

# Population Review

Volume 52, Number 1, 2013

Type: Article pp.43-61

## Family and Welfare State Reorientation in Spain and Inertia in Italy from a European Perspective

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### Abstract

This article departs from previous comparative research on Spanish and Italian families and family policies, which focused on their similarities. Here the main thesis affirms that in the last two decades Spain has taken a new path away from the family/kinship model and towards a dual-earner family model. Different cohorts of Italians and Spaniards are compared with respect to their home-leaving behaviour, gender attitudes and their paid and unpaid work patterns. Italian inertia and Spanish changes are interpreted within the context of policies directed at small children, youth, conciliation policies and the frail elderly in order to evidence both countries divergences not only in family patterns but also in family policies. Spain's two-sided change towards a dual-earner family model is further valued in relation to the cases of France and Sweden and to the current economic crisis.

### Keywords

Family, employment, family policies, social care services, Spain, Italy, Southern Europe

*Note:* This paper is part of Special Collection 4, which can be found here:

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## Introduction

Families in Italy and Spain have changed enormously over the past decades as a result of great cultural and socio-economic changes. Some decades ago, in both countries it was difficult to imagine women leading governments, fathers changing nappies and cooking, and it seemed unlikely that there would be substantial numbers of employed mothers, homosexual marriages, and voluntarily single mothers. These family changes have come with changes in social policies, such as the increase in childcare services, benefits for young people, new benefits for the frail elderly and new conciliation measures. We will show that families and social policies have changed significantly in Spain, but less so in Italy. The evolution of Italian and Spanish societies seems to have followed divergent paths.

From a theoretical perspective the family and the welfare state are two crucial institutions that have to be analysed together. People's social welfare depends upon different institutions, mainly upon the family, the market, and public policies. In welfare state research the interplay of these welfare-providing institutions in Italy and Spain has been described as distinct from other societies in western and northern Europe. As far as comparative welfare regime studies are concerned, Esping-Andersen's (1999) seminal work regards southern countries as the more 'family-oriented' or 'familialistic' countries. According to this author, south European countries belong to the Conservative Welfare Regime in spite of important differences in the degree of the role of state. However, unlike other countries belonging to Continental Welfare Regimes (i.e. France, Austria and Germany), in southern European countries "familism" has not translated into State support for families through social policies (Leitner 2003). The idea that southern countries are not merely rudimentary but that they compose a distinctive cluster with its own characteristics and experiences has been widely developed by Ferrera (1996), and continued by García and Karakatsanis (2006) and Moreno (2006). Naldini (2003) focuses on the interplay between family and welfare state in Spain and Italy and concludes that, despite historic differences in the evolution of both societies, both can be conceptualised as cases of a family/kinship solidarity model. In these two historical cases the welfare state stretches the male breadwinner family model in order to include as dependent family members to be covered by social security benefits not only spouse and children but also other relatives. In other words, unlike the male breadwinner model and the dual-earner family model, social rights neither refer to the individual nor the nuclear family but stretch the latter to include kin. In addition, in the family/kinship solidarity model the gender division of work is asymmetrical and women's care work is essential for the provision of welfare within kinship. As a matter of fact, the State provides few care services and poor family subsidies.

The question of this article is to assess empirically if the family/kinship solidarity model has changed in the two last decades in Italy and Spain in a way that nowadays only Italy can be considered as sticking to this model, while Spain is moving towards a dual-earner family model. There are two dimensions of the welfare state-family configuration that have to be addressed: first, the division between the State and the family, and second the division within the family. The latter includes care and financial support across generations, and the distribution of paid and unpaid work between genders. Both dimensions are interrelated, but for heuristic reasons they will be described separately in this article, which is structured as follows: in the first part, we ask if the intergenerational exchanges and solidarities that are assumed by the family/kinship solidarity model have changed in the last decade. In the second part, we focus on the division of work between genders that is observed and that is assumed by the welfare state and how this has

changed. Both analytic dimensions shield the answer to our question about the departure of Spain from the family/kinship model, at least until the economic and financial crisis began. Even if the main focus is on the comparative evolution of Italy and Spain, a broader comparative perspective has been taken, whenever possible, in order to assess how far Spain is moving towards a dual-earner family model<sup>1</sup>. For this purpose we compare both countries with France and Sweden, which are countries with high rates of dual-earner families and generous policies towards family, in particular, towards care support and work-life conciliation policies. We conclude assessing, as far as possible, how the consequences of the crisis will impact on the bifurcation of the Spanish and Italian path and lead back to a uniform model.

### **Welfare states' policies towards intergenerational care and support**

Despite profound changes, families in Italy and Spain continue to show very strong intergenerational ties and solidarity within kinship. Attitudes towards strong family obligations continue to be much diffused, family members of different generations live longer together than anywhere else in Europe, and care of dependent children and the elderly is to a great extent done by kin (León and Migliavacca 2013). In the following sections, some indicators on intergenerational support are presented and contrasted with recent developments in the area of policies for youth and for the frail elderly.<sup>2</sup>

Living in the parental home in Italy and Spain has to be seen as the main way of transferring resources from parents to their children, whereas in other countries parents support their independent children more often through economic transferences (Albertini, Kohli, and Vogel 2007). The percentage of young people aged 25 to 29 living at home in 2000 reached 72 percent in Spain and 73 percent in Italy (Eurostat 2002). This did not substantially change afterwards in Italy (Istat 2008: 25), but it has experienced a small reduction in the Spanish case, in particular for older youth aged 25 to 34, as can be observed in Figure 1.<sup>3</sup> Late home-leaving can be related to socio-economic causes, to public policy choices and to cultural factors. From a socio-economic perspective, it has been shown empirically that difficulties in finding a stable full-time job and in achieving a sufficiently high income and some savings, which would facilitate access to an independent dwelling, in a context of limited public policies directed at youth independence and of the prevalence of housing markets and policies oriented towards home-ownership is related to late home leaving (Jurado-Guerrero 2001; Bertolini 2011). The difficult and long road to financial independence among the young explains the support parents give their children for first-time home purchase (Mencarini and Tanturri 2006; Poggio 2008). From a larger comparative perspective, the Spanish change might be labelled as small, due to the distance of the Spanish dependency rate from other countries, such as France and Sweden.

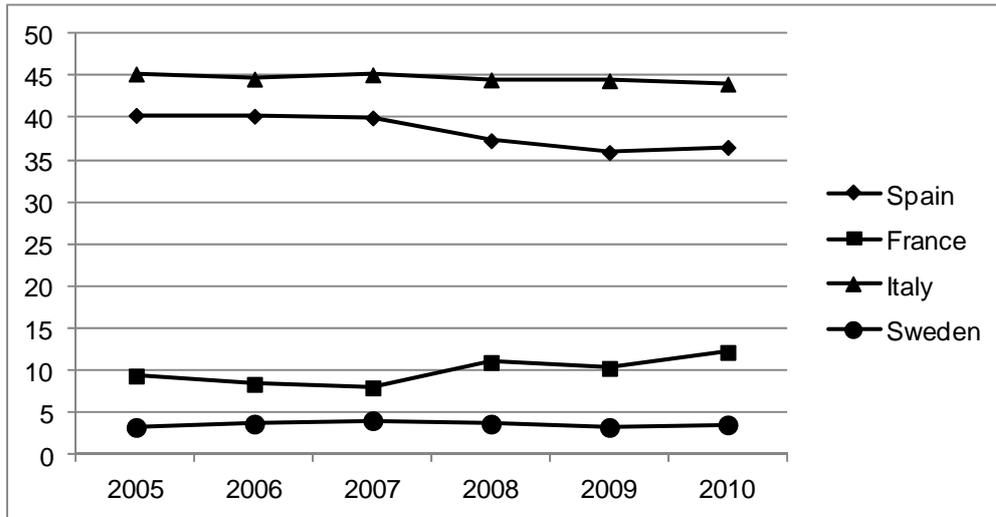
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<sup>1</sup> We have chosen to take a dual-earner family model as reference point, instead of a one-and-half-earner or a two-half-earner family model, because in Italy and Spain female employment is mainly full-time employment (OECD 2011).

<sup>2</sup> A systematic description of public policies in the form of scholarships and housing benefits promoting young people's economic and residential independence is not possible in this short space, so we focus only on social policies where important innovations have taken place.

<sup>3</sup> In Spain the reduction may be partly due to the increase of immigrants in these age groups who display different co-residence behaviour, however since 1999 a reduction in the dependency rate is also observed among the Spanish-born youth (Requena 2006).

**Fig. 1 Share of young adults aged 25-34 living with their parents, 2005-2010**



Source: Eurostat online, December 2011, data origin is EU-SILC, ilc\_lvps08.

But it has to be remarked that the decrease of the dependency rate in Spain may be partly related to the introduction of some new public benefits for youth. Tax deductions for renting a flat for youth have been implemented at national and regional levels since the early 2000s (CJE 2007) and in 2008 a national cash-benefit for housing was implemented (*Renta Básica de Emancipación*). In 2010, this national means-tested cash-benefit of €210 per month to help pay rent had been received by 252,390 young people aged 22 to 29 (Ministerio de Vivienda 2010). In parallel, the rate of rented households where the person responsible for the dwelling is aged 16 to 29 increased from 22% in 1999 to 32% in 2004 and 2009<sup>4</sup>. Thus, it can be concluded that in Spain there has been a small shift in public policies directed at youth economic independence, since new public benefits for housing have been created. It might be argued that these new public benefits are small in economic value, which compared to policies in other countries like France is right. However, the importance of these new policies lies in the fact that national and regional political actors have recognized young people's difficulties in attaining independence from their parents and have established policies to facilitate young people's leaving home. This means in fact a shift in the assumption of the State's responsibility towards young people's welfare. The same cannot be said for Italy where there have been no new public policies for supporting the income of young people without a job and very scant programmes supporting independent housing for youth (Barzi, Menon, and Perali 2011).

In return, the support youth receive from their parents gives rise to strong intergenerational moral obligations. In fact, most people in Italy and Spain are willing to engage in long-term care of their elderly (Albertini, Kohli, and Vogel 2007). The readiness to care for one's dependent parents has not been a disincentive for a reorientation of public support for the elderly in Spain, while this is not the case in Italy. Until recently, institutional care and home help services for the elderly were available in Spain and in Italy only to those who had no family members able to provide for them (Naldini 2003). In Italy, some benefits are granted under invalidity and

<sup>4</sup> Own elaboration with data from European Community Household Panel, 1999, and EU-SILC 2004 and 2009 (INEbase online, Nivel, Calidad y Condiciones de Vida, 2011).

incapacity insurance or by the non-contributory social welfare system. Despite debates and policy proposals on the frail elderly that started in Italy in the 90s, the care of the frail elderly has remained mainly a family matter (Naldini and Saraceno 2008). From a legislative point of view Italy shows a unique “legislative inertia” in this sector (Pavolini and Ranci 2008).

As a consequence, the supply of care services for the frail elderly remains very limited. According to recent data (Istat 2010b), referring to 2006, less than 2 percent of the elderly population is in a residential care service, ranging between 3 percent in the north of Italy and less than 2 percent in the south (Da Roit and Naldini 2010). This limited development of institutional care is not offset by social care and home care services. In 2006 social care services reached on average less than 2 percent of the elderly population. In the regions in which the coverage rate was higher, it reached around 4% of the population, and the number of hours in the week remains very limited (Da Roit and Castagnaro 2004), as shown by the low level of expenditure per user (on average €1,650 per year) (Istat 2009). Health care domiciliary services may have a wider coverage, but tend to be restricted to specific health tasks. The only national policy in this field is the ‘attendance allowance’ (*indennità di accompagnamento*). This measure, introduced in 1980 for disabled people who are certified as totally disabled on the basis of medical assessment and who are in need of constant care, later extended to older people, is a flat-rate cash transfer granted to all citizens. The benefit, a monthly payment of €472 in 2009, is not means tested. In fact, this scheme is the most important public programme in favour of older dependent people: it reaches around 10% of old people over 65 years old (Micheli and Rosina 2008). At a local level, a few regions and, within them, a few municipalities or Health Care Departments (ASL) have introduced a care allowance. The care allowance, where it exists, is provided by local welfare departments on the basis of a means test and highly selective criteria, which are strongly heterogeneous across municipalities (Naldini and Saraceno 2008). It can be paid either directly to the disabled person or to the caregiver. Another way to support the care of older people is the 3-days-per-month family leave, which was introduced in 2000. This family leave can be taken in case of a relative who is totally disabled but it is not paid.

Contrary to Italy, Spain has gone through an important reform by introducing a law instituting a new public and universal social scheme for dependent people in need of care (*SAAD*<sup>5</sup>). Before this law, cash-benefits for dependent people were linked to the invalidity pension for the “greatly disabled”, i.e. for people under age 65, and for over age 65 without entitlement to a social security pension. At a local level, municipalities have been offering home services, telecare, day care services, short-term out-times for carers and nursing homes for the elderly, but these services were very rare until the 1990s. The great institutional innovation did not happen until 2006 when the *Law on the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Care of Those in Dependent Situations* (39/2006) was passed.

The law foresees four types of benefits with different priorities: 1. access to public or publicly subsidised services as first priority (telecare, part-time care, nursing home), 2. cash-benefits for paying a private service, 3. cash-benefits for personal assistance for very dependent people only in exceptional cases, and 4. cash-benefits for care provided within the family context, also as an exception. In the latter case the person who cares has to be or become insured within the national social security system. The SAAD is tax financed, where the central administration

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<sup>5</sup> *Sistema para la Autonomía y Atención a la Dependencia.*

finances a basic coverage, Autonomous Communities have to pay a similar amount and the rest is a co-payment by the users according to their income and patrimony. Maximum amounts of payment depend on the degree of dependency, which is subdivided into six categories, which should be implemented progressively from 2007 until 2015 and starting by the highest degree of dependency to the lowest. Eligibility to dependency and autonomy benefits of the SAAD is for all resident citizens independently of age. Despite the law's aim to provide mainly services and to promote the growth of professional care-workers, its implementation is favouring mainly cash-transfers to families as income-support instead of an allowance for the payment of a specific service (Sarasa 2010). However, services in kind and the cash-benefit for paying a service amounted in 2011 to 53% of the benefits, which means that half of these are directed at the use of professional services. In December 2011, 741,713 people had obtained some benefit, of which 76% were aged 65 or older (563,082 people) (IMSERSO 2011).

**Table 1 Coverage rates of elderly aged 65+ for different services, Spain 1998-2008**

Service	1998	2001	2008
Public telecare service	0.8 %	1.1 %	4.7 %
Public home help service	1.8 %	2.1 %	4.7 %
Public and private day homes	0.1 %	0.1 %	0.8 %
Public nursing homes <sup>1</sup>	1.3 %	1,3 %	2.0 %
All nursing homes	3.2 %	3.2 %	4.4 %

*Sources:* IMSERSO (2000, 2002 and 2009) *Note:* The coverage rates are calculated as number of users or places / population >65\*100. <sup>1</sup>They can also be private with public subsidies.

As can be seen in Table 1, coverage rates of the elderly aged 65 or more in different types of services for the frail elderly have increased since 1998, i.e. even before the SAAD was implemented. The most important increase was for coverage rates of public telecare and home help services. This increase in coverage rates of institutional and home services in Spain is also found by Marin et al. (2009) when comparing the mid 90s with 2006, while in Italy only a very small increase is found for home care services up to 2004 and none for institutional care. If we compare more recent figures for France, Sweden and Italy (Naldini and Saraceno 2011) with the Spanish data of Table 1, again it becomes clear that both northern countries display significantly higher rates of coverage rates in institutional care (6-7%) compared to 2% in Italy and 4% in Spain. The same applies to coverage rates of the elderly who receive home services (6%-12%) compared to 4% in Italy and 5% in Spain. Thus, in Spain, the increase in coverage rates and the creation of a new social insurance for long-term care show that assumptions about the State's responsibility in support of the elderly differ substantially with respect to Italy. To sum up, the State's assumption about its role in supporting dependent youth and the elderly has changed in the last decade in Spain more than it did in Italy. What about people's and State's assumptions about who has to perform domestic work and take care of children in both countries?

## Division of paid and unpaid work between genders and conciliation policies

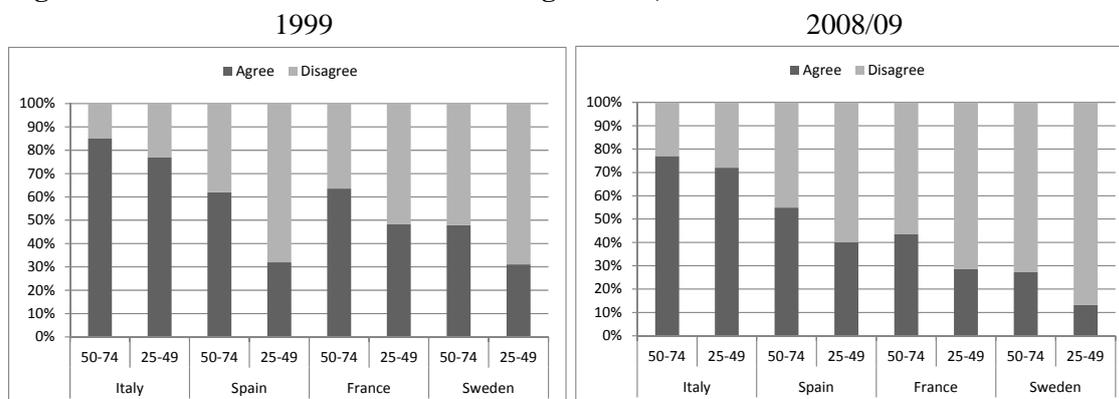
During recent decades, industrialized societies have witnessed a steady and in some countries dramatic increase in female labour market participation. Moreover, increasing the rates of women's employment has become, since the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997, the central plank of the European Employment Strategy. As a consequence, the issue of how to organize the care of young children has also entered political debates and new political measures have been taken in many European countries (Lewis 2006; Caracciolo di Torella and Masselot 2010).

### *Changes in attitudes and behaviour*

If the traditional model of family and of female occupation meant a definitive withdrawal soon after marriage or childbearing, highly educated women of the younger cohorts tend to break with this pattern. The novelty is the progressive increase in the number of women who remain permanently in the labour force, regardless of their family circumstances. This means that more women are able to consolidate their position as paid workers and, consequently, secure their economic independence in the long run. The increasing involvement of women in paid work has been offset to a very limited extent by men's increasing involvement in domestic and care work. However, the main change seems to have occurred specifically in fatherhood, with fathers spending more time with their young children and taking on part of the caring activities (Hook 2006; Mencarini and Tanturri 2009; Iglesias de Ussel et al. 2011).

When debating the issue of paid and unpaid work and its allocation by gender, one cannot ignore the issue of preferences. In other words, one can argue that the division of paid and unpaid work is not only a question of specific opportunity and constraint structures, but also an issue of preferences between men and women in relation to different cultural models of motherhood, parenthood, of proper care for children and for older people. The European Value Studies (EVS) shows that in Italy, where women's employment is lower than in Spain, the view that work for mothers is potentially harmful to child development predominates. As a matter of fact, in Italy there is more agreement on the following statement: "A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works".

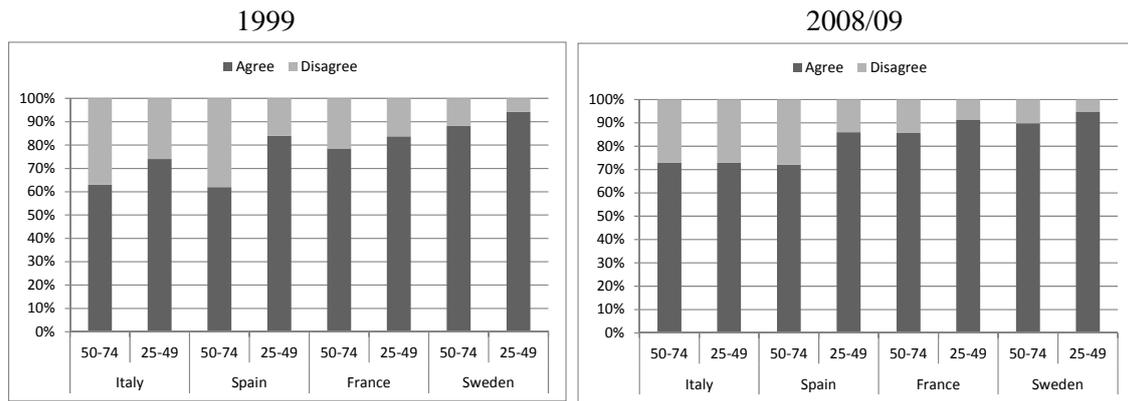
**Fig. 2 Pre-school child suffers with working mother, 1999 and 2008/09**



Source: own elaboration with EVS 1999; 2008/2009, weighted data.

Figure 2 shows that more than 2/3 Italians, both in 1999 and in 2008/2009, are most concerned about the possible impact of the work of the mother on very young children. The gap in proportions of agreement between the younger and the older cohort of Italians is very small. Differently, among Spaniards the differences among the younger and the older cohorts are very large, so that more than 60% of the former is in disagreement with the statement of a child suffering, while for the older cohort the disagreement is lower, but in any case higher than for Italians of the same cohorts. In France and Sweden disagreement has risen from 1999 to 2008/09 and, as in Spain, younger cohorts are always less concerned with a working mother than older ones.

**Fig. 3 Fathers as well suited to look after children as mothers, 1999 and 2008/09**



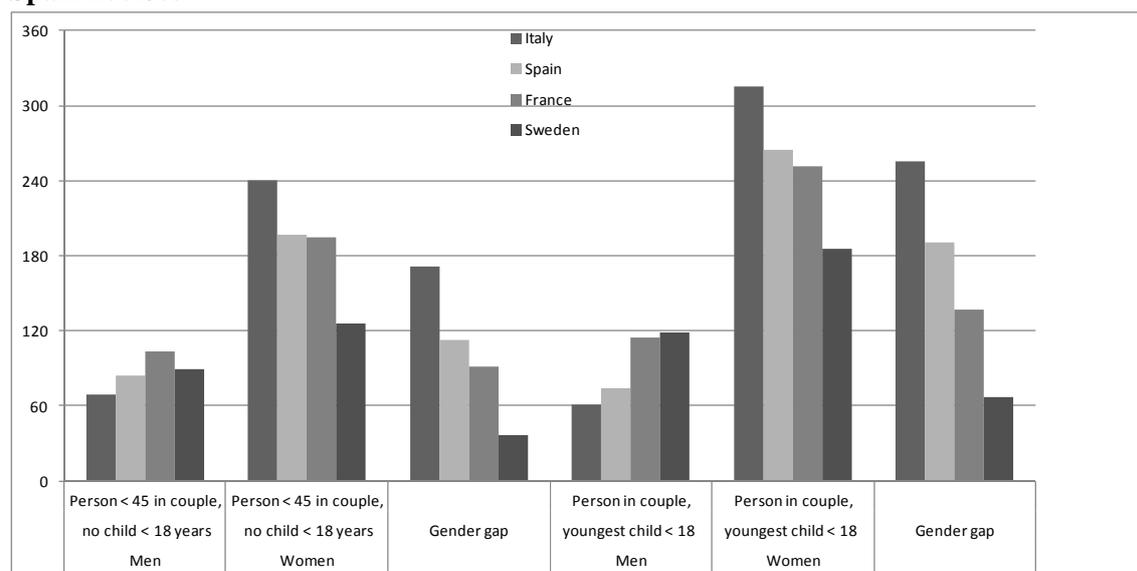
Source: own elaboration with EVS 1999; 2008/2009, weighted data.

One of the main novelties in the male use of time is the emergence of a new ideal of “paternity”. This new ideal assigns capability of care not only to the mother, but also to the father who is seen as having a new autonomous relationship of care with his or her child. Figure 3 explores the issue of new fatherhood. As in the previous table, agreement with the capacity of fathers to look after children is higher amongst Spaniards compared to Italians, and in particular among the younger Spanish cohorts, where over 80% agrees on it. In 2008/09, the younger Spanish cohort displays similar attitudes as the older French and Swedish cohorts. Thus, unlike Italians, most Spaniards, in particular the younger cohorts, state that mothers’ work is not harmful for children and fathers are able to take care of children.

In line with these cross-country differences, women’s employment rates among younger cohorts increased in Spain more than in Italy in the last decade. For twenty years Spain was approaching the corresponding French employment level until 2008, when the economic crisis stopped this evolution (for a more detailed analysis see León and Migliavacca’s article). For 2007, we find very similar proportions of couples where both adults work full time in Spain, Sweden and France: around 40% of all couples with children. Instead, the Italian proportion of two full-time-earner couples was 33%, i.e. 7 percentage points lower than in Spain (OECD Family database, LMF 2.2.A). Thus, looking at both women’s employment patterns among the younger cohorts and work-family combination patterns among families with young children, Spain is moving away from the traditional male-breadwinner couple of the family/kinship solidarity model faster than Italy. As is shown next, these diverging Italian-Spanish patterns are in accordance with a lower gender gap in the housework performed by this Spanish cohort of women and men.

The harmonised European time use surveys (HETUS) conducted in Italy and Spain in 2002/03 makes it possible to compare house and care work with diary data. The available comparative data point to the existence of a small difference in the care gap between Italy and Spain<sup>6</sup>. However, with respect to housework, differences between both countries are rather large as shown in Figure 4. The gender gap in housework is one hour larger in Italy compared to Spain, if one looks at the younger cohort of people in married or cohabiting couples. This is the result of Italian men doing less housework than Spanish men and Italian women doing more housework than their Spanish counterparts. This pattern is observed in couples with and without dependent children. A very interesting finding is also the fact that men do nearly the same amount of housework independently of the presence of dependent children, while both, Italian and Spanish women do one hour more housework when their smallest child is under age 18. All in all, it can be concluded that among the younger cohorts the gender gap in housework is smaller in Spain than in Italy. The same picture emerges from national studies in Italy, where it is shown that the increase in the time spent by men to unpaid work in the last fifteen years is due to the increase in the time devoted to child-care, whereas the time devoted to housework has remained substantially unchanged. The larger comparison reveals that the gender gap for couples with children, for the younger cohorts, is one hour smaller in France and two hours smaller in Sweden compared to Spain.

**Fig. 4 Total domestic work in mean minutes per day among younger cohorts, Italy and Spain 2002/03**



Note: Married and cohabiting couples, minutes spent on housework<sup>7</sup> as main activity.

Source: own elaboration with data from HTUS (<http://www.tus.scb.se>).

In correspondence with a lower level of involvement in housework and in childcare, fathers also tend not to take parental leave. Yet, it is not possible to know if this is due to an attribution of care-work to women or to the fact that parental leave in Spain is mainly unpaid and in Italy very

<sup>6</sup> OECD Family Database, 2011, Chart LMF2.5.A.

<sup>7</sup> This includes: food preparation, dish washing, cleaning dwelling, other household upkeep, laundry, ironing, handicraft, gardening, tending domestic animals, caring for pets, walking the dog, construction and repairs, shopping and services.

poorly paid, as shown next. It is well-established that fathers are more likely to take parental leave if it is paid at 100% of their salary.

### *Parental leave, childcare services and other reconciliation policies*

Is Spain's moving away from the family/kinship solidarity model, from the traditional gender division of work in terms of attitudes, of female employment patterns and of the gender division of housework linked to a change in public policies? This section will show to what extent the assumed family model is moving towards a dual earner model in some Spanish laws and policies, whereas this is not the case in Italy.

The evolution of the Spanish Civil Code in the last decade shows very well that extended kinship obligations persist as before, but that the assumed division of work between genders has changed with the last reform in 2005. Article 68 about rights and obligations of spouses was amended to include the following statement about spouses' duties: "In addition, they have to share domestic responsibilities and care and attention of ascendants and descendants and other dependents." Developments in parental leave and childcare services show that in Spain the central state has given priority to the enlargement and payment of services, while leaving parental leave unpaid. In Spain parental leave is characterized by being very generous in terms of duration but not in economic terms. There are two types of leaves, unpaid full-time parental leave up to age 3 of the child, and a right to working hours' reduction up to age 8 of the child (unpaid part-time parental leave). There have been only two significant changes in the last years. First, since 2000 some regions have implemented flat-rate benefits in order to stimulate the low take-up rates of full-time parental leave. Five regions provide allowances, which oscillated in 2007 between €200 per month in the Basque Country -€250 for fathers- and €560 per month in Castilla y León for low income families. Second, in 2007 the Law on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men increased social security benefits linked to parental leave from 1 to 2 years. During leave and up to two years, the State pays the worker's and employer's social security contribution to old-age pension, etc. Yet, the general unpaid character of parental leaves limits the use of such measures, since male breadwinners and parents who need two salaries are reluctant to take unpaid leave. If one looks at employed mothers at first childbirth and whose children were born in 2006, it can be observed that over the period 2006-2008 10.9% took a reduction in working hours (part-time parental leave), 7.2% took full-time parental leave and 2.7% used both resources (Lapuerta 2012). Yet in 2007, a second significant change happened when Spain introduced a 15-day fully-paid paternity leave, whose take up rate has fluctuated around 80% during the last years. Together with the civil code reform, these are two signs of a change in the family model that is assumed by the state.

In Italy parental leave since 2000 (law 53/2000) has been flexible in time, since it can be used within the first 8 years after the childbirth. It is an individual right and not a family right; as a matter of fact, each parent can take it individually for six months for a maximum in the couple of 10 months. Since parental leave in Italy contains a sort of quota for the father of one month, it could reach the maximum of 11 months for the couple if the father takes at least 3 months. Unlike the Spanish parental leave scheme, in Italy no statutory paternity leave exists, although a "daddy quota" has been implemented. However, the main limit of the Italian scheme is the replacement rate which is only 30% of the wage for a maximum of 6 months and it is paid only if it is taken within 3 years from the childbirth. Although the new law introduces a "use or lose"

quota for the father, it didn't change father take up rates. According to recent national data based on the Italian Labour Force survey (Istat 2011), among working parents having a child under 8 years old, 45.3% of mothers and 6.9% of fathers have taken up parental leave at least once. Among those who have taken it up, around 70% of mothers compared to 20% of fathers used it for a period of at least a month. The same survey shows that the number of parents who do not use parental leave is very high and among them respectively 25% of interviewed mothers and 20% of interviewed fathers declared the reason is that they were not entitled.

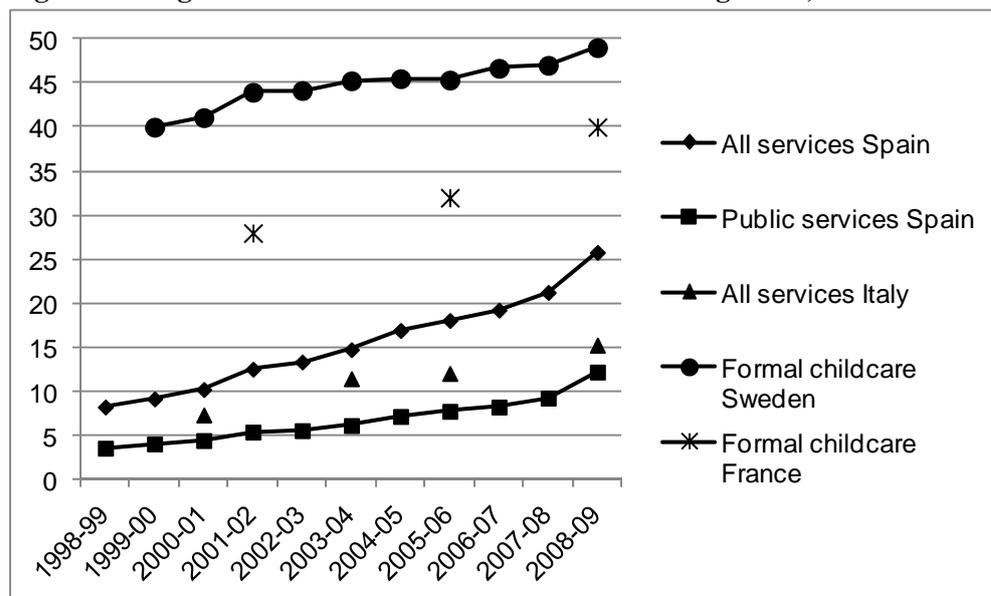
In comparison to Sweden, parental leave regulations in Italy and Spain are less generous in terms of income replacement, and also in the degree to which fathers have the possibility to take care of their small children with the same rights as mothers. Only in Spain do fathers have access to a fully-paid paternity leave of two weeks, which is very short compared to the right to an individual and 80%-paid leave of two months for Swedish men. France lies in between Sweden and both southern countries, since parental-leave is paid at a flat-rate of €553 per month and, as in Spain, men are entitled to a two-week fully-paid paternity leave (Moss 2010).

Care of small children up to age 6 can be supported by the State through leave policies or through the offer of public or publicly subsidized child-care services. The next section shows that in Spain the effort of the State to offer child-care services has been greater than in Italy. Childcare services may cover a wide range of provisions widely diversified in terms of organizations and in terms of its purposes. However, the most relevant distinction which is found in Italy and Spain is between childcare services for 0-2 and for 3-6 year-olds. In Italy in the childcare area as a whole no crucial reform was introduced and most of the services remain steadily anchored to their tradition of the recent past. Care services for children under age 3 have a very low level of coverage and high local variability. Even in regions and municipalities where the level of coverage is higher, the figure remains well below the 33% "Lisbon threshold". According to census data provided by Italian municipalities (Istat 2010a), the coverage rate of public childcare services for children aged 0-2 (or childcare services financed with public funds), although increased in total number, was no higher than 12.7% as national average in 2008. Wide is the distance between the South of Italy and regions such as Calabria and Abruzzo, with an average rate respectively of 2.7% and 9.8% and the centre-north of Italy, where the coverage rate ranges between 28% of Emilia Romagna and Valle D'Aosta, and 14% and 16% respectively of Piemonte and Lombardia (Istat 2010a). With respect to the mix between public and private, Italy has seen a growth in private services during the last decade (Istituto degli Innocenti 2006, 2009).

In Spain there was no national legislative change with respect to childcare for pre-school children. The greatest change was the Education Law of 1990 (LOGSE); for the first time pre-school education services were recognized as part of the education system and were no longer considered a social service for simply taking care of the children of the poorest families. In addition, since the mid-80s the implementation of education services is a competency of the Autonomous Communities, as such it is a decentralized policy, and services are offered and organized by local and regional agencies. Since 2002, a tax-benefit for formally employed mothers with children under age three of €100 per month was introduced (*Reducción por cuidado de hijos*) as a financial support for childcare, which represents a subsidy of around 1/3 to 1/5 of the price of a full-time place with meal service. However, this tax-benefit is not available for unemployed and economically non-active women, and it attributes childcare to mothers since this tax-deduction only exists for mothers and not for fathers. In some

Autonomous Communities supplementary tax deductions and direct benefits exist to subsidize the use of private childcare services. In 2008 the national government created the *Plan Educa3*, which intended to increase public childcare services for children aged 0-2. It “will suppose a total investment of 1,087 million Euros between 2008-2012, financed at 50% between the Ministry of Education and the Autonomous Regions and with the Municipal Councils’ collaboration” according to official statements (Peñalver 2009).

**Fig. 5 Coverage rates of childcare services for children aged 0-2, 1998-2009**



Notes: The Italian coverage rate for all services is somewhat underestimated since data of private services in Abruzzo and Sicilia are not included. Sources: Own elaboration.<sup>8</sup>

As shown in Figure 5 and according to official statistics, in both countries the coverage of childcare services for children aged under-three has increased to some extent, but with significant country differences. In Spain the coverage by public childcare services has increased steadily and in particular in coincidence with the beginning of the economic crisis and the national plan *Plan Educa3* for investment in services for children aged up to three. Even more significant has been the increase in private services, as can be deduced from the increase in “all services”. In Italy no figures for only public services are available, but the general figure, which includes public and private services, shows that the offer of childcare services is lower than in Spain. Care of very small children outside the family in Spain is still rather small, but it has advanced more than in Italy since 2000. The comparison of childcare services across a wider range of countries and over time is a very difficult endeavour<sup>9</sup>. Available indicators confirm the

<sup>8</sup> For Spain administrative data from Series “Alumnado matriculado por enseñanzas”, Tabla 5, and INEbase “Series de Población” and for Italy from Istituto degli Innocenti, Tavola 1.6, 2006; Tavola 4.2, 2009; and Istat “cifre popolazione”. For France, selected years from EU-SILC. For Sweden, OECD\_PF3.2.C online 2011, origin of data NOSOSCO (2006-2007) and NOMESCO (<http://nomnos-indicators.sk1.se/sif/start/>).

<sup>9</sup> First of all, the definitions vary across databases and, secondly, the only available cross-national time series database, which draws data from the European survey EU-SILC, is not homogeneous over time. When possible, we prefer to use administrative time-series data, which are available for a longer time span.

Italian-Spanish differences<sup>10</sup> and, in addition, underline their distance to countries with a high prevalence of “dual-earner” families and with generous family policies, such as France and Sweden (Figure 5).<sup>11</sup>

By contrast, significant improvements have been made in formal childcare provision for children from 3 to 5 in both countries. Childcare from 3 to 5 is not compulsory in Italy or Spain, but it is integrated into the education system. In 2008, in Spain 98% of children aged three were in pre-primary education.<sup>12</sup> According to data provided by the Ministry of Education in 2008/2009, 97% of children aged 3-5 were in pre-primary education in Italy.<sup>13</sup> The Spanish education system is adapting to increasing female employment by offering lunch and care services outside teaching hours, but the former still covers less than half of all pupils in primary and pre-primary education and no accurate data for the latter are available. The school schedule that is provided either by public or private services (at least from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) is shorter than the average working schedule of parents and limited by very long summer holidays, around three months and reduced teaching time and care services in public schools in June and September. In Italy, school for children aged 3-5 (*scuole per l'infanzia*) have a similar schedule as in Spain, the typical day is from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The most relevant problem for the conciliation issue is not only the short school day but the fact that in many areas of the country, mostly in the South of Italy, schools do not have a cafeteria. As a result most parents have to take them home at lunch time.

The question if attitudes, behaviour and policies in Spain point towards the emergence of a dual-earner family model, while this is not the case in Italy, can be answered positively. Young Spanish cohorts show a change in attitudes and female employment behaviour dominated by dual-earner patterns, while in Italy these patterns are less diffused. The greater public effort in offering and subsidizing childcare services in Spain compared to Italy and the implementation of paternity leave supports this idea.

### **Conclusion: Is the fiscal crisis influencing policies and families?**

The main conclusion of this article is the divergence of Spanish families and policies away from Italy and a slow convergence of Spain with the French and Swedish dual-earner-family model during the last two decades. It may be argued that the described Spanish public benefits are low in coverage and generosity, compared to other European countries, such as France and Sweden, which is true. Yet, the argument here points to two relevant dimensions of Spain's divergence. First, there have been significant policy changes over time, as shown by expenditures and coverage rates for youth independence, and for the care of the elderly and small children.

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<sup>10</sup> The EU-SILC figures for Italy and Spain are higher than the administrative ones, 28% and 38% respectively in 2008. In part this may be due to the inclusion of more private services than the administrative statistics capture.

<sup>11</sup> If one compares EU-SILC figures for Spain (38%) and France (40%), the distance is much smaller.

<sup>12</sup> Ministerio de Educación “Las cifras de la Educación en España 2011.” (<http://www.educacion.gob.es/horizontales/estadisticas/indicadores-publicaciones-sintesis/cifras-educacion-espana.html>).

<sup>13</sup> Centro nazionale di documentazione per l'infanzia, 2010, tab. 8.2.4 (<http://www.minori.it/node/2625>).

Second, there has been a qualitative transformation of the assumed family model at different State levels, which is no longer the family/kinship solidarity model alone, but which in many regards is becoming a dual-earner family model.

Now the current fiscal crisis poses two questions: first, is this Italian-Spanish divergence in family patterns, attitudes and policies being affected by the crisis? And second, will it take Spain back to the family/kinship solidarity model? The latest political events in Italy and Spain, which are characterised by deep cuts in public expenditure in a large range of social policies, offer a first general positive answer to the first question. In addition, some more figures and measures for Spain illustrate the concrete impact on the previously described social policies. Expenditures foreseen in financing childcare services for children aged 0 to 2 within the *Plan Educa3* have been reduced (*Consejo de Ministros*, 27 May 2011). Since 2010 expenditure for the new long-term dependency system has been frozen<sup>14</sup> and in December 2011 the new government decided not to include new beneficiaries, those of a lower degree of dependency, into the system (*Consejo de Ministros*, 30 December 2011). At the same time, the decision was made to discontinue the rent benefit for young people, introduced in 2008, for new beneficiaries. A further victim of the fiscal crisis has been the paternity leave in Spain, which should have been increased to four weeks in January 2011, but has been postponed for savings reasons. Despite all these cuts, the qualitative change of the assumed family model in many policy areas may survive the crisis and persist in the future.

Yet, may economic changes affect attitudes about intergenerational solidarity and mothers and fathers' roles? Could it be that the scarcity of jobs may lead to a greater legitimacy of "men first" attitudes with respect to employment and push women into unemployment and back home into full-time home work? Labour Force Survey data permit us to observe the evolution of unemployment and inactivity rates of women aged 25 to 49 from the first quarter of 2006 until the first quarter of 2011 in Spain and until the first quarter of 2010 in Italy. It is very interesting to observe that female unemployment rates<sup>15</sup> in this central age group have notably increased in Spain by 10 percentage points to reach 21.5% in 2011, while only by 1.4 percentage points in Italy (10.6% in 2010). Does this mean that more women in this age group will also become economically inactive due to difficulties in finding a job? Surprisingly, this is not the case in either of the two countries, since the inactivity rate<sup>16</sup> in Spain in this period has fallen by 8 percentage points to 19% and it remained unchanged in Italy at 34%<sup>17</sup>. So far, in Italy the crisis is not significantly affecting female unemployment and economic inactivity. By contrast in Spain, women in central ages, i.e. many mothers, have been hit by unemployment, but they want to stay in the labour market or need to guarantee a second income in order to maintain the family's income, for instance to pay the monthly mortgage bill. It must be remembered that these younger Spanish cohorts acquired their homes during the credit-financed house

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<sup>14</sup> Real Decreto-ley 20/2011, de 30 de diciembre, de medidas urgentes en materia presupuestaria, tributaria y financiera para la corrección del déficit público.

<sup>15</sup> The number of women not employed during the reference week, available for work and either actively seeking work in the past four weeks or having found a job to start within the next three months as a percentage of the economically active population, i.e. unemployed and employed women of the respective age group.

<sup>16</sup> The number of economically inactive women as a percentage of all women of the respective age group.

<sup>17</sup> Eurostat online, June 2011

([http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment\\_unemployment\\_ifs/data/database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_unemployment_ifs/data/database)).

construction boom in the last decade, whose high prices in urban contexts required acquisition by dual earning couples. Thus, female attachment to employment will most probably continue to be high. The more gender-symmetric attitudes and time-use patterns observed during the last two decades among the younger cohorts compared to the older ones will probably persist. They reflect a deeper cultural change, which is also linked to the greater secularisation of Spanish society compared to Italy.

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