection of women's rights. It is the first legally binding international instrument establishing a comprehensive legal framework to combat gender-based violence in all its forms. From a social point of view, its special feature is the recognition of violence against women as a serious violation of human rights. It is neither a private nor a public order issue; gender-based violence is a complex phenomenon with serious repercussions on the physical and psychological health of its victims and society. From a normative point of view, the convention provides a broad and detailed definition of violence, succeeding in providing for the adoption of legislative measures, both criminal and civil, against several forms of ill-treatment that were not recognized as such (e.g. economic and psychological violence). It also establishes an independent monitoring system by GREVIO (Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence). The structure of the Istanbul Convention and its normative and societal effects are better explained in section 5 of this paper. However, it is worth emphasizing how it has contributed substantially to raising the awareness of public opinion and of a (unfortunately still minority) section of professionals working in institutions (judiciary, law enforcement, medical personnel, social workers).

The cultural change, which is both desirable and necessary, so that these postulates can be translated into an effective promotion of gender equality, counteracting the sexist and discriminatory stereotypes that feed the foundations of gender inequality, is a multidimensional and complex process of which we are perhaps seeing the beginning.

The effect of these important legal instruments is not taken for granted and intersects with the cultural, institutional and, above all, economic investment choices of different countries.

In short, the actual impact of legislation on women's rights is held back by objective conditions concerning political and financial commitment on the part of states and the courage to challenge established attitudes and practices. Finally, as highlighted in the Beijing Declaration, it is crucial that policy actions are based on the recognition of the intersection between gender discrimination and other forms of discrimination. The

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[1] Ivi, p. 7

condition of a migrant or refugee, sick or culturally deprived woman is not and will never be the same as that of a fully integrated first-world woman. Although this does not mean that they do not both suffer various forms of discrimination.

1. WHERE ARE WE AT TODAY?

We can say that the level of protection of women's rights in Europe is generally higher than in other areas of the world, yet the ratification of the Conventions, both in terms of legislation and concrete implementation, has been uneven in the member states. This is due to the political and economic investment choices of different countries. Taking equal pay for equal work as an example, which despite being illegal reaches an average of 16% in the EU countries, the gender pay gap is overall higher in the Eastern countries (in Estonia it reaches 25%) and lower in the Scandinavian countries. Just as significant are the differences in employment rates by gender, although in no country do women have a job that pays as much as men.

At an overall glance, the indices that show a greater gender gap concern pay, employment, decision-making power, education and access to resources and services.

The latest EIGE[2] report, which monitors Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) by publishing reports every five years, defines many of the challenges stated in 1995 as still relevant. Among these the most obvious, but not the only ones, are the gender pay gap, unequal distribution of unpaid work and experiences of gender-based violence. Leaving aside for now the issue of experiences of gender-based violence, which will be better addressed in section 5 of this paper, let us briefly outline the most critical aspects characterizing gender discrimination in some key and interconnected issues, which summaries the objectives of the Beijing Platform Action.

2. GENDER INEQUALITIES IN THE ECONOMY

Gender inequality in the formal economy is characterized by lower employment rates for women and by the prevalence of precarious or part-time work (about four times more likely than men), even with the same educational qualifications. This condition is particularly evident for women from vulnerable ethnic and migrant backgrounds and single mothers. In addition, due to the difficulty of accessing the finance needed to start a business, women rarely start entrepreneurial careers. Their concentration in the public sector, where jobs have further decreased following the post-2008 economic crisis, has further exposed them to the risk of in-work poverty.

However, the figure that appears most significant, also in relation to the future of the economy and climate change, is the low presence of women in precisely those sectors that are now booming, such as high-tech, IT, and ICT in general, as well as in all professions related to the environment and energy. The concentration of women in the education and care sectors follows exactly the gender stereotype with a significant under-representation of men in these same sectors and this fact, in addition to economic considerations, also implies a lack of opportunity for confrontation and a wealth of ideas and visions for the future, with men at the helm of environmental policies and women at great risk of losing their jobs due to automation and digitalization.

As far as the strictly economic aspects are concerned, this employment gap leads to a lower earning capacity of women, confirming the wage gap and, consequently, also feeding the pension gap. The all-female propensity to care for children and the elderly, i.e. the employment of a large part of women's time in unpaid work (about 13 hours a week more than men) is also confirmed in recent years. The issue of

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[2] https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/beijing-25-fifth-review-implementation-beijing-platform-action-eu-member-states

elderly care calls into question two other important circumstances. First, the difficulty for families to benefit from public and social services that can take care of them and, as far as rights are concerned, parental leave time, which is less for men. In this respect, greater harmonisation of minimum rights is desirable so that parental leave can promote gender equality rather than traditional inequalities. However, for the time being, these conditions collectively impact women's risk of poverty in a very significant way and with even more devastating effects for Roma communities. Here, incomes below the poverty line affect four out of every five employed women, and many Roma girls do not complete secondary education[3].

3. GENDER-RESPONSIVE PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SERVICES

Public infrastructures, such as care services for the elderly and children or social protection services, that are gender responsive must be designed to ensure gender equality in society. It is important that these services consider the specific needs of their users depending on whether they are women or men. To give an example related to social protection, women often cannot access benefits because they are part of a household. The same applies at a broader level to welfare, pension, and taxation systems. There is no doubt that, being based on family income, welfare systems exclusively penalize women who are dependent on their partner. In the same way, taxation systems disadvantage the low-income partner (almost always the woman) within a couple, with the consequence of influencing the choice to enter the labor market and thus increasing the risk of female poverty. In the same line of discrimination, pension systems, which are, moreover, subject to increasingly substantial downsizing, exacerbate the gender gap by the very fact that they are based on long, continuous, and well-paid working careers: exactly those that women can rarely afford to access due to their caring responsibilities. It has been assessed that all measures of downsizing public spending, from pensions to subsidies and from health to care services, have had an even more specific negative impact on women.

Another end of the discussion concerns transport-related services. Here, too, it is established that women are less likely to own a car and thus to be able to move around independently, as well as to be able to travel longer distances. In most cases, women's travel patterns, also due to the disproportionate amount of time they devote to care, are shorter and more complex. Although new transport technologies may provide a favorable opportunity to challenge these behaviors, careful consideration of these gender aspects would be necessary in designing more equitable and sustainable transport policies for all. This would also help to de-construct the symbolically established pair of masculinity and automobility. A final aspect concerns the implementation of smart home technologies, which could translate into a transformative advantage on domestic work and care tasks.

4. PARITY DEMOCRACY

Equal democracy is a model of democracy that aspires to achieve full and substantial equality between men and women in all areas of social, political, and economic life. Therefore, it is not about mere numerical equality, but refers to a concrete and active participation of women as well as men in public life. A balanced representation in all the different spheres of life would have as an immediate reflection a greater richness of viewpoints, arguments, foresight of possible risks and interests involved in policies. Moreover, it would improve decision-making because of the confluence of different viewpoints and strategies.

The progress achieved in this field in the European Union's policies is still too little and has little impact on social life. We can identify the reasons for this in the way in which the issue of equal democracy is

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[3] ibidem

approached. These are still too fragmented and, more generally, lack a transversal gender mainstreaming approach that considers the intended objectives. Furthermore, gender mainstreaming tools such as gender impact assessments or gender budgeting are scarcely applied in this context. About European gender mainstreaming investments in specific sectors, indicators do not always allow for a clear and in-depth reading of the funds and investments expressly dedicated to these objectives.

A special discourse deserves instead, as mentioned before, the topic of the European Union's environmental policies also related to climate change and about which there is widespread sensitivity. Here too, despite the fact that gender differences in environmental behavior as well as in the impacts of climate change are clear, the European Union's policy appears to be essentially gendered blind. Solutions are adopted that focus on market, technological and security measures, which nevertheless continue to exclude people-based approaches.

In the decision-making processes, progress towards gender balance appears slow and uneven. In addition to the proven under-representation of women in all fields of decision-making (politics, economics, business, health, research and innovation, armed conflicts, environment, media, science and sport), differences between sectors persist, with levels of representation further decimated in the areas of economic and trade policies, sport, diplomacy and the European Court of Justice. This unequal distribution once again confirms the influence of gender stereotypes and discriminatory mechanisms in the under-representation of women and in their choice of leadership positions. The risk of online harassment has now also become an additional element that contributes, together with inequalities in care responsibilities, to the disadvantage of the decision to pursue careers in leadership. On these, then, always hangs the shadow of stigma, which is reflected in the way women in leadership positions are perceived, treated, and valued; it is not difficult to understand if one only looks at the 'media treatment' they receive.

A timid result of governmental actions in favor of gender balance in decision-making was achieved mainly through the role of binding quotas and legislative electoral quotas. Alongside this, the proportion of women on the boards and in the national parliaments of the Member States improved slightly. The most immediate benefits of this tentative change were observed in improved corporate financial performance, less corruption, greater awareness of environmental protection and better career progression of other women in the same organization.

5. PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

The empowerment of women is directly linked to the possibility of promoting peaceful and truly inclusive societies. This goal can be pursued to the extent that emancipation can be ensured for women who experience serious human rights violations and, more generally, for those belonging to minorities, women with disabilities and those affected by armed conflicts. Decisive and targeted actions and measures are needed to ensure gender-sensitive asylum processes while respecting minority rights. Despite the efforts made so far by the European Union in this direction, it is still necessary for gender to be mainstreamed in all security and defense activities. Greater gender sensitivity needs to be promoted in asylum processes, which are known to expose women to serious risks of gender-based violence and human trafficking for sexual exploitation. Again, approaches and gender sensitivity vary even significantly across countries; it is possible that seeking asylum may expose women and girls to an even greater risk of vulnerability.

The great challenge represented by the increasing migration flows cannot be tackled in a merely bureaucratic and border control manner. This approach, which is often used for political ends, has often resulted in human rights violations. The EU is taking the necessary measures to adhere to the Istanbul Convention, recognizing violence against women as a serious human rights violation that can be grounds for asylum. However, the response to these measures is different in the different member states. For example, in Hungary, there is a lack of reception and integration of refugees; in Greece, reception facilities are severely inadequate. A positive example is Belgium, which has provided specific services for pregnant

women and single parents. However, it is well known that violence against migrants occurs frequently along the Balkan route.

Daily intersectional discrimination affects women from ethnic and religious minorities, LBTQI persons and women with disabilities. A sad example are the girls from Roma communities who, in addition to experiences of discrimination in various areas of life, suffer forced sterilization. African women also face increasing difficulties in employment because of their religious identity; 44% of transgender women have experienced an average of three or more physical or sexual assaults in the last year. Finally, women with disabilities, in addition to facing gender and disability stereotypes in their daily lives, often run the risk of forced sterilization.

6. RESISTANCE TO CHANGE AND FLAME RETURNS

With respect to the ongoing challenge women face to conquer and enjoy their rights, an alarm signal that should not be underestimated concerns the rise of the 'anti-gender' movements coupled with the undermining of the role of civil society organizations and women's rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in many member states.

The assumption from which the 'anti-gender' movements move is the contestation of the concept of 'gender' as a social construct, influenced by cultural and individual factors, whereas they only accept a binary view of gender as a binary and immutable biological reality. Essentially, the distorted and simplistic vision of the 'anti-gender' movements, often combined with firm religious convictions, returns, if ever there was a need, to affirm a hierarchical view of the family related to the superiority of men over women. A further corollary of this ideological view is the strong opposition to women's right to self-determination over their own bodies and reproductive choice. In addition to being a voice against the Istanbul Convention, these movements have taken legal action to prevent abortion and the teaching of sex education and reproductive health. A further, but not secondary, aspect related to this phenomenon is the fallout on civil society organizations and women's rights non-governmental organizations that have been subjected to defamation campaigns (also with the complicity of the media, as in Romania and Hungary) and towards which governments have undertaken restrictive policies (in Hungary the government has banned gender studies in higher education and has taken actions that seriously threaten the human rights of women, asylum seekers and LGBTQI* people). Specifically, the overall hostile measures towards NGOs consist of increased difficulties in accessing funding (as in the case of the various protection networks against violence against women in Italy) and increased state control systems, which have become more restrictive.

Despite the many achievements in the field of women′s rights and emancipation, we are today witnessing a brutal increase in violence against women. An example of this is statistics on gender-based violence, which does not tend to decrease, and new forms of violence linked to digitization[4]. It is no coincidence that 90% of deepfake victims are women. Even the rise of the "anti-gender" movements seems to condense a disproportionate reaction to the changes taking place and, first, to the increase in economic insecurity resulting from neoliberal economies.

As Silvia Federici[5] clearly pointed out in her analysis of the process of female subordination as a founding element in the construction of capitalism, violence has many different challenges depending on where it takes place, but its constituent element is the claim of economic autonomy by women. This instance intersected with the crisis of wage labor and male labor in general, resulting in precarization and even more exacerbated by the economic crisis of 2008. This condition, in fact, further undermined the traditional

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[4] https://rm.coe.int/grevio-rec-no-on-digital-violence-against-women/1680a49147
[5] Federici Silvia, *Witches, Witch-hunting, and Women*, Dev Publishers & Distributors, 2023

exchange underlying marriage: unpaid domestic work in exchange for economic security. It is therefore conceivable that these objective conditions, the assertion of rights by women and the slow conquest of autonomy and of reproductive choice, are perceived as a substantial threat to a condition of certainty and security that, it's long since gone.

7. GOOD PRACTISES, OR GOOD PROPOSALS?

What steps must be taken to ensure that the setbacks in the pursuit of women's rights do not undermine the effects of the legal instruments that have been won?

First, to promote as much as possible the political will, which appears to be lacking, so that it may urgently address the social challenges of increasing poverty and the priority of the Sustainable Development Goals. on poverty, health, education, affordable energy, climate action, decent work, reducing inequalities and achieving peaceful and inclusive societies.

To increase the economic independence of women by improving the welfare services of the countries. In addition to a marked improvement in the conditions for equal access to paid work, the crucial issue of caring for the elderly and people with disabilities must be addressed, which is carried out to a significantly greater extent by women and often in unstable conditions and with a lack of safeguards. At the same time, it is essential to respond to health care shortages both to ensure a higher level of individual well-being and to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health services, which have been threatened by retrogressive policies in some Member States.

In addition, as the EIGE report suggests, to extend the adoption of quotas to ensure greater participation of women in decision-making.

With an eye to the more immediate future, attention to the language and rhetoric of textbooks and school curricula will also be fundamental so that educational institutions do not continue to perpetuate the transmission of gender stereotypes. Furthermore, as far as education is concerned, it is at least urgent that the younger generations should be well equipped to consciously orient themselves in the jungle of information offered by the digital world. In this sense, it is crucial that educational institutions pay particular attention to the basic knowledge, the repertoire and the instruments that constitute the essential cornerstone for the development of skills in the broad sense, not only in reference to the instrumental aspects (as instead appears increasingly obvious). The educational holding company should ensure the transmission of values and principles that place at the center the dignity and equality of all human beings. In other words, it is essential that the younger generations experience in school relations marked by respect, equality, acceptance, equanimity, and reciprocity.

Indications for operators

- Promote awareness of women's rights among young people through the sharing of knowledge, experience, and expectations

- Role-Playing Scenarios: Divide participants into pairs. One acts as a girl facing limitations (e.g., not allowed to pursue education), the other acts as a supporter. Girls experience the issue firsthand, while boys see the impact.

- Photo Voice: Provide pictures depicting gender roles (women cooking, men working). Discuss traditional roles, then have participants take photos that challenge those roles (e.g., a man cooking). Reflect on how these images redefine expectations.

- Storytelling Workshop: Invite a elder to share stories of strong women who defied limitations. Discuss the importance of their contributions and how girls can be similarly empowered.

- Community Survey: Design a simple survey asking adults about their educational or career aspirations when young. Compare results with younger participants' aspirations. Discuss how societal expectations might differ for girls and boys.

- Media Analysis: Analyze advertisements or media portrayals. Discuss how women are represented and the messages conveyed. Encourage participants to create alternative media that promotes gender equality.

- Debate Club: Divide the group. One side argues the benefits of traditional gender roles, the other argues for women's rights. This fosters critical thinking and challenges pre-existing notions.

- Famous Figures: Research famous women who have made significant contributions. Discuss their achievements and how they overcame challenges. This inspires both girls and boys.

- "If I Were..." Writing Activity: Ask participants to write a story from the perspective of a woman facing limitations. Then, rewrite it imagining she had equal opportunities. Discuss the impact of these differences.

- Community Service Project: Organize a project that benefits women in the community, such as health education workshops or childcare support. This fosters empathy and a sense of agency for both girls and boys.

- Creating a "Women's Rights Charter": Facilitate a group discussion to create a list of principles for gender equality within the participants. This promotes ownership and understanding of women's rights.

Gender Equality and Antidiscrimination for Roma

MODULE 4

Contrast to the economic

exploitation of labour

SUMMARY

GENDER INEQUALITIES IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Gender inequalities in the labour market refer to the systemic differences and disadvantages women face in the workforce compared to men. These inequalities manifest in various ways, including:

- Employment rate lowest

- Average number of hours worked and Higher prevalence of part-time among women

- Gender pay gap: the persistent difference in earnings between men and women in the labour market.

- Occupational segregation and "female" jobs: where women are overrepresented in certain lower-paying and traditionally female-dominated occupations, such as teaching, nursing, and administrative support. Occupational segregation contributes to the gender wage gap by undervaluing jobs predominantly held by women.

-"Glass Ceiling": Invisible barriers prevent women from reaching the highest levels of leadership and decision-making in many organizations.

-"Second Shift": Women tend to shoulder more unpaid domestic and care work than men, limiting their time and energy for career advancement.

-Motherhood Penalty: Women often experience hiring discrimination, lack of flexibility, and wage stagnation after having children.

1. WORKING TIME IN EUROPE: GENDER GAP

On average, in the EU, men spent nearly six hours more per week than women on paid work: men reported working a little over 42 hours per week, while women worked close to 37 hours. This is largely explained by the fact that women are more likely to work part time. In the EU, around one-third of employed women (28%) are working part time; the share of men is 8%. This trend is consistent across most member states.

These differences in working part time are one of the main explanations – but not the only one – for the persistent gender pay gap.

Do women work less?
The European Working Conditions Telephone Survey (EWCTS), conducted in 2021, asked about hours spent on unpaid work – like housework, cooking, or caring for children or relatives. W**omen spent on average 13 hours more than men on unpaid work each week**.

Add the hours spent on paid work, and it is women who end up with a longer working week. Their combined 70 hours compare with men's 63 hours.

This is a total of eight full-time weeks more work on average for women than men every year. Eight. Whole. Weeks.

Gender gaps in weekly paid, unpaid, and total working hours, EU Member States (weekly hours)

Gender gap in unpaid work

Notes: The vertical axis shows how many hours fewer women spent on paid work than men; the horizontal axis shows how many hours more women spent on unpaid work than men. The bigger the size of a bubble, the larger the gender gap in total working (paid and unpaid) hours. - Source: EWCTS 2021

More women feel exhausted, with 28% of them reporting they feel too tired after work to do housework, compared with 21% of men. This is doubtlessly connected to the bigger burden of housework that women face: 74% of women did daily housework and cooking in 2021, compared with 42% of men.

2. OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION AND "FEMALE" JOBS

Adapting jobs and careers to family needs often leads to the **decision to work part time**, especially if availability or affordability of care services for children or ill, disabled, or elderly adults is an issue. This consideration can influence career choices from the start, with women looking for those sectors and occupations where part time work is more easily accessible, cementing a gender-segregated labour market. The high share of women in the public sector, where the option to work part time is more frequently offered, attests to this.

3. FEMALE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Employment rate: Although rising, women's employment rates in the EU still lag behind men's. In 2022, only 69.3% of women were employed compared to 80% of men, signifying a **gender employment gap of 10.7%** (European Commission)

- The female employment rate varies considerably across EU member states:
    - **Highest: Sweden** boasts the highest female employment rate in the EU, hovering around **83.3%** in 2021.
    - **Lowest: Greece** reported the lowest female employment rate in the EU at **54.6%** in 2021.

Additional considerations:

This gap is partly attributed to unequal distribution of care responsibilities, often placing a heavier burden on women for household and childcare, impacting their ability to work full-time.

Limited availability of full-time jobs in certain sectors might also push women towards part-time options.

Overall, while the female employment rate is on an upward trend in Europe, significant efforts remain necessary to close the gender employment gap and ensure equal opportunities for women in the workforce.

U-Shaped Curve:

Research reveals a U-shaped pattern in women's labor force participation. In pre-industrial economies women played a vital role in agricultural production. As economies transitioned towards manufacturing, women's participation often decreased. In more recent times nelle economie più avanzate the female labor force participation saw an upturn again.

Ushaped curve women's labor force participation
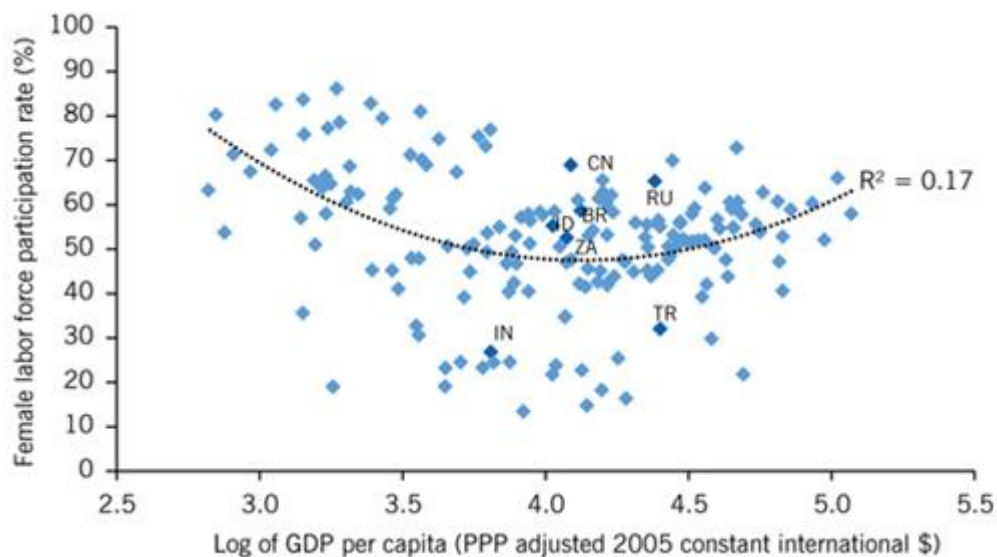
Source: ILO

4. GENDER PAY GAP

Women continue to be significantly overrepresented in low-paying jobs, but female employment has been growing faster than male employment in the highest-paying jobs, which are those accounting for the top 20% of employment by average wage.

The gender pay gap means that women, on average, earn 14.1% less per hour than men. The pay gap has reduced in around two-thirds of Member States.

The gender employment gap in the EU continues to narrow. Around 46% of EU workers are women compared to 40% a generation ago.

Gender Pay Gap in the EU

15.8% 15.7% 14.1%

2010   2014   2019   Present

Eurofound

Source: *Understanding the gender pay gap: What role do sector and occupation play?*

The gender pay gap is highest in well-paid jobs. This is a common pattern across Member States and occurs despite younger women increasingly outperforming younger men in educational attainment.

Variable forms of pay, such as shares in the company or payments based on company performance, are becoming more common. These pay components are increasing more rapidly among men than women which may widen the gender pay gap (at 13% in 2020)

5. JOB QUALITY

Gender inequalities in labour markets, employment and at work stretch well beyond labour market segmentation and gender pay gaps, and lie also within the working conditions and job quality that women and men experience in their jobs across countries, sectors and occupations.

Women are underrepresented as managers in almost all economic sectors. Management is most gender-balanced in the public sector, although men dominate here too.

Factors Behind the Gender Gap

The Gender Gap is a major manifestation of labour market inequalities.

Claudia Goldin (Nobel Prize in 2023) emphasized that the gender gap isn't explained by simple discrimination alone. There are several complex factors:

- **Flexibility vs. Long Hours:** Many high-paying professions demand long, inflexible work hours. Women are more likely to shoulder family responsibilities, making it difficult to manage careers designed this way.
- **Career Interruptions:** Women are more likely to take career breaks or work part-time for significant periods due to family care duties, harming their earning potential and career advancement in the long-term.
- **The "Greedy" Nature of Work:** numerous professions have become increasingly "greedy", in terms of time commitment, hindering work-life balance and disproportionately affecting women.

6. POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS TO REDUCE GENDER INEQUALITY

Flexibility and gender equality: workplace policies that promote flexibility and work-life balance, such as flexible scheduling, telecommuting, and parental leave. A greater flexibility in the workplace can help reduce gender inequalities by enabling women to better balance their work and family responsibilities and by encouraging greater participation and retention of women in the labour force.

Policy Solutions: Public policies aimed at improving work-life balance **and Motherhood.** Significant economic penalties that women face because of motherhood, including reduced wages, fewer opportunities for career advancement, and increased likelihood of part-time or temporary employment. Need for policies and cultural changes to address the motherhood penalty, such as affordable childcare, parental leave policies, and efforts to combat stereotypes and discrimination against mothers in the workplace.

Education and gender disparities: role of education in shaping gender inequalities, including gender gaps in educational attainment and disparities in fields of study. Importance of addressing educational barriers and promoting equal access to high-quality education for all individuals, regardless of gender.

MARGINALISED AND FRAGILE GROUPS: ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION OF LABOUR

Exploitation of labour refers to situations where workers are taken advantage of or treated unfairly by employers or those in positions of power within the workplace.

This exploitation can take various forms, including paying wages below a fair or living wage, subjecting workers to unsafe working conditions, denying workers basic rights such as breaks or overtime pay, and using coercion or manipulation to force workers into unfavorable conditions.

It's crucial to understand that **no single group** is solely affected by economic exploitation of labour, and it's a complex issue impacting various individuals and communities. However, certain **factors** can significantly increase an individual's vulnerability, making specific groups **more at risk** compared to others.

1. GROUPS AT RISK IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT:

Migrant workers: Both EU and non-EU, with undocumented and low-skilled individuals facing vulnerability.

Low-skilled workers: Often exploited in cleaning, security, and hospitality sectors.

Specific sectors: Agriculture, domestic work, and informal sectors.

Marginalized communities.

Trafficked individuals and

2. ROMA COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE:

Systemic discrimination: Limiting access to education, housing, and formal employment.

Segregation and marginalization: Pushing them towards informal and exploitative work.

Lack of documentation: Hindering access to formal work and increasing vulnerability.

Gender dynamics: Additional vulnerabilities for Roma women.

THE EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN'S LABOR

The exploitation of women's labour specifically refers to situations where women are disproportionately subjected to unfair or unjust treatment in the workplace based on their gender.

This can take various forms, including:

1.   Wage discrimination: Women may be paid less than men for performing the same or similar work, a phenomenon known as the gender pay gap all **other conditions being equal**.

2.   Occupational segregation: Women may be concentrated in lower-paying and less prestigious jobs and industries compared to men, limiting their earning potential and career advancement opportunities.

3.   Unpaid care work: Women often shoulder a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, such as childcare and eldercare responsibilities, which can limit their ability to participate in the formal labour market and advance in their careers.

4.   Sexual harassment and discrimination: Women may face sexual harassment, discrimination, and hostile work environments based on their gender, which can undermine their well-being and career prospects.

5.   Lack of access to decent work: Women, especially those in marginalized communities, may face barriers to accessing decent work, including limited educational and training opportunities, discriminatory hiring practices, and inadequate legal protections.

Addressing the exploitation of women's labour requires systemic changes, including implementing and enforcing laws and policies that promote gender equality in the workplace, combating stereotypes and biases, providing support for work-life balance, promoting women's economic empowerment, and fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity in the workplace.

1. THE EXPLOITATION OF YOUNG GIRLS' LABOR

The exploitation of young girls' labour involves the unfair or unjust treatment of girls in the workforce, often due to their age, gender, and vulnerabilities.

This exploitation at a global level can occur in various forms:

1.   Child labour: Minor Young girls may be forced or coerced into work at a young age, depriving them of their right to education, play, and a childhood. They may be engaged in hazardous or exploitative work environments, such as agriculture, domestic service, or sweatshops (Sweatshops often have poor working conditions, unfair wages, unreasonable hours, child labour, and a lack of benefits for workers.).

2.   Sexual exploitation: Some young girls are subjected to sexual exploitation and trafficking, forced into prostitution, pornography, or other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. They may be lured or abducted with promises of employment, education, or a better life, only to be exploited and abused.

3.   Forced labour: Young girls may be trafficked or coerced into forced labour situations, such as domestic servitude, factory work, or agricultural labour. They may work long hours in unsafe conditions, without adequate pay or protections.

2. IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPE:

Exploitative working conditions: Even in legal employment settings, young girls may face exploitation through low wages, long hours, unsafe working conditions, and lack of access to education, training, or social protections.

Discrimination: Young girls may face discrimination and barriers to accessing certain types of work or advancing in their careers due to their age, gender, or other intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status.

Another form of exploitation of the labour of the most vulnerable individuals is the so-called Forced begging considered a form of "exploitation of begging" and is categorized as a crime under the European Directive 2011/36/EU.

Exploitation of begging includes:

- Coercion of individuals to beg.

- Profiting from the begging of others.

3. ADDRESSING THE EXPLOITATION

Addressing the exploitation of young girls' labour requires a multifaceted approach involving legal frameworks, enforcement mechanisms, social services, and community interventions.

Efforts should focus on preventing child labour and trafficking, providing access to education and vocational training opportunities, raising awareness about the rights of children and women, strengthening child protection systems, and promoting gender equality and empowerment.

Collaboration among governments, civil society organizations, businesses, and communities is essential to effectively combatting the exploitation of young girls' labour.

Combatting the exploitation of young girls' labour In Europe requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of the problem and provides support and protection for vulnerable individuals. Here are some strategies to combat exploitation:

- Provide access to education: Access to quality education is essential for preventing child labour and empowering young girls. Governments and organizations should work to ensure that all children, regardless of gender or socio-economic background, have access to free, compulsory education.

- Strengthen child protection systems: Governments should strengthen child protection systems to identify and support children at risk of exploitation. This includes establishing hotlines, shelters, and support services for victims of trafficking and abuse.

- Raise awareness: Public awareness campaigns can help educate communities about the dangers of child labour, trafficking, and exploitation. These campaigns should target parents, children, educators, and community leaders and promote alternative solutions, such as education and vocational training.

- Support economic empowerment: Economic empowerment programs can provide young girls with alternative opportunities to exploitative labour. This may include vocational training, job placement services, and microfinance initiatives aimed at supporting entrepreneurship and income generation.

- Address root causes: Addressing the root causes of exploitation, such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination, is essential for preventing child labour and trafficking. Governments and organizations should implement policies and programs that address these underlying issues and promote social and economic development for all members of society.

By implementing these strategies and working together across sectors and borders, we can make significant progress in combatting the exploitation of young girls' labour and ensuring that all children can grow and thrive in safe and supportive environments.

UNDECLARED WORK

It is the most widespread form of labour exploitation in Europe.

At EU level, undeclared work is defined as "any paid activities that are lawful as regards their nature, but not declared to public authorities, taking into account differences in the regulatory systems of the Member States" (European Commission, 2007).

Undeclared work may come in different forms:

- The most common type is work carried out in a formal undertaking, **partially or fully undeclared**. Partially undeclared work is sometimes also called "**under-declared work**", "**envelope wages**" or "**cash-in-hand**";
- Another type is **undeclared** "**own account"** or **self-employed work**, where self-employed persons provide services either to a formal enterprise or to other clients, such as households.
- Undeclared work occurs in all kinds of economic sectors, both within countries and across borders. It is often carried out in sectors like construction, renovation or repair works, gardening, cleaning, provision of childcare or HORECA (Hotel / Restaurant / Catering – food services).

Undeclared work is a persisting challenge negatively affecting workers, businesses, and governments across Europe.

A new Special Eurobarometer survey[1] carried out in 2019 shows that in the EU:

- One in ten Europeans say they have purchased in the past year goods or services that might include undeclared work. Europeans are most likely to have purchased undeclared goods or services for home repairs or renovations.
- One third of Europeans know someone who works undeclared.
- Half of Europeans perceive the risk of being detected by authorities as low.

1. DEFINITION OF UNDECLARED WORK

Member States have adopted a variety of different definitions focusing upon non-compliance with either labour, tax and/or social security legislation or regulations If there are additional forms of non-compliance, it is not undeclared work.

If the goods and services provided are unlawful (e.g., trafficking of drugs, firearms, persons, or money laundering forbidden by law), it is part of the wider criminal economy i.e., the shadow economy (often defined as including both the undeclared economy and the criminal economy), and if there is no monetary payment, it is part of the unpaid sphere.

As such, illegal economic activities are excluded from the definition of undeclared work. However, sometimes what is lawful in one country is illegal in others. For instance, in some countries, prostitution is legal (e.g., Germany, Greece and Hungary) but not in others, and in some countries (e.g., the Netherlands) some drugs are legal but not in others.

Here, therefore, the definition of undeclared work excludes these transactions that are legal in some countries but not others. As such, undeclared work excludes all activities that are unlawful as regards their

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/special/surveyky/2250

nature, but also some lawful activities in some Member States, but not others, for which data is not collected in survey databases (i.e., EU- LFS and SBS).

In consequence, undeclared work is composed of the following four broad types:

- Unregistered employment: an employment relationship which is not registered with the authorities when it should be registered. Such employees often do not have written contracts or terms of employment and their remuneration is most probably undeclared in nature.

-Under-declared employment: when formal employers pursue the illegal practice of reducing their tax and social security payments, and therefore labour costs, by under-declaring the remuneration of employees. This occurs when employers pay their formal employees two salaries: an official declared salary and an additional undeclared ("envelope") wage which is hidden from the authorities for tax and social security purposes. Alternatively, an employer can under-declare the number of hours an employee works, such as to evade paying the minimum wage.

Envelope wages: often used in the context of under-declared employment, an envelope wage is a cash-in-hand wage paid by a formal employer to a formal employee in addition to their official declared salary, to reduce their tax and social security payments and therefore labour costs. It arises from an agreement between the employer and employee, and additional conditions may be attached to its payment, which are not in the formal written contract or terms of employment.

- Undeclared self-employment: paid activity conducted by the self-employed where income is not declared for the purpose of evading either tax and/or social insurance contributions owed. The self-employed may not declare either some or all their income.

- Unregistered family work: labour input by individuals who are not directly paid but do contribute to the for-profit family business

Undeclared Work in the private sector as % of GVA - 2019
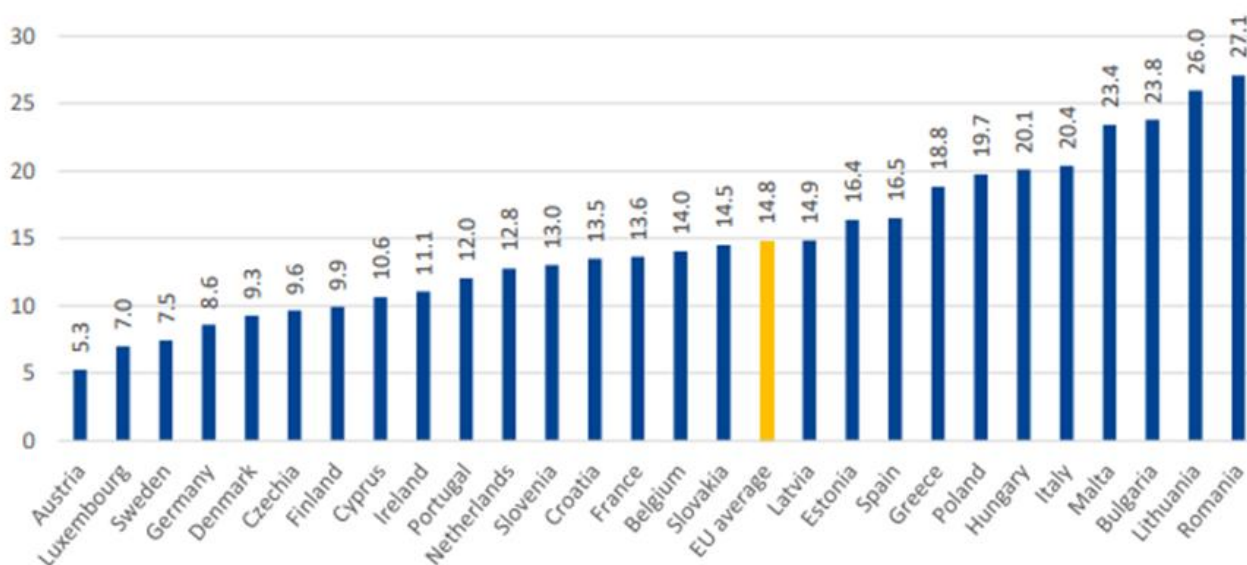
Undeclared Work in Terms of the Labour Input - 2019
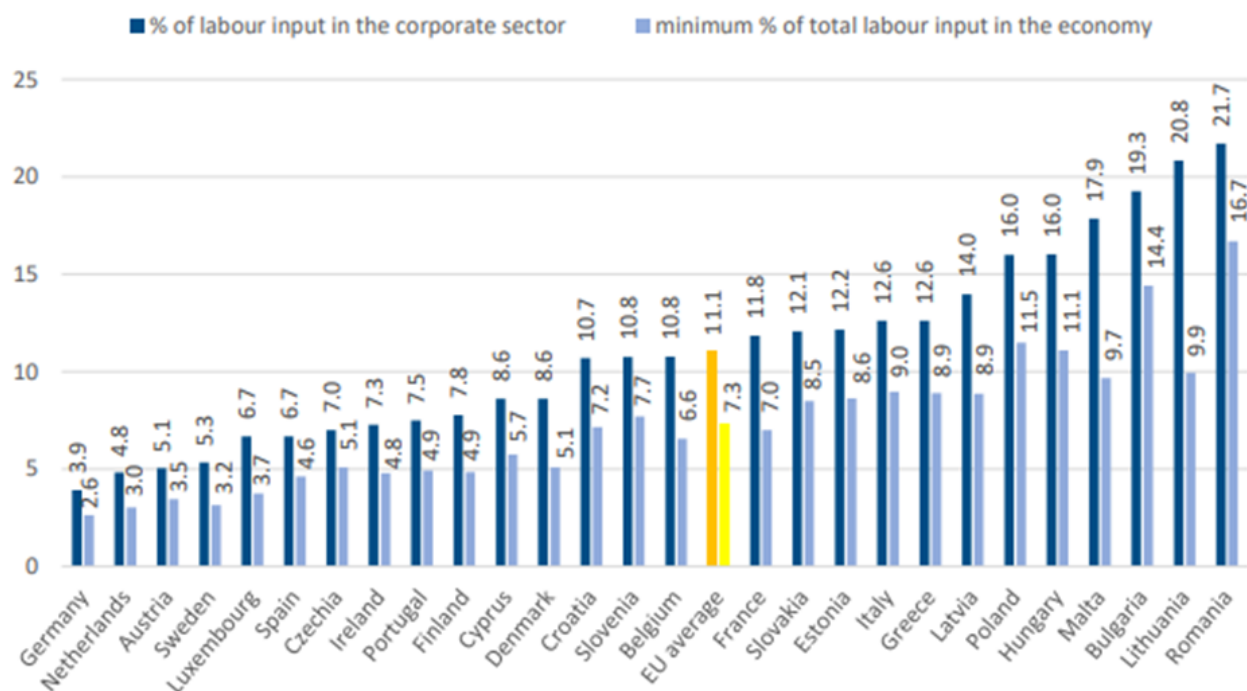
Undeclared Work in the private sector - 2019

Country	% of total labour input in the private sector				
	Total	Self-employed	Dependent employees	Family workers	% of GVA in the private sector
Romania	21.7	62.5	18.8	60.1	27.1
Lithuania	20.8	35.9	19.1	33.7	26.0
Bulgaria	19.3	12.2	20.2	4.5	23.8
Malta	17.9	45.6	10.4	63.0	23.4
Hungary	16.0	25.0	14.8	35.0	20.1
Poland	16.0	4.6	18.1	5.7	19.7
Latvia	14.0	55.8	10.2	59.9	14.9
Greece	12.6	13.3	12.2	14.9	18.8
Italy	12.6	4.1	16.1	2.4	20.4
Estonia	12.2	43.5	7.8	40.7	16.4
Slovakia	12.1	15.9	11.3	3.3	14.5
France	11.8	48.9	6.3	55.9	13.6
Belgium	10.8	3.6	12.3	14.0	14.0
Slovenia	10.8	9.2	11.0	9.2	13.0
Croatia	10.7	21.4	9.5	34.6	13.5
Denmark	8.6	54.7	3.4	52.0	9.3
Cyprus	8.6	65.2	1.3	62.2	10.6
Finland	7.8	43.7	2.8	39.5	9.9
Portugal	7.5	21.1	4.8	20.2	12.0
Ireland	7.3	31.7	2.4	30.2	11.1
Czechia	7.0	6.8	7.1	2.6	9.6
Spain	6.7	14.5	4.5	14.0	16.5
Luxembourg	6.7	48.0	3.7	68.9	7.0
Sweden	5.3	15.8	3.9	2.1	7.5
Austria	5.1	10.7	4.4	10.9	5.3

2. THE DAMAGES INFLICTED ON WORKERS BY UNDECLARED WORK

Undeclared work can be a form of exploitation in several ways for the consequences it has on workers:

Lack of worker protections: When work is undeclared, it often falls outside the legal framework of labour laws and regulations. This means workers are:

- **Denied basic protections:** They lack minimum wage guarantees, overtime pay, paid leave, and unemployment benefits.
- **Vulnerable to exploitation:** They may be subjected to longer working hours, unsafe working conditions, and unfair treatment with limited means to seek redress.
- **Denied access to social security:** They may be excluded from social security systems, impacting their access to healthcare, pensions, and other benefits.

Power imbalance: Undeclared work often involves a significant power imbalance between the worker and the employer. This is because:

- **Workers lack bargaining power:** The lack of legal recognition and fear of losing their job can make them hesitant to speak up against unfair treatment or demand better working conditions.
- **Employers can exploit the situation:** Knowing the worker is vulnerable, they may pay lower wages, impose unfair working hours, and disregard safety regulations.

Trapping individuals in cycles of poverty: Due to the lack of social security benefits and limited earning potential, individuals engaged in undeclared work often struggle to escape poverty. This can lead to:

- **Limited opportunities:** The lack of formal work experience and skills development hampers their ability to transition to formal employment and improve their situation.
- **Intergenerational poverty:** Children of parents in undeclared work are more likely to be trapped in similar situations due to limited access to education and opportunities.

It's important to note that not all undeclared work represents exploitation. In some cases, individuals may engage in informal work out of necessity, such as selling goods on the street or providing small services to supplement their income. However, the potential for exploitation in undeclared work settings remains significant, and measures to address it are crucial.

3. ADDRESS THE EXPLOITATION ASSOCIATED WITH UNDECLARED WORK

Here are some ways to address the exploitation associated with undeclared work:

- **Strengthening labour law enforcement:** Increased efforts to identify and penalize employers who violate labour laws can deter exploitation and create a fairer environment.
- **Promoting formalization of work:** Initiatives that simplify the process of registering businesses and complying with regulations can encourage both employers and workers to participate in the formal economy.
- **Supporting vulnerable workers:** Providing access to social safety nets and legal aid can empower individuals and hold employers accountable for respecting workers' rights.

By addressing the root causes of undeclared work and implementing effective measures, we can work towards creating a more equitable and just labour market for all.

4. STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS OF UNDECLARED WORK IN THE EU IN RECENT YEARS.

The structural economic and social conditions found to significantly determine the extent of undeclared work were grouped as follows:

- The lack of modernisation of government organisations (measured by government effectiveness) and persistence of public sector corruption (measured by the Corruption Perception Index and control of corruption), or what is termed formal institutional misallocations and inefficiencies.

- Lower levels of "development" (measured by GDP (current prices, euro per capita), Human Development Index and Social Progress Index).

- lower levels of state intervention in work and welfare provision (measured by the burden of government regulation, workers' rights, business flexibility index, expense of government, research & development expenditure, tax revenue, social contributions, impact of social transfers on poverty reduction, labour market policy (LMP) expenditure)

-higher levels of poverty and inequality (measured by people at risk of poverty/social exclusion, severe material deprivation rate, inequality of income distribution in terms of the income quintile share ratio, Gini coefficient and labour productivity), or what is termed formal institutional voids and weaknesses.

Relationship Between Undeclared Work and severe material deprivation rate (% of total population) 2019
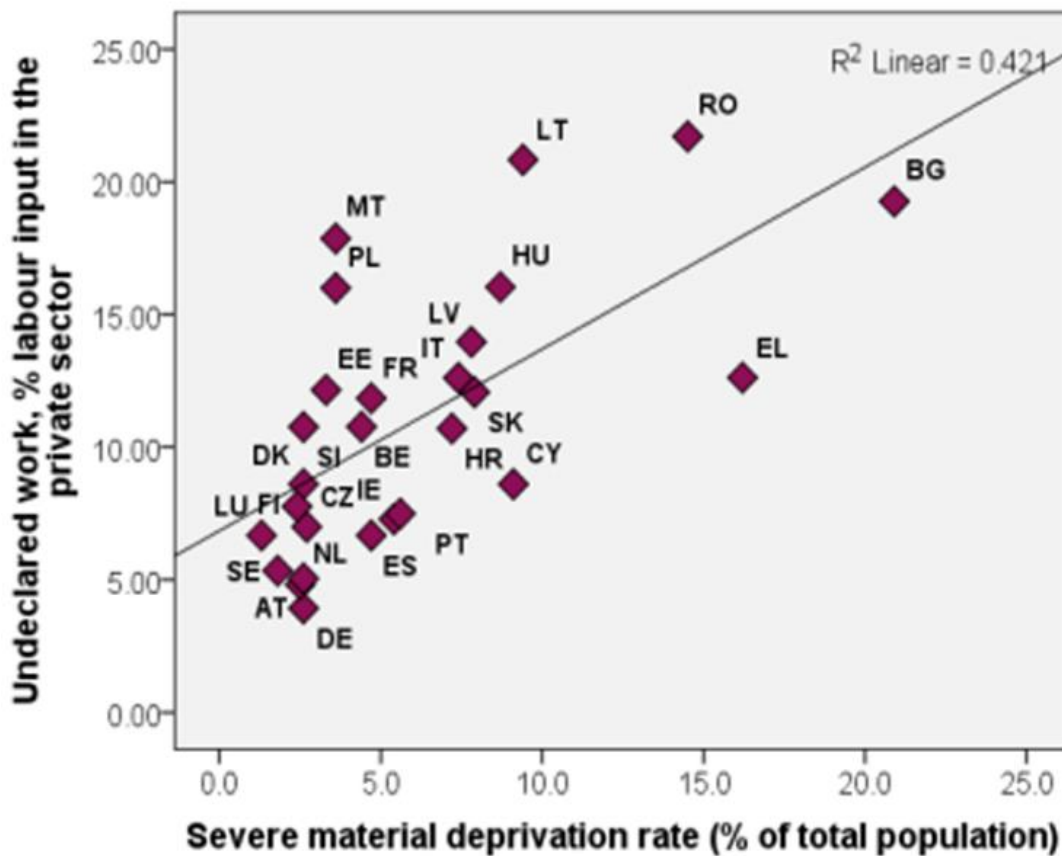
In sum, the structural economic and social conditions associated with lower levels of undeclared work have been here highlighted. Undeclared work is lower in Member States with:

i.   Higher government effectiveness and lower perceived levels of corruption.
ii.   Higher levels of development (whether measured in terms of GDP per capita, the Human Development Index or Social Progress Index) and greater levels of state intervention in work and welfare (to enhance workers` rights and labour productivity, investments in research and development and implementing measures for reducing poverty and inequalities).
iii.   Higher quality more powerful formal institutions (higher reliability of policy services, higher judicial independence, stronger rule of law, stronger voice and accountability, positive perception towards the regulatory quality and higher trust in the state institutions).
iv.   Lower levels of instability and uncertainty in formal institutions (better transparency in policymaking and reduced perception of political instability).
v.   Greater symmetry between the norms, values and beliefs of citizens, workers, employers and businesses and the formal rules (sometimes termed "vertical trust" and measured by the level of tax compliance, and the acceptability of undeclared work) and a higher trust in peers to adhere to the formal rules (sometimes termed "horizontal trust" and measured by personally knowing people engaged in undeclared work and their estimates of the share of undeclared work).

5. THE MOST VULNERABLE SUBJECTS TO UNDECLARED WORK: WOMEN, YOUTH, AND IMMIGRANTS

Where official data records low labour force participation and a shortage of job positions, there is necessarily a significant and measurable indication of the presence of a high proportion of the population excluded from socially and economically "healthy" participation in production circuits.

Analyzing the correlation of Istat/Eurostat indicators of regional irregularity with other socio-economic variables allows for an assessment of how the phenomenon of irregular work is directly and inversely related to a wide range of indicators of exclusion/inclusion from the labour market. Data show how the socio-economic variable that proves to be most directly correlated with the irregularity rate is, as expected, the unemployment rate in its various components, especially the female component and that linked to both male and female youth.

The scatter plot (see graph) also highlights the strong association between the two variables under consideration. In general, as the unemployment rate increases, the irregularity rate relative to the total economy also increases. The regions where the unemployment rate is highest are the same ones where the irregularity rate is significantly higher.

Correlation coefficients between the undeclared work rate, total economy with the main unemployment female indicators

| Indicator	Correlation
Unemployment rate: (Women)	0,95 %
Unemployment rate 30-64 yo (Women)	0,95 %
Unemployment rate 25-29 yo (Women)	0,93 %
Unemployment rate 15-24 yo (Women)	0,91 %

Source: Digivis

Undeclared Work compared to the Unemployment rate
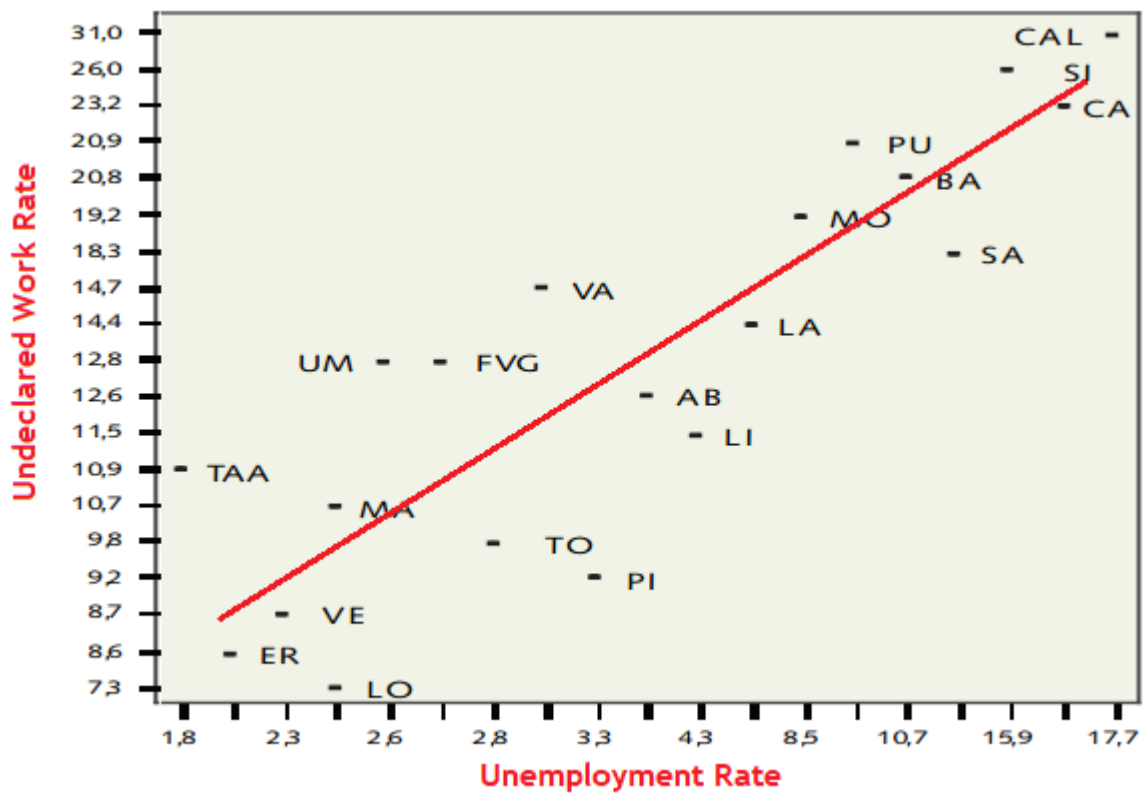
As for the inverse correlation, the variable most negatively correlated is the female employment rate: indeed, there is an inverse relationship between the trend of irregular work and that of female employment. The official indicators of employment/unemployment represent the dimension of social inclusion, understood as participation (or mere willingness to participate in the case of unemployment) in work conditions legally and contractually considered regular.

Indicators of female unemployment/employment show a high correlation with irregular work. Reconciling family responsibilities with participation in the labour market is a problem that primarily affects the female component of the workforce. Family and parental care work, which falls mainly on women, reduces the time available for paid work. For many women, there is a difficulty in accessing or remaining in circuits of work legally and contractually considered regular or admissible.

Undeclared Work compared to the Employment rate Women
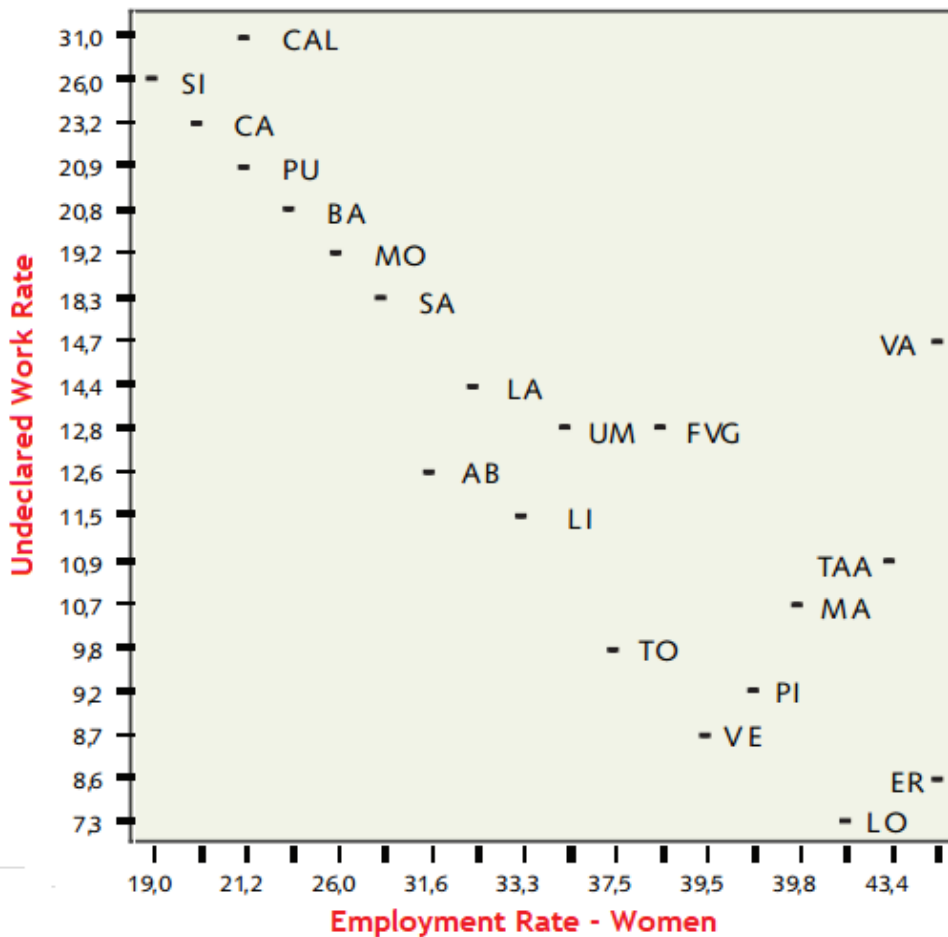
6. PREVENTING AND CONTRASTING UNDECLARED WORK IN EUROPE

Preventing undeclared work involves measures aimed at reducing its occurrence, while contrasting it focuses on detecting and addressing existing cases. Here's an overview of both approaches in Europe:

Prevention Strategies:

Strengthening Institutions: Building trust in public institutions and the legal system can deter individuals from engaging in undeclared work.

Simplifying Regulations: Streamlining administrative procedures and regulations can make it easier for individuals and businesses to comply with labour laws.

Incentive Schemes: Implementing vouchers, tax breaks, or social security benefits for formal employment can encourage workers to enter the declared economy.

Awareness Campaigns: Educating the public about the risks and consequences of undeclared work can discourage its practice.

Promoting Social Dialogue: Engaging employers' and workers' organizations in developing and implementing strategies can create a sense of shared responsibility.

Contrasting Measures:

Inspections and Audits: Labour inspectorates and tax authorities conduct inspections of workplaces and financial records to identify undeclared work.

Administrative Sanctions: Fines and penalties are imposed on individuals and businesses caught engaging in undeclared work.

Information Sharing: Cross-border cooperation between European countries helps identify and tackle complex cases of undeclared work involving multiple jurisdictions.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Highlighting successful enforcement actions can deter potential offenders and encourage reporting of undeclared work.

7. WHAT CAN WE DO? AWARENESS RAISING

Focusing awareness-raising efforts on youngsters holds particular importance in combating undeclared work in Europe for several reasons:

7.1. Shaping future generations:

- Young people are entering the workforce for the first time, making them **vulnerable to exploitation** in undeclared work arrangements.
- Educating them early equips them with the knowledge and skills to **recognize and avoid** such situations, promoting a **culture of fair work** for future generations.

7.2. Fostering responsible choices:

- As future consumers and employers, young people will play a significant role in shaping the market landscape.
- By raising awareness of the **ethical implications** of undeclared work, they become more likely to **support businesses** that comply with labour regulations and **avoid engaging** in practices that exploit workers.

7.3. Harnessing the power of influence:

- Young people are often **connected and tech-savvy**, making them effective **agents of change**.
- Empowering them with knowledge and resources enables them to **spread awareness** among their peers, families, and communities, amplifying the impact of awareness campaigns.

7.4 Examples of effective approaches:

- **Integrating awareness into educational programs:** Curriculum integration can equip young people with the knowledge and critical thinking skills to identify and avoid undeclared work situations.
- **Interactive workshops and campaigns:** Engaging activities can raise awareness in a fun and informative manner, making learning about fair work practices more appealing to young people.
- **Utilizing social media and online platforms:** Reaching young people where they spend their time on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and educational platforms can create wider reach and engagement.

Additionally:

- Tailoring messages to resonate with young people's **concerns and aspirations** is crucial for effective communication.
- **Highlighting positive alternatives** like **formal internships, vocational training, and youth entrepreneurship programs** can empower youngsters to pursue safe and rewarding work opportunities.

By strategically raising awareness among youngsters, Europe can equip future generations with the knowledge and values needed to create a fairer and more transparent labour market.

BEST PRACTICES IN AWARENESS RAISING

8.1 #EU4FairWork

The European Union has taken a multi-pronged approach to fight undeclared work, and awareness campaigns are a key part of this strategy.

One prominent example is the **#EU4FairWork** campaign launched by the European Commission in 2020. This campaign aimed to raise awareness among workers, companies, and policymakers about the negative consequences of undeclared work, such as:

- Lack of social protection for workers, including healthcare, unemployment benefits, and pensions
- Unfair competition for businesses that comply with labour laws
- Loss of tax revenue for governments

The campaign used a variety of communication channels, including social media, traditional media, and events, to reach its target audience. It also included a **Week of Action** in September 2020, which involved inspections in sectors at high risk of undeclared work, information sessions, and visits to schools.

## 8.2 #ATKRAPIES!: A Latvian Initiative Against Deception

The **#ATKRAPIES!** campaign, meaning "Don't Get Fooled!" in Latvian, is a prominent initiative launched in 2017 by the Latvian Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB) in collaboration with various organizations. It specifically targets young people aged 16-24, aiming to:

- **Raise awareness:** Educate young people about the **shadow economy**, which refers to undeclared economic activities that operate outside the formal legal system.
- **Highlight consequences:** Emphasize the negative impacts of the shadow economy, including:
  - Lack of social security benefits (e.g., healthcare, pensions) for individuals engaging in undeclared work.
  - Unfair competition for businesses that comply with regulations.
  - Loss of tax revenue for the government, hindering public services and infrastructure development.
- **Empower action:** Encourage young people to:
  - Recognize and avoid undeclared work opportunities.
  - Report suspected cases of undeclared work to relevant authorities.
  - Make informed choices about their employment and advocate for fair work practices.

Communication Strategies:

- **Social media engagement:** The campaign leverages popular platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to reach young people directly. Engaging content utilizes:
  - **Influencers:** Collaborations with local celebrities and young leaders to promote campaign messages and reach wider audiences.
  - **Interactive elements:** Polls, quizzes, and challenges to spark discussion and raise awareness.
  - **Short, informative videos:** Explaining complex topics like the shadow economy in a simplified and relatable way.
- **Educational materials:** Development and distribution of educational materials in schools, universities, and youth centers. These materials explain the campaign's objectives, offer information about the shadow economy and its consequences, and provide guidance on identifying and reporting undeclared work.

While the campaign primarily uses Latvian language content, searching for "#ATKRAPIES!" might lead you to discover some translated materials or general information about the initiative in English.
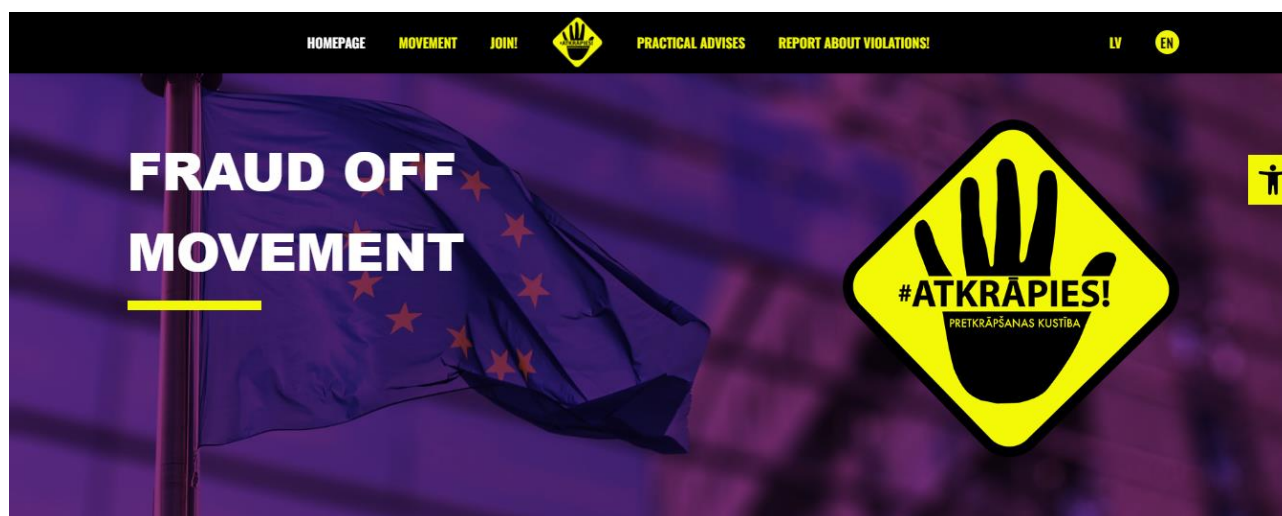
The "#Undeclared Work: It's not a game!" campaign, launched in France, utilized a creative approach to raise awareness about the negative consequences of undeclared work, particularly among young people. Here are some key details:

Target Audience: Primarily young people (teens and young adults) entering the workforce or facing precarious work situations.

Communication Strategy: The campaign's unique element was its **game show format**. This involved:

- **Interactive website:** The website offered a series of online quizzes and games simulating real-life situations related to undeclared work. Users could choose different options and experience the potential consequences (e.g., lack of social security, legal troubles) associated with each choice.
- **Social media engagement:** The campaign used popular platforms like Instagram and Facebook to share snippets from the online games, raise questions, and spark discussions about undeclared work.
- **Humorous yet informative approach:** The game format, visuals, and messaging conveyed the campaign's message in a light-hearted and engaging way, making it more relatable to young audiences.

Campaign Goals:

- **Raise awareness:** Inform young people about the nature of undeclared work and its potential drawbacks.
- **Promote informed choices:** Encourage young people to make informed decisions regarding their employment and choose legal, regulated work opportunities.
- **Emphasize the importance of fair work:** Highlight the value of fair work practices that ensure worker rights and social protection.

This campaign's creativity and focus on young people demonstrate an alternative approach to raising awareness about undeclared work. While specific details about the campaign's originators or duration are not readily available, its innovative format offers valuable insights into engaging younger audiences on serious topics like fair work practices and responsible work choices.

8.3 EURES

Jobs for young people: Awareness-raising campaign helps young people access quality employment.

EURES has launched an information and communication campaign on Jobs for young people. The campaign is running from October 2022 to February 2023, to raise awareness about EURES services among young graduates and university students, as well as employers recruiting young jobseekers.

Specifically, the campaign aims to increase EURES' visibility among young people, inform them about the opportunities and EURES support services available if they want to move/work in another EU country, and highlight the skills and jobs in demand, as well as labour market trends, that can help them to make informed career choices.

Throughout the campaign, EURES is posting on social media using **#EURES4Youth**.

GEAR

Gender Equality and Antidiscrimination for Roma

MODULE 5
Contrast to violence
and abuse against girls.

WHAT WE MEAN BY VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

As is amply illustrated by the literature on the subject, violence against women has historical and cultural roots that legitimise its imposition because to maintain the stereotypes of women and men in society, consequent social norms, concepts of masculinity and notions of women's inferiority. We define violence here, in a broad sense, as a *form of control over the freedom of the other that is expressed through the imposition, by means of coercive systems, of a system of meanings and rules.* Violence against women is the precipitate of a cultural *humus that is* transmitted through the generations and that legitimises, also through processes of normalisation, violent behaviour, continuing to promote unequal relations between the sexes. It is a power and cultural structure that is passed down through acquired symbolic categories, by men as well as women, that refer to stereotypes, prejudices, omissions, to unconscious patterns of perception and evaluation: men are strong, rational, capable, hunters; women are gentle, fickle, charming, prey.

Violence against women, as is becoming increasingly evident, is therefore a phenomenon that is rooted in structural inequality and cuts across all social, cultural, and economic conditions.

To date, the most far-reaching instrument to combat violence against women in Europe is the Istanbul Convention of 2011[1] . Subsequently signed, ratified, and adopted at different times by member states, this international treaty establishes preventive and protective measures and includes a set of obligations to ensure an adequate criminal justice response to serious human rights violations.

As far as our project is concerned, let us point out that the Convention was ratified by Italy in 2013, Belgium and Romania in 2016, while Bulgaria, causing outrage among women's rights groups, chose not to ratify it. The Bulgarian government justified this decision by claiming that the Convention's proposed definitions of gender have no biological basis and are therefore unconstitutional.[2]

The Convention insists on the need to acknowledge that this phenomenon is of a structural nature, studying and understanding it from its cultural matrixes, and clearly highlight that its eradication is inseparable from the de *jure and de facto* achievement of gender equality.

In this sense, Articles 12 and 14 are specifically dedicated to the need to recognise and deconstruct the stereotypes that underlie the intergenerational transmission of the phenomenon.

Studying the phenomenon of violence in numerical terms is therefore very difficult, especially for those cultural reasons that, as mentioned, mask and justify it. A first requirement is therefore to start from unambiguous definitions that make the phenomenon and its components objectively visible and measurable.

In accordance with the 2011 Council of Europe definition (Istanbul Convention): ""*violence against women" is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".*

This definition can include the different subcategories of violence and domestic violence, which refers to the behaviors implemented in the family context between former or current spouses or partners.

In these pages we will refer to the definitions established in the glossary by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) within the framework of the study on terminology and indicators to reliably and comparably measure violence against women in the 28 EU Member States.[3] After having analysed in detail the components of the European, international and national definitions used at the legal and political level and their declinations used for statistical purposes, this study allowed to establish the following three

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[1] Council of Europe Treaty Series - No. 210; https://rm.coe.int/168008482e

[2] See *inter alia*: https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/stronger-commitment-needed-to-combat-racism-fight-gender-stereotypes-and-increase-media-freedom-in-bulgaria

[3] https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/glossary-definitions-rape-femicide-and-intimate-partner-violence?language_content_entity=en

definitions that unambiguously describe the three forms of violence against women (VAW) for the purpose of a greater harmonisation of data collection in the first place.

Rape: "Sexual penetration, whether vaginal, anal or oral, through the use of object or body parts, without consent, using force, coercion or by taking advantage of the vulnerability of the victim."

Femicide: 'The killing of a woman by an intimate partner and the death of a woman because of a practice that is harmful to women. Intimate partner is understood as a former or current spouse or partner, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim."

Intimate partner violence (IPV): 'Any act of physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence that occurs between former or current spouses or partners, whether the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.

The main components of IPV are:

- *Physical violence:* 'Any act which causes physical harm to the current or for- mer partner because of unlawful physical force. Physical violence can take the form of, among others, serious or minor assault, deprivation of liberty and manslaughter.

- *Sexual violence:* 'Any sexual act performed on the victim without consent. Sexual violence can take the form of rape or sexual assault."

- *Psychological violence:* 'Any act or behaviour which causes psychological harm to the partner or former partner. Psychological violence can take the form of, among others, coercion, defamation, verbal insult, or harassment.

- *Economic violence:* "Any act or behaviour which causes economic harm to the partner. Economic violence can take the form of, among others, property damage, restricting access to financial resources, education, or the labour market, or not com- plying with economic responsibilities, such as alimony.

SOME ELEMENTS OF THE SCENARIO

The persistence of gender stereotypes is reflected in an immediately visible way in the maintenance of important asymmetries that are well depicted at European level by the Gender Statistic Database EIGE[4] . Women continue to be under-represented at the level of presidents and members of the highest decision-making body in major political, administrative, scientific, and academic institutions. Despite having gained an important decision-making role in the COVID-19 pandemic response. In terms of capability between men and women, significant differences remain. First, that of time devoted to family work, which, from an early age, continues to be carried out in clear predominance (around 70%) by women, to the detriment of their free time and that devoted to paid work. Equally explanatory is the gender difference in intentional homicide victims; in the 27 member states, the percentage of women victims tends to be four times higher than that of men.

Corollary to the widespread phenomenon of gender-based violence is a *socialisation to violence that* characterises the different contexts of life, from the family to the workplace, up to informal socialising environments, and that recurs with few differences at different ages, confirming the gender stereotypes that underlie it. This leads to generalised behaviour such as, for example, the acceptance of rape and violent conduct by one's partner as unpleasant events yet considered as 'normal' incidents that can happen. In many court cases, the burden of proof, conviction and social disapproval lies with the victim. Sexual violence becomes an 'incoercible impulse', killing becomes a 'raptus', physical violence becomes a 'family quarrel', in a process of devaluation, re-dimensioning and normalisation of violence itself that judges the woman if she did not conform to social expectations (she had left him, she was not a good mother, work was more important to her, etc.).

This condition is also widely amplified in its media representation: from advertising to social media, to the way the press reports on rape and violence. Harassment and inequality in the workplace, rape, feminicide and intimate partner violence are illustrated here, in most cases, through a perverse modality that implies

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[4] https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs

the secondary victimisation of the woman as the 'perpetrator' of the violence suffered. Here, gender-based violence is further expressed and reinforced in a context of widespread gender discrimination.

As described in the latest report of the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) on gender stereotypes: 'one in five men (19.7%) think that women can provoke sexual violence by the way they dress compared to 14.6% of women. On the other hand, men and women's opinions on the responsibility attributed to women in certain circumstances are similar. About 11% believe that a woman who is a victim of sexual violence when drunk or under the influence of drugs is at least partly responsible, about 10% believe that if a woman after a party accepts an invitation from a man and is raped, it is also her fault."[5]

Socialisation to violence in the family context also has serious repercussions on children's mental health. Children who grow up in a dysfunctional environment, even if not strictly abusive, react by activating adaptive mechanisms that lead them to be in a perpetual state of alertness and hyperarousal or fear, as in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), compromising the development of emotional regulation, cognitive processes, and organisational skills. Positive adaptive mechanisms, from emotional regulation to the development of communication and social skills, are those that then enable the child to interact, with others and with the social world, effectively achieving personal autonomy and being able to pursue his or her own goals. According to the World Health Organisation, violence is one of the main risk factors, together with lack of family support, poverty, and social exclusion, for mental disorders in children and adolescents. As they get older, emotional regulation disorders are associated with externalising disorders, such as conduct disorders and antisocial disorders, and internalising disorders, such as anxiety, depression and eating disorders. In a nutshell, in addition to the increased risk of suicidal ideation (suicide is the second most frequent cause of death for adolescents after accidents), experiences of abuse in childhood are also responsible for drops in scholastic performance, maladjustment in social contexts, disturbances in self-image and interpersonal skills with others; first and foremost empathy, i.e. the subject's ability to connect with the emotional states of others and thus also to foresee the consequences of one's actions. It is therefore evident that experiences of interpersonal violence, as an experience with a high traumatic potential, interfere with the development and maintenance of human capacities over time. Moreover, they contribute substantially to conditioning future behaviour: violent conduct on the one hand and quiescence on the other.

MAGNITUDE OF THE PHENOMENON

We can get a statistical estimate of the phenomenon by looking at the different services, whether health and medical, social, or legal aid, and the many agencies dedicated to offering help to women victims of violence. However, while these data can illustrate the social response to the phenomenon and offer important data on trafficking in women and feminicide, they cannot provide a realistic estimate of the extent of violence against women, although, in many cases, these statistics are still useful to identify which subgroups do not make use of anti-violence services.

On the other hand, it appears evident that many women do not reveal that they have been victims of violence because of feelings of shame or fear of the perpetrator and of possible future retaliation or even, as often happens also in Italy, in order not to be the object of secondary victimisation. Moreover, the data collected by the different services, health, justice, and social services, cannot be considered significant for the phenomenon since recourse to the services represents in many cases the last resort to which women resort after a long series of abuses. In this regard, it is estimated that on average only 33% of physical or sexual abuse and 20% of more serious incidents are reported.

However, considering that the cases of violence reported are probably about one third of those that occur, the scale of this phenomenon is seriously worrying. Data published in 2013 by the World Health Organization estimated that globally, more than one in three women (35.6 per cent) reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by a partner, or sexual violence by a non-partner; globally, as many as 38 per cent of all murders of women are reported as being committed by intimate partners; 42 per cent of

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[5] https://www.istat.it/it/files//2023/11/STAT_TODAY_Stereotipi.pdf

women who have been physically and/or sexually abused by a partner have experienced injuries as a result of that violence. [6]

With respect to the difficulties that prevent women from reporting abuse and/or ill-treatment and turning to services, where these are present, it is necessary to consider that motivation and support from family members and the community also play a significant role. Indeed, in some community's cultural conventions implicitly accept various forms of violence, e.g. economic and psychological violence, because they do not identify it as a specific sub-type of violence. For example, coercive control, which we can consider a precursor of all forms of violence and is typically perpetuated by men against women, is characterised by a low level of frequently repeated abuse. It is conduct that significantly undermines the autonomy and well-being of the victim, even though it is difficult to recognise and is not even covered by the Istanbul Convention.

Among the most underestimated forms of violence, often also because they are not recognised, psychological violence deserves special attention. In this case, surveys show a significant difference in the levels of women's awareness of this phenomenon, which has a clear prevalence in groups of women under 30 years of age, and in those subgroups most vulnerable to intersectional forms of violence: women with disabilities, non-heterosexuals, refugees, or those with a migration background. Among the consequences of psychological violence, it is necessary to consider the important repercussions on the children of women who suffer it. The latter, as mentioned before, will be more likely to commit or experience violence once they are adults and, whether they are women or men, to consider gender inequality and related forms of violence acceptable.

If suicide is the ultimate effect of psychological violence on women[7] no less important are its effects on mental health, from depression to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to the impairment of cognitive functions: attention, verbal, visual and working memory, inhibition, planning and reasoning, visuomotor skills, cognitive flexibility, and decision-making. However, a significant repercussion concerns the victims' inability to recognise the perpetrator of the abuse and thus the severity of the phenomenon due to the strong psychological conditioning that leads them to blame themselves. In other words, the state of quiescence and unawareness in which the victims find themselves is the result of continuous and systematic psychological abuse.

Let us therefore start from the assumption that statistics only significantly represent a fraction of the phenomenon.
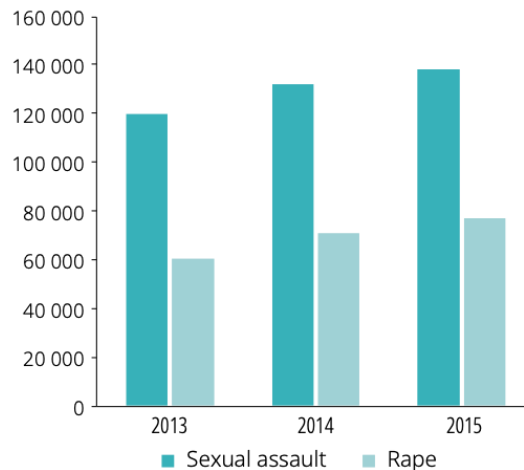However, the comparison of Eurostat data from 2013 to 2015 in the table below shows how, despite the persistence of a submerged experience of a culture of silence and victim blaming, the identification and reporting of rape and sexual violence is steadily increasing[8] .

Total number of recorded offences of rape and sexual assault, across EU-28 Sexual assault Rape

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[6] https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/85239/9789241564625_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

[7] https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/combating-coercive-control-and-psychological-violence-against-women-eu-member-states

[8] EIGE, Beijing + 25: the fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States, https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/beijing-25-fifth-review-implementation-beijing-platform-action-eu-member-states. p.73

Source: Eurostat (data code: crim_off_cat).
Note: Data missing for rape for Italy in all years. Data cover period only until 2015 because statistics for sexual assault in 2016 missing in a number of Member States at the time of writing of the report.

A further significant amount of data on the phenomenon can be found in the reports produced by the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)[9] , which oversees mapping and monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the member states, and which plans to publish further comparable data by 2024. However, even this documentation, which is the result of an attempt to standardise the legislation of the different Member States on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, reflects the different choices of the countries that have joined the convention to ratify or not to ratify certain articles of the treaty, by entering reservations. This is the case, for instance, of Romania, which, although it ratified the treaty in 2016, reserved the implementation of some articles until 2022. [10]

About the picture outlined, it should be noted that, as highlighted by the Istanbul Convention's baseline evaluation reports, women who belong to Roma community undergo forms of intersectional discrimination in their access to protection and assistance[11] . These variables further affect their ability to react and oppose passive acceptance of the *status quo*.

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[9] https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/grevio

[10] Romania ratified the Istanbul Convention on 23 May 2016. In accordance with Article 78, paragraph 2, of the convention, Romania reserved the right not to apply the provisions under Article 30, paragraph 2, Article 44, paragraphs 1e, 3 and 4, Article 55, paragraph 1, in respect of Article 35 regarding minor offences, Article 58 in respect of Articles 37, 38 and 39, and Article 59. Moreover, in accordance with Article 78, paragraph 3, of the convention, Romania reserved the right to provide for non-criminal sanctions for behaviours referred to in Articles 33 and 34. These reservations were valid for a period of five years from the day of the entry into force of the convention in respect of Romania and lapsed on 1 March 2022 in application of Article 79, paragraph 2, of the convention. https://rm.coe.int/0900001680a6e439

[11] "Another group of vulnerable women is Roma women. According to indications made by women's rights NGOs in the field, women from Roma communities, including those arriving from Ukraine, continue to experience discrimination which is rooted in deep-seated prejudice and stereotypes. Worrying accounts shared by civil society representatives indicate normalisation and disregard for gender-based domestic violence in the Roma community by professionals, including law-enforcement officers. Such indications suggest that there is a tendency to ascribe violence committed against Roma women to 'cultural practices' and to apply different standards as regards their access to justice. Moreover, educational and financial constraints hinder them from accessing support services. Research data also show discriminatory practices among the Roma population, resulting in early marriages.13 While there are no official statistics, an estimated 12% of girls in Moldova are married before the age of 18, and underage marriage is most common within the Roma communities. Such high rates of early marriages may indicate a widespread yet unreported prevalence of forced marriage." GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report Republic of Moldova, pp. 13-14. https://rm.coe.int/0900001680ad46a1

PERSISTENCE OF STEREOTYPES

Gender-based violence includes on the one hand deliberately sexist behaviour and on the other hand unconscious prejudices that justify and perpetuate it. The latter were the subject of a specific Recommendation proclaimed in 2019 by the Council of Europe[12] . Measures to combat sexist attitudes and behaviour concern all areas of society and refer to communications to public and private sectors, workplaces and environments Gender stereotypes significantly affect women's enjoyment of human rights and their access to positions of power and economic resources. Moreover, they significantly affect those minority groups already exposed to intersectional violence and discrimination: Roma women, migrants, exacerbating their vulnerability. We also must consider how these stereotypes can undermine law enforcement and even prevent or strongly discourage women from reporting. Given the deep cultural entrenchment of these stereotypes, many stakeholders feel that the legal prohibition of sexist behaviour, e.g. in the workplace, is not a sufficient measure. Instead, greater effectiveness could be achieved through legislation regulating gender stereotypes in the media and advertising. In the wake of this renewed awareness-raising, several women's groups and organisations across Europe have embarked on campaigns to promote greater attention to sexist behaviour in various spheres, coupled with an increased awareness of the sexism hidden in language at public and private level.

In Romania, a recent survey of academic students' perceptions explored their attitudes towards equality, the prevalence of stereotypes, sexual violence and harassment, and gender-based discrimination. Against a general perception of gender neutrality of professional skills, the analysis of the stereotype dimension revealed that domestic skills are more likely to be seen as typically female. Opinions on domestic violence basically confirm its clear relation to gender equality. About sexual harassment in the workplace, this study also confirms that women are more likely to be subjected to harassment and discrimination. In conclusion, the research reveals a substantial perception of high rates of gender inequality in Romania, even though the academic environment is perceived as a clearly favourable place for gender equality.[13]

Even in Italy, looking at the latest ISTAT report, there seems to be a greater awareness among women with respect to adherence to gender stereotypes, yet the differences between men and women are not so significant with respect to, for example, sexual violence.

A general overview of European countries ten years after the Istanbul Convention[14] , it is evident that many prevention and support measures are still to be implemented.

POSSIBLE SUPPORT

Among the certainly most effective measures to offer concrete help to women who are victims, in various ways, of gender-based violence are first anti-violence centres. These are free and easily accessible services (24 hours a day, 7 days a week and often with multilingual assistance) that generally offer immediate support, including: reception, safety, psychological and legal support, and empowerment paths at different levels.

Below are some summary data from the report 'Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE)' describing the state of play as of 2021.[15]

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[12] https://rm.coe.int/cm-rec-2019-1-on-preventing-and-combating-sexism/168094d894

[13]https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345237777_Students%27_Sense_and_Sensibilities_An_Exploratory_Study_of_Gender_Perceptions_At_Romania%27s_Largest_University

[14] https://rm.coe.int/final-prems-rapport-de-berlin-may-2021/1680a3d7fd

[15] https://rm.coe.int/input-caw-brussel-family-reunification-and-domestic-violence-/1680931a4f

1. Belgium

In Belgium there is no national helpline for women, due to structural and linguistic differences, but there are three regional helplines (Brussels, Wallonia, Flanders) for each of the language communities, which offer support to survivors of violence. There are 38 accessible shelters with 1,863 beds. There are several women's centres offering support services, three referral centres for sexual violence and a rape crisis centre. The services most often provided are reception, counselling, support, and practical advice. In some shelters it is necessary to pay a fee as not all shelters manage to meet the costs with donations. The three most common types of violence reported by women in shelters were intimate partner violence, honor-based violence, and forced marriage. There are also other shelters in Belgium that can offer support to women, although they are not only for women but also for men who are victims of intimate partner violence. In any case, most of the women hosted in these shelters are survivors of violence against women. There are 23 centres specifically dedicated to women survivors of violence against women. they offer psychological support, legal counselling, and specialist support services. Some centres offer training, literacy courses or psychosocial support. However, there is no general system to classify these support services. While most centres are in Wallonia, in Brussels there are three centres providing support to survivors of forced marriage, honor-based violence, FGM and trafficking. There are also centers dedicated to rape victims.

2.Bulgaria

In Bulgaria there are two national helplines for women, they do not offer multilingual support but are free of charge. There are 13 women-only shelters with a total of 128 beds available, thus missing 82% of the number of beds as would be recommended by the Istanbul Convention. The two hotlines are both run by NGOs and receive funding from the Ministry of Justice. The most common forms of violence reported by callers of all hotlines are domestic violence, sexual violence, and early marriages.
Another telephone line, not free of charge, was opened by the association Demetra in 2020. The latter is active during normal working hours and is dedicated to supporting professionals working with survivors of domestic violence such as doctors, psychologists, and police officers.
Three of the 13 women-only shelters are specifically dedicated to survivors of trafficking, another one also accommodates, in a separate building, male victims of domestic violence. The stay in the shelters is free of charge and the length of stay is six months, although the average length of stay is one to three months.
In addition to these, there are an estimated nine additional services for abused children and survivors of human trafficking. Altogether there are 18 women's centres, which offer counselling and psychological support services (also specifically for cases of sexual violence), legal counselling and employment. They also deal with prevention education. They are staffed by women's NGOs and receive state funding.

3. Italy

In Italy, there is a national helpline for women that operates 24/7, is free of charge and offers multilingual support. There are 272 free women-only shelters, offering 2,421 beds (only 41% of those required under the Istanbul Convention). Of these, only a few operate 24/7, mainly due to lack of funds and resources. Shelters are especially concentrated in large cities and are rarely found in the south of the country. This reflects the very unequal distribution of wealth, welfare, social services and job opportunities in the country. Particularly suffering in this respect are the rural areas in the centre and north, and all the southern regions.
The shelters receive state funding, unfortunately little and insufficient, and are supported by donations.
 There are 302 centres specifically dedicated to women victims of violence and of these 93 belong to the Women against Violence Network D.i.Re. (Donne in Rete contro la violenza).
The support services provided by the centres, specifically the D.i.Re. centres, include: specialised psychological care; legal counselling and support; housing; employment; financial and social support; representation in court, police, and social services; specialised SV advocacy, awareness-raising and prevention education services; and in some cases, specialised services on trafficking in persons. However, there are no specific services for migrant women survivors of VAW.

The Women's Network against Violence D.i.Recollects and publishes data on specialised support services for women.

The most common forms of violence reported by callers to the national number were physical violence, psychological violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault, economic violence, bullying and threats. In addition, 50.5% of callers reported multiple forms of violence.

Although women-run shelters recommend a stay of six to nine months, which is necessary to promote a woman's autonomy, often the difficult social, housing and labour market conditions in Italy do not allow women to become economically independent and leave the shelter.

4. Romania

In Romania, there is a national helpline dedicated to women victims of domestic violence, free of charge and operating 24/7, offering multilingual support. The line is run by the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between women and men and is funded by the state. There are 70 women-only shelters with a total of 796 beds, 41% of those that should be available to meet IC standards. There are a further 23 non-women-only shelters and there are plans to establish a network of 42 shelters in the future to provide greater geographical coverage. In fact, the shelters are currently rather unevenly distributed and concentrated in the largest cities. There are 17 counselling centres for women survivors of domestic violence; in addition, there are now five referral centres for sexual violence and one rape crisis centre.

The national helpline offers support in cases of domestic violence, human trafficking, and gender discrimination. The most frequently used services are psychological counselling and, to a much lesser extent, general counselling, and practical advice. Instead, the reason for using the services mainly concerns domestic violence.

An obvious vulnus is the impossibility for undocumented migrant women to use the shelters and for all others to be accepted if they are not resident in the same territorial area as the shelter or if there is no evidence of a complaint or protection order.

Indications for professionals and social workers

Accompanying women on their journey by supporting all protective factors, such as access to services and care pathways and, above all, exposing victims to positive interpersonal relationships as much as possible, guaranteeing access to their personal resources

Awareness education: offering information materials that enable young women to recognise controlling and violent behaviour.

Specific training for shelter workers and women. It is of fundamental importance to start from the assumption that the responsibility for violence, contrary to what the victims think, lies with the perpetrator and not with the victim.

Through seminars, focus groups and debates, promote greater awareness among girls and boys about tacitly accepted sexist views.

Focus on and deconstruct gender stereotypes from everyday experiences in socialising environments and in the family.

Promoting reflection on the meaning of power, limit, consent, responsibility.

Promoting reflection on the feelings and emotions that come into play in affective relationships with peers.

During their work in web radio, they promote girls' participation and decision-making processes.

Provide frequent opportunities for the exercise of free choice and personal development.

Building trusting relationships and promoting girls' education about the status of women in different societies and eras.

Figure 1. Pathways and health effects on intimate partner violence
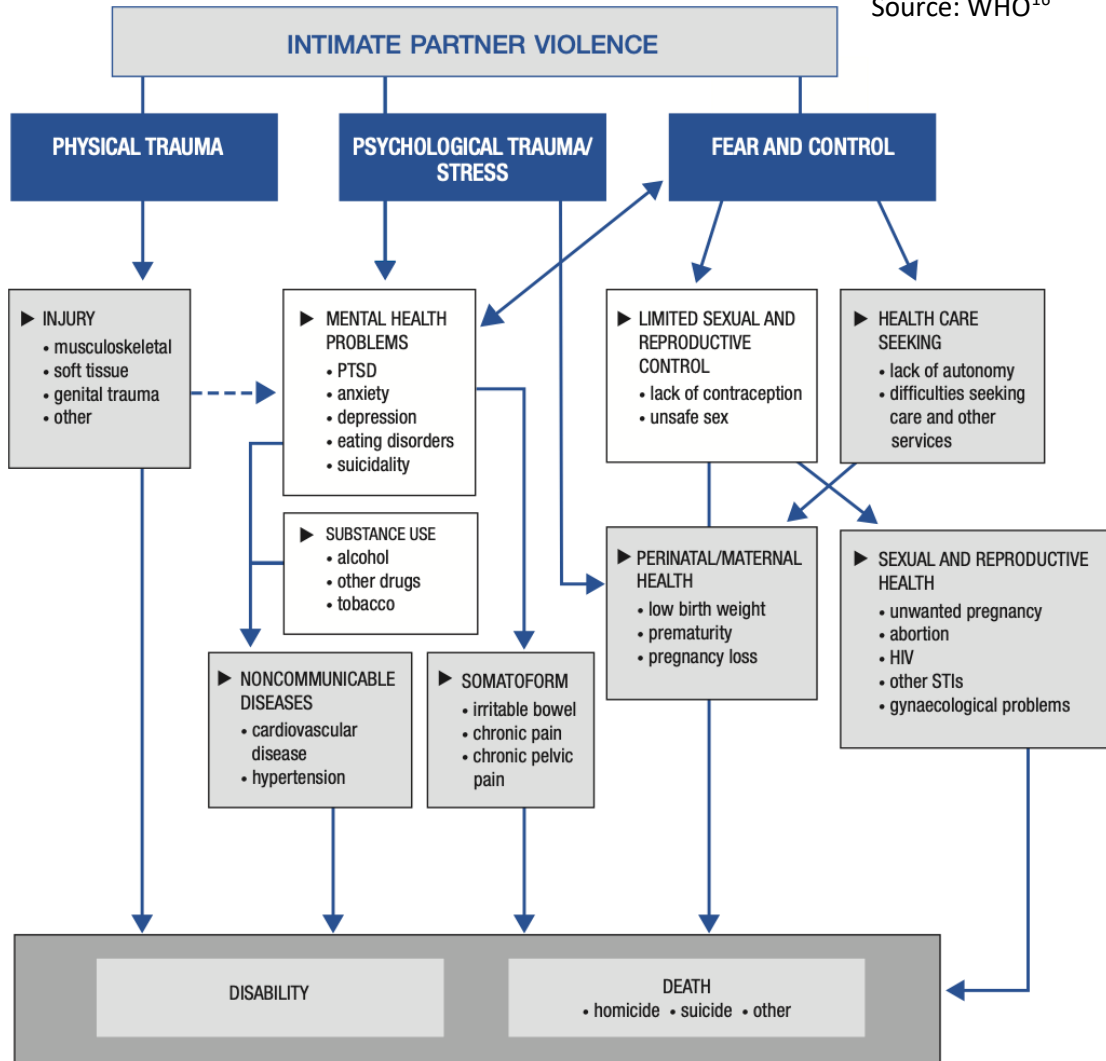
There are multiple pathways through which intimate partner violence can lead to adverse health outcomes. This figure highlights three key mechanisms and pathways that can explain many of these outcomes. Mental health problems and substance use might result directly from any of the three mechanisms, which might, in turn, increase health risks. However, mental health problems and substance use are not necessarily a precondition for subsequent health effects, and will not always lie in the pathway to adverse health.

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[16] https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/85239/9789241564625_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

GEAR

Gender Equality and Antidiscrimination for Roma

MODULE 6

Protection of the girl participation in social and political life through an increased awareness of her needs and potential.

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

As illustrated in the latest report of the Gender Social Norms Index[1] (2023), the global value of the Gender Inequality Index has not progressed significantly in the past five years. Stereotypes and prejudices against women are still entrenched in the social fabric, hindering their empowerment and participation in various spheres. At the same time, important asymmetries remain in labor remuneration, time devoted to care (i.e., unpaid work), political representation, and access to sexual and reproductive health and health services. The data on gender-based violence unfortunately reflect this condition of substantial inequality, decisively confirming that stereotypes, and the cultural conditioning that follows, are the critical issue to be addressed. The inclusion of women in decision-making processes is not only a matter of equity, it represents a strategic opportunity to draw on diverse knowledge and experience that can lead to more effective solutions in all different areas of policy.

1. FEMALE LEADERSHIP AND RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

The fact that nearly 90 percent of the world's population harbors gender bias results in lower representation of women in politics in the economy and in leadership. This deprives society of their contribution in terms of ideas, strategies, and solutions. For example, it is estimated that in addressing global challenges such as pandemics, climate change, and conflict, a greater presence of women in decision-making roles could lead to diverse and more effective solutions. Women's leadership broadens the range of perspectives considered and leads to more inclusive, and most importantly, more effective policies on the key issues of our time, such as health, environment and energy, and economic development. In addition, the increased focus on the most vulnerable in society and the consideration of interconnected aspects leads them to express more moderate and thoughtful policies in the short and long term.

Especially in areas such as health, environment, and education, there is evidence that women tend to pay more attention to the needs of often neglected segments of the population (women, children, minorities) and promote more balanced and forward-looking policies. Specifically, this is consequent to the fact that women leaders tend to balance short-term and long-term goals, avoiding extreme choices (risk/security, equity/inequity) and favoring a moderate approach[2]. As demonstrated recently during the COVID-19 pandemic (PAG12) this leadership style proved effective by adopting integrated strategies that considered health, education, and economics[3].

Globally, women are underrepresented in health care leadership roles, even though they make up most of the health and social care workforce. This is a pool of experience that remains untapped.

Another point of criticism concerns the low or almost non-existent presence of women at negotiating tables even in the most recent conflicts. Globally, most peace processes do not include female mediators or signatories. This, too, translates into fewer opportunities to influence discussions and push for more lasting solutions that contemplate institutional reforms and social recovery plans. In this regard, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) recognizes their crucial role in conflict resolution and their positive impact on the stability of peace processes[4].

Regarding the European condition, given a general alignment with global-level data, it is noteworthy that Sweden stands out for its high rate of women's participation in the work of EU executive bodies and regional assemblies (47.4 percent according to 2018 data). Factors contributing to this achievement include, in addition to the adoption of gender quotas in electoral lists, work-family balance policies, which include childcare services and flexible parental leave. A goal, that of women's political participation, which Sweden

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[1] https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdp-document/gsni202303pdf.pdf
[2] https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2026112118
[3] https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-03/UNDP_Gender_Equality_Strategy_2022-2025_EN_V2.pdf
[4] https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n00/720/18/pdf/n0072018.pdf?token=welj3d4NuAoTdd7klr&fe=true

has achieved, succeeding in putting appropriate gender policies to good use mainly through the strengthening of the welfare system.

So, gender inequality and shrinking welfare systems limit agency, understood as the ability to act on one's own ideas and values, in strategic areas such as women's economic empowerment and political participation.

Of note is the fact that the education gap is almost closed, however, this does not translate into the narrowing of the income gap. As mentioned, women continue to suffer from the social expectations placed on them with respect to childcare and, more generally, in unpaid work, such as household chores and caring for the elderly.

Moreover, it is also true that women are judged more harshly as leaders, which is another factor that discourages their participation.

International conventions, while important legal instruments, are not supported by adequate political will and financial investment from governments; compared to this stagnation, the prospect of achieving gender equality by 2030 seems a daunting challenge.

Moreover, progress toward gender equality can provoke negative reactions that hinder further advances. This is the case with current reactionary movements that, by mobilizing rhetorical strategies from across the political spectrum, attack the rights won by women. This emerging phenomenon is accompanied by the negative consequences of neoliberal policies on women's rights, particularly those belonging to the working classes and ethnic minorities.

Austerity measures introduced with welfare cuts, reduction of social services, low wages, and rising cost of living disproportionately burden women. In this way, the economic crisis pushes to reinforce the traditional role of the family, with women relegated to the role of housewife even more limited in their employment and educational opportunities. Reactionary movements oppose gender studies, feminism and the advances made by women and minorities, identifying them as a threat to the traditional family and social values. To the challenge of gender equality, the reduction of political freedoms globally is also emerging as a decisive obstacle.

Despite international efforts and European regulations, gender inequality thus remains a pervasive reality.

2. EDUCATION AND AWARENESS OF ONE'S RIGHTS

On the one hand, the discourse on women's empowerment is related to the guarantees that enable them to have access to governance and to be equally represented, and this is addressed by international legal instruments. However, a further significant dimension in women's empowerment is that related to the development of their capacities and is closely related to education and gendered social norms.

Gendered educational models are socio-cultural constructs that influence how males and females are educated and socialized. These models, often implicit and uncoded, shape the behavior, expectations and opportunities of individuals based on their gender.

Social norms are unwritten rules that define appropriate and acceptable behavior within a society. They influence our actions in often unconscious ways, shaping our expectations of how we should behave and how others should behave in certain situations.

Socialization to gender norms occurs from early childhood and is transmitted to us by parental attitudes, school environments, and informal places of socialization (friendship context, media, religious institutions). As we grow up, we continue to confront social expectations that reinforce gender norms through sanctioning or rewarding behaviors. In this sense, a woman might adopt a submissive attitude, even if in a position of leadership, to secure more room for action while considering the interplay of social dynamics. This is an example of how a social norm can influence the behavior of even those who do not share it.

UNDP argues that harmful social norms, such as those that perpetuate the subordination of women and the unequal division of labor, underlie many gender inequalities[5] .

Education enables people to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to realize their aspirations. Education aimed at personal development also creates the conditions, at the level of the social fabric and shared norms, for girls to develop their abilities and exercise their substantive freedom. This means empowering young women to choose the life they want, without necessarily having to conform to roles predefined by social gender norms: wife, mother and, essentially, caregiver. This should not be understood as an idealistic position, but rather as the answer to the social problem we experience, as fewer opportunities and limitations to women's rights also hold back economic and social development. These inequalities are transmitted unchanged and fuel intergenerational inequality.

The hyper sexualization and adultization of children, which currently largely characterize family educational styles, is reflected in children's early acquisition of sexist stereotypes and behaviors. It is therefore very important that education on gender-related issues can begin as early as elementary school. Primary prevention begins with early, appropriate, and correct education from an early age. This can help deconstruct the stereotype of masculinity from which the social behaviors that conform to it and their acceptance follow. The complementary aspect is to be able to interfere the gender norms handed down, helping women from an early age to recognize their own strength and potential. In contrast to the generality of educational traditions, which tend to empower girls, from an early age, by assigning them nurturing tasks and reflective and intellectual games and activities that rarely include physical exertion, and instead encouraging children to experience games of competition and struggle that also privilege motor activities.

Gender, as a social construct, crucially influences our experiences, our opportunities, and how we are perceived and treated. It permeates every aspect of life, from the private to the public sphere, and results in inequalities that intersect with other forms of discrimination, such as those based on social class, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Analyzing social conditions through a gender lens allows us to unveil the inequalities that affect women and girls, highlighting how these are often a consequence of a patriarchal and discriminatory social structure.

Looking at social conditions without the veil of gender bias allows for positions of better social justice to be won for the benefit of all.

A recent example that perfectly illustrates how a gender- and class-conscious approach to intersectionality has determined access to rights and opportunities was the struggle for reproductive freedom in Latin America.

The movements that supported this challenge highlighted how this issue implicitly intersected with other dimensions of gender-based violence. Because clandestine abortion, which carries sometimes fatal health risks and prohibitive costs, is a form of violence on par with domestic violence, sexual harassment, or the wage gap. Emphasizing the cost of abortion, which makes it risky differentially depending on each person's social and economic position, has allowed the debate to shift from ethical and religious issues to that of equality in rights of access to public health service, suggesting that the right to reproductive freedom is a right that goes beyond the individual sphere, assuming collective relevance in terms of public health, social welfare and economic development. Secondly, the call for the inclusion of sex education in the school curriculum has expanded discussion and reflection on sexuality relationship and affect, representing a further step forward against gender bias. Sex education provides new generations with the tools to learn about their bodies, experience sexuality consciously and responsibly, and build healthy and respectful relationships.

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[5] https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-03/UNDP_Gender_Equality_Strategy_2022-2025_EN_V2.pdf

The Capability Approach

The Capabilities Approach (CA), developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, represents an innovative paradigm for evaluating social and welfare policies. The approach focuses on the capabilities of individuals-that is, their actual freedoms to choose and achieve what is important to them-rather than simply material well-being. From this perspective it conceives of all the different dimensions of concrete living, such as health, the ability to take care of one's physical integrity, education, equal employment opportunities, political and religious freedoms, which ultimately determine the actual opportunity and freedom of choice and action[6].

Nussbaum distinguishes between two types of capacities: internal capacities, which are those related to a person's level of development (cultural level, health, morality, understanding of the world) and combined capacities, which concern how these internal capacities can correlate with external conditions and thus have a way of expressing themselves (access to study, health, natural environment, cultural heritage).

Capabilities are defined as "substantive freedoms," that is, as sets of opportunities for action that people can choose and enact. Quality of life and well-being depend on the space of freedom made available to choose and act on one's aptitudes and experiences.

To activate and optimize decision-making, it is necessary for the person to have developed satisfactory capabilities that are feasible and practicable in the context in which he or she lives. To this end, it is essential that the context be supportive and appropriate, enabling personal free choice. In this sense, the capability approach shifts the focus from the concept of development as the sum of goods to the concept of capability, understood as real freedom to do and be. Quality of life is measured by the concrete opportunity's individuals have to choose among different lifestyles, realizing their human wholeness. This focus on the specificity of people recognizes the importance of environment and personal characteristics in converting resources into well-being. Not everyone starts from the same point, and policies to improve the situation of a particular disadvantaged person or group must take these factors into account. Finally, this approach recognizes individuals' freedom of choice and the diversity of their goals.

Not only is it important to have the ability to achieve a good level of well-being, but also to have the ability to pursue what one considers meaningful, even if it involves sacrifice. The basic elements for acquiring skills are education and work. Without them, it is not possible for a person to break free from a condition of dependence and vulnerability, let alone gain experience and become aware of his or her abilities.

Women often live in conditions that limit their opportunities, so they cannot aspire to something they do not know[7].

Changing education, especially women's education, is therefore crucial. Equally important is to recognize that this task cannot be left exclusively to educational institutions; NGOs can play a more immediate role in this direction by creating networks of supportive relationships and offering alternative examples of educational and relational styles, and by making women aware not only of their capabilities but also of their rights. Above all, welfare policies can achieve significant results in this regard, provided, of course, that economic investment is increased[8] .

Regarding the applications of CA with special attention to the status of women, we cite two particularly significant examples. The first is the intervention on childcare services in Scandinavian countries. The provision of high-quality services at affordable prices and the redistribution of paid parental leave to fathers

[6] Nussbaum, M. 2000, Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[7] Nussbaum, M. (Editor) , Professor of Law and Ethics , University of Chicago Sen, Amartya (Editor) , Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, The Quality of Life, Print ISBN 0198287976, 1993

[8] https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment

as well as mothers has improved the reconciliation of women's work and family life by increasing the female employment rate[9].

Another example of the application of CA is that of microcredit programs for women in India to start businesses. In this case, women's increased control over economic resources was reflected in increased autonomy in decision-making, with a direct impact on their ability to negotiate within the family and community. This was a tangible improvement in the living conditions of women and their families[10].

In both cases the change the increase in women's social role was the direct result of their empowerment.

These examples demonstrate how in empowerment processes it is essential and necessary to accompany programs of education and appropriate education with concrete support interventions at the level of economic and/or service provision. This combination can enable people, and in particular women from disadvantaged groups, to broaden their possibilities of choice and action, fostering their personal fulfillment. So, regarding the condition of young women, the most effective strategies for promoting their real empowerment are those that consider both aspects: removal of structural barriers and access to economic resources.

2. Participation in community and political life

The participation of girls from disadvantaged groups in community and political life is crucial, and it is essential that they be able to put forward and field their own expectations and solutions and thus participate actively in political life. Moreover, considering that they generally cannot do so in their home group, it is even more essential to be able to ensure that young women from disadvantages groups can express their public potential. Promoting public engagement of Roma girls at the small community level would establish a virtuous circle, influencing decision-making at the local level and bringing to the agenda those issues, related to social and family issues, that have the greatest impact on their daily life experience. Giving the youngest girls a voice is also crucial for thematizing and making visible spaces of demand that are still unexpressed.

Their participation in local community management can therefore lead to several positive cascading effects. First, there would be a redistribution of land development priorities, with a greater focus on socially oriented plans and projects. This would result in the enhancement and adequate funding of existing social programs to counter discrimination. Think, for example, of awareness-raising initiatives to overcome social stigma or specific support services. But the contribution does not end in direct action. Women from disadvantaged groups, if adequately represented, can put in place various advocacy mechanisms. Consider the establishment of local councilor associations that specifically address the rights of these women, or the appointment of representatives from disadvantaged groups to community executive bodies. At the programmatic level, this could translate into social programs at the local level that have a focus on the most vulnerable groups in the territories. Finally, it would involve implementing and disseminating good practices that have already proven their effectiveness in protecting the rights of women from disadvantaged backgrounds[11].

We have already mentioned (see section 3) the legislative tools that can facilitate this process, and improve opportunities for women's representation, such as gender quotas in local elections, and compliance with regulations to counter sexism and discrimination. However, it is important to remember the other elements

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[9] https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/affordable-quality-childcare-inaccessible-many-worlds-wealthiest-countries-unicef
[10] https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/217381468313758622/pdf/351370REV0GenderGuidelines0SANS.pdf
[11] Alcuni esempi virtuosi di donne che, grazie al loro impegno sono riuscite ad innescare cambiamenti significativi impattando la comunità locale, sono documentati in: EU Award for Roma Integration in the Western Balkans and Turkey, © European Union, 2019.
https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/4c1aa71c-8954-4305-8c4f-ea8435140d84_en?filename=eu_award_for_roma_integration_2019_projects.pdf

that play a decisive role in promoting or not promoting women's active participation in political life. Briefly, they can be summarized as: the presence of favorable conditions at the social level; the presence of widespread prejudice, (intolerance, discrimination, and social exclusion) against women, and especially those belonging to more disadvantaged groups; lack of awareness of opportunities for political participation; and difficulties in reconciling family and political commitments. In addition, the low presence of other women in leadership positions may be an additional deterrent to pursuing this career.

Women who belong to disadvantaged groups (low educational level, low income or unemployment, rural women, women with disabilities, in forced or early marriages, members of ethnic/religious minorities, refugees, internally displaced persons, HIV-positive, drug addicts, female prisoners, etc.) and who suffer from forms of intersectional discrimination, in addition to having fewer opportunities, are even less motivated to participate in political and public processes. In this case, we can consider specific elements to increase their participation. Encouraging them to take leadership roles in the community requires a diverse approach that considers both social barriers and practical tools. First, their direct involvement in self-governing bodies and/or public engagement in the work of local authorities. Essentially, their participation should be fostered at the local level, in the communities where they live[12].

Measures that can further foster young women's participation relate more specifically to the psychological and emotional, political, and legal, interpersonal, and managerial aspects of leadership and can be the subject of specific training. First, it is essential to work on the psychological and emotional aspect so that they gain awareness of their potential and their ability to influence their own lives, families, and communities. In this regard, it is important to strengthen their self-esteem, determination, and self-confidence, providing them with the tools to find their own motivation and better manage their emotions and behaviors. A powerful motivating factor could be the knowledge of women leaders who share their experience.

Second, training should focus on knowledge of human rights, their exercise, and legal mechanisms for their protection, especially in cases of discrimination and sexism. It is essential to familiarize young women with the functioning of local self-government bodies, decision-making processes at the regional level, and for them to be informed about existing public participation tools. Creating concrete community development projects can also encourage them to take an active part in decision-making processes and political life.

Finally, interpersonal, and managerial skills training. This includes the acquisition of the skills of critical and analytical thinking, effective communication and teamwork management, practical notions on the organization and democratic management of women's groups and on networking with other local entities. The training should also include the basics of planning and presenting projects at the local level, to equip participants with the tools they need to implement concrete actions and improve their community[13].

3. Promoting alternative behaviors

Attitudes, social relationships, and power dynamics are directly influenced by gender social norms. As we mentioned, the persistence of these norms, which undervalue women's capabilities and rights, effectively undermines the effects of removing barriers to political appointments. Stereotypes remain the same and are evident even at the level of language. For example, in the media, women in leadership positions are often represented in ways that denote a reductionist idea of their competence. This happens, for instance, by shifting the focus to elements related to their private and family life (mother of, wife of), or simply by identifying them by their first name rather than their surname.

Regarding career choices, it is much more difficult for women to break free from the professional and life paths already decided by the family. Supporting specific vocational training programs for women in male-dominated sectors to help them find qualified work can be an opportunity rich in developments.

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[12] https://rm.coe.int/participation-young-women-en/1680a01873

[13] Per approfondire il tema guarda: https://rm.coe.int/participation-young-women-en/1680a01873

Specifically for our project, it's important to highlight that it involves both girls and boys, fostering their participation in all phases of creating the web radio. This involvement at different stages, from ideation to implementation, to evaluation of the work done, creates a sense of shared ownership. In this way, the project itself can become an expression of the community's needs and capabilities, including diverse perspectives, and thus creating content that responds to the interests and needs of the entire community. Consequently, its impact will be greater in the long term.

The educational and empowerment journey during the activities should be able to connect with the untapped potentials of the young participants, revealing more clearly the inequalities present in their community. Their agency could be encouraged through tasks and activities usually entrusted to boys and that could also increase their social visibility. This would help to interrupt the spiral through which harmful social norms self-reinforce, as the more girls are excluded from certain areas of action, the more the idea is strengthened that they are not suitable for those specific tasks, further justifying their exclusion.

4. Direction for practitioners

During communal activities, practitioners can work on several levels, first by fostering the creation of a climate of communicative exchange and sharing among the girls with each other and with the boys. It is important for the purpose of strengthening their agency that they can break through isolation and cultivate the social fabric of exchange and mutual trust. To this end, providing for small group training (6 max 10 participants) will be able to foster an informal communication style with the operators as well. Later in specific training sessions, the groups can be expanded.
Specific directions with respect to the areas.

(a) Training:
- Workshops on human rights, mechanisms of protection from discrimination and sexism, functioning of local self-government bodies and public participation tools.
- Provide girls with information on their rights and opportunities available to them.
- provide training in leadership and political participation skills.
- provide examples of female role models: meetings with successful women leaders who share their experiences to motivate girls.

(b) Capacity building:
- training that develops self-awareness of one's potential and teaches techniques for managing self-esteem, motivation, and determination.
- courses on critical thinking, effective communication, teamwork, and project management.
- training on democratic management of women's groups and networking with other associations.
- creating safe and inclusive spaces where girls can meet and discuss.
- offer support and mentorship to girls who wish to take on leadership roles.
- promote the creation of support networks among girls.

(c) Active Involvement:

- design and implement community-based initiatives that enable girls to practice the skills they have learned (including through the creation of radio podcasts);
- highlight the success stories of girls participating in programs, creating role models for others.
- encourage girls to participate in political and social activities in the most immediate context.
- support the candidacy of girls for elected office.
- ensure girls' representation in decisions that affect them.

Gender Equality and Antidiscrimination for Roma

MODULE 7

How to strengthen the role of familiar responsibility in improving girls' status

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In traditional societies the characteristics desired for each sex are attributed at birth, and they have much to do with the working activities that the society practices: in agriculture and herding for example, roles for men and women are quite diverse.

However, these sharp separations can become more nuanced when we analyse urban contemporary economic models.

Today, in a world dominated mainly by activities in the realm of the so-called tertiary sector, there is no need any more to invest in stereotypical male qualities such as strength, agility, or physical and weight superiority. Changes are of course occurring mostly in urban centres everywhere around the world, however, there is still a substantial part of the world which still lives according to the old standards. However we must not be deluded by the "westernized progress", because if we observe the western world, we see that in spite of the significant changes intervened by mean of historical women's conquests in the field of gender equality, there is still present an underground stream of silent agreement of which are the society's expectations when it comes to the status of being born a male or a female, and this subterranean flow is still very much at work in our societies.

This introduction was important to frame the focus of this seminar, which is dedicated to family involvement in the education of children in respect to society's obligations and expectations, and parents' will. We have seen from the questionnaire answers, that youngsters can be involved in decisions concerning their future and their aspiration, however, from direct field observation, we can also affirm that "to correctly behave" represent a clearly important issue for families; more so when these families are living in a close-knit community or in an urban context, often seriously affected by poverty, unemployment, deprivation and discrimination: this general context originates a strong pressure to conform on behalf of the children. Often in these social contexts it is difficult to make parents understand how education and right to education are key factors for the future child integration in the social life. Data from almost all research undertaken in the field of Roma access to education shows that the Roma community has a very low degree of schooling, and they show the highest percentages of school dropout rates[1].

Families and groups living in extreme poverty, can find difficult the idea of capitalising money and time in a challenge that might (or might not), bring the desired, hopefully successful results. The "ethnic cultural package", represent a model whose validity is confirmed by its widespread acceptance and by its validity in terms of reproduction and continuation of both the species and the culture it brings within. It is a package that has worked for generation, and it has the advantage of presenting smaller risks compared to the challenges brought on by formal education and employment, where the rules are different, competition is fierce and there is no protection or support available from parents and the enlarged family. Therefore, regarding the child development and early inculturation, the first agency to involve is certainly the family, and particularly the children's mothers.

As the saying goes "When you educate a mother you educate a whole family group"; it is quite evident that parental involvement in communities is crucial for fostering a supportive environment for children's development and well-being.

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[1] On this subject there is a massive amount of documents, studies and researches. The European Roma Strategy 2020 – 2030 produced by the European Commission after a Council proposal contains a number of important references. It is available here: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1813

This clearly highlights the importance of the family influence in the child's history: our parents are our role model in the most important, formative years: those of our early socialization. The child observes and learn from everything happening around him and from how people around behave and relate to him/her. Within this environment he/she" breaths" the family atmosphere and learn how to react appropriately in the various ongoing situation and in daily contexts. The child wants unconditional love and support and approval, and in searching this fulfilling combination, he/she will do his best to comply with the family's approved answers and codes. During this phase parents represent the authority and the security. Verbal and nonverbal messages are continuously exchange within the family setting. The problems might arise when, the messages are violent or dysfunctional, because regardless of how unadaptive and damaging the message might be, the child does not have the strength and confidence to question parents' decisions or to oppose their will because he/she knows (learning it very early) that any behaviour or response deviant from the accepted norm can create unhappiness and critical situations.

If in a family there are frequent tensions, the voices always shouting, the dialogue often confrontational, the child learn that shouting and rage are the appropriate responses. Often, families of this kind, tend to be completely unavailable emotionally, and this brings a feeling of constant fear overall upon the child: fear of being rejected, feel of being abandoned, feel like he/she "does not do enough" to please the parents and to comply with their expectations. This combination of factors is an example of how deep and how pervasively, the family choices and attitudes engulf and involve the child. The case above relates to unhealthy psychological contexts and mechanisms which are "transmitted" from one generation to the other, however, gender issues work in a very similar way.

In the questionnaire filled for this survey, we have had several respondents who have highlighted the role of grandparents: this is especially the case of Romania, where there is a high presence of grandparents involved in children education and caring, due to the migratory project of the parents, which has in some cases brought them abroad, leaving the children behind at home. This situation of parental substitution should be taken into consideration when present, as it requires the activation of several agencies and people. It would be very important to help keeping contacts with the family abroad and in supporting the elders who might need care also.

The survey conducted for this project in the four countries involved have all confirmed that there is quite a strong division between the tasks assigned to each family member and it is mainly based on gender. This data is shared by all interviewed in all countries. Some specific tasks, such as familiar care for elders and children are almost invariably assigned to women (mothers in general, but also sisters). Percentages are ranging from 89 to 96% assigning to mothers all household chores, with childcare ranging from 70 to 96%. Sisters are also involved in these two tasks, although in much smaller numbers. This element demonstrates how reliable women are considered as they are entrusted these tasks. However, the same survey, when interviewing about who oversees managing the family financial aspects almost invariably assign this task to men, except for Romania, where also paperwork's and financial issues are female-managed. This difference can be explained by the fact that either the male parent is working outside the settlement or village, or to migration to other countries, thus preventing the husband from being involved in these aspects. Always in the case of Romania, we also witness a shift in parental responsibility from parents to grandparents also due to the migratory project.

These data are important because they show the resistance of a very traditional model based on gender; a confirmation also emerges from the qualities expected from both men and women[2]. Clearly these data have to be taken with a grain of salt; sociologists know well that it is difficult to register the full nuances of this simply through a direct question in a questionnaire, and that often people give the answer according to what is considered to be socially acceptable, but it is worth to remember how big is the pressure on individuals to conform in particularly close-knit communities like in mono (or predominantly) ethnic or rural groups.

The key action for every intervention on the ground is that of directly involving and, most important, engaging the families in what we are doing, clearly explaining the final goals of the activities and the benefits and improvements that can be achieved. Strategic thinking is the skill that we must try to improve and strengthen the family's motivation by debunking the possible existing distrust. Education and training are not to be considered as harmful or damaging or useless for the children belonging to the community, but they should rather be seen as an addition, an element which adds more to the competences and sets of values already present and given by the family themselves. Families should be encouraged to familiarize with the school environment, which should be open and welcoming; it is strongly advised that teachers and trainers should pay frequent and regular visits to the village or neighbourhood or dwelling. Establish relationship of durable mutual knowledge and allowing the parents to see that nothing "harmful" is taught to their sons and daughters. It is important that parents are involved when children are progressing, learning new things, or performed particularly well; it is also important to underline and highlights the talent, the commitment, or the motivation of the student. This is something that can be shown to parents and can improve their trust in the education system. Also of key importance is the living example of peers that, coming from the same background, have had positive results and have been successful in their trade of choice just thanks to the educational achievements. In many countries there is a well-established Roma elite of intellectuals, activists, and scholars, and they could represent a tangible, realistic example of the opportunities that formal education can bring to women. This means that families must be given a real opportunity to see the achievements reached by girls and having pride in supporting them; they also should acquire familiarity with the school environment and with school professionals. Of course this might not be possible with all parents; some might be more conservative and stricter, some others more open, but again, for social workers, the task remains the same: that of building, bridging, and bonding with families, with the final goal of becoming accountable and trustworthy as operators within the community.

The establishment of this bond of trust between the professional and the families is of paramount importance, and apart from its final goal, which is that of ensuring child education and empowerment, it has the added advantage of providing the family with a network, both institutional and not, that can be accessed in time of need or simply as something that "is there and helps". This "bridging and bonding" phase is of extreme importance because it will set the tone and atmosphere of all relations further on, so it is important for the professional to be well prepared to present the project, its goals, and ways of realization, and how it will be enriched by the family participation to some of the activities. It is important to be very clear avoiding technical terms as much as possible and offering as many information as possible, also using a short leaflet containing the list of available services, how to access them, and the contact information. In this way the family can easily and immediately see a concrete help. Explain also that services have a duty to serve the

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[2] Neetu A. John; Kirsten Stoebenau; Samantha Ritter; Jeffrey Edmeades; Nikola Balvin, 2017, Gender Socialization during Adolescence in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. Conceptualization, influences and outcomes. Available at: https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/885-gender-socialization-during-adolescence-in-low-and-middle-income-countries-conceptualization.html

public and inform them on how to request this or that document, do not help directly by accompanying, except situations where some help is needed.

The starting point in the building of this trust should be the acknowledgement of family's resources and competencies; the style of intervention should avoid the creation of a family dependence from services or operators avoiding demanding behaviours that will hinder the family road to autonomy; you must offer clear information and support for bureaucratic and other possible issues but unless there are well grounded specific reasons try not to accompany them, rather guiding them through services and ensuring follow up. If families must be encouraged to exercise parental responsibility, then dependence from services and operators should be avoided at all costs. Finally, it must be always kept in mind that interventions must be conceived and implemented with the help of a network, institutional and informal, therefore, considering all the possible variables and issues that need to be addressed and providing in a comprehensive perspective, the concrete tools to deal with these variables in a timely and efficient way.

Family's priorities and need must be listened to, and they must be corroborated by personal observation and by the comparison with other sources (teachers, other educators etc.), in this way we can come close to a representation of reality more objective that the one made solely on our or on our informants' impression. As we have stated throughout this whole guide, the process of direct, prolonged observation of contexts is the prime element of every program and plan; it is also important to investigate as to whether there have been previous projects involving the same group or the same family, and how did they ended up, what outcome was produced. This will serve to help in identifying successful (or unsuccessful) ways of intervention and to help us calibrate better the one we are presently doing.

A delicate, for those working with disadvantaged youth in Europe, is the issue represented by phenomena of young criminality and deviance i.e. the legal/penal aspect, which is present in many situations in Europe, and involves very often also adolescents and youngsters. Petty crimes like theft or burglaries, and pick pocketing raids, car hijacking, and other crimes can be carried out by some groups, but neither within the community nor within families there does not seem to be a strong enough attitude toward an effective sanctioning of these behaviours. Other delicate issues might arise in the case where children, especially girls, are the subject of trafficking or of forced or arranged marriages or are involved in theft or any other criminal or risky and damaging activity (drug use, alcohol, others). Although these cases are always rarer in the community and they are not exclusively, especially in large urban contexts, it remains an issue for some other groups, and must be addressed and taken into consideration as part of a global approach.

For social workers and practitioners willing to work in the field of female emancipation must be aware of this background context in order to implement efficient and punctual interventions, tailored on the real situations and needs of the target group. In particular it is important to focus on *practicing* rather than mainly *advocating* for women and girl's empowerment. The daily behaviour and work ethic of the social workers involved, ought to mainstream in everyday's activities this principle, making it available for youngsters not as an enunciation, a motto, but as a daily tool to be used in relationships and in educational and working environments. What we can certainly affirm is that what is learned early within the family is often going to be replicated as it is considered as the familiar norm to conform to. It is difficult to promote a new approach when individuals have never had a chance to experience differently. Again, in the questionnaire's answers, it emerges the data regarding the long time spent at home or within the household. It is especially the case of many villages in the rural areas of Romania and Bulgaria. This detachment and relative isolation from "cultural contamination", prevent youngsters to be able to establish significant and mutual relationships with the out-village context. Parents should be encouraged to involve themselves more directly in their children

education, understanding that childhood is the only moment in life where time can be used in many, many ways. So, parents (or grandparents) should be supported in the process of enroling their children to post school activities (sports or other). The social worker could for example provide a number of free activities to undertake where also parents would participate, in this way children would be offered the possibility of seeing their parents in contexts "other" than the traditional domestic setting; it opens up to a whole new range of possibilities of thinking "outside" the usual models, and opens further possibilities for intervention because when the goal o fan action is shared by the community, the greater the chance that changes might be occurring. The most powerful educational tool lies as always in the practice, and, particularly when working with young children, in the practical example, witnessed as an everyday, average response. Often parents do not reflect really on what and how children are growing, because in their generations, no one was really expecting an opinion from children: and the main success in their education would be that of being able to withstand society's judgement, according to the commonly shared values and cultural expectations, therefore, mainly to conform correctly to given standards and stereotypes.

We have seen how in the more traditional Roma families; women assume a caretaker role very early in their lives. They care for their younger siblings and help with house chores and in the case of establishing a formal relationship, it might happen that women are also entrusted to care for their boyfriend's family members. All these tasks foresee the dedication of time and energy to fulfil appropriately the caretaker responsibilities. This is however, often incompatible with school life and with the concept of investing time in such thing as education, making it difficult to attend school. In many cases, family may experience fears toward a potential relationship with other boys, etc.

Social maturity for women is reached with the birth of their first child. Therefore, it is not strange to observe that engagements and weddings are celebrated at a young age, and this directly impacts their educational possibilities.

All these characteristics influence the educational process of the children, and it is necessary to consider them in designing an adequate intervention with a family: as a social institution the family adapts to the social situation in which it lives in.

The data gathered for this project have also registered some important changes that are taking place and that should be highlighted:

The appearance and spread of new family models (single-parent homes mothers leading the home on their own, divorced, or separated families, cohabitation between two or three generations, etc.)

The family interacts in its socialising effort with an increasing number of institutions (health, employment, social services etc.). Other factors such as media, (television, but also new technologies: Internet, Facebook; Twitter, Blogs, etc.) have appeared and Roma also benefit from them. According to data from the direct survey of young Roma, 90.1% use digital platforms and only 5.7% explicitly state that they do not use any Internet technology.

Family, and in particular parents, have still a key importance in society including Roma communities. This is why it is so important to gain their support and involvement in the projects and programs dedicated to their children, particularly toward education. Several reports from NGOs working in the field of Roma inclusion have highlighted a number of attitudes that members of the Roma community show often toward the educational system: mutual distrust and prejudices, Roma see the school as "unfamiliar" to them, weakness

of the school relationship with parents, lack of motivation, lack of role model within the families and poverty[3]. Social workers and professionals should therefore carefully assess the familiar group object of the intervention; this assessment should be of a multi-dimensional kind and should be built with enough information to allow successive monitoring and evaluation and for the most punctual building of the individual or family intervention plan. These processes: construction of a baseline onto which measure and evaluate progress, set up of a list of indicators to measure, keep monitoring and registering. The data acquired with this method and in a systematic way, are the only reliable and accountable tools able to measure effective progress[4]. Direct observation may for example reveal the true charge related with the house chores for female children, and this information is key for the educational success of the child and cannot be gathered in any other way than by observation. To this end is also useful to consult other professionals working on the same field, especially if they are doing street work or fieldwork, these can be considered key informants just like the family members: all these actors, coupled with the process of observation, will enable the professional to work better and more efficiently and to find useful alliances and exchanges. It would be very useful to become familiar with existing tools dedicated to the promotion of political engagement for girls coming from a disadvantaged background[5].

To be able to effectively strengthen the role of familiar responsibility the relationship with the family must be consolidated in time so that we can secure their collaboration by discussing every aspect of the intervention, analysing problems and possible solutions. Remember to prepare a clear and concise illustration of the projects' aim and phases, indicating for each step what is the goal, what the expectations are, trying to single out weaknesses and strength through common discussions. Provide families with clear information regarding the services to they might be entrusted, their operational capacity offering a basic knowledge of the opportunities offered and eventual benefits.

Families can be very unfamiliar with the school dynamics and the aspects that might influence the educational process, and they might only perceive the aspect of "support" expressed through material benefits such as free books and stationery and fail to see the "immaterial" support offered for example by tutorship's, by the other skills that can be acquired in school: social skills, motivational support, emotional and intellectual growth. Families are the one who must assume responsibility, and they ought to be enabled and supported in the process of discussing norms and limits of their children, in doing so, remember to always underline that all advancements, even the smallest, have been achieved thanks also to the family commitment, try to establish with them a working alliance, and to foster an exchange dimension. Clarify that education is compulsory for every child, helping them to understand the concept of parental responsibility. At the same time, work with schools and other institutions to have them ready and prepared to welcome.

There are numerous ways in which parents can be involved and actively participate and contribute to their communities:

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[3] See the FSG – REF, 2013, Guide for working with Roma families towards achieving the success of their children in school, Available at: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/resources/guide-working-roma-families-towards-achieving

[4] See the FSG – REF, 2013, Guide for working with Roma families towards achieving the success of their children in school, Available at: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/resources/guide-working-roma-families-towards-achieving pp. 128 - 132.

[5] A good example is the toolkit published by the Council of Europe in 2020

School Engagement:

- Ty to engage parents as much as possible in the school activities and in their children's education and achievements: show how education can contribute to a better future for the youngsters.
- Organize public annual events to present the children's work made during the school year: this helps to make the family perceive the concrete, effective achievements of their children.
- Attend Parent-Teacher Meetings: Regularly attend parent-teacher meetings, not only to stay informed about a child's academic progress, behaviour, and any concerns arising, but in order to create an habit toward collective meetings and discussion, creating a routine that is a learning routine, trying to use these meetings to allow the parents to see the school and the services with their own eyes from a perspective of equality.
- Parental Education Programs: Implement programs that educate parents about the importance of education for girls, dispelling myths and addressing cultural barriers.
- Workshops and Seminars: Organize workshops and seminars for parents to understand the long-term benefits of investing in their daughters' education.
- Volunteer at School: Offer to volunteer for school events, extracurricular activities, or field trips to actively participate in your child's school life.
- Promote Equal Treatment: Encourage parents to treat their daughters and sons equally, providing the same opportunities for education, extracurricular activities, and personal development.
- Challenge Gender Stereotypes: Raise awareness about the harmful impact of gender stereotypes and encourage parents to support their daughters in pursuing any field of interest.
- Nutritional Support: Promote awareness about the importance of proper nutrition for girls' health and development, encouraging parents to provide balanced diets.

Community Events and Activities:

- Participate in Community Events: Attend community events, festivals, and gatherings to build a sense of belonging and community cohesion.
- Support Local Initiatives: Volunteer for or support local initiatives, such as clean-up campaigns, cultural events, or charity drives, as a family.

Parental Support Networks:

- Open Communication: Foster open communication between parents and daughters, creating an environment where girls feel comfortable discussing their goals, challenges, and concerns. Register and assess family common values and beliefs.
- Emotional Support: Encourage parents to provide emotional support and encouragement, fostering a sense of self-worth and confidence in their daughters.
- Join Parent Support Groups: Engage with local parent support groups to share experiences, seek advice, and provide mutual support.
- Establish Networks: Form networks with other parents to address common concerns and work collaboratively on community issues.

Youth Programs and Organizations:

- Support Youth Programs: Participate in or support youth programs, sports teams, and extracurricular activities that contribute to the positive development of children in the community.
- Collaborate with Youth Organizations: Collaborate with youth organizations to create opportunities for skill development, mentorship, and community service.
- Positive Role Models: Encourage parents to be positive role models by demonstrating qualities such as respect, equality, and a commitment to lifelong learning.
- Career Guidance: Provide guidance to parents on how to support their daughters in exploring diverse career paths and making informed decisions about their future. Organise informative "open days" both in the school institution and in the village or dwelling.
- Encourage the protagonism of young leaders: Through the establishment of scholarship, invest in the group's talent; economic support might be provided through a number of ways, although the best would clearly be a scholarship issued by the same school or other larger educational institution.
- Establish Parental Support Networks: Create networks where parents can share experiences and advice, providing mutual support in promoting the well-being and status of girls.
- Community-Based Organizations: Partner with community-based organizations that facilitate parent support groups focused on girls' empowerment.
- By empowering parents with knowledge, resources, and a supportive community, we can enhance their role in improving the status of girls, creating an environment where girls can reach their full potential. Parental involvement is a key factor in building a more equitable and inclusive society for girls.

Advocacy for Community Issues:

- Attend Community Meetings: Participate in local community meetings to discuss issues affecting families and children.
- Advocate for Change: Advocate for changes or improvements in community services, such as education, healthcare, and recreational facilities.
- Parental Involvement in Communities: Encourage parents to actively participate in initiatives that promote gender equality and support the well-being of girls.
- Community Dialogue: Facilitate community dialogues where parents can share experiences and learn from one another about effective strategies for empowering girls.

Education and Literacy Programs:

- Engage in Literacy Initiatives: Participate in literacy programs, book clubs, or reading initiatives to promote a culture of learning in the community.
- Share Knowledge: Share your skills and knowledge with others, contributing to the educational enrichment of the community.

Healthcare and wellbeing:

- Access to Healthcare: Advocate for parents to ensure that their daughters have access to quality healthcare, including reproductive health services. This topic might be extremely sensitive with some families and groups, it is therefore advised to treat these topics with the due tact and in respect of the individual beliefs unless they violate a law or human rights.
- Promote Safe Play Areas: Advocate for and contribute to the creation of safe play areas for children within the community.

Environmental Initiatives:

- Participate in Green Initiatives: Engage in environmental initiatives, such as tree planting or community clean-up projects, to instill a sense of responsibility for the environment in children.
- Promote Sustainable Practices: Advocate for sustainable practices within the community, promoting eco-friendly habits for families.
- Encourage Entrepreneurship: Support parents in encouraging entrepreneurial skills in their daughters, providing them with opportunities for economic empowerment.
- Equal Financial Education: Advocate for equal financial education for both sons and daughters, preparing them for financial independence.

Digital and Media Literacy:

- Support Digital Literacy: Stay informed about digital platforms and technologies, ensuring that children are using digital media responsibly.
- Organize Workshops: Collaborate with community organizations to organize workshops on digital and media literacy for parents and children.
- Promote Safe Internet Use: Educate parents on the importance of digital literacy for girls and promote safe internet use.
- Support Educational Technologies: Encourage parents to support the use of educational technologies that enhance girls' learning experiences.

Legal Awareness:

- Know and Advocate for Rights: Educate parents about the legal rights of their daughters, including the right to education, protection from discrimination, and inheritance rights.
- Legal Support Services: Ensure parents are aware of available legal support services in case of discrimination or rights violations.
- By actively participating in any of these ways, parents contribute not only to their child's well-being but also to the overall health and vibrancy of the community.
- Strong parental involvement fosters a sense of community, encourages positive social values, and provides children with a supportive foundation for their growth and development. Strengthening the

role of parents is crucial in improving the status of girls. Parents play a pivotal role in shaping their daughters' lives and creating an environment where girls can thrive.

**PRACTICAL EXERCISES*:*

Focus group with parents where through a free discussion on several selected topics. The methodology is the same as the one used with children: simulating real situations where parents have to manage a number of different realistically possible and common situations in which they might find themselves.

Examples might be the following:

- The girl has been withdrawn from school to help the family at home or in their works. How to cope with this situation? Explain that it is a duty to enrol minors in school. Ask them for reasons and argument in favour of the investment of a number of years spent acquiring a formal education as it will greatly improve one's life prospect plans.
- Check how parental authority works: What is sanctioned? What is approved? What is tolerated? What is encouraged and rewarded? (This exercise can be easily carried out by using labels with written some commonly shared phrases (for example: It is natural for men to lead, or talking about fear is not masculine, or to have a bad reputation is worse for a girl than for a boy, or women are better at cooking than man) and challenge them with counterbalanced practical examples. Ensure group discussion with a moderator.
- The girl has been taken by the police while (begging? Stealing? Loitering? Using drugs? Using alcohol?) And any other illegal activity. What happens, step by step in each of the different situations? What strategies do the family adopts?
- Aspirations: stimulate parents to express their aspiration for their children's future, and then ask them to remember what his/her aspiration where when he/she was young. Were there any episodes of rebellion or resistance to the family's will?
- The girls have been asked in marriage underage or another any situation of disadvantage) by another family. Here we should work both cases: in the case the family included in this project approves the match, and vice versa. See and note the common strategies that families enact according to habits or personal advantage and the re model the situation with appropriate and according to European standards and rule.