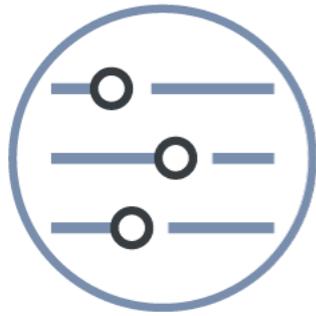




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by the European Union



**MASP**  
MASTER PARENTING IN WORK AND LIFE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

WP2 – Research and Best practices

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

WP2 – Research and Best practices

Edited by Gruppo Cooperativo Cgm\*

\* edited by Flaviano Zandonai with the support of Alessia di Cesare, Sabina Bellione, Biagio Currò and (...). The authors would like to thank the Masp project partners involved in the research activities and revision.



## **Masp Project**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **WP2 – Research and Best practices**

Edited by Gruppo cooperativo Cgm\*

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## 1. Introduction: objectives and structure of the summary report

This document outlines the results of the research activities carried out in the context of WP2 (research and best practice) of the Masp - Master Parenting in Work and Life project., As indicated in the work package, the objective is to encourage a first dissemination of the investigative activities carried out, but above all *to provide strategic and operational indications useful for the realization of future activities*, in particular those concerning the adaptation and transferability of pilot experiences MAAM<sup>1</sup> and Family Audit<sup>2</sup>.

Starting from the summary of the main *results of the research actions* (paragraph 2) and from the analysis of the most *recent statistics at European and Italian level* (paragraph 3), there will be proposed some *social challenges that encourage traditional approaches to work-life balance* (sub-points paragraph 4). The policy objective of the project, explained in the form and strengthened by the comparison between partners, is in fact *to outline a new framework of meanings* able to feed strategies and actions that can redefine, not only in terms of balance but also in terms of greater synergy, the relationship between the spheres of parenting and of work (paragraph 5). On this basis, in the final part of the document *precise indications regarding the future activities of the project* will be proposed (paragraph 6).

## 2. Research activities and main results

The main results of the different research activities carried out by the various project partners are summarized in the following schemes. These actions aimed to pursue the following objectives:

- to identify and analyse best practices for work-life balance at European level promoted and implemented by both public administrations and enterprises;
- to deepen and evaluate the results obtained from MAAM training programmes and from the Family Audit certification;
- to analyse the specific needs in terms of work-life balance of women excluded from or in a discontinuous relationship with the labour market within the two target territories (metropolitan city of Milan and Autonomous Province of Trento).

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<sup>1</sup> MAAM is the digital training program for companies that accompanies new parents in the months preceding birth, during Mat leave and return to work, making their experience an opportunity for personal and professional development ([www.maam.life](http://www.maam.life)).

<sup>2</sup> Family Audit is a tool that aims to activate a cultural change in the company through innovative *Work-life balance* actions. Family Audit is a registered trademark owned by the Autonomous Province of Trento, which acts as a certification body ([www.trentinofamiglia.it](http://www.trentinofamiglia.it)).

<b>Activity</b>
Analysis of best practices for work-life balance
<b>Responsible subjects</b>
Reves Network with the support of Bin Italia, Afolmet, A.P.I. Associazione Piccole Medie Industrie
<b>Goals and methodology</b>
Realization of 10 case studies that return the variety of work-life balance strategies at European level undertaken by both public administrations and enterprises. The goal is to identify the transferability conditions of their elements of innovation, efficacy and sustainability.
<b>Main results</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Definition of a best practice study tool based on some key elements of the balance activities that is: i) involvement of families in the co-planning of the activities; ii) dialogue with the organization's stakeholders about the implementation of the initiatives; iii) focus on the elements of innovation; iv) relevance of innovation in terms of sustainability and transferability in other contexts and sectors; v) impact of activities in transformative terms (organizational change and policy redesign).</li> <li>- Recommendations for public (and not only) project and policy makers in order to project better and evaluate work-life balance policies based on the following guiding elements: - a more realistic profile of the needs of parents and families, highlighting the various phenomenologies of discrimination on the labour market; - a greater ability to intervene in traditional role models, for example as regards the paternal role and career paths; - to use the lever of public procurements to promote gender equality and work-life balance by acting across different policy areas (not just social or employment policies); - targeted supports for small and medium-sized enterprises and social economy enterprises, enhancing their peculiarities also as regards balance; - to broaden and qualify the offer of balance services (in particular childcare services), looking specifically at the offer of the social economy subjects.</li> </ul>

<b>Activity</b>
Evaluation of pilot experiences MAAM and Family Audit
<b>Responsible subjects</b>
Aiccon with the support of Agenzia del Lavoro and LBV
<b>Goals and methodology</b>
<p>Analysis of the results achieved by the pilot experiences consulting mainly cognitive materials produced by the projects themselves for information and evaluation purposes. The goal is to focus on the main success factors of these initiatives by identifying scalability models consistent with their constitutive characteristics.</p>
<b>Main results</b>
<p>Scalability elements of Family Audit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focusing on the family as a target of welfare policies also in the business context avoiding the risk of fragmentation of benefits.</li> <li>- Centrality of the organizational audit procedure, which allows to efficiently locate work-life balance policies thanks to an analysis and evaluation of the environmental contexts and business management processes.</li> <li>- As a result of the approach described in the previous points – focus on family and organizational analysis – it is possible to customize the offer of welfare services both in terms of performance content and distinctive quality.</li> <li>- With respect to this system, the territorial variable can play an important role, in terms of specific constraints and opportunities referring to both companies and families.</li> </ul> <p>Scalability elements of MAAM.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acknowledgement of parenting as a resource and "proposable" competence even in fields other than those strictly related to its traditional context of exercise, triggering a cultural change based on the synergy among different spheres of life.</li> <li>- Possibility of replicating the same synergy mechanism also in other areas of competence (for example the roles of caregiver).</li> <li>- Native design as a digital platform which is both BTB (interface between platform and companies) and BTC (interface between platform and parents). Possibility to provide for information and training services to support people and organizations to bridge gaps in skills and culture of use (especially by users).</li> <li>- The need to trigger the adoption of a broader "family friendly" strategy in enterprises resorting to the platform, through initiatives that can enhance the elements of social impact triggered by the use of the program.</li> </ul>

<b>Activity</b>
Balance needs of women with frailty in the labour market
<b>Responsible subjects</b>
Bin Italia with the support of Agenzia del Lavoro, Afolmet, Gruppo cooperativo Cgm
<b>Goals and methodology</b>
Analysis of the needs and obstacles related to work-life balance on a target group represented by unemployed women or women with discontinuous presence in the labour market, through the creation of focus groups, interviews and compilation of questionnaires in the territories of reference (Trento and Milano).
<b>Main results</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Detection of obstacles to accessing balance services mainly on two fronts: i) physical proximity of services (also linked to the territorial gaps between metropolitan area and internal and extra-urban areas); ii) quality level (basically low) and costs of services (basically high).</li> <li>- Need to adopt contractual tools that allow to create and maintain direct contacts with companies (traineeships, time contracts, etc.) in order to multiply the opportunities for women to return to and stay in the labour market.</li> <li>- The same need to strengthen job search capacity can get stronger through ways of meeting and learning between peers (women and their partners), in particular as regards the construction and management of balance networks and, more in general, to educate approaches to parenting with reference to working life.</li> <li>- Presence of roles of facilitation and mediation of the relationship between person and organization along the path of parenting in the broad sense (not only the period of maternity in accordance with the law).</li> <li>- Need to structure spaces dedicated to the meeting and debate between parents who have balance needs so that empowerment and support initiatives can be put in place by professional figures with counselling and community building skills. In the same spaces, contacts and ties can be shared with other subjects (enterprises, employment agencies, etc.) who are able to make the return and permanence in the labour market easier.</li> </ul>

### 3. Statistical evidences at European level

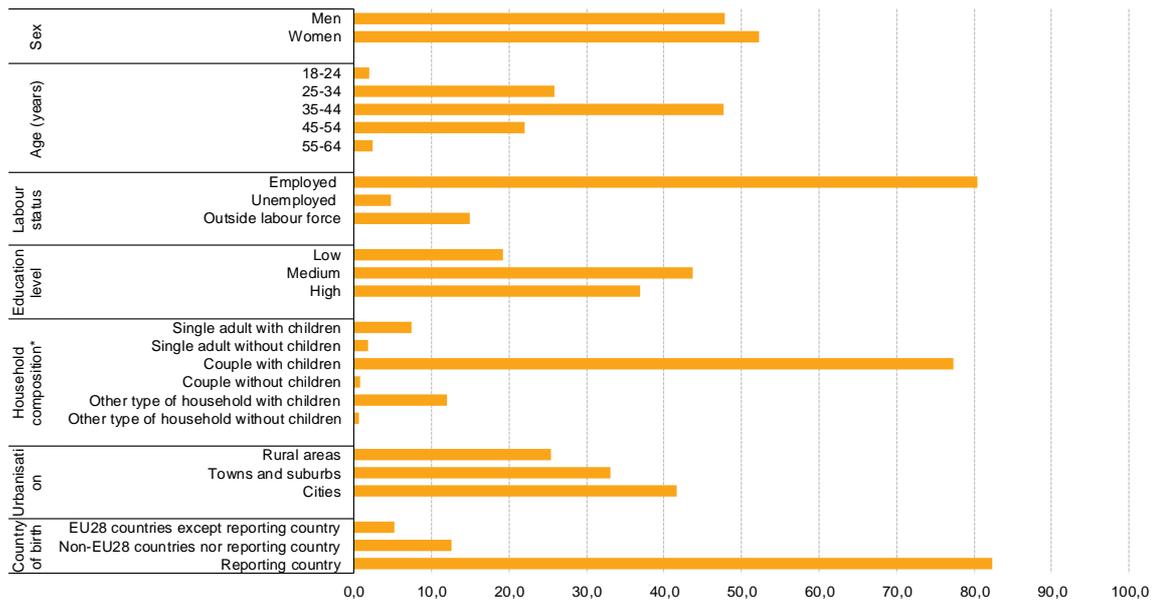
The results of the research activities carried out under the second work package of Masp project and outlined in the previous schemes can be enriched by picking up data from the European (Eurostat) and Italian (Istat) statistical institutes, which in the second half of 2019 published reports on work-life balance (with statistics updated to 2018). This will make it possible to reconstruct the scenario at EU level and, in the next paragraph, grasp the peculiarities of the Italian case, given that most of the project's actions will be carried out in this country.

A first important element of knowledge concerns *the profile of the persons carrying out care activities for minors under 15 years of age*. It is about of nearly 90 million people aged between 18 and 64 years, a significant percentage equal to 85% of the total number of people (about 106 million, 1/3 of the population in the indicated age group) playing a caregiver role not only to minors but also to elderly, sick and disabled family members. Within the various European countries and in some non-European countries for which statistics are available (Turkey, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland) there are significant differences regarding the percentage of people with care tasks: in Germany for example, the percentage of caregivers is 24% of the population while at the opposite side, in Ireland it is almost 40% (39,2%).

After quantifying the dimensions of the phenomenon, Eurostat data allow us to draw the identikit of the care giver, focusing on those people who carry out care tasks exclusively in favour of minors under 15 years of age who live in the same home. From the data presented in the following figure some features of this subpopulation emerge: these are mainly women, of adult age (especially the age group between 35 and 44 years), employed in the world of work, of secondary/higher levels of educational attainment and with a family structure mainly consisting of a couple with children, resident in the European country of birth and in urban area. Alongside these macro trends, some interesting exceptions can still be observed, starting with the considerable percentage of childcare men, followed by the presence of age groups both younger (25-34 years old) and older (45-54) than the more common one. Looking at the labour market, there is a low but not insignificant percentage of people who have left the labour market, as well as the amount of low educational qualifications also appears to be substantial among the educational levels. Lastly, it is worth pointing out the presence of family structures other than couples with children such as single adults with children, as well as the amount

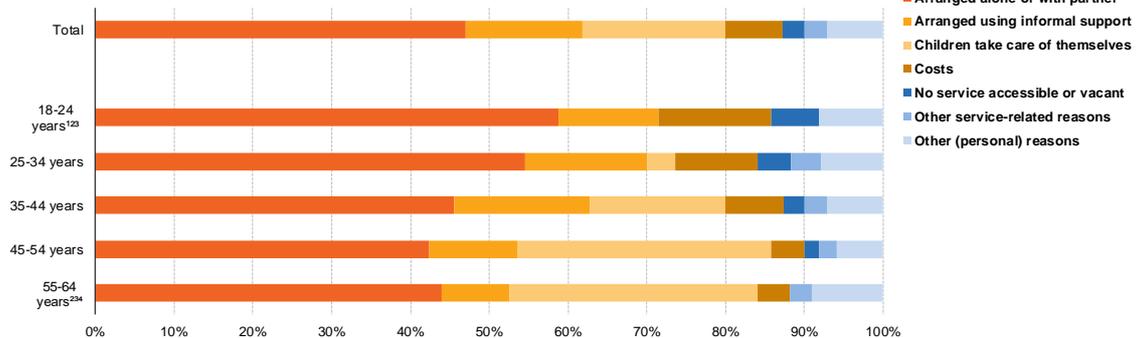
of people born outside of their country of current residence, as well as the territorial distribution where even rural areas carry great weight.

Share of persons with only childcare responsibilities by population group (%)



After defining the profile of the subjects who take care of minors (mainly their children), Eurostat data deepen still another important aspect, namely *the use of professional welfare services to support their activity*. The most remarkable datum on that subject is that the majority (62%) do not use these services and therefore it may be interesting to investigate the reasons for this choice, which are summarized in the following figure. For almost half (47%) of those who do not make use of any external service, the reason is linked to the need (or will) to make use of resources within the family. This "self-management" solution is followed by the 15% of people who integrate their care resources using informal help mainly by relatives. Also interesting is the datum (18% of the total) on minors who are able (or deemed to be able) to look after themselves. A percentage that, not surprisingly, grows as the age of parents and therefore of children increases. Lastly, it is noteworthy the low percentage of those declaring that they do not have access to support services because there is no adequate offer in this regard, demonstrating how the demand for services in this field follows specific training mechanisms that are linked to the possession of economic resources but also organizational, and in a broad sense, cultural skills aimed at integrating and supporting a care activity that is experienced as an integral part of one's parenting role.

**Main reason for not using professional childcare services by age, EU-28, 2018 (%)**  
Persons not using childcare services at all or only for some children



Among those who declare to use professional services (a significant percentage equal to almost 38% of the total), there are some positive correlations (that is an increase in the use of services) related to the following variables:

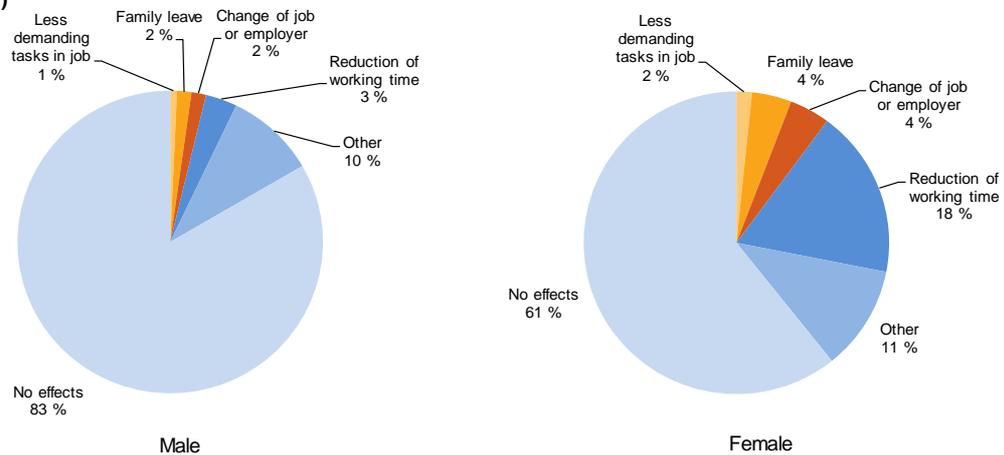
- the age of people with care duties, so within the 24-44 age group the use of services for minors is almost 90% of the total, most likely being childcare services;
- working status, as a result of which working people reach a percentage of 41%, even if the use of services is however widespread, albeit to a lesser extent, among both unemployed people (25%) and those who left the labour market (24%);
- the levels of education, hence people with high educational qualifications use services in 45% of cases against 24% of those with lower educational qualifications;
- residence in the country of birth positively influences the use of services (34%) even though there are no particular gaps, compared with those who migrated from other countries (30%);
- lastly, there are no particular differences in the use of services, looking at the different types of workers, in particular distinguishing between employees, freelancers and entrepreneurs with employees.

A further section of the Eurostat report is particularly interesting in relation to the goals of the Masp project, it concerns *the strategies and adaptation mechanisms aiming to balance care responsibilities and work commitments*.

At European level, 27% of people aged between 18 and 64 who have caregiver duties to minors under the age of 15 stated that they made changes and adaptations at working level. The percentage varies considerably from country to country with the minimum of 6% in Romania up to the maximum of 60%

in Sweden. In relation to this trend, a particularly significant variable is determined by the level of education, as in almost all European countries people with higher qualifications have made changes to their work structure more frequently: 34% at continental level, against 17% of those with lower educational qualifications.

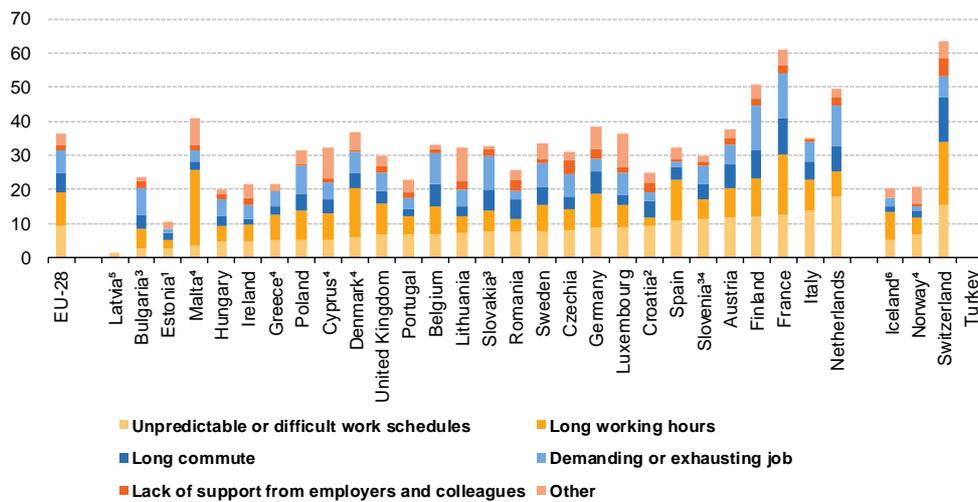
**Persons in employment with childcare responsibilities by effect on employment and Sex, EU-28, 2018 (%)**



It is interesting from this point of view, to examine the types of adaptation made, but not before pointing out a significant gender gap: if, as for men, the percentage of those who made changes is equal to 17%, women increase up to 39% as much as 22 percentage points. This same gap is also observable as regards the main adjustment solution, that is the reduction in working hours made by 18% of women and only by 3% of males, as a result no less than 83% of people who demanded for a reduction of working hours in Europe is female. Even the choice to change job, although made by a smaller percentage, still shows 4% of women and 2% of males.

Flexibility of working time is therefore a particularly critical variable in relation to which Eurostat has detected different levels of perception: for example, almost 30% of workers say they can both anticipate arrive and leave times and take a whole day off in case of need for medical care. But at the opposite side, ¼ of the total declare that they cannot use these same flexibility mechanisms in any way.

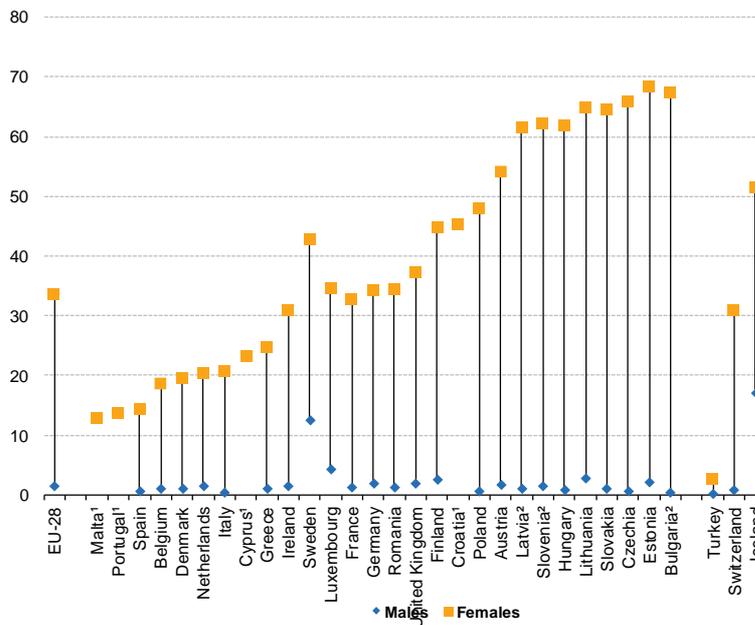
**Persons in employment with care responsibilities by main obstacle at work for reconciliation, 2018 (%)**



As a consequence of this situation so uneven, it has been investigated the presence and nature of the obstacles that stand in the way of the possibility / ability to adapt to working rhythms in relation to parental obligations. The majority of workers (63%) declare that they had no obstacles to any need of change at work level, while those who report impediments (37%) indicate as the main causes excessively long working hours, unpredictability of work tasks that keep them from scheduling according to the needs of care, and the heaviness of the work tasks, albeit with very significant differences among the different countries as pointed out in the previous figure.

Lastly, we can investigate some trends concerning the progress of the working career, detecting any slowdowns or interruptions due to care needs of minors. From this point of view, just less than ¼ of the interviewees report a work interruption at least one month long for care needs, while to the contrary 41% does not report any. The remaining part is distributed among those who do not have children (just less than 1/3) and those who do not work because of both care needs and other reasons. In the latter case, although these are limited percentages, there is a marked difference between people born in the same state of residence and people who moved from another country. For the former the percentage of those who do not work for care needs is 1,1% while for the latter the percentage increases to 3,5%.

**Share of persons in employment or with previous employment experience, aged 18-64 with a work interruption (more than 6 months) for childcare reasons by sex, 2018 (%).**



Regarding the issue of interruptions and slowdowns in working careers however, the widest gap is the gender one. Extending the leave period to six months, the percentage of women grows, at European level, to about 1/3 of the total while, as for males, it is 1,3%. But the most relevant aspect is given by the width of the gap between male and female time off which is in some countries decidedly bigger than the European average, while in others it is smaller as shown in the previous figure.

### 3.1. Peculiarities of the Italian case

Once the scenario has been outlined at European level, it is possible to deepen the Italian case, pointing out its peculiarities in order to introduce in the following paragraphs the elements of social challenge that characterize the work-life balance needs in this country. In fact, it should be remembered that almost all the actions envisaged by the Masp project will concern Italy.

The data collected by the National Institute of Statistics (Istat) follow more or less the Eurostat statistics and therefore allow to deepen the three macro themes analysed previously, namely: i) the identikit of people who take care of minors; ii) the choice to make use of professional childcare services as a support; iii) the strategies and behaviours implemented to balance care activities and work-related tasks.

*In relation to the number of people aged between 18 and 64 years who declare to carry out care tasks, Italy ranks on the European average, as the over 2,8 million people detected by Istat represent 34% of the total, therefore in line with what was recorded at continental level. As far as the care of minors under*

the age of 15 is concerned, the Italian datum (27%) is similar to the European one (29%), but in Italy there is a greater presence of people with multiple care tasks, that is, both care of minors but also of the elderly, sick and disabled. A percentage of caregivers equal to almost 6% of the total, which is therefore subjected to particularly heavy care responsibilities.

Within this general framework however, there are further peculiarities of the Italian case. In Italy, for example, the age group of people with care tasks between 45 and 55 increases substantially, reaching almost 30% of the total against 22% at European level and moreover, the percentage of those not having higher educational qualifications decreases (21% against 37% at Community level). These are remarkable differences also because, as highlighted in the survey at European level, age and level of education are variables that significantly influence some key choices such as whether or not to avail oneself of professional support services and the management of the relationship with the world of work. Regarding the latter aspect, the data about Italy contain interesting insights that measure two important gaps: the one between genders and the one among macro territorial areas (North, Centre and South).

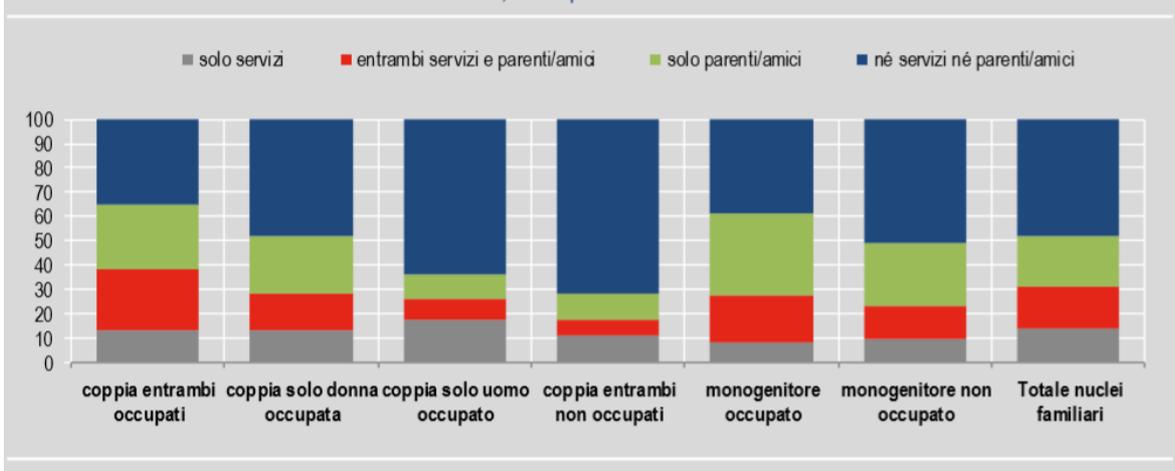
The employment rate among people aged between 25 and 54 years, when the presence of minors is highest, is 89% for males while for women is 57% and it is even lower for those with children in preschool age. Another gap is added to this one, while for men having or not children does not affect the employment rate, this rate for women instead undergoes a remarkable decrease in fact for those without children the level of employment is no less than 72%. These dynamics between mothers and childless women are even more evident when analysed at a macro regional level: the difference in the employment rate is smaller in the central and northern regions (11 and 10 percentage points respectively), while in the South it grows up to 16 percentage points. In the southern regions, moreover, the employment rate of mothers is lower (36%) than in the Centre (65%) and in the North (69%).

*If we shift instead our attention to the use of professional welfare services to support care activity, we notice a significant gap between Italy and the European average. In fact, if at the continental level there*

is a recourse to these services with a percentage of 38%, in Italy the rate drops seven percentage points (31%) and it reaches 13 points if we consider only the southern regions (25% against 34% in the North and 33% in the Centre). The possible use of both professional services and informal arrangements by relatives or friends is closely linked to the working status of the parents of minors. If both parents work, both the use of services (38%) and informal support (25%) increase, if instead only the male works, both the recourse to the services (26%) and the help by relatives and friends decrease (8%). This highlights a further increase in the care load for the caregiver (in the vast majority of female cases) and consequently

greater difficulties in entering (or re-entering) the world of work. This “welfare trap” is evident by looking also at the choices of working women and considering the territorial area of residence, the employment contract they have and the type of professional support. For example, women workers from the South use services in a proportion equal to 31% against 36% in the Centre and 38% in the North. The percentages grow, but with the same gaps, if we consider the services for children aged between 0 and 5 years: 54% in the South against 65% in the Centre-North. Similarly, the use of services is much more widespread among women with full-time employment contracts (54%) than among those with part-time contracts (46%).

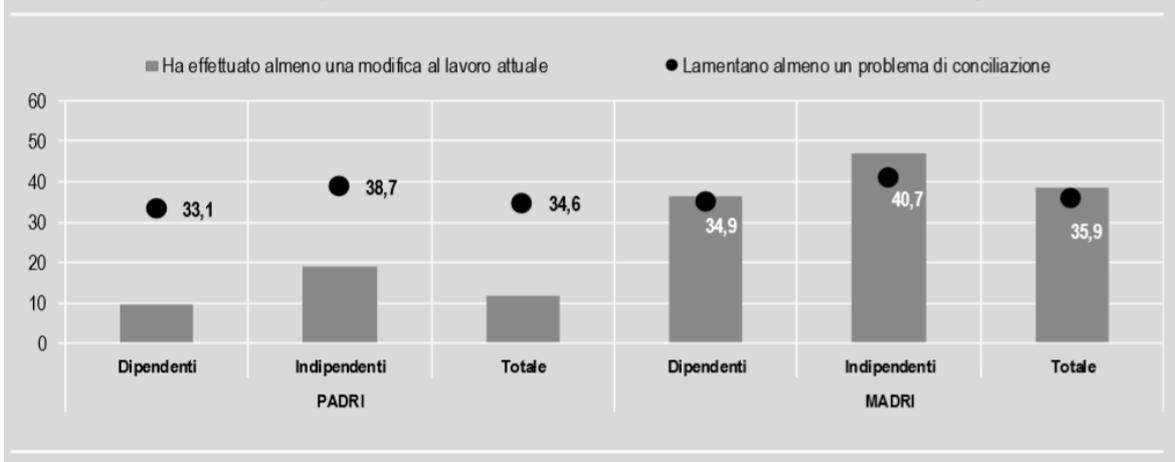
**FIGURA 7. NUCLEI FAMILIARI CON FIGLI DI 0-14 ANNI PER UTILIZZO DEI SERVIZI E RICORSO ALL'AIUTO INFORMALE PER LA CURA DEI FIGLI. Anno 2018, valori percentuali**



Lastly, looking at the *ways adopted to balance parenting and working commitments* it emerges that the percentage of people who in Italy declared to have difficulties at work because of childcare

commitments is 35% (in line with the European average of 37%), but the percentage rises to 39% if we consider self-employed workers and those who carry out qualified tasks. As at continental level, the main balance variable to act on is the working time reported by about ¼ of Italian workers, but with percentages that increase, once again, if we consider independent workers (43%) compared to employees (20%). The latter however, report more frequently problems related to the management of shifts and afternoon and evening work (19% against 6% of self-employed workers).

**FIGURA 5. OCCUPATI CON FIGLI DI 0-14 ANNI CHE HANNO MODIFICATO L'ATTIVITÀ LAVORATIVA E HANNO PROBLEMI DI CONCILIAZIONE, PER GENERE E POSIZIONE PROFESSIONALE. Anno 2018, valori percentuali**



In view of these critical elements, 22% of Italian workers with childcare duties has introduced changes in their working structure, a figure five percentage points lower than the European average (27%). But like the European case, the choices of remodelling the employment arrangements concerned in most cases only women (35% against 11% of males), in particular those who carry out self-employment (almost half), who reside in the northern regions (41%), who have a part-time employment contract (50% against 30% of those who work full-time) and who perform a qualified job function (43%). In summary, once again the costs of balance weigh heavily on very specific target groups of workers (women, self-employed and with qualified tasks) generating not only immediate problems for these people, but an effect of impoverishment of the labour market as a whole.

#### 4. Social challenges for a new approach to balance

After outlining the main results of the various surveys and analysing the most recent statistics at European level, it is possible to propose in the following paragraphs some specific *societal challenges* related to work-life context that emerge from a cross-sectional analysis of the research reports. The

aim is to provide partners and managers of the subsequent phases of the project with *managerial and strategic indications* that allow, as a final result, to *re-establish policies, organizational choices and social representations* related to parental and working life according to a harmonization perspective capable of *overcome the limits of a negotiating nature* that underlie an approach based on mere reconciliation among separate spheres.

The research activities have in fact highlighted that the solutions to problems related to parenting in the working sphere come from not only the often difficult rearrangement of the different interests among the various actors in the field (companies, parents, public authorities, trade union representatives) but also,

and better, the ability to identify win-win solutions based on the recognition of the resources that everyone can put in place. *The transition from needholders and stakeholders to assetholders* represents therefore a key pivot to redefine, in the first place, the *forma mentis* of the actors in relation to the issues of parenting and work and, secondly, to adopt intervention methods based not so much (or not only) on bargaining among the social partners, but on the co-planning of solutions through the active involvement of parents and families.

It is a radical change of approach to the design of both policies and services and in this regard it is necessary *to propose intervention modalities that require looking in a new way at the resources* that are required to succeed in accomplishing it.

- Firstly, it is necessary to look with new eyes at the way primary networks and community fabrics are structured around families and see the substantial (and not only evoked) role that these resources are actually able to play (paragraph 3.1.).
- Secondly, in addition to bottom-up sociality, it is necessary to rethink the provision system of social services and facilitation of everyday life, in particular the public ones and those provided by suppliers belonging to the social economy sector, proposing new production models capable to use the social potential of digital technologies in an authentic “smart” way (paragraph 3.2.).
- Thirdly, the re-modulation of social ties and the qualification of the services offer can trigger processes of organizational change more and more important for enterprises, in particular for the small and medium-sized ones operating on the network, giving to them as well, and not only to the enterprises of large size, the opportunity to recognize the value deriving from a greater

interpolation between the spheres of parenting and work and transforming it into a factor of competitiveness (paragraph 3.3.).

- Fourthly, the empowerment process that concerns parents, social networks, services system and workplaces, may be at the origin of a positive and lasting social impact on public regulation systems which, however, need to be redesigned in architecture and mission by acting transversely to traditional purviews of policy and action (paragraph 3.4.).
- Lastly, the architecture of a new paradigm based on the synergy between parenting and work requires the acquisition of new professional roles and dedicated spaces capable of triggering and supporting these synergies not only with the provision of specialized services, but above all, with the construction and maintenance of communities orientated to experiment and subject daily practices, which incorporate relevant social changes, to common use (paragraph 3.5).

#### 4.1. New communities to support primary networks

A first in-depth guideline for future project activities concerns the role played by new community aggregations in support of primary networks – family, friends, neighbourhood – which instead, looking at the results of the research, look like more and more frail. This is a very important challenge characterized by significant levels of ambivalence. In recent decades in fact the welfare systems managed by the Public Administration and its private suppliers (often of non-profit origin) have increasingly focused on the role of primary networks with the aim of improving their ability in intervention through “tailor-made” approaches to the needs of users, as well as the aim of welfare sustainability requirements thanks to the progressive “devolution” of operational responsibilities and the choice of the users themselves. The outcome of this strategy could therefore consist of a negative trade-off where we see on the one hand, an increase in the investment by the public subjects and the social economy in strategies and empowerment projects of the beneficiaries and their proximity networks but, on the other hand, we see an increasing difficulty of these primary social networks to play the required role.

From the investigations carried out within the project, in particular those on women excluded from or with a discontinuous relationship in the labour market, some signs of transformation emerged concerning the morphology and functionality of the community fabrics. In fact, these new communities are characterized by being more and more "artificial" in the training and management methods, as they

are based on identification mechanisms linked to problems of common interest – assistance to unborn or new-born children - rather than on mechanisms related exclusively to physical proximity and/or to adherence to particular political-cultural roots (for example cultural or religious associations). They are therefore communities centred on the daily management of balance needs, often promoted by groups of "peers" (mainly mothers) and facilitated by digital tools such as chat and social networks.

The aggregative capacity and the quality of social reproduction are still not highly valued, in particular as regards the ability to share not only specific solutions to individual problems, but also wider opportunities and skills. The aggregative capacity and the quality of social reproduction are still not highly valued, in particular the ability to share not only specific solutions to individual problems, but also wider opportunities and skills. The basically low level of identification within these sui generis "communities of practice" limits in particular the ability to create connections with the context (businesses, social and labour services, etc.) and consequently to raise the level of effectiveness perceived by who belong to them. In short, the negative combination of a low quality of exchanges and a low sense of belonging, besides the contingent need, risks fragmenting these new community fabrics by creating

isolation among people living a crucial and complex phase of their life. The challenge, for those who intend to invest in these community groups in the making, consists therefore not only in making them more effective in solving problems according to a "to do" approach, but also in intervening above all in the ability to produce elements of meaning through a "sense-making" approach, facilitating thus aggregation processes and laying the foundations for new elements of awareness of parenting roles and their harmonization with respect to work choices and workplace characteristics.

#### 4.2. Innovative platforms for accessing to quality services

The presence of these new social networks calls for a system of welfare offer and, more generally, of a wider complex of services to facilitate everyday life because they trigger, on the one hand, a greater awareness of the needs and the expected quality of the responses, on the other, a more accentuated propensity of the beneficiaries to be an active part in the processes of planning, production and evaluation of the services. A need emerges therefore, to structure mechanisms of offer through analogue-digital platforms capable of enabling a plurality of suppliers, looking at both the type of services offered and the characteristics of the production process more or less orientated towards the involvement of the beneficiaries.

It is a passage full of opportunities but also of pitfalls considering in particular the effect of two main factors.

The first factor concerns the role of public economic resources that in this area represent an important component both in terms of amount – in particular in the so-called "noble component" of social welfare such as social assistance, educational and health care services – and in terms of investment orientation regarding to particular sectors and types of needs. In fact, the allocation of public resources answers (or should answer) criteria of equity and social justice, in particular regarding to areas of need that suffer from market failures (which does not find favourable conditions to operate), but also from the defeat of civil society organizations (which fail to play a significant role in terms of both advocacy and production of responses). Public resources however, have been subjected, for such a long time now, to expenditure review processes which often consist in a mere cut in the budget instead of a relocation of expenses according to emerging needs. In relation to the consolidated offer of services to the needholders with more representation capacity, the reduction in the amount of resources and the dependence on the path do limit the endowment of the various public administrations (in particular the local ones) in terms of effectiveness but also of social innovation. With regard to this last point, the programming function can play an important role in order to better devote resources to new needs and, specifically, to new response models and new types of suppliers. This requires, however, to innovate also the common scheduling and planning process so as to actively involve different actors orientated to play an assetholder role, thus avoiding risks of self-reference and closure of public policies towards traditional areas. In this sense, policies and interventions in favour of family represent a relevant test bench for policy making actions characterized by intents of social innovation. On the one hand, in fact, we are witnessing a profound change in family models and structures and on the other, we see equally significant changes in both the opportunities mediated by the labour market and the aspirations of people, especially of women, in relation to their work choices. Requests that, as a whole, make the approach to policy-making obsolete based exclusively on the redistribution of resources given through the coordination approach of the existent.

The second factor is linked to the "consumption patterns" of this particular type of goods and services of welfare and everyday life facilitation. In fact, these are areas where remain not only information asymmetries about the distinctive quality of the offer, but also a low propensity to create aggregation models of demand that facilitate mechanisms of "collective consumption" and active participation of the beneficiaries in the construction of the offer. The social services markets are characterized by two

opposite phenomena that are both located on the supply side. On the one hand, its fragmentation due to the presence of a great amount of micro producers who often place themselves in unregulated or actual black markets. On the other hand, its concentration due to big players who tend to act through global service models based on specialist performance sets that do not provide for an active role for users / customers but rather tend to multiply the consumption of services against needs so complex that can be satisfied without creating habituation. Regarding this polarization, an important role can be played by social economy organizations, in particular by those of an entrepreneurial nature. In fact, these subjects are characterized by an "inclusive" approach that can be declined by looking at both the management models (governance) and the production processes (co-production). However, these potentials of the social economy remain, at least in part, unexpressed. On the one hand, because the entities that aggregate the offer tend, in some cases, to adopt management models which, also due to the mechanisms of regulation of public markets, tend to assume connotations not very different to those of the actors of for-profit origin. On the other hand, the social economy actors operating on the demand side have not yet been able to overcome the stage of interest representation (advocacy), developing production models governed and managed by the "consumers" of welfare and everyday life facilitation services. Or furthermore, there are still few collaborations between the actors operating on both sides with the aim to hybridize production and consumption through new models of organization and governance.

As regards these dynamics, the digital transformation of welfare and social services can play an important role both to aggregate the offer of various providers and to serve a demand also coming from subjects not mediated through the Public Administration channels as "Users of the services". It is an evolution rich in opportunities and ambivalences too. If the digital welfare infrastructures will be based above all on marketplace service models, there could be an exponential increase of the global service model thanks to the presence of few managers able to enable and concentrate a very large chain of goods and services, proposing it on a large scale and thus managing to extract value even in a residual share but from a large amount of transactions. If, on the contrary, the digital platforms will be designed to encourage the co-design of the offer between producers and beneficiaries thanks to community management functions and to the possibility of participating in the governance of the infrastructure itself, then elements of authentic "sharing economy" can be recovered which, moreover, appear particularly consistent with the nature of the goods and services exchanged. From this point of view, the corporate welfare represents the most advanced point of the digital transformation and

therefore it is able to return the evolution of the dynamics just described. Making a difference in the way the digital platform is built and managed could be possible by a more effective profiling activity of both the beneficiaries (workers and their primary networks), the companies and, in a broader sense, the socio-economic contexts in which they operate. For example, community managers, capable of operating as both service designers for end users and resource brokers, could be trained and manage to enhance the ability to offer local welfare services, thus triggering virtuous circuits of place-based development. In the same way the platform could be managed through multi-stakeholder governance structures and thus allow producing economic and social value in a more shared way preventing the corporate welfare from becoming only a tax advantage for companies and a benefit for the exclusive use of certain categories of workers.

#### 4.3. Organizational change strategies and practices

The issues relating to work-life balance represent a challenge for management models and also for the governance of business organizations, especially for those that open up consciously and responsibly to this dimension. As previously mentioned, it is not just about incremental changes related to the introduction of benefits and support services, but a deeper rethinking of the link between person and organization. The overall improvement of this relationship in terms of individual well-being and organizational climate can in fact generate benefits to at least two different levels:

- the quality of the product value, considering that goods and services are more and more characterized by an “added value” linked to elements of culture, not encoded knowledge and soft skills concerning people and in particular communities of practice;
- the two-way relationship that company and their employees have with reference environment, where the latter represents not a scenario regulated by institutional policy makers but rather a social construction capable of absorbing the effects of economic production and, at the same time, making available a capital of tangible and intangible resources that can contribute to the quality of this production itself.

Some corporate functions are prompted on by these transformative dynamics, in particular if they involve the work-life balance. This is in fact a component that, as demonstrated by the Maam and Family Audit pilot cases, represents an important trigger of organizational change management processes and even of governance models as it emerges, for example, from the adoption of legal qualifications and standards that certify and report the transition towards more sustainable and impactful business models (such as the Benefit Corporations).

- The first function concerns the management of human resources that more and more often catalyses complex needs related to the management of life rhythms, which have an increasingly important influence on the organization of work and on the workers' *effort*. This propensity to search for a greater balance between work and other spheres of life is increasingly visible not only in service companies or companies with a high intensity of knowledge, but also in industrial production contexts where technological innovation requires the development of relational soft skills that stimulate cognitive abilities and emotional states.
- The second function is connected to initiatives of corporate social responsibility increasingly incorporated into the value production chain and less and less relegated to impromptu activities unrelated to the company's core business. This evolutionary step puts at the core of the business project elements of environmental sustainability and of social and cohesion inclusion that, to be effectively "brought to value", require a substantial strategic and management effort in order to harmonize not only the internal production processes, but also the roots in socio-economic and territorial contexts. Regarding this broader synergy, the actions related to improving the work-life balance increasingly represent a control variable and, at the same time, a reference point to be used, for example, to manage the corporate welfare not so much as a set of incentives but as a tool for territorial development and transformation of organizational models.

#### 4.4. Social impact-oriented transversal policies

The intersection between the spheres of parenting and work involves several areas of politics in addition to the ones represented by social and work policies: living, culture, mobility, etc. In view of this challenge it is necessary to innovate the policy making models in order to encourage learning among the different actors involved in their respective areas of action. Without this reorientation, there is a real risk that the mechanisms of dependence on the path mentioned above – in particular those generated by a poor quality and accessibility of the offer of welfare and facilitation services – will remain and even become stronger maintaining the conciliation policies in an ancillary position.

In general terms, in order to redirect policies, a particularly important role is played by the dimension of mission intended as a response to a social challenge that requires the adoption of transformative actions by the subjects that elaborate and accept it. This is an important step, considering that often policy making activities, also in the context of social policies, are characterized above all by goals of coordination and enhancement of the existent rather than goals of social change. In this sense, action frameworks, inspired by objectives of recombination of the resources and not of mere "restorative"

nature, can be configured as impact policy, that is characterized by the explicit desire to “change the rules of the game” including, for example, new actors in the decision-making processes and using new methods of involvement, in particular as regards decision-making mechanisms (i.e. at the governance level).

In short, the choice to operate transversally to different areas is therefore related not so much to the need, even if useful, to make the resources efficient and increase improvements, but rather to the will to solicit deep and intentional changes. This approach applies both to the way in which the objectives are focused on and to the methods that are adopted to develop solutions thanks to experimentations and “prototypes” to be tested and, if successfully, to be scaled within different contexts and frameworks. A challenge that concerns mainly the welfare and, within it, the policies of work-life balance in a phase where the dimension of protection and social activation does not refer only to the offer of social services but is also visible and close to the main life contexts: workplaces, housing contexts, cultural, sporting and recreational activities, etc.

#### 4.5. Facilitation roles and places

The requests, coming from the needs for greater synergy between parenting and working life, trigger changes at organizational and institutional level, but also at the level of professional roles and places that, starting from these needs, activate empowerment paths of a wide range of resources made by an equally broad spectrum of actors.

A social mechanism, in particular, assumes an important role in this context, that is, the support for birth and for development of those new communities that, as previously mentioned, concern in the first place primary social networks (family, friends, neighbourhood) and peers (parents). The research activities carried out within the project have, indeed, highlighted the crucial role played by social workers and

labour market operators not only as providers of services but also as facilitators acting on the aspirations of parents to improve their own condition and the contexts where they live in.

In the same way, community subjects can be accompanied also within a plurality of contexts, for example inside of companies in order to share knowledge not only codified, but also tacit, and not only hard but also soft skills, thus exerting a decisive influence on the processes of change management as well demonstrated by the service model proposed by Maam.

At the same time the policy making activity orientated towards social innovation is not only resolved into the rituality of the “panels” of coordination among the representatives of the different institutional stakeholders, but also into communities of operators and technicians who operate “in the front line”, that is, within articulated and complex networks allowing to activate and manage policy making actions beyond the level of coordination of the existent.

These communities are often accompanied by subjects who play ever more explicitly the roles of builders and managers of these aggregations. These are community managers often operating within “third places” – that is, in regenerated spaces to facilitate new social relationship schemes – where it is possible to experiment with new forms of co-planning and exchange. A partially new way of implementing both technical skills of facilitation and new leadership models. In fact, the aim is not so much to lead a group to a predetermined goal, but rather to create opportunities so that the parties involved are able to act and develop new action schemes.

## 5. From balance to synergy: towards a new parenting-work paradigm

The transition from a structure based on balance – which provides, actually, compensation mechanisms of a restorative nature – to one based instead on the synergy among different spheres of life requires an increasing of the efficacy level of a plurality of initiatives, activities and projects characterized by intent of social innovation in this field. In particular, the expected impact consists in creation and sharing of new meanings (*mindset*) in relation to changes concerning not only a series of product / service innovations, but also the re-signifying of crucial life choices such as parenting and work. This change on a cultural basis is closely linked to the ability to involve the greatest number and variety of subjects, helping to rebuild the relationship patterns among them on new foundations. In summary, this is an approach capable of expanding and innovating connectivity among social actors, re-establishing it around a paradigm based not on the conflict management but on the ability to orchestrate differentiated contributions, thus changing, in a more shared sense, the mechanisms for generating value.

With respect to this macro-objective, the following points propose some strategic guidelines that can inspire the next actions of the Masp project:

- *to increase the learning ability at all levels:* from the direct beneficiaries of the activities to the intermediaries that supply goods and services up to the decision makers at the level of public policies and corporate strategy so that they can better manage the increase in complexity linked to a more synergistic approach;

- *to encourage the empowerment of parenting resources* in terms of awareness and management skills so that they can be effectively implemented within different spheres of life (work but not only);
- *to enhance the role of figures with process facilitation tasks*, operating especially in the junctions among the different spheres of life, to unlock the potential for good practices of social innovation;
- *to increase the use of digital tools* to expand and make the connectivity of people and organizations more consistent with a multiplicity of contact points (services supply, users' communities, business networks), as well as to improve the ability to provide and process feedbacks able of increasing the effectiveness and impact of a less compensatory and more synergistic system consequently richer in opportunities but also in ambivalence.

## 6. Indications for the next phases of the Masp project

On the basis of the analyses and strategic indications contained in the previous sections of the document, punctual proposals are formulated in the following schemes concerning the work packages of the Masp project whose contents are directly related to the research activities.

<b>WP 4</b>
Training
<b>WP Leader</b>
Agenzia del Lavoro
<b>Goals</b>
Realization of training courses for the following targets: i) employers and social partners; ii) consultants, especially who work in the “Family Audit” programme; iii) public officials and private operators, in particular within the ambit of employment services.
<b>Indications</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- With respect to the first target, an important indication lies in the need to reconnect the “execution” dimension linked to the different conciliation tools (smart working, corporate welfare, etc.) with the strategy and the corporate values.</li> <li>- This indication itself can be useful also for training consultants who are often called upon to work on technical issues but can trigger broader organizational and strategic change paths.</li> <li>- In relation to this goal, a further indication consists in identifying, in favour of best practices for work-life balance, elements of adaptability to the context in order to facilitate learning and transferability (for example taking into account small and medium-sized enterprises, social economy enterprises, target territories, etc.).</li> <li>- Lastly, as regards the target of public officials and other private operators of employment services, since it is a capacity building process, the indication consists in training (or better, educating) also soft facilitation skills. In fact, the goal is to qualify these figures as community managers among both social networks and work contexts, so as to encourage the transition to new more synergistic approaches between the spheres of parenting and work.</li> </ul>

<b>WP 5</b>
Public Programme for Women
<b>WP Leader</b>
AFOLMET
<b>Goals</b>
Creation of a new digital service, supplementary employment services and an information and awareness-raising tool about the issues of balance. All activities have as a point of reference the enhancement of life and soft skills, especially women's ones, within the labour market.
<b>Indications</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In relation to the new digital service – consisting in an adaptation of the Maam platform – two elements of service design take on particular importance. The first is linked to the profiling of the women involved as beneficiaries in order to create information bases rich in cognitive elements regarding their needs and above all their skills. The second element consists in community management activities within the platform in order to facilitate the exchange of information and experiential data thus making women more aware of their skills and also enabling them with respect to a greater proactivity in the management of the digital community.</li> <li>- In the same way, the activities of support to the traditional offer of employment services are characterized by the construction of a competency assessment that does not just certify the existent, but insists above all on the emergence of hard and soft skills acquired in the context of parenting. As for this goal, a possible indication regards the need to intervene also on the job offer side (entrepreneurs and managers, in particular managers of human resources) so that they know how to understand the value of these skills linking them to a really smart use of technological innovation.</li> <li>- As regards the information kit, it could be interesting to convey it through an information and awareness-raising campaign that highlights its dimension of social change through a new way of approaching and managing a everyday activity such as work and family as a social innovation.</li> </ul>

<b>WP 6</b>
Private services for enterprises
<b>WP Leader</b>
AFOLMET
<b>Goals</b>
The activities of this work package are of an applicative nature. In fact, they consist in the implementation of the new digital service developed inside WP 5 within both large and small enterprises. The application of the new tool will also allow to activate a certification process by taking the Family Audit tool as a point of reference.
<b>Indications</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The digital tool will probably accelerate organizational change management processes, also considering that the enterprises involved will be selected on the basis of their positive and structured orientation towards the themes of work-life balance. The observation and self-assessment tools, in particular, will be able to highlight important learning on the managerial side as regards not only the management of human resources but also, more generally, the production processes and the social responsibility strategies referring especially to the social and environmental context of reference.</li> <li>- The drafting of a work-life balance plan as part of the support pathway for Family Audit consultants can represent, in this sense, not only the landing place for certification but also a useful tool for harmonizing business strategies with respect to this particular theme. If certification is then obtained, it may be useful to strengthen the organizational compliance procedures in order to increase the enterprise's absorption capacity by "cranking up" an important social innovation.</li> </ul>

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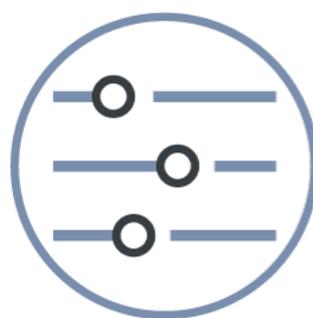
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# MASP

MASTER PARENTING IN WORK AND LIFE

Developed by



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