

Labour Migration Branch

Promoting integration for migrant domestic workers in Italy

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International and European Forum of Research on Immigration (FIERI)

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Preface

The ILO discussion paper series International Migration Papers aims to disseminate results on relevant and topical labour migration issues among policy makers, administrators, social partners, civil society, the research community and the media. Its main objective is to contribute to an informed debate on how best to address labour migration issues within the overall agenda of decent work. The primary goal of the International Labour Organizations (ILO) is to contribute, with member States and constituents, to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people, a goal embedded in the 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, which has now been widely endorsed by the international community.

In Europe, as in many other parts of the world, domestic work has the characteristic of attracting large and increasing numbers of migrants, most of whom are female. While domestic work has been a source of employment for at least 2.5 million men and women in Europe, most of whom are migrants, increasingly restrictive national immigration policies leave many migrants trapped in situations of irregularity of status or in informal employment, remaining excluded from the enjoyment of fundamental labour and human rights despite the existence of regulatory frameworks in most European countries.

Since the adoption of the ILO Convention (2011, No. 189, hereafter C189) and its accompanying Recommendation 201 (R201) on decent work for domestic workers, there has been a renewed interest from EU Member States and national social partners to improve the working and living conditions of domestic workers and migrant domestic workers, and to promote their integration in their countries of destination. The current report was commissioned by the Labour Migration Branch of the ILO with the financial support of the European Commission's Integration Fund, as part of the policy-oriented research project entitled Promoting integration for migrant domestic workers in Europe, implemented by the ILO in collaboration with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), Forum Internazionale ed Europeo di Ricerche sull'Immigrazione (FIERI), and the Fundación José Ortega y Gasset-Gregorio Marañón (FOYG), and with the support of the Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies of the University of Antwerp (CeMIS) and the Institut National d'Etudes Demographiques (INED). Based on the analysis of existing national statistics, on original qualitative data collection and wide consultation with national stakeholders, the authors focus on the "labour trajectories" of migrant domestic workers in Italy. They explore the diverse perspectives, opinions, and strategies of migrant domestic workers in their search for higher quality work and integration opportunities, and of the social actors in their efforts to improve the quality of work in the domestic work sector. The report concludes with policy recommendations that address several gaps and opportunities for European governments, employers, trade unions, and other social actors to improve the integration of and decent working conditions for migrant domestic workers.

We hope that this paper will contribute to efforts to better analyse and understand the impact of national and EU-level migration and integration policies on the work and lives of migrant domestic workers and their employers, and support policymakers in the design and implementation of policies and programmes that serve to promote decent work for all migrant workers.

Michelle Leighton
Chief
Labour Migration Branch

Introduction

Since the 1970s, the labour market of domestic services has experienced a considerable growth in Italy, becoming over the past decade the main sector of employment for migrant women: in 2011, more than one foreign woman in two (51.3 per cent) was employed as a domestic worker or family assistant (CNEL, 2012).

This phenomenon has been driven by the concomitance of a number of processes: an advanced process of population ageing (with one of the highest rates in the world of persons over 65), the increase of female participation in the labour market, the persistence of rigid patterns of gendered labour division in households, a public welfare budget heavily skewed in favour of monetary transfers (especially old-age and survivor pensions) to the detriment of welfare services in support of families.

On the other hand, it has been shown that some migratory systems emerged which are strictly connected to the demand for domestic labour in Italy, encouraging individuals to migrate and to look for a job in this sector of the labour market. Immigration policies, both through the regular admission system (i.e. annual quotas) and recurrent regularizations, have largely sustained this growth by making domestic work one of the major entry points into the Italian labour market, in particular for women.

Although these migratory systems are strictly connected to the labour demand in domestic work, they are not the only channels of entry into this sector. A significant proportion of workers, mainly women, arrived in Italy through migratory paths that were not intentionally aimed at such an outcome (Sciortino, 2009), but found limited options to work outside of the domestic sector, with a marked effect of segregation.

Vis-à-vis the crisis of traditional informal care systems and the inadequacy of national welfare services, migrant workers have been progressively and significantly joining this sector, providing personal and home-care services to Italian households, up to the point of becoming one of the major pillars of the Italian welfare system as far as long-term care or work/life balance policies are concerned. In recent years, despite the economic downturn which has affected migrant participation to the labour market in Italy, the domestic sector has remained largely unaffected by the dramatic rise of unemployment observed elsewhere. Employment of domestic workers kept growing, although at a slower pace than before: a slight decrease in the number of migrant domestic workers (-5.2 per cent) has only been observed between 2010 and 2011 (Fondazione Leone Moressa, 2013; Salis and Villosio, 2013).¹

Huge efforts are still needed in order to achieve a full recognition of the rights of domestic workers (not only migrant) in Italy,² and to enhance their socio-economic integration through a more efficient and sustainable policy regulation of the sector and a comprehensive approach that could better harmonize welfare, labour market and immigration policies. However, it is worth noting that, in the last years, awareness and mobilization by several stakeholders in the domestic sector have been growing. Italy has witnessed a wealth of initiatives in the field of research, lobbying and advocacy, and policy experimentation, at both national and local level, on the issue of migrant domestic work.

¹ See Figure 1 for further insights on this figure.

² For instance, on the state of the negotiations for the renewal of the national contract for domestic workers and the recognition of the rights in matter of maternity protection, see www.uil.it/immigrazione/colf-badanti-babysitter2013.htm.

In this regard, it is not by coincidence that Italy was the fourth ILO member State and the first EU country to ratify in December 2012 ILO Convention No. 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers. In accordance with Article 21, the Domestic Workers Convention (ILO, 2011a), adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2011, will enter into force in Italy on 5 September 2013 (ILO, 2013).

Within the framework of ILO activities in support of the ratification and implementation of the ILO Domestic Worker's Convention (No. 189) and Recommendation (No. 201), the project "Promoting Integration for Migrant Domestic Workers in Europe" was implemented under the supervision of the ILO, in collaboration with the International and European Forum of Research on Immigration (FIERI),³ the Fundación José Ortega y Gasset-Gregorio Marañón, the Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques (INED) and the Centrum voor Migratie en Interculturele Studies (CeMIS).

The project, financed by the European Integration Fund of the European Commission, consists of three distinct but related components: (1) research and knowledge development; (2) knowledge dissemination, awareness and advocacy; and (3) capacity building and training for targeted stakeholders.

Within the framework of the research and knowledge development component, an international comparative research study was been carried out in four targeted countries (Belgium, France, Italy and Spain), with the aim of:

- (1) providing an analytical background of the labour market for domestic services in Italy and of the role of migrant workers in it;
- (2) analysing the patterns of socio-economic integration of migrant (domestic) workers in Italy since their arrival and first entry into the sector to the interview time, as well as the role of the migration policies and of the labour market regulative framework for domestic work on integration outcomes of migrant domestic workers; and
- (3) highlighting relevant policy areas for a better integration and protection of migrant domestic workers in Italy.

The research was designed in three steps, implemented between January 2012 and February 2013: a desk review, interviews with migrant domestic workers and consultations.

(1) The desk review was based on:

- the analysis of the regulatory framework for domestic work; migrant labour admission schemes and regularisation programmes targeting the migrant domestic workers; labour and employment protection rights of domestic workers;
- a statistical overview, based on administrative data and survey data on the size, composition, and socio-demographic characteristics of migrant domestic workers; the main development and employment trends of the domestic sector in Italy over the past 15 years; and the conditions of employment of migrant domestic workers; and

³ The research team in Italy was composed of Ferruccio Pastore (scientific supervisor), Eleonora Castagnone (scientific coordinator), and Ester Salis and Viviana Premazzi (researchers). Interviews were conducted by Viviana Premazzi, Pietro Cingolani and Ester Salis. This report stems from a common scientific work and analysis within the research team, and was edited by Eleonora Castagnone and Ester Salis.

-
- state-of-the-art research undertaken to date on migrant domestic work in Italy.

(2) Interviews were conducted with 55 migrant domestic workers in Turin. The interviewees are both third-country nationals (45) and EU foreign citizens (10) who have been in Italy from a minimum of two to a maximum of 15 years, with at least one year of experience as a domestic worker and who were employed as domestic workers at the time of the interview, or no longer than one year before.

The respondents were selected through the following channels: local institutions and organizations (37 interviews); snowball from four interviewees (nine interviews); two key informants (nine interviews).

In addition to the minimum sampling criteria, the selection of respondents was oriented at diversifying the sample composition, reflecting the heterogeneity of the target population with respect to the nature of professional tasks (i.e. personal care and home care/cleaning); nationality (i.e. selecting workers from the main national groups); sex (although the labour force in the domestic sector is prevalently composed of women, a limited number of men migrant domestic workers were also included in the sample); the nature of the employer (i.e. directly employed by households or employed by a private agency); live-in or live-out working modality; immigration status in Italy.⁴

The face-to-face interviews undertaken with migrant domestic workers were based on a semi-structured interview guide (see Annex 2) aimed at retracing the migration and labour trajectories within and out of the domestic sector, with constant reference to the family/network composition and to their role in the different moments of the migration and labour trajectory.

An “age/event” grid (see Annex 3) and current situation sheet (see Annex 4) were also compiled during or immediately after the conclusion of the interview. The age/event grid presents a synthetic, but clear, summary of the main events in the different life domains of the respondents:

- migration history: arrival in Italy; previous or further migration to other destinations; temporary returns to origin country; administrative history in Italy; etc.;
- family and network: family and network members in origin and destination country, relevant to the migratory project or to the professional history;
- employment and training in domestic work: (regular and irregular) periods of employment in the domestic services sector;
- employment and training in other sectors: periods of work in occupational sectors other than domestic services; unemployment or inactivity periods; etc.

⁴ We encountered difficulties in finding irregular migrants in the domestic sector available for an interview. Legally residing respondents often hesitated or refused to provide contacts of undocumented colleagues/friends/co-nationals; in some cases, key informants inquired about the availability of irregular migrant domestic workers with whom they were in contact, who nevertheless in the end refused to be interviewed. The interviewees who participated in the research did not have particular problems in talking of their past periods of irregularity, both in terms of legal and occupational trajectories. As a result, we gathered much information on irregular status of migrants and on strategies and trajectories of emersion from irregular status and undeclared work, through retrospective information on interviewees’ biographies.

The current situation sheet was aimed at gathering essential information on the employment and socio-demographic situation at the moment of the interview.

Qualitative analysis of the transcribed interviews, combined with the related age-event grids and the fact sheets, was mainly focused on labour trajectories, looking in particular at the experience in the domestic work sector and at the events that influenced individual respondents' integration processes and outcomes. Particular attention was given to the role of immigration status and its possible changes into the path of labour market integration and development of trajectories in the respondents' lives.

(3) Two consultations, one at a local level (Turin)⁵ and one at a national level,⁶ of the main stakeholders involved in the sector of domestic services, with migrant domestic workers as a specific target group in their activities. The composition of the stakeholder meetings was varied, gathering tripartite representatives of workers' unions, employers' associations, and local and national public institutions; with civil society organizations providing legal, psychological and material assistance to migrant domestic workers; and with specialists and researchers with an expertise on migrant domestic work in Italy. The main goal of the stakeholder meetings was to discuss the preliminary results of the research carried out in Italy; to stimulate the debate around the main critical issues on the regulation of the domestic work sector, with a focus on the immigrant labour force; and to consider possible policy measures oriented at providing responses to such critical issues.

The first section of the report will provide analytical insights on the composition and the organization of domestic work in Italy, highlighting the growing contribution of migrant workers to the sector. It will also look at Italian immigration policies and their role in the development of the domestic services sector in the last decade.

The second section will provide a statistical background of domestic work in Italy and of migrant domestic workers, looking at their socio-demographic characteristics, working conditions and distribution in the sector, showing the main trends in the last ten to 15 years.

The third section will look at the labour trajectories of domestic migrant workers. It will focus on the first experiences of migrant workers in the domestic work sector in Italy, highlighting how the most vulnerable migrant workers (i.e. those who are undocumented, usually with limited social connections and low awareness of their rights, and in the urgency of finding a job) and the least professionally skilled (often at their first experience in the sector) are often concentrated in the most critical and challenging segment of domestic work, namely the domiciliary care of elderly and dependent people. The report will show how, after the first experiences in the sector, the subsequent labour trajectories often entail a transition to live-out working regimes, registering trends of upward mobility

⁵ The following stakeholders took part in the national stakeholder meeting in Turin: CGIL-FILCAMS Torino (trade union); API-Colf; ASAI (trade union); Almaterra (association providing services to migrant women and care workers); DOMINA (employers' organization); Province of Turin; Italia Lavoro (technical agency of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies).

⁶ The following stakeholders took part in the national stakeholder meeting in Rome: Ministry of Labour and Social Policies-DG Immigrazione; FILCAMS CGIL, ACLI-COLF, API-COLF, UIL, CISL, CGIL Immigrazione (trade unions); IOM-Rome (international organization); CARITAS-IDOS (Research Institution of Caritas Rome); EUI (European University Institute – Florence); Fidaldo (employers' organization). The national stakeholder meeting in Rome was organized in close collaboration with the ILO's office in Rome, which facilitated the involvement and the participation of unions, employers' organizations and government representatives and provided precious support.

within the sector, boosted by processes of regularization, professionalization, enhancement, and differentiation of the social capital and acquisition of right awareness. Although the research was not designed in order to capture experiences of exit from the domestic sector, future perspectives of permanence in (or exit from) domestic work were taken into consideration. Another aspect of the analysis will focus on patterns of emerging leaderships among migrant domestic workers who engage in activities of advocacy and lobbying for the rights and interests of care workers as a result of upward mobility paths, often after experiencing a strong de-skilling at entry in the Italian labour market.

Conclusions will be drawn, summarizing the key points that have emerged from the research and suggesting some possible avenues for policy reform aimed at tackling the most serious challenges concerning socio-economic integration of migrant domestic workers in Italy.

1. Migration and the domestic work sector in Italy: A background overview

1.1 The drivers and effects of a booming domestic work sector

The employment of domestic workers providing a wide range of personal and home-care services has become increasingly common within Italian families in recent years. Their number has almost tripled between 1998 and 2008 and, for the most part, this growth has involved migrant domestic workers, either EU citizens or third-country nationals (INPS, 2011). In 2011, more than 80 per cent of the registered 881,702 domestic workers were foreigners. These official figures are nothing but the tip of the iceberg, as the domestic work sector is characterized by one of the highest rates of irregular or underground employment. According to recent estimates produced by the National Statistical Office (ISTAT, 2011b), around half of the employment in the domestic sector in the past decade has been performed irregularly.

At the origin of these developments that have great implications for the sustainability of Italian welfare regimes, it is possible to identify three concurring and interconnected factors. The first one is the peculiar feature of the Italian welfare system, with the primary role attributed to the family in the provision of care services to their members in need of economic or personal support (Ferrera, 1998; Saraceno, 2007). In this context, public services are negligible with respect to the private sphere of the family or other (in)formal networks in addressing the temporary or permanent needs of vulnerable subjects or in supporting households (and especially women within them) in reconciling work and family responsibilities. Secondly, demography is a crucial factor leading to a substantial increase in care needs, which the welfare system has been so far unable to meet adequately. In fact, population ageing, as a result of low fertility and life expectancy growth, has been steadily increasing in the last decades.⁷ Many of those old people live alone and are dependent on constant assistance, but few of them have access to public residential care services. Thirdly, the increasing participation of women in the labour market, combined with an unequal and largely unchanged gender division of labour within families, has determined a crisis of the traditional informal care provision, largely attributed to women, and a growing resort to market services (i.e. domestic workers) to carry out necessary home and personal care tasks.⁸

The combination of these three factors largely explains the widespread use by Italian families of domestic workers, and particularly migrant women. The recourse to domestic workers is now a common practice, not only of affluent, upper class families but also of low-middle class ones. This is especially true in what concerns long-term care, where salaried caregivers – called “*badanti*”⁹ – often employed as live-in, are nowadays the

⁷ Currently, the number of old people (over 65) largely exceeds that of young people (aged 15 or less) in a proportion of 144 people over 100, while in 1992 the ratio was 97 over 100 (ISTAT, 2012).

⁸ Barone and Mocetti (2011) found that the increased supply of babysitting services provided by immigrants has allowed Italian women, especially the most educated, to increase working hours; similarly, Romiti and Rossi (2011) have shown that the offer of foreign “*badanti*” has had a positive effect on the decision of Italian women to postpone the retirement age.

⁹ After the term *colf* (“*collaboratrice familiare*”), introduced in 1964 by the first union of domestic workers (the Gad, then ACLI-Colf) to indicate domestic workers employed as housekeepers or

backbone of the elder-care system in Italy, in a welfare mix that combines the help provided by relatives with the few opportunities offered by public and private care services at local level. The importance of domestic service in compensating the deficiencies of the public welfare system is reflected in the use of terms associated to it in the vast literature developed on this theme in the last decade: “home-made” (IREF, 2007), “hidden” (Gori, 2002), “underground” (Ranci, 2002) or “invisible” (Ambrosini, 2005) are just some examples. Bettio et al. (2006) have described this radical transformation as a change from a “family” to a “migrant-in-the-family” model of care. However, although these “innovative” arrangements have implicated a considerable saving of public resources and allowed finding a rapid and effective solution to huge problems, this has been achieved at the expenses of migrant domestic workers themselves in terms of poor working conditions, low salaries, social isolation, de-skilling, and – in the worst cases – psychological distress and burn-out.

As we will see in the next parts of this report, immigration policies have sustained and accompanied the development of the domestic work sector in Italy, both tolerating and subsequently regularizing irregular migrant domestic workers and opening up legal entry channels for domestic workers (Sciortino, 2004; Van Hooren, 2010).

1.2 Origin and evolution of the regulatory framework for the domestic work sector: A long-standing differential treatment

Domestic workers are universally considered a vulnerable category of worker, especially when working as live-in help, and are particularly exposed to exploitative working conditions, irregular employment or isolation (ILO, 2011b). The nature itself of domestic work – carried out within private households and with a strong emotional involvement – makes it difficult to classify and regulate it in the framework of a standard employment relation. Despite a long-established regulation of domestic work in Italy (Sarti, 2010) and a relatively well-developed normative framework compared to other EU countries (Carls, 2012), domestic workers are not yet fully granted the same rights and employment standards as in other sectors.

Since 1958, Italy has adopted *ad hoc* legislation on domestic work, which for the first time explicitly recognized the nature of domestic work itself as a form of employment and established some important labour standards in the sector. Law No. 339 adopted in April 1958 applied to workers that performed paid (in cash or in kind) domestic activities for the same employer for at least four hours per day. It regulated different matters such as job placement and hiring, the trial period, weekly rest and annual paid leave, working time and seniority allowance. Moreover, the law established that domestic workers could be hired after a testing period of a maximum of 30 days in the case of specialized personnel, or eight days in the case of manual workers, to be paid with full salary. Domestic workers had the right to night rest (at least eight hours), one day of rest during the week (usually on Sundays) and a half-day during holidays, and paid annual leave after one year of work (from 15 to 25 days according to seniority and type of occupation). Employers had to pay a salary at least once a month and to provide the live-in worker with an accommodation “that is not harmful to his/her moral and physical integrity”. Domestic workers could be

babysitters (Andall, 2000), the term *badanti* has been progressively introduced into everyday language (and even in some official documents) since the 1990s to identify domestic workers assisting elderly and disabled people. The term is not neutral and it has provoked some debate among experts and practitioners: since the verb “*badare*” [to look after] is considered diminishing and even pejorative, many have adopted instead the term “family assistant” which does not fully represent the specific professional figure. Although unsatisfactory, we will use the latter term in this report.

dismissed with an advance notice varying according to seniority and type of occupation, and they had right to due allowances. Before Law No. 339 of 1958, significant steps towards the recognition of important labour rights were made in the field of maternity allowance (Law No. 860 of 1950), sickness insurance (Law No. 35 of 1952) or Christmas bonus (Law No. 940 of 1953).

Law No. 339/1958 was a crucial advancement in the recognition of important rights for domestic workers. It contributed to compensating for the absence of a collective agreement imposed by an article of the Civil Code in force at that time, which explicitly forbade collective bargaining in the domestic sector. However, it maintained the special regime based on the assumption that domestic work is not like any other kind of work, and did not treat domestic workers equally to all other categories of workers with respect to important fields such as dismissal or maternity protection (Sarti, 2010).

Around ten years after the enforcement of the 1958 law, a sentence of the Constitutional Court opened the way to collective bargaining and, in 1974, the first collective agreement for the domestic sector was introduced. Compared to the law of 1958, it applied to all domestic workers and not only to those employed by the same employer for at least four hours per day. It also introduced three occupational levels, according to professional skills and specific tasks performed by the workers; it set maximum working time at 11 hours per day and 66 hours per week, and minimum wages. Since then, the collective agreement for the domestic sector has been renewed seven times, but no substantial changes were introduced until the last renewal in 2007. In the 2007 collective agreement (renewed during the drafting of this report in April 2013), important provisions were introduced reflecting the developments of the sector in the last decade (Ioli, 2010). In particular,

- *Classification of occupations.* Domestic workers are now classified into eight different categories: A, B, C and D (according to the tasks performed and the necessary degree of autonomy), each one sub-divided into “normal” or “super”, where the latter identify care workers, assisting autonomous or dependent people. This reflects the reality of the sector, with a growing presence of specialized care workers, to be distinguished from workers responsible for simple cleaning and home maintenance activities.
- *Working time.* Maximum working time has been gradually reduced to 40 hours per week for live-out workers and to 54 hours per week for live-in workers. The 2007 agreement introduced the possibility of reduced working time of a maximum of 30 hours per week in the case of live-in workers in charge of home-care activities or personal care to autonomous people. This possibility is excluded for caregivers assisting dependent people.
- *Job-sharing.* Article 8 of the collective agreement introduces the possibility of job-sharing between two workers providing personal care services to the same family.

Despite these important advancements, domestic workers still enjoy a differential treatment with respect to other categories of workers in important fields such as maternity protection, illness, or occupational safety and health.

Since the late 1990s, general labour laws (e.g. Law No. 30/2003, Legge Biagi) have introduced increasing flexibility in the Italian labour market, with a wide number of contractual forms in fixed-term employment. However, it is worth noting that in the domestic sectors these atypical employment forms are not common and the standard open-ended contract is still the most widespread form. To some extent, also agency work, where the individual domestic workers are formally employed by private employment agencies, is used; however, reliable information on it is still lacking.

1.3 Policy experiments addressing employment and working conditions in the domestic sector

Given the impressive development of the market of home-based care services, and particularly of elder care, massively provided by migrant women, and the problems that arise by the often irregular character of this work, public authorities, both at national and local level, have tried to tackle some of the most serious challenges. A number of measures have been developed at local level since the early 2000s.¹⁰ In general, they have sought to address both sides of the market of care services, namely the demand represented by the elderly and their families and the supply provided by migrant women workers. Their double objective was to support families through financial schemes, information and legal counselling services, on one side, and to improve working conditions of domestic workers by stimulating the regularization of their employment, enhancing their qualifications and skills or orienting them in job search, on the other side (Pasquinelli and Rusmini, 2009). It has to be underlined that these measures have concerned almost exclusively family assistants caring for elderly or disabled people, while much less has been done in addressing domestic workers providing home-care or child-care services. Furthermore, action in this field is largely subject to territorial variations, linked to significant differences in availability of public funds, fundraising capacity of local actors, social policy planning and institutional framework, among other factors.

The plethora of measures implemented by regions and municipalities can be synthesized into four main types of intervention, sometimes combined with the others and sometimes as an isolated action.

- (a) *Cash-for-care schemes.* A ground-breaking cash-for-care scheme was introduced in the early 1980s with the attendance allowance (*indennità di accompagnamento*), a monetary benefit supplied by the Central State to people in need of care without means-testing and controls upon its use (Da Roit et al., 2007; Lamura and Principi, 2009; Chiatti et al., 2011). Since the early 1990s, new cash-for-care schemes (usually means-tested) have been introduced by many regions and municipalities: at present, all regions foresee the distribution of care allowances (*assegni di cura*) as one of the cornerstones of their social policies (Lamura and Principi, 2009). More recently a number of regions and municipalities have implemented new cash-for-care schemes where some constraints linked to the use of private care services offered by a family assistant have been introduced, with the explicit aim of tackling irregular employment. In these cases, the formal hiring of the family assistant is a precondition to the enjoyment of the monetary benefit (Pasquinelli and Rusmini, 2009).
- (b) *Professional training courses.* The enhancement of qualifications and skills of family assistants has been identified as a key priority in public policies addressing long-term care. In 2009, nine regions had regulated in a comprehensive manner professional training courses for family assistants (Rusmini, 2009). Beside official training provided in the framework of regional social policy planning, a wide number of courses were given by training institutes, NGOs or voluntary organizations (Demarchi and Sarti, 2010).
- (c) *Service desks.* One of the most often-adopted measures has been the creation of *ad hoc* service desks aimed at facilitating the match between supply and demand in the private care market, between families in search of care workers and (qualified) family assistants (Pasquinelli and Rusmini, 2009; Demarchi and Sarti, 2010).

¹⁰ Regional authorities in Italy have an exclusive competence in the field of social and health policies.

-
- (d) *Registers*. Often matched with the service desks, official registers of qualified family assistants have been introduced at regional or communal level to provide an additional source of information and to reduce informality in the job-matching process (Rusmini, 2012).

In a few cases, the four types of measure are integrated into more articulated programs of intervention. This was the case of the projects “*Insieme si può*” (Together we can) or “Equal-Aspasia”, described by Demarchi and Sarti (2010). Experts and policy analysts monitoring the development of these actions and of the private care market unanimously agree in indicating that this is the right direction to follow: only a comprehensive strategy based on the integration of monetary benefits, training and recognition of qualifications, tutoring and job-matching services, with a leading role of public actors and institutions, can achieve the objective of reducing informality and enhancing the quality of care in the sector (Pasquinelli and Rusmini, 2009; Demarchi and Sarti, 2010). The need of a public control and oversight on the long-term care sector has been also repeatedly stressed by local and national stakeholders consulted during research fieldwork. In most cases, however, these interventions were project-based and not part of a comprehensive public policy; therefore, their effectiveness and regularity has been limited.

1.4 Immigration policies and their role in the development of the domestic sector

Migrant women from Cape Verde, the Philippines or Ethiopia employed as domestic workers have been among the forerunners of labour immigration flows to Italy since the 1960s and early 1970s (Andall, 2000; Einaudi, 2007). Today, migration for domestic work is one of the main reasons for entering Italy and, even during the current economic crisis, the domestic work sector has been largely unaffected by the rising unemployment observed in other economic sectors (Salis and Villosio, 2013). Italian immigration policies have accompanied and sustained – although sometimes in a contradictory way – the growth of migrant domestic workers in Italy from the beginning and the development of a welfare mix where migrant women (and to a lesser extent men) have a primary role.

The domestic sector as the main entry into the Italian labour market

The first regulatory tools disciplining the employment of foreign domestic workers date back to the early 1960s and 1970s (Einaudi, 2007; Sarti, 2010). Although a comprehensive immigration law was still lacking, a series of memorandum issued by the Ministry of Labour tried to regulate the employment of foreign women as domestic workers that were starting to be a (quantitatively) relevant phenomenon.

Only at the end of the 1990s did Italy manage to enforce a comprehensive regulative framework on migration, with the adoption of the so-called Turco-Napolitano law in 1998 (Law No. 40/1998). Different matters were regulated by this law, e.g. rights of foreigners, admission mechanisms, control of irregular migration, integration and access to social services. Despite important – and sometimes substantial – amendments introduced by the Bossi-Fini law of 2002 (Law No. 189/2002) and other legislative provisions, the standards of the Turco-Napolitano law are still at the core in regulating immigration in Italy.

Respecting admission of foreigners for reason of employment, the general rule imposed by the law is that of nominal hiring from abroad: it is an employer-driven mechanism where extra-EU workers are allowed entry and employment only upon a specific, individual

request advanced by a national or regularly resident employer.¹¹ Admissions for employment purposes are subject to quantitative caps, based on an annual planning of new inflows determined by the government on the basis of the estimated labour demand and available labour supply. Employers' and workers' organizations may be consulted, although they can only provide non-binding advice. Quotas are distinguished by seasonal or non-seasonal employment or, in some cases, special quotas are reserved for specific sectors or occupations, as has been the case with domestic work in the second part of the last decade. Indeed since 2005, a growing share of the general quotas for non-seasonal employment has been granted to workers in the domestic or care services sector (see Table 1): around 30 per cent of the total quota for non-seasonal employment was reserved for domestic workers in 2005, reaching 70 per cent in 2008.¹² No quota decree for non-seasonal employment was adopted in 2009 and 2010. The slight decrease observed in 2011, when quotas for the domestic sector represented "only" 36 per cent of the total, may be explained by the then recent implementation of the 2009 regularization and its effects in terms of absorption of the pool of irregular workers. Quite significantly, this trend was accompanied by a parallel increase in the share of applications concerning domestic workers, which represented 22 per cent of the total in 2005 and reached 73 per cent in 2011.

Table 1. Annual entry quotas for domestic work, 2005-2011

	Total annual quota	Quota for non-seasonal employment	Quotas for domestic work	Applications concerning domestic workers	Total number of applications	Domestic work as a percentage of non-seasonal quotas	Domestic work as a percentage of total applications
2005	79,500	51,800	15,000	56,000	250,880	29%	22%
2006	170,000	78,500	45,000	200,000	540,000	57%	37%
2007	170,000	158,000	65,000	391,864	720,000	41%	54%
2008	150,000	150,000	105,400	*	*	70%	---
2011	98,080	82,080	30,000	314,356	430,258	36%	73%

* No new application was accepted during the 2008 Quota Decree: quotas were distributed among the applicants from the previous year.

Source: Annual Quota Decrees; Piperno, 2009; and Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2012.

Once the final quota is set, it is transposed into a Ministerial Decree and published in the *Official Bulletin*. Afterwards, the actual admission procedure starts. Despite recurrent changes introduced during the last decade, pre-admission bureaucratic procedures still remain extremely long and burdensome and are subject to a certain level of arbitrariness.

Over the years, admission mechanisms have shown their high degree of ineffectiveness, both in responding to the needs of Italian employers (especially private households) and in reducing migration, namely two of their original key objectives. On the one hand, planning mechanisms of annual quotas have scarcely addressed real labour needs of Italian economy and especially in the care and domestic sector. Indeed, the persistent, structural gap between planned annual quotas and the total number of work permit applications has been huge during every quota decree. Although it is not correct to say that all those applications reflected a real labour demand (Colombo and Martini,

¹¹ Before the Bossi-Fini law of 2002 abolished it, another admission mechanism for employment was worker-driven: foreign workers were admitted into Italy to search for jobs, with a guarantee offered by an individual or institutional sponsor (or, under given circumstances, self-sponsoring). The foreigner was granted a stay permit to search for a job valid for 12 months, after which he/she was expected to return home in case the search was unsuccessful. This entry channel was deemed as particularly fitting labour matching mechanisms in the domestic sector, where trust and personal encounter between prospective employers and workers are key elements in the recruitment process.

¹² The remaining 30 per cent being devoted to nationalities of countries with which Italy has concluded (or was negotiating) bilateral agreements on migration management.

2007; Salis, 2012), the fact that annual quotas have been set more on the basis of political rather than technical considerations is less questionable. On the other hand, the extremely long and burdensome administrative procedures necessary for the admission of third-country nationals have made the general principle of nominal hiring from abroad completely unrealistic: several weeks, and even months, are needed (Salis, 2012), too long for a business, even more so for a family looking for someone to care for an elderly person in urgent need of assistance. It is instead much more convenient to hire an irregular migrant already living in Italy and subsequently wait for a regularization, or try to use opportunities offered by the quota system to regularize the employed workers *ex post*. As a matter of fact, admission mechanisms through the quota system have been universally considered a *de facto* regularization, even by top-level public officials (Salis, 2012).

Thus, irregular entry and/or overstaying tourist visas has remained the main door of access to the Italian labour market in the past decade (and in particular to the domestic and care sector): in a survey on migrant domestic workers carried out in 2005 by the IREF research institute, 63.1 per cent of the respondents entered Italy with a tourist visa and overstayed their visas, while 18.4 per cent of them were totally undocumented; the remainder (less than 20 per cent) entered through legal channels, either with employment visas or family reunification or study (IREF, 2007).

Box A. Transitional arrangements during the two enlargement waves (2004 and 2007)

During the past decade, inflows from Eastern Europe have had a leading role in the total growth of the migrant population in Italy. The two waves of EU eastern enlargement in 2004 and 2007 have boosted this process, especially the second one, with Romanian immigration to Italy taking the absolute lion's share in the whole process.

On both occasions, the Italian government opted to adopt transitional arrangements limiting immediate access of EU8 and EU2 nationals to the Italian labour market, although in completely different forms.

In 2004, the policies adopted imposed a two-year transitional period in which nationals of new Member States were still required to request a work permit in order to access dependent employment in Italy, and their admission was subject to quantitative caps through the well-known quotas system. No limitation was imposed on self-employed or EU8 nationals regularly resident in Italy before May 2004. In order to ensure a preferential treatment to EU8 nationals with respect to non-EU workers, it was decided to set annual quotas for the former at the same level imposed on all other nationalities. The transitional arrangements adopted in 2007 have been considerably different, due to both the experience observed after the 2004 enlargement and the peculiar characteristics of the Romanian presence in Italy. Overall, between 2002 and 2010 the Romanian presence in Italy increased about ten-fold (+919 per cent). Nothing similar has happened with nationals of other new Member States. Recently arrived EU2 migrants (95 per cent of which are Romanians) currently represent around 1.1 per cent of the total working age population in Italy (European Commission, 2011).

Although some restrictions to full access by Romanian and Bulgarian workers to the Italian labour market have been imposed, they were limited: employment in agriculture and tourism, in construction, in the metal industry, in highly skilled professional activities, and in domestic or care services was not subject to any limitation. Indeed, these are exactly those sectors where EU2 nationals are most employed. In addition, no quantitative ceiling was imposed and restrictions, namely the need to request a work permit, were limited to the first access to employment while they were not applied for all subsequent working experiences. Due to the economic crisis and its serious impact on the Italian labour market, the transitional regime was maintained until late 2011 and ultimately abandoned only from 1 January 2012.

Source: Salis, 2012

Regularizations and the domestic sector

Despite the rhetoric against irregular migration by the government (Colombo and Sciortino, 2003; Geddes, 2008), regularization has remained the main functional equivalent to effective labour migration policies in the last ten years (Salis, 2012). Migrant domestic

workers have been among the main beneficiaries of the three regularization campaigns carried out since 2002.¹³

The “great regularization” started in the fall of 2002 and was initially meant to address exclusively migrant workers employed as domestic or care workers by Italian households.¹⁴ In early discussions in 2001 on the reform of immigration law, the possibility of a new regularization scheme was initially excluded. This attitude soon changed, under the pressure of vocal protests by many civil society and Catholic organizations lobbying for the regularization of the “*badanti*”, caring for thousands of elderly in need of constant assistance. The possibility to regularize domestic and care workers was eventually included in the Bossi-Fini law (Law No. 198/2002) adopted in July 2002. Following lobbying action from employers’ organizations, the regularization scheme was soon extended to workers in all other sectors.

Around half of the 702,000 applications presented concerned domestic or care workers, namely 330,000, of which 190,000 for domestic workers and 140,000 for family assistants (Zucchetti, 2005). Almost 90 per cent of applications in the care sector concerned women as well as 78 per cent of applications in the domestic sector. Most applicants came from Eastern European countries, in particular from Romania, the Ukraine, Poland and Moldova, while the second region of origin was Latin America, particularly Ecuador and Peru. In early 2004, more than 90 per cent of the applications were accepted.

With the “great regularization”, the “home-made” welfare provided by migrant domestic workers became a publicly recognized mass phenomenon (Sciortino, 2004).

After the conclusion of the 2002 regularization campaign, a new opportunity to regularize migrant domestic workers living and working irregularly in Italy was offered in 2009. This time a much more selective regularization scheme was adopted that exclusively targeted workers in the domestic sector. This happened despite the severe economic crisis that was having a deep impact on the Italian labour market and, in particular, on migrant workers. Employment in the domestic sector, which is dominated by migrant women, has continued to grow even during the years of the crisis (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2011). A second key element to bear in mind is more political in nature: in July 2009, a new law (Law No. 94/2009) was enacted, making irregular stays in Italy a criminal offence and introducing harsh sanctions for employers of irregular workers. Shortly after the enforcement of the new law, government officials started to ask for a new regularization campaign, primarily to prevent serious consequences for a large number of families employing irregular workers. Despite the open opposition of certain political parties, the pro-regularization positions soon gained a broad (although not very vocal) consensus within the political majority; the regularization programme was enforced in August 2009.

The applications were presented in September 2009: 294,744 applications were filed, 61 per cent of which were for housekeepers or babysitters (*colf*) and 39 per cent for family assistants. Around 18 months after the closure of the application procedure (March 2011),

¹³ In 2006, two Quotas Decrees for non-seasonal employment were enforced: the first one, in February 2006, set the maximum number of new entries to 170,000. Afterwards, the new government enforced a second Quota Decree in October, where an additional 350,000 new entries were allowed, corresponding to the total amount of applications received. According to many, this explicitly turned the quota decree into a *de facto* regularization.

¹⁴ With around 650,000 new permits, the 2002 regularization campaign produced almost the same number of regularized immigrants as the three previous schemes adopted in 1990, 1995 and 1998, that is 680,000 (ISTAT, 2005).

approximately 75 per cent of the applications had a positive outcome (222,182 new stay permits), while 12 per cent were rejected (34,559).¹⁵

A new regularization campaign opened on 15 September 2012, to allow Italian legislation to conform to EC Directive No. 52 of 2009, the so-called Employers' Sanctions Directive. The 2012 regularization campaign was open to all categories of workers. The final number of applications was overall quite low, at least with respect to previous experiences: 134,576 applications were filed as of 15 October 2012 (final date for reception), 86 per cent of which for domestic workers and the remaining 15 per cent for all other categories.¹⁶

Immigration policies and the domestic work sector: A matched evolution

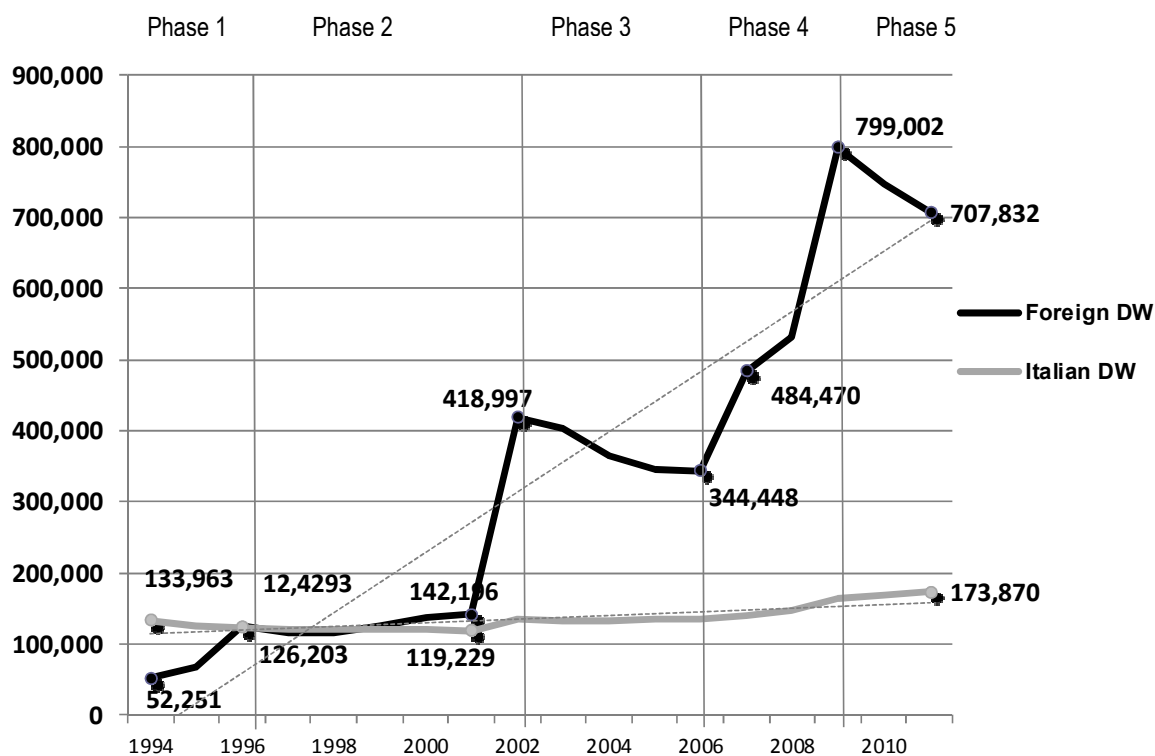
Overall, a close linkage between the evolution of immigration policies and the growth of employment in the domestic sector can be observed.

Between 1994 and 2011, an overall four-fold increase of Italian and foreign workers (from 186,214 to 881,702) was registered, with an evident exponential expansion of the sector. If we compare Italian and foreign domestic workers, we can see how the former have been increasing very slightly, from 133,963 workers in 1994 to 173,870 in 2011 (+22.9 per cent), while during same period migrant workers increased from 52,251 to 707,832 (+92.6 per cent). The dotted trend lines in Figure 1 display a modest growth of Italian workers in the care sector and an overall sizeable growth for foreign ones. However, while the Italians register a steady growth (the grey curve), data on foreign workers (the black curve) highlight five discontinuous periods, largely corresponding to significant changes in immigration policies.

¹⁵ See http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/20/0099_Emersione_colf_e_badanti-dati_al_14_marzo_2011.pdf.

¹⁶ See: http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/24/2012_10_17_Emersione_2012_-_Report_conclusivo.pdf.

Figure 1. Matched evolution of the domestic work sector and immigration policies in Italy (1994-2011)



Source: INPS [data 1994-2001 in Catanzaro and Colombo, 2009; 2002-2011 from Osservatorio sui lavoratori domestici INPS, accessed online in January 2013].

The *first phase* (before 1996) corresponds to the early phases of the immigration boom in Italy in the early 1990s. At that time native, domestic workers still outnumbered migrant workers to a significant extent. But the regularization campaign (*Sanatoria Dini*) started in 1995 definitely reversed the situation.

In a *second phase* (1996-2002), the number of officially registered migrant domestic workers kept growing at a slow pace and it exceeded that of Italian workers after 1998, that is after the adoption of the “Turco-Napolitano” law and the joint regularization scheme. The steep increase observed in 2002 is obviously related to the implementation of the “great regularization” of 2002, when a huge number of irregular domestic workers were registered all at once, recording a variation from 1996 to 2002 of +69.9 per cent.

In a *third phase* (2002-2006), we observe a significant decline in the total number of foreign domestic workers, with a reduction between 2002 and 2007 of -21.6 per cent. Many explanations may account for this fact: in some cases, the newly obtained stay permits have allowed domestic workers to change sector of employment; in other cases, once attained, the regular status of the employment relationship continued in an irregular form. Moreover, in a number of cases the regularization as domestic workers was probably used to obtain stay permits by workers who were actually employed in other occupations and that formally changed sector of employment afterwards.

The *fourth phase* (2006-2009) coincides with the adoption of special quotas for domestic work in the annual quota decrees and with the accession of Romania to the EU, with the consequent acquisition of regular status of Romanian workers. It ends with the peak observed in 2009, largely explained as a consequence of the 2009 regularization campaign. Globally, domestic workers register an increase of 56.9 per cent during this period.

Finally, *the most recent phase* (2009 to present) sees again a decline in officially registered foreign domestic workers (with a variation of -12.9 per cent between 2009 and 2011). This is partly explained by the same reasons advanced above for the 2002 regularization and partly by the effects of the economic crisis: as Pasquinelli (2012) hypothesizes, rather than reflecting a real job contraction in the sector, these data could also suggest a growth of irregular employment.

However, the evolution of Italian immigration policies, which made employment in the domestic work sector one of the main entry doors into Italian labour market, is not exempt from ambiguities. Despite no systematic research being conducted on this issue so far, the opportunities offered by the relative openness to domestic workers, both by regular admission through quotas and by mass regularization, have allowed a significant number of foreign workers, not necessarily employed as domestic workers, to access the Italian labour market on legal grounds. During the 2009 regularization campaign, a great number of applications concerned nationalities such as Morocco (around 36,000 applications), China (around 21,600 applications) or Senegal (around 13,600 applications) that are only marginally represented among officially registered or surveyed domestic workers (see Table 2). Furthermore, in many cases applicant employers were immigrants themselves: around 8,000 Moroccans, 5,000 Senegalese or 3,000 Chinese (Pasquinelli and Rusmini, 2010). To interpret these figures, we advance the hypothesis that the 2009 regularization scheme served to regularize not only domestic workers. Some partial confirmation of this argument is provided in Table 2 below, in particular for Morocco, Albania and India, and in general for all other EU nationalities. The number of male domestic workers substantially decreased during the two years following the regularization campaign, supposedly because of a change of sector once legal status was obtained. Similar clues emerge from official data relative to the 2012 regularization campaign: among the almost 116,000 applications concerning domestic workers (two-thirds of the total), almost 70 per cent concerned male workers, especially from Bangladesh (14,279), Pakistan (10,369) or Morocco (10,285).

Some evidence supporting our argument, although weak and partial, is also found on data relative to the admission mechanisms through the quota system in recent years. Data reported by Colombo and Martini (2007, p. 126) confront national and foreign-applicant employers according to the economic sector for which the work permit was requested during the period 2005-2007: it emerges that foreign employers from Ghana, Senegal, the Philippines or Peru massively requested work permits concerning the domestic sector (respectively in 95.6 per cent, 86.3 per cent, 83.4 per cent and 69.6 per cent of cases). These requests were probably sustaining enlarged family or chain migration rather than responding to a real labour demand in the domestic sector.

Table 2. Extra-EU domestic workers in Italy, first ten nationalities, by sex (2009-2011)

Citizenship	2009						2010						2011						2009-2011 M	2009-2011 W
	M	% M	W	% W	Total	% of Extra-EU	M	% M	W	% W	Total	% of Extra-EU	M	% M	W	% W	Total	% of Extra-EU		
Ukraine	5,900	5.1	110,132	94.9	116,032	22.3	4,962	4.6	103,979	95.4	108,941	23.1	3,992	3.5	109,568	96.5	113,560	24.9	-47.8	-0.5
Philippines	16,192	25.8	46,471	74.2	62,663	12.0	16,089	25.7	46,516	74.3	62,605	13.3	17,560	25.0	52,554	75.0	70,114	15.4	7.8	11.6
Moldova	4,526	8.0	52,301	92.0	56,827	10.9	3,980	7.3	50,778	92.7	54,758	11.6	2,798	4.9	53,839	95.1	56,637	12.4	-61.8	2.9
Peru	6,521	18.6	28,513	81.4	35,034	6.7	6,088	17.7	28,331	82.3	34,419	7.3	5,343	15.1	30,032	84.9	35,375	7.8	-22.0	5.1
Sri Lanka	13,976	53.6	12,082	46.4	26,058	5.0	13,027	52.2	11,932	47.8	24,959	5.3	13,010	50.5	12,746	49.5	25,756	5.7	-7.4	5.2
Ecuador	2,769	11.2	21,909	88.8	24,678	4.7	2,558	10.7	21,386	89.3	23,944	5.1	2,241	9.1	22,520	90.9	24,761	5.4	-23.6	2.7
Morocco	17,999	54.1	15,301	45.9	33,300	6.4	10,796	42.3	14,738	57.7	25,534	5.4	4,577	24.1	14,451	75.9	19,028	4.2	-293.2	-5.9
Albania	6,135	28.4	15,478	71.6	21,613	4.1	4,757	23.8	15,189	76.2	19,946	4.2	2,449	13.4	15,791	86.6	18,240	4.0	-150.5	2.0
India	15,159	85.5	2,581	14.5	17,740	3.4	11,677	81.4	2,666	18.6	14,343	3.0	6,142	69.8	2,655	30.2	8,797	1.9	-146.8	2.8
Russia	230	2.9	7,720	97.1	7,950	1.5	184	2.6	7,005	97.4	7,189	1.5	150	2.1	6,963	97.9	7,113	1.6	-53.3	-10.9
Other extra-EU	54,574	45.8	64,539	54.2	119,113	22.9	35,328	37.4	59,032	62.6	94,360	20.0	18,338	24.1	57,906	75.9	76,244	16.7	-197.6	-11.5
Total extra-EU	143,981	27.6	377,027	72.4	521,008	100	109,446	23.2	361,552	76.8	470,998	100	76,600	16.8	379,025	83.2	455,625	100	-88.0	0.5
Total	198,177	20.8	755,401	79.2	953,578		147,100	16.5	746,635	83.5	893,735		101,467	11.4	791,884	88.6	893,351		-95.3	4.6

Source: INPS data, in Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali (2012), and own elaborations.

The role of immigration policies in affecting employment and working conditions in the domestic sector

Beyond their direct or indirect impact on the quantitative expansion of the domestic sector, Italian immigration policies have also contributed to affect employment and working conditions in the sector.

Indeed, despite the fact that the law imposes the general principle of equality of treatment between Italian and regularly resident foreign workers with respect to labour and civic and social rights (as well as duties), this general principle is not always properly applied¹⁷ and, in general terms, migrant workers are subject to a great vulnerability respecting the stability of their legal status. Based on the current immigration law, legal status and employment status of migrant workers are closely linked:¹⁸ stay permits for employment reasons usually have a duration which is linked to the duration of the job contract and, even in case of open-ended contracts, the duration of permits cannot exceed two years. Only after five years of regular residence in Italy (and other conditions), migrant workers may be granted a permanent stay permit. As a consequence of these norms, migrant workers are in a particularly vulnerable position since the loss of their job may entail the loss of their stay permits: they are thus more prone to accept sub-standard working conditions in order to be able to maintain their legal status.

The security of migrant workers to stay in Italy, including domestic workers, may be further endangered by the implementation of the Integration Agreement introduced with Law No. 94 of 2009, which fully entered into effect since March 2012. All newly arrived TCNs applying for a new residence permit in Italy are now requested to sign an agreement with the Italian authorities, committing themselves to acquire an adequate knowledge of the Italian language¹⁹ and of the basic norms pertaining to social and civic life in Italy, as well as to respect the Charter of citizenship values and integration²⁰ and to educate their underage children. With this new tool, the socio-economic integration of immigrants in Italy is now assessed through a point-based system: those who subscribe to the agreement are granted a certain amount of credits that have to increase to a certain threshold at the moment of renewal of the stay permit. In case of failure, the residence permit is revoked and the worker will receive an expulsion order.

¹⁷ For instance, equality of treatment was not fully respected by a number of local administrations in the northern regions, which, in the past years, have imposed criteria for the access to social benefits provided by municipalities based on length of stay. In many cases, those decisions were overturned and declared illegal by the judiciary authority.

¹⁸ Until June 2012, migrant workers in case of job loss were granted a stay permit valid six months to search for a job. After some years of discussion – further stimulated by the impact of the crisis on migrant workers – the government has finally approved new norms that extended the duration of stay permits to search for a job to 12 months, and in any case for the period of duration of due unemployment benefits.

¹⁹ The minimum level corresponds to A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

²⁰ Adopted by Minister of Interior Decree on 23 September 2007. See http://www.interno.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/sezioni/servizi/legislazione/cittadinanza/09998_2007_06_15_decreto_carta_valori.html.

However, it is worth noting that most categories of residence permits, except those for employment reasons, are exempted from this provision and their holders cannot be expelled.²¹ Given the short-lived implementation of these new rules, it is too soon to say if these will eventually have a negative impact on the security of residence rights of migrant workers. However, it is clearly an additional burden charged on migrant workers and on their paths to integration, especially when considering that the implementation of these new rules is developed “without additional burden for public budgets”, meaning that the State will not directly finance the necessary language or professional training activities that could help immigrants to acquire new credits and, ultimately, to enhance their socio-economic integration.

Stay permits for employment reasons can be renewed only if the person is regularly employed for a minimum of 20 hours per week. This requirement largely explains the high number of 25-hours-per-week job contracts in the domestic sector. Indeed, herein lies the double reciprocal convenience to both employer and migrant domestic worker: the former may save a lot of money in terms of social security contributions, while the latter is granted the possibility to renew her stay permit and receives a higher salary since the actual salary is higher than the one set by the job contract. A second crucial element in explaining the attractiveness of irregular employment for many migrant workers lies in specific requirements of the current immigration law, in particular those that forbid the redemption of paid social contributions, in case of return, before the age of 65. For many migrant workers with short- and medium-term migratory projects, including those in the domestic work sector, this creates a strong incentive for irregular work. In fact, the trade-off between present and postponed incomes is always to the advantage of the former.

²¹ See Article 4-bis, paragraph 2, of the Immigration Act (DLGS No. 286/98).

2. A booming growth: Main trends in the domestic work sector in Italy in the last decade

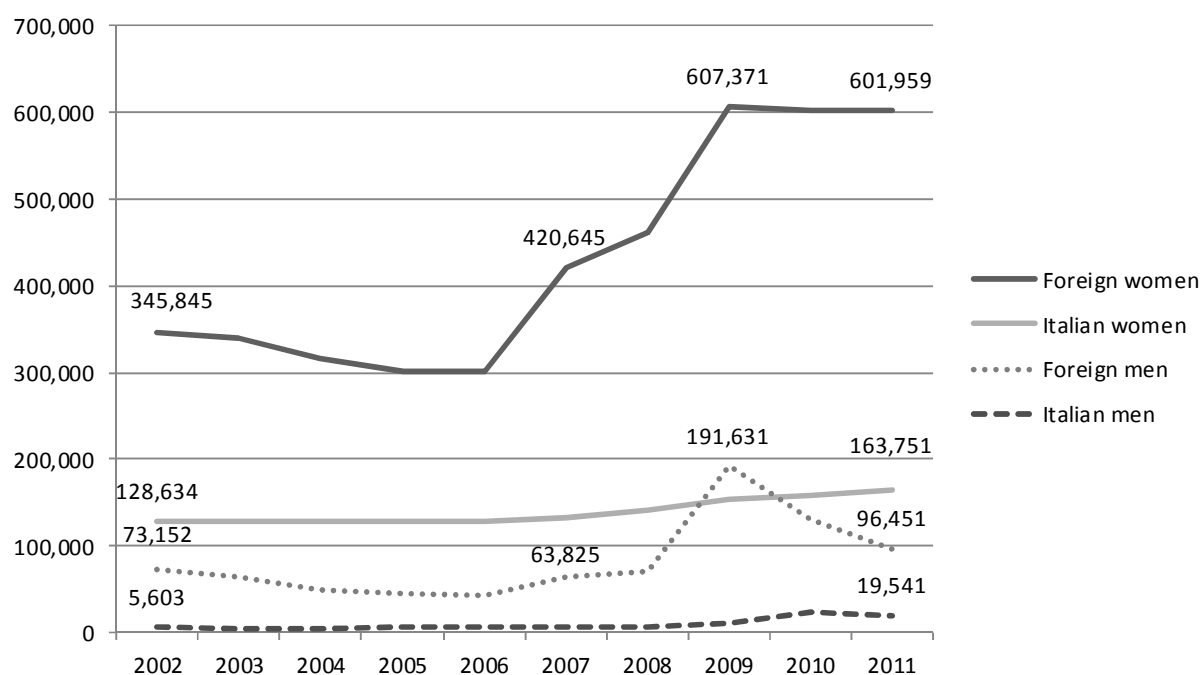
The main features of the domestic sector in Italy will be highlighted here, sketching a socio-demographic profile of (migrant) domestic workers and describing the characteristics of domestic work, their recent patterns and dynamics. This section will draw on a variety of statistical sources, both official administrative data provided by the National Social Security Institute (INPS) and survey-based data produced in the framework of *ad hoc* research carried out in recent years.

2.1 An highly feminized and ethnicized sector

A first key element to highlight is that domestic work still persists as an activity devolved upon women's work, whether provided by national or foreign workers: a clear and persistent disproportion of women's contribution to the employment in the domestic sector, with a stable rate of female labour at around 85 to 90 per cent, relatively decreasing only in 2009, the year in which many men registered as domestic workers in coincidence with the second regularization (see above).

If the gender composition of the domestic work sector has remained largely unchanged, one of its major evolutions is related to drastic changes in its ethnic composition: as noted above, the boom of the Italian domestic sector has been almost exclusively fed by huge inflows of migrant workers, especially women. Figure 2 below, based on official data, gives a more detailed description of how the gendered division of labour has been reproduced, both among Italians and foreigners in the last decade.

Figure 2. Domestic workers in Italy by nationalitz and sex (a.v.) (2002-2011)



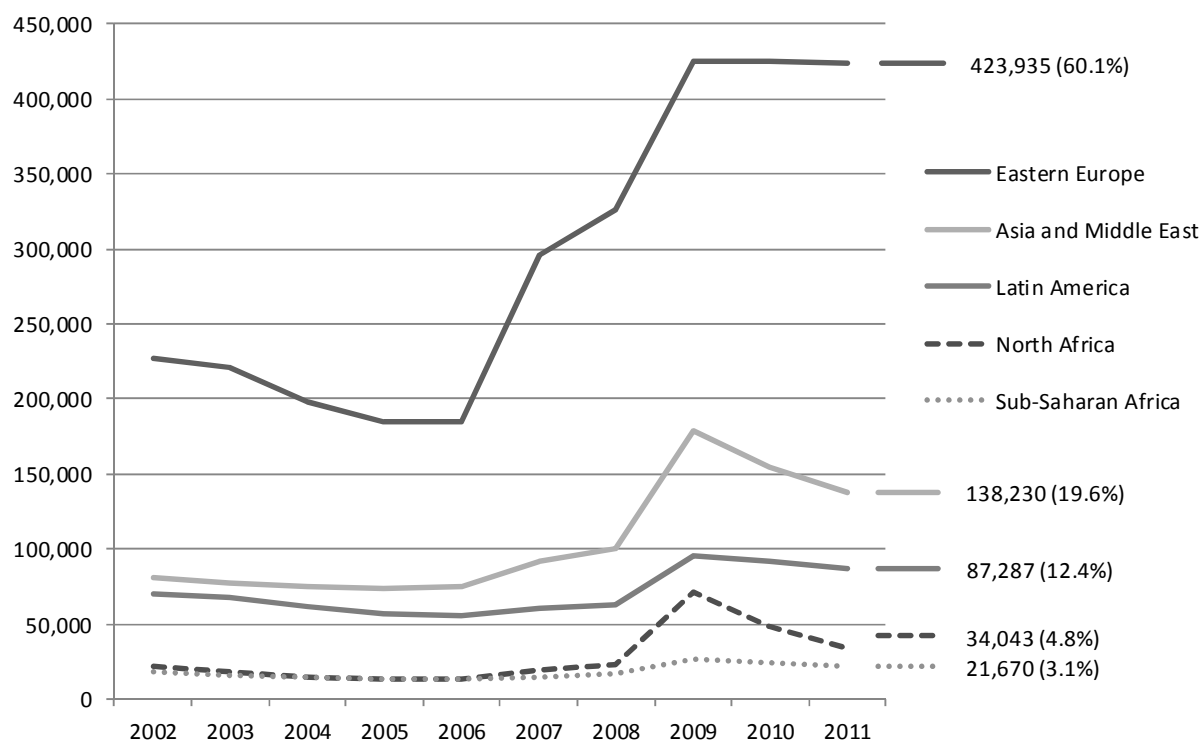
Source: INPS data, own elaborations.

In Figure 1, we highlighted that migrant workers outnumber Italian workers in the domestic sector since the late 1990s. After the “great regularization” of 2002, migrant women represent the vast majority of domestic workers in Italy, followed by Italian women (with the partial exception of 2009), migrant men and a small number of Italian men. Furthermore, while the growth of migrant women in the sector has been impressive, the number of Italian workers (both women and men) has increased at a much slower pace. The trend observed in the pool of migrant men employed as domestic workers is less stable and this is probably related to the evolution of migration policies: as noted above, greater chances for legal entry or regularization through employment in the domestic sector have pushed many migrant men (and possibly women) to register as domestic workers, although this was not always their actual occupation.

Immigration flows to Italy in the past decade have involved a wide majority people from Europe, and particularly from Eastern Europe. This is reflected also in the nationalities recorded within the growing group of domestic workers: since 2002, as a consequence of the “great regularization” implemented that year, Eastern Europeans – both EU and non-EU nationals – are the most represented among migrant domestic workers. This sub-group has witnessed an accelerated growth, notably in 2007, when Romania (and Bulgaria) entered the EU, producing an overall increase in registered domestic workers (see Phase 4 in Figure 1). In 2011, 60.1 per cent of migrant domestic workers come from Eastern Europe.

Asia and the Middle East represent the second area of origin of the migrant workforce in this sector, providing 19.6 per cent of the overall workforce in 2011, followed by Latin America (12.4 per cent in 2011). Finally, a minority of migrant domestic workers come from the African continent (4.8 per cent from North Africa and 3.1 per cent from sub-Saharan Africa).

Figure 3. Areas of origin of domestic workers in Italy (2002-2011)



Source: INPS

Looking more in detail at individual countries of origin, around half of the officially registered domestic workers come from three eastern European countries, namely Romania, Ukraine and Moldova, which provided respectively 26.3 per cent, 16.1 per cent and 7.1 per cent of the total workforce in the domestic sector in 2008.²² The Filipinos are the third most represented national group, with around 55,550 workers (representing 10.9 per cent of the total of foreign workers in 2008). Other Asian countries of origin are Sri Lanka (19,252 in 2008), India (5,619), China (5,357) and Bangladesh (4,611). The most represented Latin American countries are Peru with 22,863 domestic workers, Ecuador with 20,958, and the Dominican Republic with 4,079, while the main African countries are Morocco (15,307), Ghana (3,891), Nigeria (2,556) and Ethiopia (2,431).

Table 3. Foreign domestic workers by country of origin (first 25 nationalities) (1998 and 2008)

	Country	2008	Percentage of total foreigners	Variation % 1998-2008
1	Romania	134,623	26.3	3445.5
2	Ukraine	82,449	16.1	437.559
3	Philippines	55,550	10.9	50.1
4	Moldova	36,217	7.1	76957.4
5	Peru	22,863	4.5	95.3
6	Poland	22,171	4.3	401.4
7	Ecuador	20,958	4.1	889.1
8	Sri Lanka	19,856	3.9	72.0
9	Morocco	15,307	3.0	275.9
10	Albania	13,511	2.6	248.9
11	Bulgaria	8,699	1.7	2473.7
12	Russia	6,419	1.3	3158.4
13	India	5,619	1.1	482.3
14	China	5,357	1.0	8465
15	Bangladesh	4,611	0.9	585.1
16	Dominican Republic	4,079	0.8	40.9
17	Ghana	3,891	0.8	191.5
18	Brazil	3,693	0.7	162.1
19	Mauritius	2,720	0.5	-9.4
20	Colombia	2,560	0.5	244.1
21	Nigeria	2,556	0.5	87.5
22	Ethiopia	2,431	0.5	-21.6
23	El Salvador	2,080	0.4	82.5
24	Bolivia	2,028	0.4	1026.7
25	Cape Verde	2,020	0.4	-8.0
	Total	510,319	100	351.6

Source: INPS, Idos elaborations

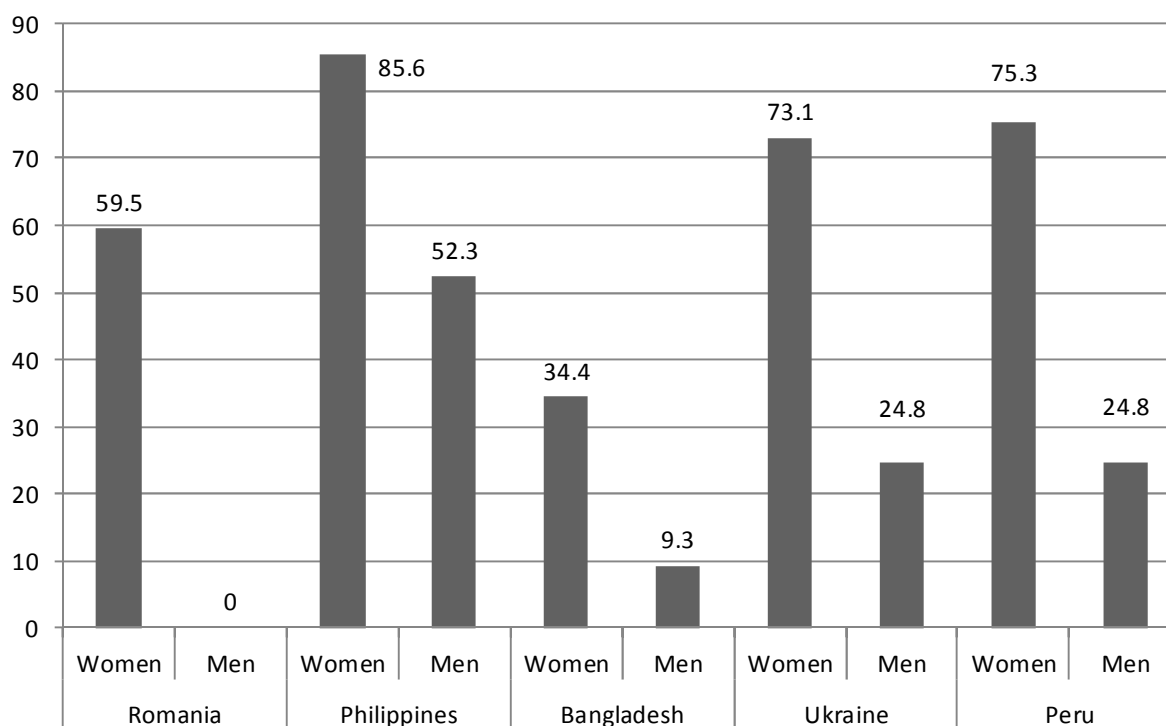
A significant degree of occupational segregation within the domestic work sector is observed for many of these nationalities. A study based on the data extracted from the local Labour Market Observatory of the province of Rome (AAVV, 2011), provides an overview of the main economic activities of the top five nationalities in that area (Romania, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Ukraine, and Peru).²³ Although the data refer only to the province of Rome and therefore are not nationally representative, they provide a picture of the area hosting the highest absolute number of domestic workers (109,990, representing 15.5 per cent of the entire labour force in this sector in Italy).

²² 2011 is the latest year for which disaggregated data are available by nationality.

²³ Analyses are based on the compulsory communications transmitted by employers and on data supplied by the unemployed centres in 2011. For further details, see AAVV (2011).

Figure 4 below highlights the occupational segregation in the domestic sector by gender and country of origin.

Figure 4. Rate of domestic workers on total newly registered workers in 2011, by first five nationalities, Province of Rome



Source: Data warehouse of the Labour Market Observatory, Province of Rome (AAVV, 2011, pp. 79-84).

Filipino women show the highest degree of concentration in domestic work: more than four out of five (85.6 per cent) are employed in this sector; Filipino men also show a considerable presence in the sector, with half of the newly registered workers declared in this activity in 2011 (52.3 per cent). Three out of four women from Ukraine and Peru (respectively 73.1 and 75.3 per cent), and one out of four men from these countries, are also concentrated in the domestic sector. Finally, although the absolute number of Romanian women in domestic work is by far the highest in Italy (see Table 3), the rate of Romanian women employed in this sector is not one of the highest, with 59.5 per cent of the total female workforce.

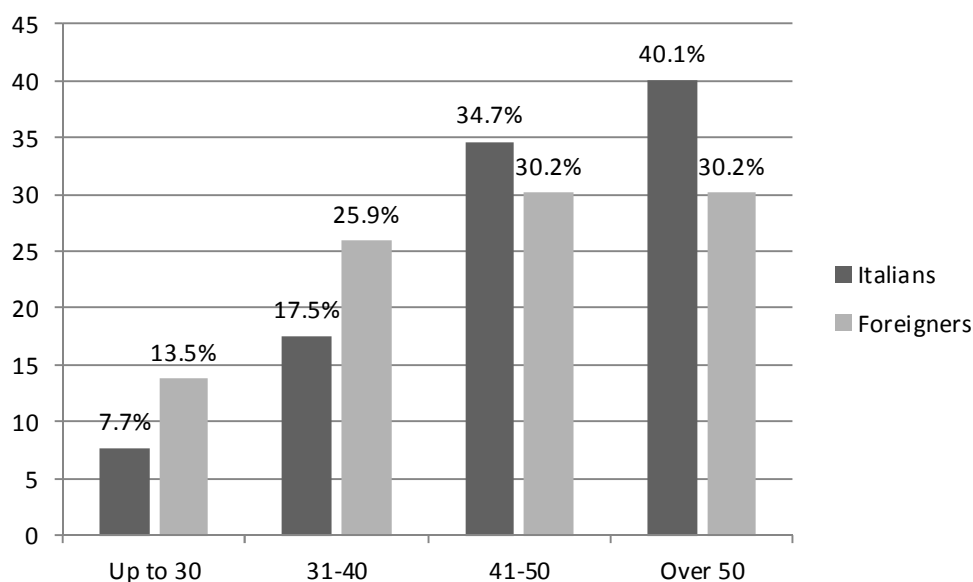
2.2 A socio-demographic profile of domestic workers in Italy

This section will take into consideration some socio-demographic characteristics of domestic workers in Italy, looking at their age composition (through INPS data), civil status and educational level (through the data from a survey undertaken by CENSIS in 2009) on a sample of 997 domestic workers in Italy.²⁴

²⁴ The interviews were carried out through the face-to-face administration of a closed-answer questionnaire. The sample was selected according to the criterion of geographical distribution of domestic workers (CENSIS, 2010).

According to INPS data, foreign workers are younger than Italian workers: the age group of people over 40 account for 74.8 per cent of Italian workers, compared to 60.4 per cent of foreign workers, whereas younger persons (aged 40 or less) represent almost 40 per cent of migrant workers and only a quarter (25.2 per cent) of Italian workers.

Figure 5. Domestic workers in Italy by nationality and age, percentage (2011)



Source: INPS, FIERI elaborations

The survey undertaken in 2009 by the Research Centre for Social Investment (CENSIS) on a sample of 997 domestic workers provides detailed data on the socio-demographic profile and the type of work performed in this sector.

Differently from what was observed in administrative data produced by INPS, the CENSIS survey does not highlight significant differences in the age structure of Italian and migrant workers. In most cases, migrant women employed as domestic workers are also wives and mothers: more than two out of three employees have children (67.5 per cent of foreigners and 68 per cent of Italians), while more than half are married or in a partnership.

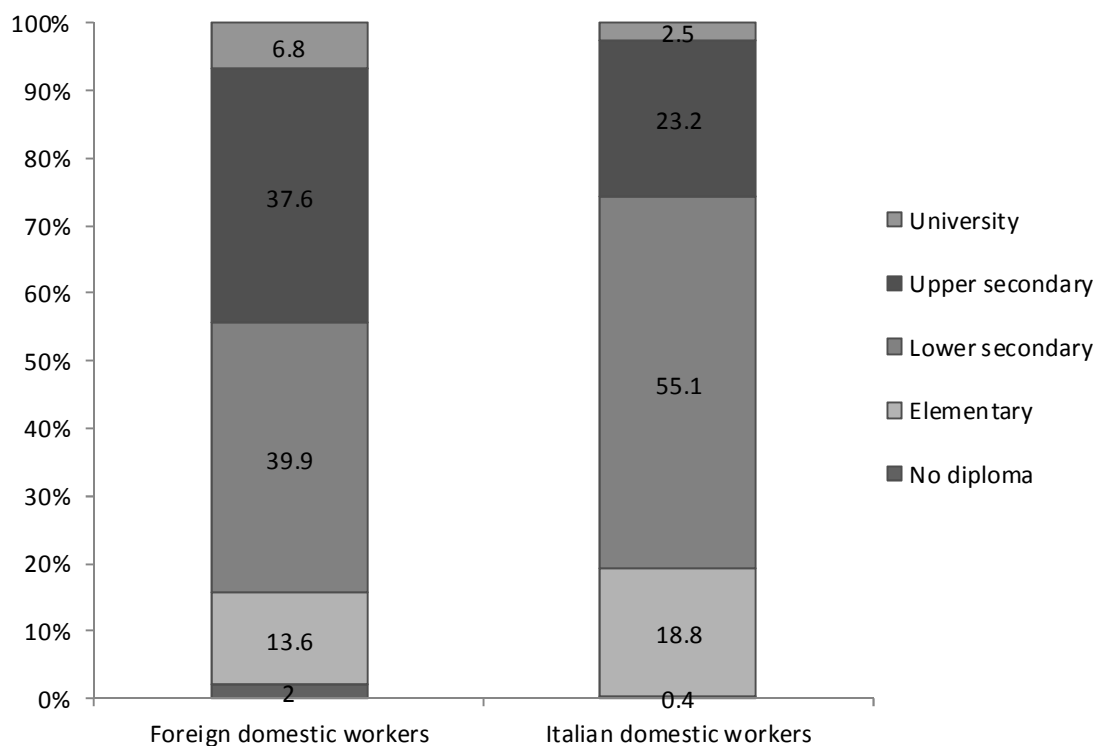
Figure 6. Civil status of domestic workers by nationality, percentage



Source: CENSIS, 2010

Looking at the education endowment of domestic workers, CENSIS data seem to show, on average, a higher level of education among foreigners than among Italians: 37.6 per cent of foreign workers hold a secondary education degree and 6.8 per cent hold a university degree, compared to respectively 23.2 per cent and 2.5 per cent of Italians. The phenomenon of over-qualification thus affects foreign workers to a larger extent than Italian ones.

Figure 7. Educational level of domestic workers by nationality, percentage

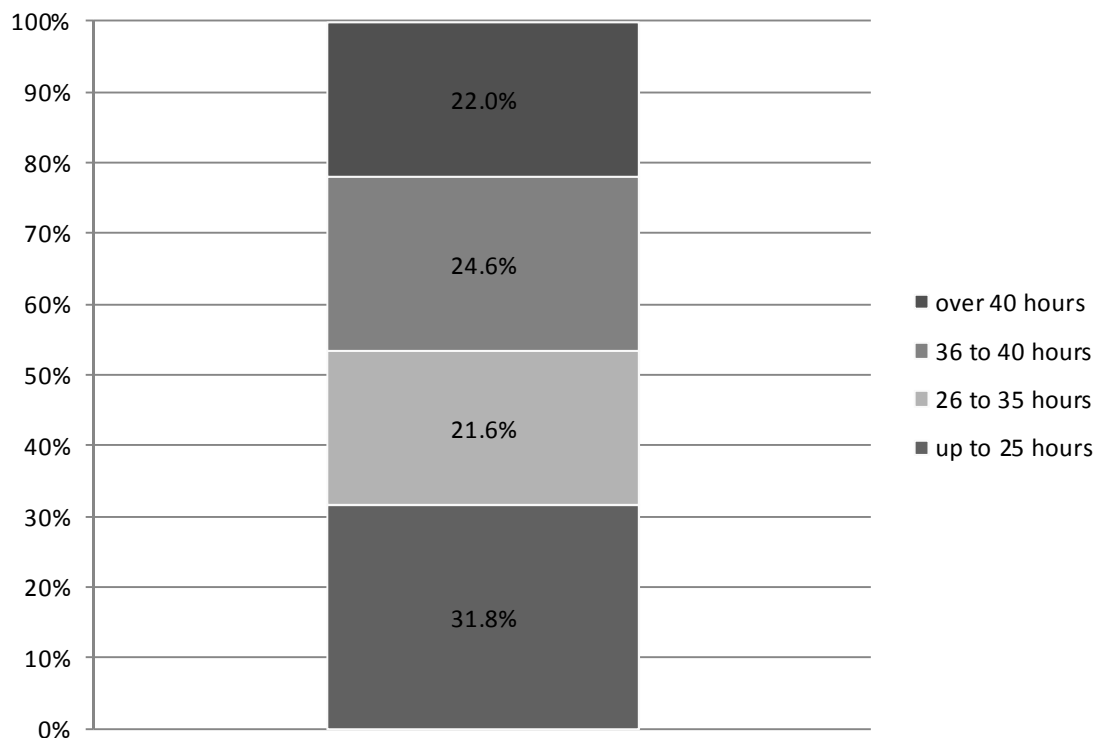


Source: CENSIS, 2010

2.3 Characteristics of the work provided by migrant domestic workers in Italy

Looking at the characteristics of the work performed by domestic employees, the average working time is around 33 hours per week: 31.8 per cent of respondents to the CENSIS survey work less than 25 hours, 21.6 per cent between 26 and 35 hours, 24.6 per cent between 36 and 40 hours, and 22 per cent over 40 hours a week.

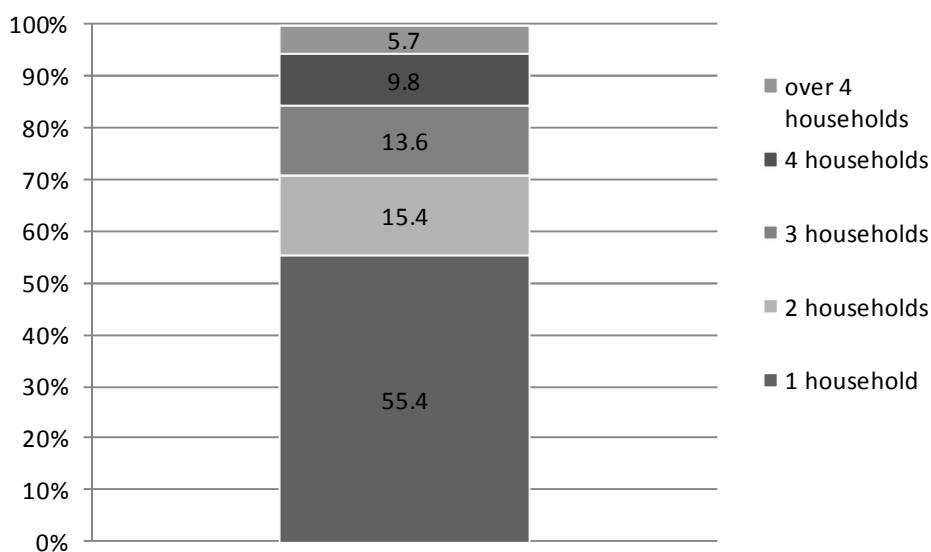
Figure 8. Weekly working time (hours) of foreign domestic workers, percentage



Source: CENSIS, 2010

Another important element is the number and type of households in which domestic workers are employed. In the 2009 CENSIS survey sample, 55 per cent of domestic workers are employed by one single household, while the remaining 45 per cent work for multiple employers.

Figure 9. Number of households in which domestic workers are employed, percentage



Source: CENSIS, 2010

The 2009 CENSIS survey also demonstrates a significant difference between Italians and foreigners regarding the length of their work experience in the domestic sector: migrant workers, also as a consequence of their relatively recent arrival in Italy and their age composition, usually have a shorter working experience within the domestic sector than Italian workers. While around one-third (32.7 per cent) of Italian workers have been working in the sector for more than ten years, only 11.3 per cent of foreigners did so. Symmetrically, a relative majority of migrant workers was employed in the sector for less than four years, whereas this was the case only for one-fifth of Italian workers.

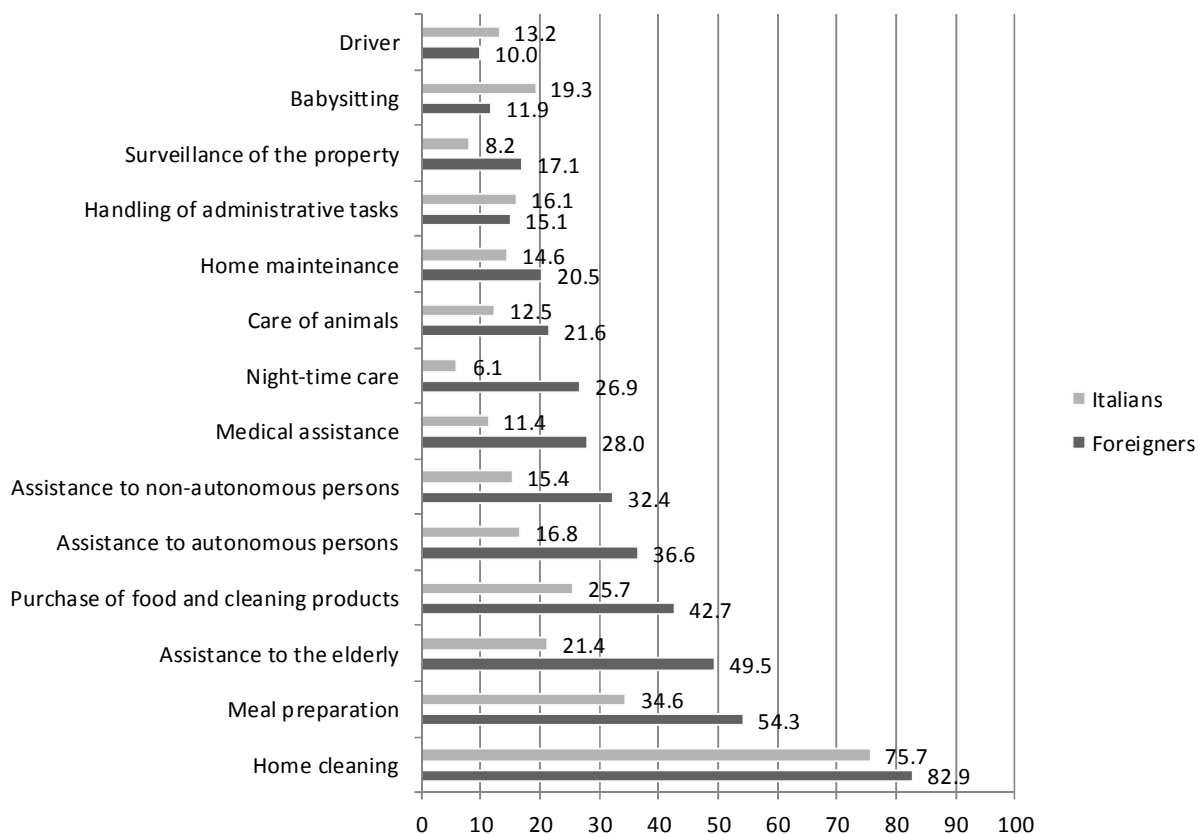
Table 4. Working experience in the domestic sector by nationality, percentage

	Nationality	
	Foreigner	Italian
Less than four years	38.7	19.0
Four to six years	29.0	18.5
Seven to ten years	21.0	29.8
Over ten years	11.3	32.7
Total	100	100

Source: CENSIS, 2010

Looking at the specific contents of domestic work, available data provide a highly diversified and, at the same time, blurred picture: domestic workers typically show a multifunctional profile, and the range of their tasks is broad and varied. In the 2009 CENSIS survey, only 23.9 per cent of respondents claimed to be engaged in a single activity, while the vast majority performed more than one task. In fact, as already noted above, many domestic workers in Italy are employed as live-in caregivers for elderly or disabled people (i.e. family assistants or *badanti*). In a sample of foreign domestic workers interviewed by the Istituto di Ricerche Educative e Formative (IREF) in 2005, more than half of respondents worked within households with at least one person aged over 65 (56.7 per cent) and, in particular, 29.5 per cent of them were employed as a family assistant to a single elderly person, with 19.7 per cent taking care of a couple of older people (IREF, 2007). This kind of work usually entails carrying out a number of activities that range from housecleaning, cooking or shopping, to providing basic medical care or handling administrative tasks. The specific tasks of domestic services performed hugely depend on specific arrangements negotiated – and constantly renegotiated – by employers and workers. Comparing Italian and migrant domestic workers, the latter clearly shows a highly multi-tasking professional profile. Being employed more often than Italians as family assistants, they are more extensively involved in multiple activities, particularly those entailing a personal interaction with the assisted person, such as night-time care (26.9 per cent against 6.1 of Italians), assistance to an elderly person (49.5 per cent against 21.4), or to autonomous (36.6 per cent against 16.8 per cent) and dependent persons (32.4 per cent against 15.4).

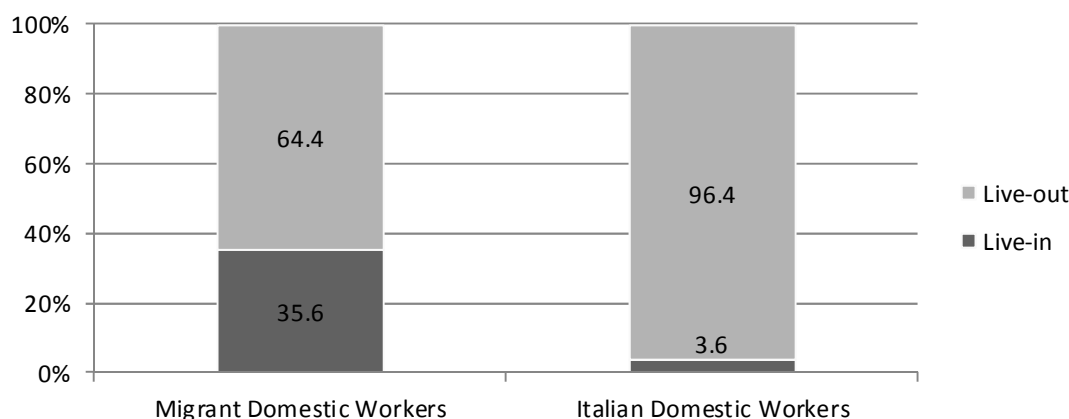
Figure 10. Type of tasks performed by domestic workers according to nationality, percentage



Source: CENSIS, 2010

Another substantial difference between Italian and migrant domestic workers is relative to the distinction between live-in or live-out employment.

Figure 11. Distribution of live-in/live-out employment by nationality of respondents, percentage



Source: CENSIS, 2010

Indeed, the greater concentration of immigrants in domestic care activities for dependent people is reflected in the large share of workers living in the same house as their employer compared to Italians (35.6 per cent against 3.6 per cent). Based on the 2005 IREF survey (IREF, 2007), a majority of family assistants providing home and personal care to one elderly lived with their employer (63.2 per cent).

2.4. The hidden side of domestic work: Irregular employment in the domestic work sector

The domestic sector is traditionally one with the highest rate of irregularity of employment. According to official estimates produced by the National Statistical Office (ISTAT) in 2009, around half of the employees in the sector (51.1 per cent) were not hired with regular job contracts, whereas irregular employment concerned 37.2 per cent of workers in agriculture, 5.2 per cent of workers in industry and 10.7 per cent in the service sector (ISTAT, 2011). Nonetheless, irregular employment in the domestic sector has greatly decreased in the last two decades from almost 70 per cent of total employment in the sector in the early 1990s.

Available survey data seem to broadly confirm this and add some elements related to situations where employment is partly regular and partly irregular, that is when job contracts cover only a part of the total working hours while the remainder is often paid off the books. According to CENSIS data, on average 40 per cent of interviewed domestic workers did work irregularly, 22 per cent partly regularly and 38 per cent fully regularly. Significant differences are observed across the different areas of the country: irregular employment is widespread in the southern regions (around 60 per cent of the total), while it is less common in the north-west (24.4 per cent).

Furthermore, the 2009 CENSIS survey provides disaggregated data on irregular employment by specific features of the employment relationship and by nationality or age class of the workers. Data highlight that 61.6 per cent of domestic workers employed by one single household have a job contract and only one-third (33.1 per cent) works irregularly, whereas only 8.7 per cent of those working in more than one household hold a regular job contract, 48.2 per cent work irregularly and 43.1 per cent partly irregularly. Regular employment is more common among live-in workers (71 per cent) than among live-out workers (25.8 per cent). Migrant domestic workers hold a regular job contract to a larger extent than Italian ones (42.1 per cent against 27.5 per cent), but in many cases they are only partly regularly employed (23.3 per cent against 18.6 per cent of Italian workers).

This is easily explained by the fact that, in most cases, migrant domestic workers need a job contract to obtain a stay permit and are therefore less available to work irregularly. Finally, CENSIS data show that irregularity of employment decreases when working experience increases: almost half of those with less than four years of experience in the sector, but only 30 per cent of those with over ten years' experience work completely irregularly.

Information gathered during our fieldwork seems to show an increase in the rate of undeclared work in the sector in recent years due to the impact of the current economic crisis.

2.5 A booming growth accompanied by extensive research: Brief literature review on the domestic sector in Italy

The domestic work sector in Italy and the increasing involvement of migrant workers within it has been extensively studied by social research in recent years. Migrant women's experience in this occupational sector can, in fact, be considered one of the first research topics in the field of migration in Italy: almost as if it was "the appearance of the figure of the migrant domestic worker as a phenomenon and as a subject of research to proclaim, in fact, the transition of Italy from a country of emigration to a country of immigration" (Santagati, 2007, p. 45).

At the outset, studies on domestic work carried out by migrant workers were conducted mainly by scholars of black and feminist studies focusing on the relations between gender, and race and on the analysis of the different forms of discrimination and exploitation of migrant women (Zanfrini, 1998). In these first stages, research mainly targeted domestic workers, while growing attention has been dedicated to the emerging figure of family assistant only in recent years: with respect to the latter phenomenon, the 2002 regularization can be considered a crucial turning point. Since then, many research projects and studies were realized, which were related to specific national groups (e.g. Ukrainians and Moldovans) and/or specific territorial areas in Italy (see below), sometimes upon the initiative of migrants' organizations and associations (Miceli, 2003; Shedka and Horodetsky, 2004; Mingozi, 2005). This path-breaking research analyzed, on the one hand, relationships, conflicts and intercultural exchanges between migrant domestic workers and Italian employers (Casella Paltrinieri, 2001; Miranda, 2002). On the other hand, some literature focused specifically on the care sector and on the role of family assistants in the so-called "home-made" or "invisible welfare", analyzing, for instance, the relationships between migrant caregivers and the assisted persons, their family or the public social services in the destination context. At the same time, increasing attention was dedicated, in the field of transnational studies, to migrant domestic workers' transnational families and relationships, especially drawing on theories of global care chains.²⁵

(a) Living and working conditions

A first group of studies looked at the domestic sector in Italy to analyze the interaction of race, gender and class in redefining social structures within Italian society.

²⁵ Over the years, various practical manuals have been produced, providing information and guidance both for family assistants and their employers. See, in particular, CENSIS, 2010; *Il Sole 24 ore*, 2007; Marini, 2005; Colombo, Cocever and Bianchi, 2005; Dal Pra Ponticelli, 2004; Baratella and Tecchio, 2004; Taccani, Tognetti and De Bernardinis, 1999; Taccani, 1994.

Early Italian research on migrant women (Crippa, 1979; Favaro and Tognetti Bordogna, 1991; Vicarelli, 1994; Ambrosini and Cominelli, 2005; Ambrosini, 1995), in fact, dealt with this sub-group of foreign women, i.e. domestic workers and caregivers, showing that migrant women are usually relegated to subaltern roles which reflect the most traditional female occupations (Ambrosini, 1995, 2004, 2005; Tognetti Bordogna, 2007). In this way, migrant women are discriminated against both as migrants and as women (Giaccardi, 2002).

Working conditions and the social identity of foreign female domestic workers in Italy have also been analyzed by foreign scholars (Andall, 2000; Anderson, 2000; Parrenas, 2001), focusing on processes of racialization and feminization of paid domestic work and on the relations between gender, race and social class (Cardenas and Franzinetti, 1998; Zanfrini, 2005; Zanier, 2006). According to Ponzio (2007), these studies show that different hierarchies are at work in the domestic sector in terms of families' preferences and wages: for instance, in Germany, Polish women get the highest wages, while Italian families seem to prefer Filipinos; on the other hand, women from Africa seem to be the most discriminated group wherever they work (Anderson, 2000, Andall, 2000; Cardenas and Franzinetti, 1998).

(b) Domestic workers, families and welfare structure

In general terms, two distinct, but interconnected, approaches coexist in the research on living and working conditions of migrant domestic workers. There are studies that have looked at the triangle between the family assistant, the assisted person and his/her family by adopting a micro-level perspective, thus considering the perceptions of migrant domestic workers and the relationships and expectations established in the context of daily living (CNEL and Fondazione Silvano Andolfi, 2003; Caritas Migrantes, 2003). This research shows the key role of the Italian family in affecting labour and social integration of newcomers.

Other studies have instead looked at the nature of the demand for care services provided on the market by migrant family assistants (Da Roit and Castegnaro, 2004). It could be mentioned here the study promoted by the local section of SPI (Union of Italian Retired People) in the Lombardy region (Da Roit and Facchini, 2010). The study analyzed the phenomenon with the aim of understanding how the migratory paths are structured, depending on the country of origin and individual characteristics of the respondents, but also the relations between the family assistant's living and working conditions and the characteristics of the assisted elderly and their families.

Other research (Tognetti Bordogna, 2003; Gori, 2002; Ranci, 2001, 2002) have adopted a meso or macro perspective and investigated the linkages between the demand for immigrant caregivers and the Italian welfare structure, the position of family assistants within the latter in interactions with the wider elder-care system, with respect both to institutional and informal actors (Spanò, 2006). As Ponzio (2007) states, some authors suggest that migrant women compensate for the "invisible welfare" once represented by the unacknowledged, unpaid domestic work of Italian women, which is a characteristic feature of the southern European "familialistic model" of welfare (Tognetti Bordogna, 2003; Gori, 2002; Ranci, 2001, 2002; Zanfrini, 2001; Ambrosini, 2005). In actual fact, according to some authors (Altieri, 1994; De Filippo, 2000), foreign women are proportionally less employed in this segment of the labour market in those Italian cities where public services (nurseries for children, nursing homes for the elderly, etc.) are better developed. The lack of public welfare services and the consequent need for private care have led Italian governments to adopt a more open policy towards domestic workers (Colombo, 2003; Andall, 2000), as reflected in preferential access to residence permits in comparison with other workers (see section 1.4 above).

(c) Transnational relationships

Another group of studies has looked at migrant women's kinship and emotional relationships, often adopting a transnational perspective. These studies have looked at transnational family ties of migrant mothers, often employed as domestic workers: the perception of migration as an individual, in fact, has been replaced, over the years, with the exploration of its family implications, with particular interest in intergenerational ties. This has been the case, for instance, of the research promoted by CESPI and FIERI (Castagnone et al., 2007) based on approximately 100 qualitative interviews with Romanian and Ukrainian women in Turin and Rome, as well as with their families in the country of origin; or the study by Lagomarsino (2006) which, although not specifically devoted to migrant domestic workers, provides a detailed and in-depth analysis of the feminized flows between Latin America and Europe, especially between Ecuador and Italy. Both these research projects highlight the relation between migration and family constraints, decisions and events, showing that there is not a single model of "transnational family management".

(d) Migrant domestic workers' networks

Within this stream of literature, a remarkable aspect is the growing emphasis put on networks. Several studies have investigated the role of formal and informal networks in job-search and hiring processes, particularly in the private care market, and the functioning of ethnic networks and associations (Ambrosini, 2005; Ponzo, 2002; Alemani, 2004; Morini, 2001; Scrinzi, 2004; Ambrosini, 1999; Mazzacurati, 2005; Ambrosini and Boccagni, 2003; Tassinari and Valzania, 2003; Spanò and Zaccaria, 2003). These studies, as Ponzo (2007) highlights, have also pointed out the ambivalent nature of social relations: networks may foster access to first employment in the private care sector for new arrivals, but may also trap them in this segment of the labour market, restricting upward social mobility (Ponzo, 2002; Alemani, 2004; Morini, 2001; Scrinzi, 2004; Ambrosini, 1999). Furthermore, networks may hide abuse and exploitation: sometimes access to jobs is mediated by co-nationals and entails payment of a fee (Mazzacurati, 2005; Ambrosini and Boccagni, 2003; Tassinari and Valzania, 2003). Lastly, some research highlights the weakness of domestic workers' and caregivers' social network, especially if live-in, and their separation from the host society, since relations with Italian people are often limited to the employer's family and possibly to supporting religious institutions. In this way, a gap forms between labour/economic insertion and socio-cultural integration.

(e) Labour rights and employment conditions

A significant number of studies dealt with issues related to rights of domestic workers, often in relation to the implementation of welfare and/or migration policies, including the effects of regularizations. In some cases, they have been promoted by regional and local authorities, NGOs, foundations or research organizations in the framework of local welfare-mix measures or projects (ANCI Veneto, 2003; CNEL and Fondazione Silvano Adinolfi, 2003; Miceli, 2003; Lazzarini, 2004; Colombo, 2004; Maione, 2004; Da Roit and Castegnaro, 2004; Ambrosini and Cominelli, 2004; Chiaretti, 2004; Battaglino, Gerardi and Sampieri, 2005; Baraldi, 2006; Mesini, Pasquinelli and Rusmini, 2006).

The problematic working conditions of caregivers emerged from the research in the field (Da Roit and Castegnaro, 2004; Mesini, Pasquinelli and Rusmini, 2006), which stimulated a reflection on the role of training and education as a strategic tool for promoting ways to enhance socio-professional insertion of domestic workers. Some of these projects also carried out action-oriented research related to the attitudes of migrant domestic workers and caregivers towards training and education.

(f) Information and communication technology (ICT) in the care sector

One seminal area of studies, highly cross-disciplinary, is beginning to produce the first studies to consider the relationship between the care sector and the role of ICT. The first comprehensive study carried out (Boccagni and Pasquinelli, 2010) explores the use of ICT and ICT-based assistive technologies in long-term care of dependent old people in Italy, considering in particular the large number of immigrants employed by Italian families as personal care assistants. The report analyses the potential mediation role of migrant care workers in ICT use in personal home care, and how ICT could be used to professionally qualify and enhance the living conditions of these workers.

Some weaknesses in the research conducted so far in Italy need to be highlighted. Firstly, up until now, research has adopted mainly qualitative techniques, such as semi-structured interviews and ethnographic methods. There is a lack of reliable quantitative data and of comparisons on a large scale on domestic work and migrants' participation in this segment of the labour market (Baldisseri, 2005; Pelliccia, 2011), while studies addressing specific national communities or local contexts predominate: [Mazzacurati (2005) on the Ukrainian community, Vlase (2006) on the Veneto region, Pelliccia (2011) on Polish women].

It is, however, important to point out that some comparative studies between two or more communities or local contexts exist [Zontini (2002) (comparing the experiences of Moroccan and Filipino women in two Southern European Cities, Bologna and Barcelona); Parrenas (2001); Anderson, 2000; Sarti, 2006; Mazzacurati, 2005; Castagnone et al., 2007; Spanò and Zaccaria, 2003; Avola et al., 2003]. The study by Fullin and Vercelloni (2009) is particularly noteworthy, comparing four communities: Filipino, Romanian, Moroccan and Ecuadorian. The study describes the career paths of the interviewed women, with the focus shifting to subjective aspects through a qualitative approach, highlighting how the respondents see domestic/care work, what expectations they had before leaving their country and what opportunities they believe they have in the Italian labour market.

In regard to large-scale quantitative research, it is important to point out the various research reports produced by public and private agencies, such as INPS, CNEL, IRES, IRS and others (CNEL and Fondazione Silvano Andolfi, 2003; INPS and Caritas Italiana, 2011; IREF, 2007; CENSIS, 2010). A study carried out in the Lombardy region (Colombo and Sciortino, 2005) reconstructed the ways out from domestic work: ten years after arriving in Italy, two-thirds of the immigrants interviewed managed to get out of the domestic work sector. This number was higher among men than women. Furthermore, while men undertake paths of upward mobility, women normally find jobs as cleaners (20 per cent), waitresses or unskilled workers in factories, in most cases working for a private company, but doing the same job they did previously for a family.

3. Into, within, outside the domestic sector: Labour trajectories and patterns of socio- economic integration of migrant domestic workers in Italy

This section will look at the labour trajectories and the career patterns of migrant domestic workers in Italy, on the basis of qualitative in-depth interviews to 55 EU and third-country national migrant domestic workers in Italy in 2012.

The analysis will first concentrate on the entry *into* the sector, demonstrating how newcomers tend to concentrate in the most sensitive, precarious and exploitative segment of the sector. Secondly, the trajectories *within* the domestic work sector will be looked at, showing that – with longer stay and professional experience in the host country – many workers managed to experience upward mobility paths and socio-economic empowerment. Particular attention will then be devoted to those factors and processes that promote people in domestic work, such as the acquisition of a regular status and the transition to regular employment, the increasing professionalization through access to specialized courses and on-the-job training, the enhancement and social capital, and the increased awareness of their rights.

Emerging leadership among migrant women will also be considered, as the result of a growing engagement in the lobbying, advocacy and right defence activities in support of domestic workers. Finally, the experiences and perspectives of exit from the domestic work sector will be explored.

3.1 Live-in assistance to dependent people as the main entry into the domestic work: The paradox of the care sector

While migration and labour trajectories of migrant domestic workers are very diverse due to individual characteristics, strategies and collective resources that they mobilize in the given social, economic and political “opportunity structure” (Sohler and Lévy, 2013), some common patterns of labour integration in the personal and household services sector can be highlighted.

In order to understand how the labour trajectories of migrant workers are structured, it is important to consider how their careers start out in Italy. Biographies of interviewed migrants highlight one of the most evident paradoxes of the domestic work sector in Italy: in the vast majority of cases, newcomers – who are often the most socially, economically and legally vulnerable and the least skilled in the care sector – enter the labour market joining the most labour-intensive, lowest paid and worst working conditions segment of the domestic work sector: the live-in assistance to elderly or disabled people.

Live-in care work in fact implies cohabiting 24 hours a day with the assisted person, who is, in most cases, an elderly or dependent person presenting various degrees of physical or mental disabilities or cognitive problems, ranging from persons who are able to undertake some activities independently and to go out, to cases where they are not self-sufficient in carrying out vital functions, such as cooking, washing or taking medicines (Pasquinelli and Rusmini, 2008).

Live-in assistance to the elderly often implies long working hours, involving regular overtime beyond the contractual hours of work, night work and lack of weekly rest periods. According to a survey undertaken by the Fondazione Leone Moressa (2013), over

half of family assistants (54.8 per cent) work for longer than 12 hours a day in the household where they are employed. The daily and weekly rest periods set out in the national collective agreement (respectively two hours per day and 36 hours per week) are actually seldom granted.

Furthermore, the multi-functional profile of domestic workers, as previously highlighted in this report (section 2.4), becomes even more pronounced with live-in assistance (CENSIS, 2010), ranging from cooking and cleaning, to clothes washing, shopping, and basic health and medical care. In some cases, the family assistants have to look after more than one person at the same time within the same family, to perform tasks intended for other members of the family (ironing, cooking, shopping, etc.) or not included in the domestic activities.

[When I arrived] I worked for a gentleman, not for long, because then he passed away. Soon after, I worked for a family of five persons: an old lady in a wheelchair, her sick husband and three young persons. I did everything, absolutely everything, I ran the home, I took care of the sick one, I administered medicines, I cleaned, did the shopping, prepared food, everything.

(E., female, 44, Moldova)

The first job I found was as an apprentice and I worked outside Turin, in the countryside. There was the 75-year-old mother, her disabled 55-year-old son and the 73-year-old aunt. I worked as a family assistant in an apprentice position. They were building the house. I had to paint, do woodwork, I have learned everything there."

(C., male, 38, Peru)

The multitasking nature of domestic work performed by migrant workers has emerged as one problematic issue during the stakeholders meeting organized during our fieldwork. Indeed, while representatives of employers' organizations claimed that domestic workers have to carry out all those domestic activities related to both household and personal care of family members (*"the worker assisting an elderly or dependent person must also take care of the environment in which this person lives: the functional profile should be fluid, otherwise it is unthinkable for the family to bear the costs of various employees"*), trade unionists raised some concern about the potential trade-off between multitasking and professionalization of domestic workers (*"If they keep on doing a little of everything, how can you expect them to get specific skills and to enhance their qualifications?"*).

Another feature of co-residency is the living arrangements, where the workplace and residence are one, entailing a strong promiscuity between work and personal life. Moreover, the houses where the domestic workers are employed may impose isolation when located in rural areas and poorly served by public transportation, thus preventing workers to keep in contact with family members or networks, as well as to break from work during the rest hours.

You are no longer a person, you live for the other, you no longer have your own identity (...) women need a psychological support. In Romania now they speak about "Italian syndrome" (a form of depression) for the women who return

(O, female, 33, Romania)

Finally, live-in care work is highly precarious by its nature. High turnover prevails with the unstable conditions of the assisted elderly, whose health condition can worsen suddenly, requiring hospitalization, or death. New demand for migrant domestic workers is filled by the most recently arrived migrants, who are forced to accept tough working conditions for lack of any better opportunity.

As anticipated, newcomers share some common features: they are socially vulnerable; they have no, or poor, linguistic skills; little knowledge of the functioning of the Italian labour market and of the procedures to access to it. Most importantly, albeit with differences according to the different national groups and individual characteristics, newly arrived migrants have limited access to support networks, mostly made up of links with co-nationals, relatives or friends in the country of origin. Such networks play a crucial role in matching labour demand and supply, as the recruitment of migrants mainly relies on word-of-mouth.

Upon arrival, migrants are usually oriented to co-nationals, kin or friends (who are often themselves employed in this sector), towards domiciliary elderly care work. In many cases, the recruitment takes place through a direct call by co-nationals, often for temporary replacements, which can then turn into permanent employment relationships or eventually open the way to other jobs. While these networks are the most effective entry channels into the labour market, at the same time, they may trap foreign workers in the employment circuit reserved to migrants. They contribute, in fact, to pre-establish the cognitive and structural framework within which individual decisions are taken, define the outer limits of possible options, channelling and shaping the migrants' patterns of integration at the destination (Ambrosini, 2006). In addition to the role played by networks in providing migrant workers with information and shaping access and integration into the labour market, the entry into the domestic sector is also the result of stereotyping by Italians (Reyneri, 2007; Ponzio, 2006), who tend to attribute to (women) migrant workers "natural" competencies and work qualities in the care and personal services activities.

The role played by networks between destination and the country of origin – in addition to the increasing labour demand for a cheap labour force in this sector in Italy and to immigration policies favouring the entry of migrant workers in the personal and household assistance services (see section 1.4) – have promoted the rise of migratory systems strictly connected to labour opportunities in domestic work in Italy. As it has been argued (Sciortino, 2009), migration channels operate in respect of the demand for domestic work, channelling migrants who are aware of the labour opportunities in the domestic sector in Italy before their departure.

However, such systems are not the only entry channel into domestic work. A significant proportion of migrants arrive in Italy through different paths and with completely different migratory and professional projects, and then end up in the domestic sector, where the demand for a migrant labour force is high, and it is easier and faster to get a job.

Often their first professional experience in the field, migrant workers in most cases enter domestic work in Italy without specific professional knowledge or skills, especially in the case of elder care and in the assistance of individuals with specific diseases or disabilities (e.g. Alzheimer or dementia). Regardless of expectations and an awareness of Italian employment opportunities in the domestic sector before leaving, most of our interviewees had no experience or training in the care sector upon arrival in Italy. This does not exclude, though, a minority of migrants holding professional credentials, and sometimes having direct experience either in the country of origin or in other migration countries which are directly useful in the care sector in Italy. Among our interviewees, for instance, M.H. (49, female, Peru) worked for 11 years in the domestic sector in Argentina before coming to Italy; V. (58, female, Peru) assisted an elderly woman in Peru for three years; M. (56, female, Philippines) used to work as a family assistant for an Italian family in the Philippines.

Another common feature of migrant newcomers entering the job market and the domestic sector for the first time is their irregular status. According to a study carried out by Fullin and Vercelloni (2009) on a sample of 186 in-depth interviews with women from Morocco, the Philippines, Ecuador and Romania, only one woman in four employed as a domestic

caregiver held a regular contract at the outset of her work career in Italy. Irregular migrants, especially upon arrival in Italy, have no other alternative but to look for a job on the black market, and many of them, especially women, end up working in the domestic sector. Live-in domestic work in particular presents some advantages for irregular migrants, at least in the short term: it offers a safe haven while waiting to obtain regular documents; it allows saving on living expenses upon arrival at the most precarious moment of the migration trajectory, when migrant women have limited economic resources (they may need to urgently repay loans that funded their trip and sometimes the purchase of a residence permit); and have limited access to networks (Ambrosini, 2011). Furthermore, migrant domestic workers, especially live-in help, are seldom (if ever) controlled by labour inspection authorities, which have no authority to enter private homes without a judicial order (Sohler and Lévy, 2013). However, the precarious legal status of migrant domestic workers make them especially vulnerable to abusive practices, non-payment of wages, debt bondage, abusive living and working conditions, or psychological abuse.

These vulnerabilities (weak links to networks, limited professional experience in the sector, poor language skills) prevent foreign domestic workers from acquiring adequate knowledge of general elderly home-care services, of labour standards, and of social and labour rights attached to the job (e.g. maximum working hours, daily or weekly rest, minimum wages set by the national collective agreement, maternity leave rights, etc.).

I didn't know anything about all these laws then, I didn't have any rest hour. I didn't even know about it. I worked this way for two years and after that, they did not give me anything: no compensation, no Christmas bonus, nothing. I lived there. I went away Saturday and Sunday, and Sunday evening the lady came to pick me up at the train station and my work started there. I have been working this way about three years.

(M., female, 44, Moldova)

When I arrived I was undocumented. The family I used to work for started to exploit me: they paid me 500 Euros per month, I worked from 9am to 7pm, they didn't pay my social contributions ... I didn't know how to manage such things. I got sick three or four times and they didn't say anything, so I worked also when I was sick. I slept in a camper van, there were no problems with food but I didn't know how much was my salary, I knew it was minimal but ... they keep on telling me "you're an apprentice"... For the whole year I was an apprentice.

(C., male, 38, Peru)

3.2 Careers within the domestic work sector: Towards live-out domestic work

How do the working trajectories of migrant workers further develop after their first entry into the domestic sector as live-in help? If we look at the biographies of our interviewees, we can see that labour trajectories develop mainly while performing domestic work; relatively few workers had previous professional experience in this sector. This can be primarily the result of the design of the research, which is based on interviews with workers employed as domestic workers no later than one year before the interview who, in the vast majority of cases, were still working at the time. As a result, workers leaving the domestic work sector are limited and under-represented here. Given these limitations in the data, we will focus mainly on the labour trajectories *within* the area of domestic work and personal assistance, considering, however, the few episodes of persons leaving (see section 3.5).

While live-in work continues to be an active choice for some interviewees, even after the first entry into the labour market, most migrant workers try to move to live-out domestic work as soon as possible.²⁶ A study about the job careers of migrant domestic workers shows a decrease in live-in work over time, decreasing from 83.4 per cent to 72 per cent for family assistants, and from 63.5 per cent to 18.8 per cent for maids or babysitters (Fullin et al., 2009).

Cohabitation, in particular, imposes unfavourable working and living conditions, and the exit from this segment of the domestic industry takes place primarily to avoid isolation and loneliness and to become emancipated from dependency and isolation that live-in work entails.

I came back [from a vacation in my home town] but I was tired, and I said, "I do not want cohabitation anymore" because I lost a bit my independence, I was no longer able to decide for myself, you do not realize but over time then you realize that you become dependent on that person. And you no longer have your life. So I said, "No, I won't do it, or I'll go crazy" ... so I decided to become a domestic worker.

(M., female, 37, Romania)

They did not give me the two hours [of rest], but they paid the money for those two hours. For someone who badly needs this it can be nice, but not for me, because there isn't only money, but also the meaning of being human. Eventually there comes a time that one gets tired. I was at work on Saturday and Sunday, always, always. So I put aside money and went with the nuns.

(M., female, 43, Peru)

I realized that this was not the job for me, it was not good even for my head. I could not have my space, you are no longer a person, you live for others, you have no identity.

(O., female, 33, Romania)

Furthermore, live-in work implies an exclusive working relationship and it prevents carrying out other activities: considering the low level of wages received, this can end up in economic hardship, once the employment relationship ends (Scrinzi, 2004). The demise or the hospitalization of the assisted person, which is typically the primary cause of dismissal in this segment of the domestic work sector, often leads to relatively sudden periods of unemployment and to conditions of economic, social and legal vulnerability (Fullin et al., 2009).

Moreover, if in past decades cohabitation was common as a housing solution for caregivers who had just arrived in Italy, in recent years this option seems less common, with larger support networks and a higher housing autonomy available to newcomers (Pasquinelli and Rusmini, 2008).

²⁶ The modes and time of exit from live-in work varies according to different characteristics, such as the migration project, but also the age of arrival in Italy, the relationship with the country of origin, the family structure, etc. A previous study on women domestic workers from Romania and Ukraine (Castagnone et al., 2007) showed that, after the first live-in work experiences, the Romanians (on average younger, with young children and relatives to be reunited) showed a greater inclination to shift from live-in to live-out domestic work than the Ukrainians (older, with adolescent/adult children left behind in the Ukraine and short-term migratory projects), who instead preferred live-in elder-care work with a view to a short-term return to the country of origin.

3.3 A way toward enhanced integration: Determinants and paths of upward mobility within the domestic work sector

What are the main processes of labour mobility of migrant workers in the domestic work sector? While certainly they are non-linear and discontinuous processes, some general patterns can be observed both in the lives of the interviewees and as more general trends within the sector. In the experiences of the respondents, a general process of empowerment can also be observed. Through acquisition of a regular status and a regular contract, the enhancement of skills and qualifications, participation in training courses, access to diverse and larger social networks, and access to information, migrant domestic workers progressively acquire a knowledge of the functioning of the sector and of their rights. They become increasingly able to define their own paths, rejecting exploitative working conditions, and making working and personal life choices according to their own preferences and needs.

The first factor that helps to trigger labour mobility is acquiring regular status in Italy. The irregular condition is one of the main factors of attraction and entrapment of foreign workers to live-in work. This trapping mechanism is weakened by a range of different factors, including access to networks, increased awareness of rights, and acquisition of language and professional skills. It is only when migrant domestic workers obtain regular documents that undeclared work is no longer the only possible option, and migrant workers can switch to registered jobs and possibly change occupation (Fullin and Vercelloni, 2009).

When you work without a contract you cannot ask for your rights. When you work without papers nobody gives you anything. Even though I had a good relationship with the lady and her son, who was a lawyer, he knew what was going on, after four years when she died and I returned to Romania, he said, "I'll do you a favour, I'll give you 300 euro extra "... After four years! I said thank you, I was happy he gave me the salary and I shut up, because I was also afraid that they could call the police and say, "ah, a stranger came into the house, to kill my mother." So you'll shut up, dumb, and just work.

(D., female, 42, Romania)

The thing that is not good is not having a job contract. Having a contract gives you some security. I accepted because I needed the money. But even if they tell you that they give you more, without the contract is not convenient, because then you lose your job and it is very difficult. As happened to me. If I had the contract I could have asked for unemployment benefits, as my wife did.

(M., male, 45, Romania)

Irregular employment, in part, stems from a mutual convenience: families employ undeclared domestic workers with little or no professional experience, with limited access to labour and social rights, and low assertiveness, in exchange for reduced contractual obligations and flexible and extended work, while domestic assistants swap the guarantees and social protection of a regular contract for a higher wage (Fullin and Vercelloni, 2009).

Episodes of undeclared work tend to become less frequent over the years of stay in Italy: comparing the first with the latest occupational episodes reported by the respondents of the above-mentioned research, the percentage of regular occupations rises from just over 24 per cent among the first jobs up to almost 54 per cent among the last ones (Fullin and Vercelloni, 2009).

Obtaining a legal status, however, does not automatically lead to jobs with regular contracts. The domestic sector largely relies on an area of "grey" regularization, i.e. of partial regularity, where the declared hours are lower than actual ones or, in the case of

working for more than one employer, some jobs are declared and others are not. According to a study on family assistants held in Genoa a few years ago (Pasquinelli and Rusmini, 2008), only 17 per cent of care workers are legally employed. Among those who arrived in more recent years, only 37 per cent had any interest in declaring the actual total amount of hours, while the majority believed that the cost of a fully declared job would have been too onerous, both for themselves and for their employers.

[...] with this agency I worked a lot in hospitals and nursing homes, but also in the homes of the elderly, for short periods of 15 days, sometimes even just one night. I had an unwritten contract. They always paid for everything in cash. Also in the hospitals it works like this: you go in the hospitals, work 8-12 hours and it's the agency that find an agreement with the patient, the relatives, and then after they pay us. I have always worked in black with them and so I do even now. This did not create problems with the residence permit, because while I worked with the agency I had my work in a family where I was paying the contributions.

(O., female, 55, Peru)

Now the families are afraid of undeclared work, for fear of complaint. Often are charged contributions for 20 hours, and then people work full-time, this is the trick. Or on Saturday and Sunday working in black. Employers hire people with the minimum amount of time, it is more convenient for families. In my case, my wife has a regular job and I'm here for family reunification and so I can work in black. My wife, however, must always be in good standing. For us here there is no hope, when we are old: we have no house, we have no right to a pension. In Peru, we have our family.

(R., male, 54, Peru)

In this respect, an interviewed domestic worker and Romanian community leader declared that Romanians in particular show an increase in unregistered work lately, they have lower incentives to declare their jobs and their revenues since they no longer need a residence permit.

Before a job contract was the key to get regular stay papers. Now there are many [Romanians] who don't want to have a job contract because they don't need papers now that they are EU citizens.

(O., female, 33, Peru)

However, even when migrant workers obtain a job with a regular contract, which can lead to formalization and the possibility to claim rights, working conditions do not improve automatically, as the contents and the modalities of the job are contracted within the household and the employer-worker relationship tends to remain asymmetrical.

The problem is that the contract often does not match what actually happens. Of course some forms of control should be increased. You can write what you want in the contract, you might as well work without it, if no one respects it. The problem of care workers is the following: working 24 hours non-stop. And there are people who cannot sleep at night in order to assist the elderly and then struggle to work during the day. We need more awareness among caregivers and between employers. Now I think that although many people have the contract, what is written is not respected. There are women who agree to have only one Sunday a month free. But how can you stay a normal person in this way?

(O., female, 33, Peru)

A further concern, in particular in the case of temporary migration, is that contributions made to the social security system in Italy might be relinquished after the migrant departs, since pension contributions are not transferable from one country to another (ISSA, 2011). For those planning to return to their country of origin before retirement age, the possibility

of withdrawing pension contributions only after the age of 65 creates incentives towards irregular work.

For me it is better to work without a contract, because I will not have any right to pension. In five years I will return to Peru. I do not need to pay social contributions. I prefer to make more money now and put money aside for when I'm back in Peru.

(R., male, 54, Peru)

Beside the acquisition of regular status, a second important element that could have a positive impact on the socio-economic integration of migrant domestic workers is enhancement of their skills and qualifications. A process of gradual professionalization in the domestic sector emerged. This is primarily the result of the experience acquired on the job. However, a growing participation in professional training courses was also registered among care workers, thanks to an increasingly extensive supply of courses and training initiatives in the domestic and elderly assistance sector provided by local authorities, voluntary associations or trade unions (see section 1.3).

After their first experiences as family assistants in Italy, a growing number of migrant domestic workers join training courses provided by the OSS (*Operatore Socio-Sanitario* - Social-Care Operator) once they obtain regular stay permits, own better linguistic competences, have access to information on training opportunities and on the functioning of the domestic labour market.

The OSS are social workers trained to provide basic social care and to act as a support to medical and nursing staff. They obtain a qualification certificate after training for 1,000 hours in classes. Both vocational training and professional experiences gained over time help workers to learn the technical aspects of care work, how to better manage relationships with employers (families) and the assisted persons, to re-elaborate their own experience, to reach a greater awareness of the work, to be assertive for their own rights, and, ultimately, to promote empowerment of workers themselves.

With this OSS course, I have learned so many things, I also had the answers to doubts I had, because I started to do this job without any training. Instead, doing it in a conscious way, with a preparation, is different: there really is the quality of care, because a trained person is able to assist in a different way (...). I succeeded, like many women, simply because I used my human sensitivity, but it is much better if you are prepared (...) to address the challenges of disease and deal with these issues that are not easy.

(E., female, 34, Peru)

I never appreciated this work, since I was thrown in to do this, I tried to handle it ... but after this experience with this lady I had already taken this path [...] in the meantime I re-elaborated this experience, then with the OSS course I reworked even more all my path.

(E., female, 34, Peru)

Yes, I did a training course now, as a family assistant. And I can tell the truth, even with all my experience, the course helped me a lot. Because we were given lectures on psychology and those really help, for I'm struggling to communicate with my employers, not with her [i.e. the assisted person] but with her relatives, and this course has helped me to understand how to relate with them.

(D., female, 42, Romania)

Now I no longer care: the experience helped me to understand that I do not like working with the elderly. For care work, what I say is a categorical no, for the future. With children, I have a little more freedom, and then babysitting is a job that has prepared me to work in the social sector. From the social point of view the job of family assistant is too difficult. You do not

work for a future, you work for a death, not for a life project. This is very tiring. From the psychological point of view also to babysit is similar. You have to take care of food, clothing, you have to wash. However, if you do your job well you know that you will leave a good impression on the children you take care of.

(O., female, 33, Romania)

After a week I found another elder to assist, but it was no more so heavy because I had learned to stand out. I had learned something from my previous experience. In this last job, I also had my food, I set the medicines for the elder, I drove home. It has been good.

(O., female, 33, Romania)

They get angry, as they say that they pay me. And I say: "Yes, but you pay me to care after an elderly lady". So many times he says "ah, now that you have a little time ..." if he sees me sitting there, "What do you think of dusting the chandeliers?". And I say: "It's not my responsibility; I won't do it, if you want you can hire a girl who does it....". I ensure daily cleaning, but the curtains, windows ... no. Before I did it, but later on I did not. Since I started following that course I do not touch anything.

(D., female, 42, Romania)

Social care operators are most frequently employed in residential care structures and only marginally in home-based elder-care services. In the latter case, when not directly hired by public administrations, they are generally recruited by cooperatives and employed in publicly funded elder-care services contracted out by municipalities (Villosio and Bizzotto, 2011). However, as far as professional careers are concerned, the OSS course has ambivalent functions in the experience of our respondents. While the course provides specific competences and skills in the domain of care work and assistance to elderly and disabled people and is meant to train specialized professional figures, it does not necessarily lead to a job in the public sector or in private residential care structure. E. (female, 34, Peru), for instance, expressed her preference for private assistance in households and for a job based on a direct relationship with the assisted person, while others have chosen the OSS course as a chance to flee live-in work.

I do not like the pace of the hospital, I did an internship in a residential structure, a very bad thing for me because I'm used to heal, to get in touch with the person, instead here everything is mechanical, do this, do that... also your work loses quality... it no longer has that human value ... in the hospital is the same because the pace is just ... run here, run there ... but at home there is the quality of the work, you can give so much, you just take care of a person ... it's different ... I would continue to work with people on my own.

(E., female, 34, Peru)

I want to do the OSS not to work anymore with families.

(M., female, 44, Moldova)

However, the enhanced qualifications obtained through attending training courses do not necessarily result in an economic advantage since the net hourly wage remains practically unchanged (CENSIS, 2010).²⁷ Furthermore, as courses may become also the basis for claiming workers' rights, this is sometimes experienced negatively by the employers.

²⁷ That is 7.2 euro for those having attended the course, compared to an average of 7.1 euro for those who did not attend the course.

Do you know what he always tells me? “If you want the rights, go back to your country to ask for the rights.” And then he has the courage to tell you in the face!

(D., female, 42, Romania)

Professional training is not necessarily the panacea. The domestic sector is a fragmented one, with highly discretionary management of the content of the work, often directly negotiated (or imposed) within the household, and where informal networks still play a crucial role.

Professional courses are crap. Everyone says it is important to be qualified. But then everybody knows they call you within the networks. They call you, and if they like you, they give you the job. If you respect the rules that they impose is fine. And even if you attend a training course, those who decide are always the employers. You have to adapt to the family that you find, there is no rule valid for everyone. Every family is different. Perhaps for the elderly, a professional course would be needed for medical issues, but it is difficult. What do you do?

(O., female, 33, Romania)

An additional factor that provides empowerment, awareness raising and upward mobility within the domestic sector is the enhancement of the social networks of migrant workers. Indeed, migrant domestic workers’ relational resources are initially weak, mainly concentrated and limited to few acquaintances and relatives, due also to the initial working conditions in the domestic work sector that often entails isolation. Nevertheless, across time and experience, they manage to expand their social capital and to develop “specialized relations” in the domestic sector, with Italian persons (former employers, trainers of courses) and organizations, either as clients or active members (third-sector organizations, trade unions, etc.) or with community organizations organizing activities and offering specialized services for domestic workers (see section 3.4).

Third-sector organizations have been playing a crucial role in the support of migrant domestic workers, either providing legal assistance (e.g. procedures to obtain residence permits), supporting integration in Italy (e.g. organization of language courses and professional training, help in the search for accommodation, access to general information, etc.), psychological help and, most importantly, job-matching services in the domestic sector.

With regard to unions, migrant domestic workers generally join unions once they obtain regular status. IRES-Filcams reports (2009, p. 129) that only 22 per cent of respondents asked for help from a trade union; requests from domestic workers is quite rare, but is more likely from those who benefit from a regular contract. This may also be due to a lack of knowledge of the unions and of their procedures, and of their rights as irregular migrants: in fact, many domestic workers are unfamiliar with what unions are and can do. Trade unions are mainly used for confirmation, rather than for the actual defense, of their rights.

Sometimes we go to CGIL or CISL. We go for arrears, severance pay, but we do not go for other things. We are not close to the trade unions. We go there only when there are problems, then we disappear.

(M., female, 56, Philippines)

From the collected interviews it seems that the “traditional” trade unions and associations are not very effective in becoming a reference point for the workers in relation to the defense of their rights.

Marchetti (2012, p.16) points out that one of the main problems for migrants is the lack of “trust” in the goodwill of labour organizations, which are perceived as backstopping the Italian families rather than workers: “Italian labour organizations are seen as unable to fully protect workers' rights, especially in the case of migrants. They are said to not really care about defending migrant domestic workers and to be, ultimately, always on the side of Italian employers, asking domestic workers to accept very disadvantageous compromises. Various images which relate to this belief reinforce the idea that Italians are always ready to form alliances among themselves, not really caring about the rights of foreigners”.

This is also often reinforced by the fact that many associations, cooperatives and agencies (often close to the Catholic church) defend an attitude of deference and submission of the family assistant and do not promote a working relationship based on reciprocity and equal dignity, i.e. advising the worker not to complain or take action to claim rights. Deference is often presented as a professional competence and, as Scrinzi (2004) pointed out, work is often treated according to a moral register that ends up hiding the social, political and economic dimension of the phenomenon.

Then they told me that the trade unions do not help so much even here, we have to do by ourselves.

(M., female, 43, Peru)

Instead, those associations which are more targeted to domestic work seem to answer more effectively the needs of migrant domestic workers, as experienced by D. (female, 42, Romania), who was helped by one association in the recognition and defense of her rights

Locked in a house who comes to tell you that you have rights? Even now, until I enrolled at API-Colf, they always try to play games with us. Because in the beginning, with this man, those two hours he said that I have to be to work. I said, "No, calm," I picked up the phone and I called the lady of the API-Colf and she explained everything to me. They (NB: employers) always try. After that they (API-Colf) intervened, thanks to them. And now he, being afraid of them, has begun to do things properly. Before I used to do it (NB all that the employer used to ask), but not after. Since I started doing that course I do not touch anything.

(D., female, 42, Romania)

The risk, however, is that a vicious cycle is created related to the negative image of the trade unions, because the disappointment of migrants' expectations sparks a chain of bad representations which are created and circulated among the migrant groups (Marchetti, 2012).

As a result, the informal networks with relatives, friends and foreign workers working in the same sector turn out to be the ones to rely upon in case of need. The networks of co-national workers in the domestic sector and peer-to-peer information sharing may also play an important role among migrants in raising awareness of rights.

My cousin's friend had this information because she was married to an Italian. She went to the union in Como and then they helped her. So when I arrived she told me how to work as caregiver and as domestic worker, she gave me an information sheet that I photocopied and I read. But not everyone has this knowledge here in Italy.

(M., female, 43, Peru)

3.4 Standing up for the domestic workers' rights: Lobbying and advocacy and emerging leaderships

Among these more or less similar paths, some persons stand out for their leadership role: after having personally experienced a process of empowerment and awareness-raising about their rights they decide, also thanks to their cultural background and organizational skills, to set up associations supporting their co-nationals or to collaborate with those organizations that are already dealing with workers' or migrants' rights.

In some cases their experience has been characterized by an initial phase of strong de-skilling and a deep sense of humiliation for the work of family assistant or domestic worker, as in the case of A. (female, 50, Morocco), a graduate in economics in Morocco and today, after a period of work as domestic worker, cultural mediator at the MEIC.²⁸

Yes, at the beginning honestly I used to cry every day when I was working because I saw that work like domestic worker as an humiliation: one that has come with a degree in economics, dreamed of having a good life, get a job, I do not know how in the end I clean the floors, to take away the rubbish of the dogs... And that, at the beginning I used to cry, I always used to ask God to help me to face that humiliation.

(A., female, 50, Morocco)

Another interesting path of “mediator of rights” that is worth describing in this section is related to the story of M. (female, 56, Philippines), who founded in 1996 the ACFIL (Associazione Culturale Filippina del Piemonte – Filipino Cultural Association of Piedmont) with the aim of supporting her co-nationals employed by Italian households, preserving Filipino culture and promoting the integration of Filipinos into Italian society. At the time, ACFIL was founded in response to tragic events that had affected the Filipino community and had made evident the need to provide psychological assistance to domestic workers and training about rights to support the transition “from being hidden to letting people know who we are”.

From this fact [i.e. the death in a house of a Filipina domestic worker] came out the desire to create this association of Filipinos. Marietta didn't have regular status, she had no employment contract. Most employers do not care about who the persons that live in their house are and what they do. After Marietta's death no investigation was made: why is she dead? and how did she die? because we are hidden in homes. With the association we want to let the Italian society know who we are.

(M., female, 56, Philippines)

The activities of ACFIL focus on the psycho-social well-being of their members, their cultural and economic integration into Italian society, and it has had a fundamental role in sustaining Filipino domestic workers in Turin in their process of empowerment and in acquiring the skills to claim the protection of labour rights.

It is important to remember that Filipino migrants have occupied a special and highly visible role in the Italian domestic work sector since the very beginning of the entry of immigrants to this sector (Marchetti, 2012), and they are today one of the oldest and largest migrant communities in Italy (Caritas-Migrantes, 2012). Around 79 per cent of them are

²⁸ Movimento Ecclesiale di Impegno Culturale is a national movement active in Turin, founded in 1932. It has realized over the years various initiatives concerning Islam, migration and intercultural education, interreligious dialogue as well as the promotion of the Italian language and citizenship, especially for women from the Maghreb.

employed in household services, covering 10.9 per cent of the total regular workforce in the whole sector (Marchetti, 2012).²⁹

If, on the one hand, the Filipino community in Italy has a 30-year presence here, extremely high levels of employment and a considerable degree of appreciation on the part of Italians, on the other hand it is not deeply involved in processes of social and professional mobility, with the result that many Filipinos continue to engage in work for which they are decidedly overqualified and without knowing their rights. According to an ISMU-Mapid project, this happens for five main reasons: lack of or low competence in the Italian language; scarce information about training opportunities and development of entrepreneurial culture; difficulties in having recognition of study qualifications obtained prior to emigration (sometimes also because they neither attempt to undertake such procedures, “discouraged as they are by their scant knowledge of the law and by a conviction that immigrants are in any case denied access to skilled jobs” (ISMU 2010b, p. 3); insufficient knowledge of financial instruments or of the investment solutions available in Italy and in the Philippines; lack of knowledge of the laws that regulate the access to Italian citizenship.

The needs developed during their stay in Italy, together with the knowledge of some representative institutions, have however stimulated the desire for integration and social participation. The demands from migrants to be allowed to participate more fully have represented in many cases a factor of increasing social awareness (CODRES, 2000) as in the case of M. (female, 56, Philippines).

Like the majority of immigrants in Italy (CODRES, 2000), even the Filipinos have had very little experience of community life and associations in their country of origin. Most frequently, Filipinas participate in associations related to religion, which have not enabled real processes of awareness and empowerment of individuals since most decisions are made by priests.

My employer has educated me, because at the beginning they took me to see things, I was exposed to your culture, they made me see the monuments. Instead my co-nationals they do not even know what it is Superga [NB a hill nearby Turin]. This is because employers treat them only as workers, they are not interested in what they think and live their employees. Since we are not used to associations, because everything there [in the Philippines] is around the church, the priest, who is as a mayor, a judge ... But here it is different in Italy. She [the employer] encouraged me and so I talked with other friends and we created the association (...) We have no voice.

(M., female, 56, Philippines)

²⁹ This over-representation of Filipinas in the sector is probably due to the strong feminization and dynamism of this national group, of which 72 per cent are women with a very high level of labour market participation (87 per cent) (ISTAT, 2009).

Box B. The experience of the Associazione Culturale Filipina del Piemonte (Filipino Cultural Association of Piedmont – ACFIL)

ACFIL seems to insist on preserving the culture of origin and helping each other in the more difficult stages of migration or in emergency situations, even if the community reveals needs which go well beyond those of meeting each other (ISMU, 2010a).

Until now, efforts of the association have been mainly philanthropic activities and aid intervention in emergency situations. These are for the most part actions designed to temporarily alleviate conditions of difficulty and hardship that threaten to resurface should the actors and institutions of the territories involved lack the will and capacity to provide a definitive solution to situations of need or to consign them to the care of local institutions.

M.'s goal is that the association can become the instrument for a more complete integration of the Filipino community into Italian society by action directed towards individual empowerment; creating awareness among their members; supporting each other psychologically; "coming out" about legal status so domestic workers can begin to feel less isolated and divided from others; and having the dignity and value of their work recognized for and by themselves, employers and the wider Italian society.

But not all Filipinos are informed, information, preparation is missing. I wish that my co-nationals have dignity, courage, that they don't hide. They continue to work, they do not have the courage to defend their rights. But this is the problem of our culture. Why we, Filipinos, never appear in news? But then if everything explodes? Depression, mentally unbalanced... For all these needs, our association has been organizing psychological support. For example, for the families, we have called a psychologist. At the first meeting there were six families, then only four. Because they do not want to "wash their clothes in the square". We don't have voice. I have tried to change our figure, our social image.

(M., female, 56, Philippines)

In addition to M.'s experience, there are other cases in which increasing awareness of rights gives rise to a mission. These migrant domestic workers in fact want to put their experience to the service of others through intercultural associations already active in the field, as in A.'s case mentioned above, or E. (female, 34, Peru), who works with an intercultural association gathering Italian and foreign women in Turin.

I did voluntary work for a while ... then I said "I have to do something because it is not right to be treated in that way ..." and I came here (in Alma) ... inside of me I was so willing to fight for the rights.

(E., female, 34, Peru)

In many cases, intercultural associations offer psychological assistance to migrant domestic workers as well as professional courses that help to raise awareness of rights. One of the intercultural associations contacted during our fieldwork reported on the existence of a self-help group created by family assistants working in Turin and hosted in their offices. For more than four years, the group meets once a month for an update on technical issues related to domestic work. The group also provides an opportunity to exchange experiences, especially the more painful ones, for which they seek possible solutions or mediation strategies together.

Here I deal with awareness-raising, training and orientation for women, because sometimes it depends a lot on how to do the work because sometimes this job requires skills that are not always aware of being able to give and I do this with women, we revise the experiences, the difficulties that they have encountered.

(E., female, 34, Peru)

An important point highlighted by all the domestic workers and family assistants who are working for the defence of the rights of domestic workers and the improvement of working conditions is the advocacy work that needs to be done with families and with employers.

Of course, some courses may be helpful. (...) But I think these courses should be made also for families, we need to create a joint system, because if I do something also the family has to know and also to agree.

(O., female, 33, Romania)

For the families, when they arrive, we explain the rights, we try to raise awareness among them about the people who they hire, because however the effect is always on the elderly ... and in the end if I'm treated badly by a person then I do not even really want to take care of her or him and if I do so I do it in the wrong way ... so I try to communicate this thing.

(E., female, 34, Peru)

One of the stakeholders consulted at the local level reports that a change of certain types of association is observed in recent years: some openly declared their mission as that of creating a link between families and workers in the care sector, particularly among Filipinas, Peruvians and Romanians. The role that these leaders hold in the domestic sector, through their associations, is to facilitate a real mediation between employees and families, not only in matching labour supply and demand, but also spreading information about rights and procedures, or providing answers to emerging problems. In this sense, they fill that knowledge and protection gap that apparently other institutions are unable to face (Carchedi, 2000).

A last important point that stakeholders and migrant domestic workers report as a key issue to address is that of the image of domestic workers and family assistants. This is, in fact, of a crucial symbolic importance. After years of deep symbolic degradation of this form of work, it is becoming increasingly urgent to raise awareness among families and the whole Italian society about the value, dignity and usefulness of domestic and care work.

I work hard on this, raise awareness among families, saying that those who go to them to clean the house they are people too, so if they were treated in an appropriate manner it would be better for both the employer and the employee.

(E., female, 34, Peru)

3.5 Outside the domestic sector: Experiences and perspectives of exit from the domestic work

Although our data do not allow us to draw strong conclusions about the real chances and experiences of exit from the domestic sector, in this section we want to raise some considerations on the effects of segregation within the sector, on the episodes of exit from the care sector that some of our respondents have experienced, and on the future perspectives of permanence in (or exit from) domestic work.

As argued, the receiving society affects the processes of migrants' integration into the labour market in an institutional way, through admission and labour market policies, but it also acts in a more informal way, through the production of stereotypes about national groups, on their skills and their employment opportunities (Fullin and Vercelloni, 2009, p. 429). As O. (female, 33, Romania) states, occupational segregation of migrant women into domestic work in Italy is strongly linked to widespread stereotypes of Italians based on the belief that the family assistant job is preferred by migrants and that (foreign) women are particularly suitable for domestic work, regardless of their legal status, educational or socio-economic background.

The access into European Union has not improved the living conditions of Romanians in this area. There is a prejudice according to which you always and only find "Romanian" kind of jobs here in Italy. If you are highly qualified it's easier, as it happened to my sister, who has found a place in a design firm because they were looking for someone to hire there, they needed her.

(O., female, 33, Romania)

Stereotypes and networks substantially contribute to ensure the functioning of the market, matching supply and demand in an efficient and fast way; however, they do so at the high price of strong occupational segregation. According to Fullin et al. (2009), the transition from domestic work to other occupations affects around 14 per cent of the workers.

Networks promote segregation of migrant women in domestic work, who are only able to find employment opportunities, circulate the information, and structure their own expectations *within* the domestic sector (Fullin and Vercelloni, 2009, p. 427).

Labelling and stereotyping mechanisms contribute to structure the opportunities that arise in the labour market (Ambrosini, 2005), through the behaviour of employers – in this case families – and through the action of all those institutions which are aimed at facilitating the job-matching processes. The latter, in fact, often unintentionally help to perpetuate stereotypes and to channel migrants towards employment opportunities that are socially considered suitable for them (Ambrosini, 2003; Andall, 2004; Scrinzi, 2004).

The process of adapting to the expectations and the opportunities shaped by the labour market emerges quite clearly from the stories of some respondents, who knew even before leaving their origin country about the opportunities of finding a job in the domestic sector; some of them thought it would have been a transitional occupation, and that they would have been able to integrate better jobs later on (Fullin and Vercelloni, 2009).

On the other hand, the way out from domestic work is much more common for men. Comparing the first work obtained in Italy with the latest at the time of the interview, a study revealed that very few men remain confined to personal live-in assistance (less than 15 per cent). The proportion of those who persist in hourly domestic work is much higher (almost 43 per cent) since this work is perceived as relatively more acceptable, especially for immigrants from some Asian countries (Fullin et al., 2009).

Finally, work trajectories are strongly influenced by the first job held in Italy. The probability of carrying out other activities is, however, much higher (23.1 per cent) for those women who have started their career paths outside of the domestic sector and then moved only temporarily in the area of personal assistance (Fullin et al., 2009).

We found a symmetrical trend in our research: women with early experiences in the domestic sector, who subsequently worked outside of it, who later on returned to domestic work. S. (female, 32, Romania), after several experiences as a domestic worker, had trained as a beautician, got a job in a factory and afterwards, due to the economic crisis, returned to domestic work, joining the OSS course.

In general, however, many interviewees expressed their will to remain in domestic work, of which they know the functioning, and appreciate the values of human contact.

I cannot access another job because there is nothing and moreover I got used to this job. If they say factory, maybe I cannot accept. With the crisis you never know, fifteen days and then ... This job is more secure, if the patient dies, then you find another one. Because if you're good, they recommend you to others. If not, then you find a job back in Peru and goodbye.

(A., male, 52, Peru)

In Morocco I have always heard that there is this opportunity to come and do this job, here in Italy. And when I came here, I found that this was the best thing I could do. [...] I like it. I cannot imagine another job.

(R., female, 43, Morocco)

I always see myself in this area of care, however, because even if it is hard work, it gives you so many things ... to be in contact with people gives you a lot ... I believe in these things ... I see myself always working assisting people, with a job involving human contact anyway.

(E., female, 34, Peru)

Conclusion

As we have repeatedly underlined throughout this report, during the last two decades migrant domestic workers have progressively become one of the major pillars of the Italian welfare system, especially in the field of elderly care (Sciortino, 2013). Nevertheless, these developments are far from being unproblematic and the insertion of migrant women into the domestic work sector often negatively affects their socio-economic integration. This sector of the labour market still remains among the ones characterized by poorer working conditions, weaker recognition of labour rights and lower levels of social security safeguards: total or partial irregularity of employment concerns around half of the employees in the sector; wage levels remain low overall; domestic employees enjoy a lower level of protection against unemployment, maternity, professional injuries or disability; and often suffer from social isolation, especially in the case of live-in employment. The growth of this key economic sector has thus been possible only at the cost of keeping labour and social security standards in the sector at a poor level, and the progressive *ethnicization* of the workforce has been one of the preconditions that has made this possible.

In particular, three key critical elements have emerged from the research that we have presented here.

First, the role of ineffective and exceedingly rigid immigration policies implemented since the late 1990s. The absence of formal job matching mechanisms, combined with the principle of nominal hiring from abroad which labour admissions rest on and with burdensome administrative practices, has made an initial period of irregular stay an almost unavoidable step in the individual migration trajectory of most migrant workers, not only of domestic workers. As it has plainly emerged also in the interviews carried out during our fieldwork, informal networks of friends, relatives or religious organizations are typically the most effective job search tools, especially for migrant workers and even more so for migrant domestic workers. However, these mechanisms can hardly be combined with the employer-driven mechanism managing admission for labour purposes in Italy, particularly in what concerns labour demand in the domestic sector: a prior personal encounter and trust relationship are key elements in the job matching processes and they are both hardly attainable if the prospective worker is expected to stay in her country of origin. Moreover, necessary paperwork and long waiting time for administrative proceedings of work permit applications or the misuse of official quotas as *ex post* regularization tools create strong incentives for bypassing official procedures and entering the country (and the labour market) in an irregular way. As a result, almost all of our respondents have experienced an initial phase, of variable duration, of irregular stay. Irregularity of stay and of employment in the early stages of the migration path drives many domestic workers into the most problematic segment of the labour market for domestic work, namely live-in work, where they are particularly vulnerable and prone to exploitation and social isolation. Beside, even after attaining a regular status, migrant (domestic) workers still find themselves in a vulnerable position due to the close linkage between regular stay and employment. Since the loss of their job may throw them back into irregularity, many migrant workers are more willing to accept low-paid jobs and to bear exploitative working conditions. Our interviews have provided a number of confirmations of this.

Secondly, the vulnerability of migrant domestic workers related to their immigration status is matched with, but certainly not alleviated by, similar vulnerability of their employers. The (irregular) employment of migrant domestic workers to care for dependent elderly or disabled people is often the only possible option for many households and families in the low-middle strata of Italian society: indeed, in most cases alternative solutions – such as residential care, domiciliary care services provided by local authorities or private agencies,

or informal care provided by family members (typically women exiting the labour market) – are seldom feasible options. However, many families employing family assistants still find great difficulties in bearing the full costs of a regular job contract or simply in managing all the necessary paperwork and administrative practices related to it. In some cases, employers themselves are scarcely aware of their duties towards their employees and tend to consider them more as a substitute for family members than as proper workers. Although employers were not a primary target of this research, most of the key stakeholders interviewed during our fieldwork have constantly stressed this double weakness of both workers and employers in the domestic work sector and the problems arising from it when both parts are left alone in facing the difficulties they meet: primarily undeclared or irregular employment or lack of compliance with labour regulations. The current economic crisis and its negative effects on public budgets is further deteriorating this already discouraging situation: according to key stakeholders at local level, the drastic cuts imposed to social policy funds are leaving many households without any form of monetary support and this is affecting households already hit by hard economic problems. As a consequence of these developments, they are elaborating new coping strategies: undeclared employment is on the rise, a reduction of working hours for family assistants or a return to traditional informal care provided by family members is observed.

The consideration of the double weakness of domestic workers and their employers leads to the third critical point highlighted through this research: the highly multifunctional profile of migrant domestic workers. Clearly, a sharp distinction between care work and domestic work is quite hard to ascertain, both in conceptual and normative terms: in the Italian case, for most domestic workers assisting an elderly person with basic health and personal care usually entails also taking care of the environment where the assisted person lives and carrying out all related everyday activities (i.e. shopping, cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, ironing, etc.). The actual content of the work carried out within private households is usually the outcome of constant negotiation (and renegotiation) between employers and workers, which is obviously influenced by the relative respective power positions. However, this often results in an excessive workload for many domestic workers, especially those assisting the elderly in live-in situations. At the same time, most employers cannot afford to employ different professional figures within the same household. A trade-off emerges between multitasking and professionalization of domestic workers: assistance to dependent elderly people, often suffering from serious physical and neurological problems, usually requires specific technical and social skills, often acquired both through experience and *ad hoc* professional training. However, it is hard to acquire specific professional skills when family assistants are expected to perform any kind of basic everyday activity. Moreover, professionalization of family assistants would imply a rise in their labour costs, which would be difficult to bear for most of the households employing them.

Indeed, a deeper look at these three key nodes contributes in drawing attention to the interconnection between immigration, welfare and labour regimes in the Italian context: immigration policies as implemented to date have put migrant domestic workers in a weak position related to the precariousness of their status, while providing a vast labour supply to fill existing shortages in the sector; inadequate welfare policies, especially in the field of long-term care, have made the recourse to domestic services provided by migrant workers the only viable solution for a wide number of households in order to cope with the deficiencies of the Italian familialistic welfare regime; the weaker labour and social security standards imposed by labour law in the domestic work sector, matched with the scarce role of labour inspection and the inadequate recognition and enhancement of professional skills in domestic work, contribute to explain the continuing viability of the “domestic worker solution”.

At first, this “domestic worker solution” may appear as a win-win-win solution: many migrant workers are able to secure jobs in a high demand sector, Italian households can

meet their huge care needs at a relatively low price, and the Italian State may save a tremendous amount of public resources that would be otherwise needed in order to provide alternative solutions reforming the welfare state. Nevertheless, as has been argued elsewhere (Pastore, Salis and Villosio, 2012), this “low-cost” solution implies very poor working conditions for a great number of migrant women and negatively affects their socio-economic integration. Furthermore, it is barely sustainable in the long run and needs to be thoroughly questioned. The steady process of population ageing will continue and exponentially increase care needs. At the same time, a considerable number of migrant workers, including domestic workers, will soon become potential welfare users without meeting the established criteria in terms of social contributions. Furthermore, the expectation of continuing inflows from abroad of a malleable and abundant workforce for the domestic sector is far from being certain.

Therefore, as many of the stakeholders consulted have stressed, there is an urgent need to bring public institutions back into the management and provision of long-term care services and more generally to design social policies that could help Italian households to cope with their care needs. This should be done through an integrated approach that, on the one hand, aims at harmonizing the multilevel governance of social and employment policies affecting domestic work across the central, regional and municipal authorities; on the other hand, there should be a careful consideration of the intersections of care, employment and migration policies, and of how these affect patterns of labour market integration and living conditions of domestic workers in Italy. Even though a discussion of structural and comprehensive reforms of the immigration, welfare and labour regimes goes beyond the scope of this report, it is possible to identify examples of policy measures that could provide a solution to some of the more problematic issues emerging from this research. In particular, a careful use of the fiscal leverage could contribute to reduce the burden of labour costs for a number of households employing domestic workers while at the same time reducing the rate of undeclared employment in the sector, thus reducing the double weakness of both domestic workers and employers. As some of the stakeholders interviewed have claimed (in particular trade unions representatives), a reduction of social contributions paid by employers of domestic workers, subsidized through the general taxation (so called “*fiscalizzazione degli oneri contributivi*”) would greatly help to reduce underground employment in the domestic work and care sector. An in-depth reform of the attendance allowance (see section 1.3), the main cash-for-care scheme implemented in Italy, is urgently needed: a re-design of this scheme towards a more efficient distribution of monetary benefits, conditional on means-testing and needs-testing controls (standardized at national level), as well as proof of use of professional care services, would certainly contribute to rationalize the use of scarce resources, at the same time addressing undeclared employment of domestic and care workers. Comprehensive policy measures based on the pilot experiences recently developed at local or regional level (see section 1.3 above) (i.e. cash-for-care schemes, service desks, registers and training courses) should be enhanced, strengthened and structured on a more permanent basis. Professionalization of domestic workers and family assistants, through professional training and recognition of credentials, should be better matched with services and monetary transfers supporting employing households in managing the employment relationship and bearing the increased labour costs. On the employers’ side, tutoring and information services for households willing to employ domestic workers could indirectly contribute to enhance working conditions and to protect the rights of migrant domestic workers. On the workers’ side, self-organizing processes of domestic workers allowing to raise awareness and enhance knowledge of labour and social rights should be supported and accompanied; trade unions could have a primary role in these processes. Looking at the role of immigration policies, an enhanced flexibility of admission mechanisms for labour purposes could contribute to reduce informality of job-matching mechanisms in the labour market of domestic services. In particular, opening up new legal avenues for the admission of job-seekers, carefully counterbalanced by effective monitoring mechanisms, could enhance effectiveness of the matching between labour demand and supply in the domestic work sector and reduce the

space for irregular migration. Eliminating regulations impeding the redemption of paid social contributions – even in case of return of the migrant worker before the age of 65 – or strengthening bilateral cooperation on social security with sending countries could reduce existing incentives to irregular and undeclared employment.

The feasibility and viability of such policy measures and comprehensive strategies will crucially depend on the evolution of the economic situation in Italy and its effects on public budgets. However, the challenges raised by structural demographic transformations and related socio-economic processes impose a thorough re-thinking of the role of domestic work and of migrant workers in long-term care systems in Italy and, more in general, in work-life conciliation strategies of Italian households.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Relevant websites

- www.qualificare.info
- www.italialavoro.it
- www.equalaspasia.it
- www.studiocome.it
- www.anolf.cisltooscana.it
- www.venetoimmigrazione.com
- www.insiemesipuo.net
- www.badandum.it

Annex 2. Interview matrix

Trajectory	Migration	Social	Educational and professional (out DWs)	Educational and professional (in DWs)
<p>“THERE” (before leaving, preparation of departure)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circumstances of emigration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Administration: permits/visa → Channels → Authorities → With whom? • Place(s) of destination • Reasons and expectations • Problematic situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family situation before leaving • Significant others THERE [child(ren), parents, husband/wife, family ...] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Number → Age → Care-giving status → Reasons to leave behind • Support of social network/family HERE 	<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schooling, training and diploma <p>Labour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional experience 	<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schooling, training and diploma • Vocational training <p>Labour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DW within Ego's family • DW in professional sector
<p>FROM “THERE” TO “HERE” (arrival, settlement process)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circumstances of immigration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How? → With whom? → Administration: permits/visa → Contact with authorities: border control/questioning/rejection ... • Living conditions: housing, material resources, finances, health, social assistance • Security and controls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support of social network/family in Belgium/France/Italy/Spain in administration, housing, work ... • Joining associations: religious, social, school, labour, migrant ... 	<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schooling, training and diploma • Recognition of diploma <p>Labour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering the labour market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Sector → Channels for finding a job 	<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational training, on-the-job training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Promoters and organization → Facilities to access → Certificate: type and value <p>Labour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering DW

Trajectory	Migration	Social	Educational and professional (out DWs)	Educational and professional (in DWs)
<p>“HERE” (AND “THERE”) (current situation)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing administrative status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Obtaining and renewing permit/visa → Experiences: irregular ↔ regular • Changing reasons/motivation of stay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↔ Family ↔ Friends ↔ Work ↔ Study ↔ Other • Changing identity and socio-spatial self-placement • Circular migration and mobile life • Changing living conditions • Security and controls, detentions ... • Use of public services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Health system → Social benefits • Difficulties faced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing family status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Marital status → Child(ren) → Reunification of family members → Mortality HERE and THERE • Developing a social network HERE • Maintaining relationships with people THERE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Division of reproductive work THERE and HERE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job corresponding education • Working conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Formal/informal → Content, hours, breaks, payment → Contract and social security: reason → Relationship with employer → Leave and holiday modalities → Employment protection and dismissal • Motivation for accessing (and leaving) job(s) and expectations <p>Inactivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployment, parental leave, study/training, migration, illness ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Social benefits → Employment protection → Re-entering job <p>Professional and social rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration in trade union <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Function and activities → Perceived and received benefits → Advocacy of interest • Localizing social and professional rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Knowledge and awareness → Working conditions issues, respect of rights and action: legal action, denunciation, negotiation, nothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Channels for finding a job • Reasons and expectations • Type of DW job(s) and work organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Caring/cleaning → Live-in/live-out → Transportation → Full-time/part-time/mix: reasons → On-the-side work: which jobs? • Working conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Formal/informal → Content, hours, breaks, payment → Contract and social security: reason → Relationships employer/family/DWs → Leave and holiday modalities → Employment protection and dismissal • Professional mobility in DW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Changing job(s) → Improvement in working conditions → Promotion within DW hierarchy → Sectorial changes: conditions, demand • Positive and negative dimensions of DW

Trajectory	Migration	Social	Educational and professional (out DWs)	Educational and professional (in DWs)
"HERE" OR "THERE" (future)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspirations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Migrating to other destinations → Returning → Staying • Applying for nationality 	Ego's future representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking for a job outside DW or staying in DW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Motivation • Looking for formal position or staying in informal sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Motivation • Educational and professional aspiration 	

Annex 3. Age/event grid

Life-course grid

CODE | | | | | | | |

First name: _____

Duration	Years	Migration (mobility, legal status, ...)	Family and network	Employment-training in domestic work sector	Employment-training in other domains, including periods of unemployment or inactivity
13	1999				
12	2000				
11	2001				
10	2002				
9	2003				
8	2004				
7	2005				
6	2006				
5	2007				
4	2008				
3	2009				
2	2010				
1	2011				
0	2012				

Annex 4. Respondent's current situation sheet

Date of the interview: _____ Interviewer's name: _____

Professional position (ego)

	Written contract		No written contract		Other
	Permanent	Fixed-term	Oral contract	No contract	

Domestic work

Private household
 Service vouchers
 Self-employed/independent
 Other

Other job

Other job

Student

Socio-demographic profile

Age:	City of residence:
Nationality:	Administrative migration status:
Country of origin:	Date of entry into Italy:
Member of social association:	Member of trade union:

Partner

If so
 Married
 Other
 Professional situation
 Schooling, diploma
 Living area (main)

Children

If so

Birth date	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
Schooling, diploma or professional situation	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
Living area (main)	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.

Relatives

	Mother	Father	Siblings
Living area (main)			
Professional situation			
Schooling, diploma			