

Working paper series FVeP 16

ISSN: 2240-3272

**Ilaria Madama  
Franca Maino**

# Work-life balance policies as a multi-level, multi-stakeholder policy challenge

The case of Territorial Networks for Conciliation in Lombardy

*Selected, presented and discussed at the international conference*

*“Participatory local welfare, citizenship and third sector organizations. What is at stake?”*

*Pisa, 31st January – 1st February 2013*



**Fondazione  
Volontariato  
e Partecipazione**

## ***Abstract***

Work-life balance policies represent an interesting case in the perspective of 'second welfare', which imply the participation of a number of non-public actors for the co-production of welfare. Compared to European figures, Italian women display high levels of inactivity, hiking after the birth of the first child, unbalanced care responsibilities with respect to men, inadequate childcare support and work arrangements. However, thanks to a number of stimuli from the EU, in the last decade work-life balance policies have gained some salience within the domestic political debate. In particular, at the sub-national level we have observed a proliferation of initiatives. Building on this framework, the research investigates the co-production of reconciliation policies in a multidimensional, multilevel, and multi-stakeholder perspective, by shedding light on innovative dynamics. In this respect, the Lombardy Region represents an intriguing case. In 2011, with the Regional White Paper on reconciling work and family, the territory was divided into 13 areas, and each one is now experimenting a network for the governance at the local level of work-life balance policies named *Territorial Network for Conciliation, TNC* - participated by public institutions, trade unions and employers representatives, as well as private companies, cooperatives and the Third sector - in charge of monitoring the needs of each territory, coordinating efforts, setting up new and innovative conciliation services.

***Keywords:*** Second welfare; work-life conciliation; social innovation

## 1. Introduction: work-family conciliation and “second welfare”

Since the 1970s the European countries have seen the emergence of new social risks and needs caused by profound demographic, social, and economic changes. In parallel with these changes, the onset of what has been called the era of ‘permanent austerity’ [Pierson 1998], marked by pressing macro-economic and financial constraints, has created new challenges for the mature European welfare states. In this new scenario, sub-national levels of government, victims of the *decentralization of penury* [Keating 1998], have in various countries shown great potential in devising innovative solutions to the new risks and needs left unresolved by national welfare systems. Albeit to different extents, these solutions usually involve the participation of non-public actors in the co-design and co-production of welfare measures. These initiatives, which often are undertaken by local governments through innovative forms of governance, fall in the area of what has been recently termed “second welfare” [Ferrera and Maino 2012; Maino 2012a].

This notion is meant to capture welfare programmes and social investment measures financed with non-public resources made available by a broad array of economic and social actors embedded in the local context (without this precluding forms of trans-local and/or transnational cooperation). The welfare arena has thus been entered by non-public actors – such as bank and community foundations, firms, trade unions, employers’ associations, social enterprises, insurance companies, representatives of the third and voluntary sector – able, by virtue of their rootedness in the community and in partnership with the local authorities, to help respond to new needs and mitigate the shortcomings of the national welfare state.

With reference to Italy, the conciliation policies sector is an area of particular interest in this regard for three main reasons. Firstly, because conciliation measures, given the multi-dimensional nature of social needs, represent challenges in terms of both policy solutions and governance. In fact, they require a high capacity to coordinate policy sectors (social services, active labour market policies, employment regulation), and to mediate among the interests of the wide array of actors crucial for the devising, funding and implementation of conciliation measures.

Secondly, conciliation policies represent an interesting area in which to investigate ‘frontier’ changes in the Italian welfare system, due to its traditional familist approach and the scant investment in services and support to families that have historically characterized Italy’s social protection system [see e.g. Ferrera 1998; Naldini 2003; Saraceno 2003]. Only in recent years in fact, amid discouraging demographic and economic dynamics and in re-

response to stimuli from the supranational arena [see Graziano and Madama 2011], have work-life balance policies begun to acquire greater importance in the Italian debate, both public and political. In particular, first the *European Employment Strategy* and then *Europe 2020* have placed great emphasis on measures able to increase labour-market participation and thus promote economic growth. Crucial among these measures are those which concern parental leave and the organization of work, as well as working time policies and social services, because they make it possible for those with family responsibilities to overcome the barriers to labour-market entry or to remain in work.

Thirdly, given the ‘rescaling’ process of social policies [see Kazepov 2009] in areas crucial for family-work conciliation – social assistance, social services and active labour market policies –, decentralized levels of government tend to be privileged areas for social innovation.

Compared with changes in other European countries, in Italy legislative provisions and public investments targeted on the sector have been limited so far, although some signs of modernization are visible. Worth of notice is the shared endeavour of the various levels of government to increase the availability of early childhood services through the *Piano Straordinario per lo Sviluppo dei Servizi per la Prima Infanzia (2007 -2009)* (Extraordinary Plan for the Development of Early Childhood Services). In regard to public support for innovative measures led by sub-national levels of government, to be mentioned is the fund of 40 million Euros<sup>1</sup> allocated by the Ministry for Equal Opportunities in 2009 to autonomous regions and provinces for initiatives “to increase the availability of personal care services and/or schemes in order to favour work-life conciliation and to strengthen measures aimed at enabling women to remain in or re-enter the labour market”. The subsequent *Intesa* (Agreement) endorsed by the *Conferenza Unificata*<sup>2</sup> on the distribution of the resources then defined the specific purposes of the funds, most notably: the creation of day nurseries and innovative early childhood services; training programmes to facilitate work re-entry by women on maternity leave; the payment of allowances in the form of vouchers for the purchase of care services; support for work arrangements facilitating work-family conciliation (such as telework, part time, flexible working hours schedules, etc.). More recently (in June 2012), with the Monti Government, the *Piano Nazionale per la Famiglia*

<sup>1</sup> *Decreto del Ministero delle Pari Opportunità* of 12 May 2009 followed by the *Intesa* approved by the *Conferenza Unificata* on 29 April 2010 (known as the *Intesa Carfagna*).

<sup>2</sup>Governmental body involving Municipalities, Regions and the central State.

(National Family Plan) was approved, which devoted ample space to the issues of conciliation and care work. The Plan envisaged the close involvement (also in terms of resources) of regional and local governments in implementing the principles and actions identified, the purpose being to off-set the shortage of resources with innovative schemes involving the numerous stakeholders operating at decentralized level.<sup>3</sup>

In this scenario, with reference to reforms at the sub-national level targeted on conciliation, the case of Lombardy appears as distinctive. Various studies have emphasised the distinguishing features of Lombardy's welfare system with respect to the rest of Italy: in particular, its marked emphasis on subsidiarity, both vertical and horizontal [see e.g. Maino 2001; Gori 2005; Pesenti 2008; Neri 2010; Carabelli and Facchini 2011]. Consistently with this approach, since 2010 the Lombardy Region has pursued a path which is innovative with respect to both governance and policy-making also in regard to conciliation measures, one of its main ingredients being the creation of Territorial Networks for Conciliation, TNCs (*Reti Territoriali per la Conciliazione*).

Building on this background, the article investigates the results achieved by conciliation measures in Lombardy, with a focus on the TNCs pilot project. More specifically, the next section contextualizes the topic within the crisis of the welfare state and its possible transformation. In this regard, discussion is made of the concept of 'second welfare' and its implications in terms of governance and social innovation. Section 3 illustrates the Lombardy Region's overall strategy, of which the TNCs are part. Sections 4 and 5 deal with the results of the project's first year of activity by investigating two of its dimensions: the construction of a multi-level and multi-actor governance and the co-production of innovative conciliation measures. The article concludes with brief discussion of the potentialities and the challenges of the route followed by Lombardy.

## **2. Second welfare between new models of governance and policy innovation**

The crisis of the welfare state – due to increasingly scarce resources and the emergence of new social risks and needs, and exacerbated, as said, by the economic-financial crisis of the past five years – has increased the salience of the debate about the future of social protection systems and their possible transformations. There appear to be three main possible

---

<sup>3</sup> On the *Piano Nazionale per la Famiglia*, its contents but also its limitations and flaws, see Canale [2012], Visentini [2012] and Gatti, Omodei and Papetti [2012].

scenarios: dismantlement, or the prevalence of retrenchment policies bound substantially to downscale the welfare state; maintenance, which implies the rationalization of existing programmes and application of recalibration measures; and renewal, where it is considered possible to develop a new model in which a ‘recalibrated’ public welfare system is flanked – on an integrative pattern – a ‘second welfare’ financed by non-public resources.

What is meant by ‘second welfare’ can be better defined and understood by bearing in mind that the State has increasingly assumed a significant role in ensuring protection against the main social risks, and meeting new needs, by defining norms, rules, and evaluation criteria in regard to the distribution among citizens of certain resources and opportunities. Such risks and needs, however, can also be addressed by resorting to resources and opportunities available in the market (particularly the labour market, in which incomes are earned), the family (including kinship and friendship networks), and so-called “intermediary associations”<sup>4</sup>. People’s living standards (and therefore their well-being) depend precisely on the place that they occupy within familial, work and associative networks, on the organization and operation of those networks, and on the relationships among their components.

First and second welfare are therefore spheres, which interweave and merge according to the area of need and the policy sector. The second welfare system must be conceived as supplementary to the first, not as a substitute for it. The State, the market, the third sector, and the family are all affected by the same crisis and faced by similar challenges. The hypothesis is that their capacity to establish a new balance among themselves will determine the resilience of the social system and create a model of ‘neowelfare’ – that is, renewed and sustainable welfare. This model no longer presupposes separation among the four facets of the ‘welfare diamond’ [see Ferrera 2012b], or two-directional relationships between the State and the other spheres. It instead envisages co-penetration and overlaps among all four areas, so as to deploy participatory solutions resulting from collaboration among the actors operating within those areas. This framework fosters the social investment approach proposed by Giddens [1998], according to which the State must perform a preventive function, no longer solely acting to remedy or limit negative events *a posteriori*. It must furnish services tailored as closely as possible to needs, reducing the range of standardized and impersonal interventions. It must endeavour to promote positive lifestyles through the formation of human and social capital and by involving and supporting civil-society, third-

---

<sup>4</sup>By this last expression is meant informal communities like the neighbourhood or district of residence, but also organized groups such as trade associations and actors in the so-called ‘third sector’, i.e. non-profit voluntary organizations [see Ascoli and Ranci 2002].

sector, and philanthropic organizations [see Jenson 2010; Morel, Palier and Palme 2011].

As for services and programmes, according to the EU, the first welfare should comprise the basic regimes stipulated by law and the obligatory complementary social protection regimes which cover fundamental life-risks – those connected with health, workplace accident, unemployment, old age, retirement, and disability – but also the benefits and services (generally means-tested) considered ‘essential’ for a decent life and adequate integration into the community, as well as guaranteeing fundamental citizenship rights. The second welfare system should instead comprise the sector of voluntary supplementary social protection, especially in regard to pensions and health care, and the remaining social services – to persons and families – with features to be defined pragmatically need by need, age by age, area by area, local community by local community. The redistributive function of the welfare state then (its funds, personnel, standards of performance) is not in question; rather, it is integrated from outside in cases of unmet demand.

The second welfare is expected to develop on regulatory bases defined at local level but which at the same time rest on both the national and European normative framework. Although local authorities are increasingly constrained in their spending decisions<sup>5</sup>, they may perform a key role in promoting public/private partnerships and in the procurement of additional resources. For this to come about positively and virtuously, however, the reference paradigm must change. It is necessary for the new forms of collaboration among public, private and social-private actors to favour social innovation, rather than only serving the purpose of economic retrenchment (Osborne et al., 2008; Goldsmith 2010). The local institutions must also contribute to reversing the logic of planning: needs and possible solutions should become the starting-point from which to involve non-public financiers. The aim should be to define a new model of governance which makes it possible to overcome the crisis without the dismantlement of the public welfare system that some fear. And this should be done by developing innovative solutions and tools within a new institutional framework, thus creating both process and product innovation. In this perspective, the involvement of public institutions is decisive for the intervention not to be episodic and partial, and to increase its social impact so that people more vulnerable or more likely to suffer social exclusion can benefit.

Two ingredients appear crucial in second-welfare measures: the development of new mo-

---

<sup>5</sup>For example, between 2007 and 2012 the national social policy funds (for childhood and adolescence, the integration of immigrants, the non self-sufficient, youth, and the family) were cut year on year (in 2012 alone the cuts amounted to 37% on the budget for 2011) and in some cases were eliminated.

dels of governance, and the promotion of social innovation. As regards governance, in response to the new forms assumed by social risks and needs, the welfare state creates increasing space for the step-in of other actors and for the creation of multi-stakeholder nets of governance. This means that local authorities are required to play a coordination role by configuring innovative relationships among the bodies responsible for planning, financing, and concretely producing social services [CNEL 2010]. This entails redesigning policy-making processes so that the interests of stakeholders can be represented, and supporting a network logic rather than a hierarchical one, with negotiation and co-participation rather than bureaucratic imposition; and incentivising the inclusion of civil society in decision-making and planning according to a welfare mix model. This perspective mirrors the shift from a government logic to a governance one, based on the involvement of a wide array of stakeholder in the policy-making process. Starting from the classical work by Kooiman [1993], the term ‘governance’ refers to new patterns of interaction between public actors and private ones aimed at “discovering other ways of coping with new problems” by means of “co-regulation, co-production, cooperative management and public private partnerships, giving rise to non-traditional mixtures of the public and private sector” [Kooiman, 1993, pp. 1-2]. In this view, conciliation policies appear to be a privileged area for the development of governance practices characterised by a *sui-generis* polity.

Turning to social innovation, its propulsive role has recently been stressed at the European level<sup>6</sup>. Following the definition proposed by the Bureau of European Policy Advisors: “Social innovations are new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations” [see BEPA 2011]. Consider the numerous initiatives aimed at social innovation through the development of new forms of cooperation among public actors, private for-profit organizations, and the third sector. If these actors are involved and supported in their roles, they can develop appropriate and economically sustainable responses to social needs, mobilizing private resources and capacities to produce value for society as a whole, not for single individuals. For stakeholders, which have traditionally operated almost in isolation, the challenge is to understand and to exploit the opportunity of partnership and networking as added value.

Of crucial importance in this regard is the ‘Europe 2020’ strategy, which urges all parties concerned (national and regional parliaments, regional and local authorities, the social partners and civil society) to contribute to the strategy’s implementation, working in part-

---

<sup>6</sup> See Canale [2013] for a discussion of the importance given to the concept of social innovation at European level.



nership and adopting initiatives in the sectors for which they are responsible. This confirms the consolidation, at European level, of a conception of an ‘enabling’ welfare that induces institutions and citizens, trade unions and enterprises, to experiment with new processes and services able to respond to the needs of society more efficiently and effectively than is presently possible in the mutable context of the national welfare state [see European Commission 2010]<sup>7</sup>.

It has also to be noted that rethinking social protection by including and valuing new actors and new non-public resources is also a way to create employment and to re-launch a country’s growth and development, as well as to increase its “innovative” capacity in responding to new social risks and needs [see Maino 2012b]. In this regard, consider services to persons and families: these could both respond to new needs – among them work-life conciliation – and provide job opportunities for young people and women<sup>8</sup>.

### **3. Territorial networks for conciliation in Lombardy: origins and ob-**

---

<sup>7</sup>Europe 2020 identifies social innovation among the principal means to pursue economic and social objectives through seven “flagship initiatives”. In particular, innovation is the core of the “Innovation Union” flagship initiative (the aim of which is to boost research through development of a strategic programme centred on energy security, transport, climate change and the efficient use of resources, health and ageing, environment-friendly production methods and land management) and of the “European platform against poverty”. The latter firmly ties the fundamental themes of welfare modernization to social innovation: “[...] the Commission will work [...] to design and implement programmes to promote social innovation for the most vulnerable communities, in particular by providing innovative education, training and employment opportunities for deprived communities, to fight discrimination (e.g. the disabled) and to develop a new agenda for migrants’ integration to enable them to take full advantage of their potential; to undertake an assessment of the adequacy and sustainability of social protection and pension systems and identify ways to ensure better access to health care systems” [European Commission 2010, p. 20].

<sup>8</sup>This concerns supporting the growth potential of the new services, taking them outside the family, where – in countries like Italy – they continue to be produced and consumed. The experience of other countries shows that it is possible to mobilize private capital (for-profit and non-profit, national and even foreign, as well as private savings) to have the sector take off, and numerous experimental schemes and concrete actions are already well under way. In this regard, the second welfare system – given the numerous different stakeholders involved – can significantly contribute to activating bodies operating in sectors crucial for the promotion of employment and development. In France, for example, the CESU, the *Chèque Emploi Service Universel*, has generated a wave of new consumption in the third sector which has annually created more than 100 thousand jobs since 2006, and which is worth at least one additional GDP point per year [Ferrera 2012a].

## **Objectives of the pilot project**

Concerning the regional socio-economic system, with 12 Provinces and 1,546 Municipalities, the Lombardy Region has a population of 9,6 million and a per capita GDP of 29.000 Euros. The over 800.000 enterprises operating in the territory hire as many as 4,3 million workers, that contribute to the Region's economic, social and technological development. Lombardy is one of the most developed and industrialized regions in EU, as it is a member of the network "Four Motors for Europe", together with Baden-Württemberg, Catalonia, and Rhône-Alpes.

Notwithstanding Lombardy's great economic performance and social and technological achievements, the occupational structure still highlights a significant trade-off between career and family responsibilities for female workers. About 20% of employed women leave the job market during the first year of maternity, while 30,5% of them, against a lower 5,2% of men, is in a part-time position. The vast majority of citizens has work-life balancing difficulties, with 27,1% of families having at least one child and as many as 33% having to take care of an elderly relative. A need that is witnessed by the presence of about 126.182 irregular caregivers working in Lombardy.

In recent years, the issue of work-family conciliation has got new salience in the regional debate. In particular, the regional government's agenda has paid increasing attention to work-life balance policies since 2009, when it stressed their crucial role in the region's socio-economic development. These policies, in fact, make it possible to pursue two goals simultaneously: on the one hand, they are opportunities to re-launch the economic and productive performance of firms; on the other, they are ways to give individuals and families greater freedom to participate in the labour market and meet their household needs.

In November 2010, the public consultation process launched with "*Lombardia 2020 - Libro Verde sulla Conciliazione Famiglia-Lavoro*" was a first concrete step towards developing and promoting a Lombard model for work-life balance<sup>9</sup>. A few months later, in September 2011, the Region's strategy for concilia-

---

<sup>9</sup> *Lombardia 2020 - Libro Verde sulla Conciliazione Famiglia-Lavoro*, Regione Lombardia, November

tion was set out in the “*Libro bianco - Lombardia 2020*”<sup>10</sup>, a document which stated the Region’s approach and its programme. The document foresaw – by including it in a three-year planning cycle (2011 -2013) – the creation of a system of “regional multi-level and multi-actor governance”.

The Region’s plan set three general and interconnected objectives: to promote the well-being of families, with particular regard to the sharing of care tasks; to improve the well-being of workers in their jobs; and to advance equal opportunities and economic growth through female labour-market participation (Table 1).

**Table 1. Overarching goals and actions in the field of work-life balance policies, Lombardy Region**

<b>Overarching goals</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve families well-being, with emphasis on the sharing of care tasks; Support parents labour market participation.</li> <li>2. Improve workers well-being at workplace and favour flexible time schedule and more tailored working conditions.</li> <li>3. Support gender equality and female labour market participation.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Family mainstreaming.</li> <li>2. Multi-level Governance and “territorial networks for conciliation”.</li> <li>3. Communication and awareness-raising policies.</li> <li>4. Services for families with caring tasks.</li> <li>5. Flexible time schedule measures.</li> <li>6. Promotion of firms’ family responsibility</li> <li>7. Conciliation policies for Lombardy Region’s employees.</li> </ol>

Source: Regione Lombardia, Libro Bianco, *Roadmap per la conciliazione famiglia-lavoro* [2011].

These general objectives were to be pursued by the seven specific lines of action shown in Table 1. Among them, the creation of territorial networks for conciliation was one of the most innovative choices in regard to policy and governance. To be pointed out is that conciliation networks began as an experimental

2010 (download: <http://www.famiglia.regione.lombardia.it/shared/ccurl/582/590/Libroverde.pdf>).

<sup>10</sup> *Libro Bianco, Roadmap per la conciliazione famiglia-lavoro. Tabella di marcia verso un sistema regionale favorevole alla conciliazione famiglia-lavoro 2011 – 2013*, Regione Lombardia, September 2011 (download: <http://www.famiglia.regione.lombardia.it/shared/ccurl/962/786/Libro%20Bianco.pdf>).

project implemented after the agreement signed in April 2010 by the Government, Regions, Autonomous Provinces, ANCI, UPI and UNCEM for use of a fund of 40 million Euros made available by the Ministry of Equal Opportunities. It is then of interest that the initial input came from multi-level dynamics between the central government and decentralized governments. Of the overall appropriation, almost 7 million Euros were allocated to Lombardy, which subsequently increased the amount through a specific regional co-financing. The main aim of the networks was “to support the construction and the development of a coherent system of policies and actions for family-work conciliation, with particular regard to the demands expressed by the community and to the resources available, and to support the maximum integration among the three areas of work, training, and services to the person/family”<sup>11</sup>.

The creation of networks for conciliation is based on ‘programme agreements’ (*Accordi di programma*) signed by public and private partners that decide to join the network, and which define objectives, priorities, and forms of participation. The concrete actions necessary to achieve the objectives are then specified in territorial action plans (*Piani d’azione territoriali*), which are therefore the operational programmes defining the projects and how they are to be implemented in compliance with the principles stated in the agreement.

According to the Region’s dispositions, the action plan is drawn up by the promoters, following an analysis of needs and a mapping of the resources already present on the territory. The intention is therefore that the territoriality of the plans and the participation of numerous actors should yield a cross-section of needs in the community, and then an innovative response to social demand.

---

<sup>11</sup> Also in the sector of youth policies, the Lombardy Region has recently created territorial networks. In February 2011, in fact, a “Permanent Regional Committee for Youth Policies” was set up with the purpose of developing and implementing a regional network of youth policies acting as means to involve all local actors in the planning and realization of policies for young people according to the principles of subsidiarity and accountability. The committee consists of 12 general directorates, ANCI Lombardia, the Unione delle Province Lombarde, the Ufficio Scolastico Regionale, UnionCamere Lombardia, and the Third sector as represented by Fondazione Cariplo, CSV, Forum Terzo Settore, Centro Sportivo Italiano, and Azienda Speciale Consorzio di Comuni per i Servizi alla Persona “Dimensione Sociale”. The proposal identifies the Comuni Associati as optimal planning and launches the process that could lead to the creation of networks similar to those for conciliation between 2012 and 2015.

Moreover, through the conciliation networks, the community can become a place for the piloting and integration of policies and the renewal of organizational models through comparison, thus strengthening the cooperation among actors and generating resources.

The territorial networks of conciliation activated in Lombardy should also allow experimentation with locally diversified schemes, thus giving the regional government an opportunity to conduct comparative analysis among the best initiatives, measure their effects, and consequently to decide what policies to implement in the middle-to-long term. In other words, communities are seen as potential 'laboratories' for innovation in two respects, those of governance and policy.

Between 2010 and 2011, thirteen territorial conciliation networks were created in the region, with the signing of the relative programme agreements. The areas that activated a TCN were: Bergamo, Brescia, Como, Cremona, Lecco, Lodi, Mantova, Milano, Monza and Brianza, Pavia, Sondrio, Varese, Valle Camonica. The agreements were later followed by thirteen action plans signed between May and September 2011<sup>12</sup>. The next sections report the main results achieved in 2012 in regard to fulfilment of the two main goals for which the networks were activated: the creation of multi-level and multi-actor participatory arenas, and experimentation of innovative conciliation practices.

#### **4. The networks as multi-level and multi-actor participatory arenas: first evidence**

As mentioned, territorial conciliation networks are intended, through the creation of multi-level and multi-actor arenas of governance, to generate local participatory processes. Design and planning activities are undertaken at the institutional level by both public and non-state actors closest to the needs to be satisfied and deemed able to do so most cost-effectively. On a multi-level pattern, the regional administration supervises the process. The principle of subsidiarity,

---

<sup>12</sup>Except for Pavia, where it was signed in November 2011.

with both its vertical and horizontal dimensions, is therefore a central element in the conciliation networks project – as it has already been in other policy sectors in Lombardy.

Coordination at regional level is undertaken by the *Direzione Famiglia, Conciliazione, Integrazione e Solidarietà Sociale*, which works with *Direzione Istruzione, Formazione, Lavoro* and the *Direzione Impresa* through an interdepartmental group. Projects are supervised through three types of activity: the monitoring of social demand with surveys and analysis of conciliation needs in the region; training (guidance and tutoring); the monitoring and assessment of the process and of the initiatives. In regard to this last function, monitoring and assessment are based on qualitative and quantitative indicators relative to the functioning of the networks: for example, the frequency of committee meetings; the percentage of additional and co-financed resources made available; the number of actions undertaken; the number of active participants among the signatories of the agreement; the proportion of co-projected and co-produced actions; the network's degree of internal cohesion and inter-operationality.

With reference to the horizontal partnership dimension, at the regional level the economic-social participation to the process has been fostered since November 2010 by the *Comitato Strategico Conciliazione Donna Famiglia Lavoro* (CSCDFL), which consists of representatives of the business world, the region's universities, the civil service, and the third sector. This committee has an advisory function: it seeks to promote attention to the family-work issue, and it devises strategies to place conciliation between family and working times at the centre of regional social policies.

Turning to facts, by June 2012 each TNC had produced a monitoring and assessment report on the project, which was then used by the regional administration to organize focus groups in order to identify good practices and problems. Comparison among the reports, with reference to governance aspects, shows a series of positive aspects but also some weaknesses.

With reference to the horizontal dimension of subsidiarity, the networks involved a large number of public and private actors. As shown in Figure 1, this is indubitably indicative of success. Overall, at the end of September 2012 there were 443 participants divisible into two general categories: the 'promoters' (138) and

the 'adherents' (305, equal to 69% of the stakeholders involved). The former (yellow ovals in Figure 1) are those that have launched the network, among which to be found in all areas are: the Local Health Enterprises (ASL) as lead partner<sup>13</sup>, followed by the Lombardy regional administration through its local offices (STER), the provincial administration, some municipalities and local authorities, Chambers of commerce, Provincial Equal Opportunity Counsellors. The adherents vary according to the territorial context, but mainly consist of trade unions, employers' associations, third-sector and non profit organizations, educational institutions, INPS, INPDAP and INAIL, public and private enterprises, bank foundations, local school boards, universities, and dioceses. The networks varied also in size from a minimum of 11 members (TNC Milano) to a maximum of 87 (TNC Mantova). In almost all cases, the number of adherents was larger than that of the promoters, which is indicative of a certain receptiveness by civil society to the theme of conciliation.

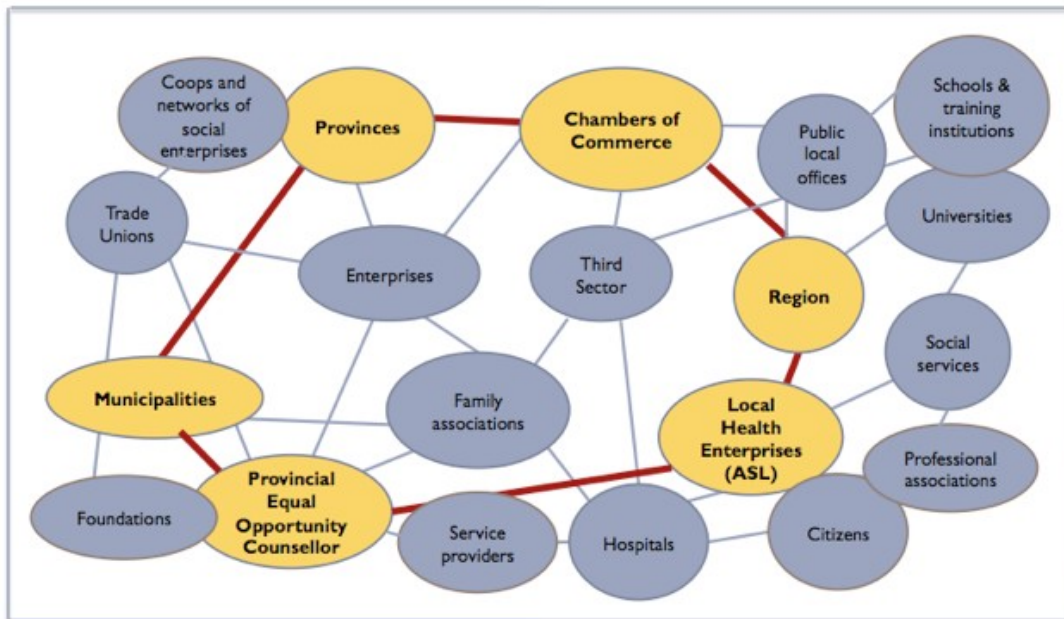
Moreover, as illustrated by red and grey lines in Figure 1, in general numerous linkages emerged among all the stakeholders involved in the network. Projects and initiatives were started on the basis of a high involvement of different actors as it has emerged from the focus groups. Nonetheless, relevant differences can be detected among the networks. In some cases, the collaboration among the different stakeholders occurred at the first stage, when the initiatives were co-designed but coordination did not go beyond this stage and implementation was left to individual actors. In other TNC, on the contrary, the collaboration continued during the following stages of the process through a direct involvement of all the stakeholders taking part to the project<sup>14</sup>.

---

<sup>13</sup>Local Health Enterprises (regional health care bodies) have no jurisdiction in matters of work-life balance policies. However, they represent the Region in this project and have been identified as the body responsible for promoting the TNC and for governing the process, at least in its initial phase and through the institutional steps.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Francesca Pasquini, expert on work-life balance policies for the Lombardy Region, Istituto di ricerca regionale Eupolis Lombardia (11 December 2012).

Figure 1. TNC as multi-stakeholder territorial networks: actors and main relationships



Source: our elaboration based on Éupolis Lombardia information.

Turning to weaknesses, one of the main ones reported by the networks concerned difficulties in obtaining concrete and long-lasting involvement by all actors. This aspect was mentioned in particular by the broadest networks, in which the initial enthusiasm was not always followed by effective participation and commitment. Varese TNC represents an example of this modest activism as the main initiatives have been those concerning communication and information on work-life balance measures. In some cases, however, the results in terms of stakeholder involvement were encouraging. In the case of the TNCs of Monza and Brianza, Cremona and Lecco, for instance, the partnership had generated positive dynamics in terms of co-designing and co-production of interventions. The report of Monza TNC emphasised moreover the importance for the network's



success of the contribution made by the social partners<sup>15</sup>.

A second problem, closely connected with the first one, concerned the excessive delegation made in some TNCs to the leader partner, the ASL, to the detriment of a more active role by the other promoters and/or adherents. Some TNCs envisaged the ASL as an 'external actor' providing guidance, supervision, and training for attainment of the declared objectives and management of the network and not as 'a peer-to-peer' actor cooperating with all the other stakeholders.

A third difficulty then pertained to the time horizon of the network projects (twelve months on average), which was regarded as too short for the activation of medium-long term processes. On this respect, the fact that the TNC project has been recently extended to one more year (2013) is a positive element as well as the new funds made available by the Region in December 2012. A new call has been, in fact, issued as part of the regional strategy on the re-organization of welfare services. The total budget amounts to nearly 10 million, of which 5 million earmarked for the financing of projects of company-based welfare. The main novelty compared to previous initiatives and the first call (issued in 2011) regards support for the decentralized bargaining. The call provides for the presence of second-level bargaining, already in place or under definition, as a condition of access. The categories of beneficiaries have also been expanded, opening the call even to supermarkets and large enterprises, if associated with small and medium-sized enterprises. Finally, the call lists clear and comprehensive objectives to be attained and the tools to be used. The regional contribution, up to 100,000 Euro per project, will cover a maximum of 80% of the project costs. Concerning the second section, the Dowry Reconciliation will be extended to the whole Lombardy, and the funding will not only for the costs of child care and educational services but also to cover the costs involved to assist frail elderly

---

<sup>15</sup> As stressed by the person in charge of the process at the ASL during a focus group organized by the Region in July 2012, in the case of the TNC of Monza and Brianza "both the trade unions and employers' associations worked in the subgroups, reporting their experiences and making suggestions particularly useful for the calls for applications addressed to companies. The trade unions and employers' organizations proved pivotal for the network because they were, thanks to experience acquired and relationships developed over time, the 'operational arm' for the network's initiatives. In the future, the competences of the trade unions will be used to train service practitioners on the ground".

and disabled persons.

Finally, a fourth problem – perhaps the one most influential on the experimentation's outcome – had to do with the lack of integration between the networks' activities and local social planning through Zone plans (*Piani di zona*). Only in some areas, in fact, there was coordination and integration between these two processes, aimed at preventing the fragmentation of actions and the dispersion of resources.

## **5. The networks as opportunities to innovate conciliation policies**

Also the actions undertaken by the networks are highly diversified. By the end of September 2012, each network had activated between 3 (Brescia TNC) and 26 (Milano TNC) projects on conciliation, for a total of 127 actions (Table 2). Some of them had a general aim, related to awareness-raising, on the issue of work-life balance, training and/or simple information. Others had launched initiatives more closely targeted to the community, firms, firms' networks, and/or local authorities. Nevertheless, the total budget activated by the networks amounted to 850 thousand Euros.

With regard to communication and awareness-raising, to be mentioned is the Lecco TNC, which produced a monitoring report on the female labour market in which a section investigated the effects of maternity on local employment and the difficulties of work-life re-conciliation<sup>16</sup>. It is interesting to note that almost all the networks (12 out of 13) had started actions addressed to local firms, with economic contributions ranging from 3 thousand to 50 thousand Euros and covering between 70% and 100% of the cost of the initiatives. In this field, three main lines of action can be identified: economic support for the creation/extension of networks for inter-company conciliation services; consultancy services to firms (e.g. the family audit); and the creation of dedicated information desks.

---

<sup>16</sup> The report highlighted that every year in the province around 200 women quit work because of incompatibility following the birth of a child.

Table 2. Projects launched by TNC, total number of projects (Sept. 2012) and examples

TNC	Total number of projects	Examples
1. Bergamo	8	Promotion of conciliation policies for public administration employees
2. Brescia	3	Firms networks: flexible working schedules (part-time and tele-working)
3. Como	7	After school services for young pupils
4. Cremona	7	Creation of a baby sitter list
5. Lecco	6	Services for kids below 3 years of age
6. Lodi	6	Promotion of conciliation policies for public administration employees
7. Mantova	6	Promotion of firms' networks to enhance conciliation measures
8. Milano	26	Project "Io concilio"
9. Monza e Brianza	9	<i>Ticket family</i> pilot project
10. Pavia	12	Promotion of firms' networks to enhance conciliation measures
11. Sondrio	7	Mobility services and flexible time schedules
12. Valle Camonica-Sebino	4	Project "Nonni di giorno", aimed at integrating public day-care services for underage children
13. Varese	7	Counselling desk for firms in the field of conciliation policies
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	

Source: Éupolis Lombardia.

Good examples of inter-company-based conciliation measures are the experiences of the Consortium Consolida and of the Consortium Lariano, both part of the Lecco TNC. These two consortia of small and medium firms received regional funds to finance projects aimed at facilitating the implementation of work-life balance measures in SMEs by offering family services, from 'time-saving' services to after-school program for employees of local firms. The initiatives of the Consortium Consolida are considered positive, as for workers they have meant: introduction of child care services, consulting and training through a 'reconciliation desk' (*Sportello conciliazione*), measures of regulation of working time such as tele-working and the 'bank of hours'. Concerning the industrial relations side, moreover, the agreement signed by the numerous companies which are part of the Consortium made possible a second-level bargaining (normally quite difficult to be approved in individual SME), which will contribute to standardize the reconciliation interventions reducing inequalities of opportunity among workers within the same sector.

Other interesting measures developed by the networks (thanks to a specific co-

financing by the Region) are those of the *Dote conciliazione* (Conciliation dowry), launched in six territorial areas – Bergamo, Brescia, Cremona, Lecco, Mantova, and Monza and Brianza. This scheme included two kinds of grant: one targeted on families (*Dote servizi alla persona*) and one on firms (*Dote servizi all'impresa*). The former supports parents returning to work after compulsory or optional parental leave. The second is a voucher awarded to firms, which hire mothers excluded from the labour market or in precarious employment. Each area involved in the project was allocated a specific sum for the two schemes amounting to 480,000 Euros for the former and 100,000 Euros for the latter. In addition to these schemes, – as part of services to firms – are 50,000 Euros allocated to each area for payment of a 500-Euro bonus to firms undertaking consultancy in regard to parental leave plans and/or corporate flexibility plans. Totally, therefore, more than 3,7 million Euros have been invested by the Region for such measures.

In accordance with regional guidelines, the requirements for obtaining the grants have been made particularly stringent. The recipients of the personal services grant are parents employed by SMEs and micro-firms returning to work within the child's first year of life after compulsory or optional leave, and who do not change to part-time work<sup>17</sup>. The grant consists in reimbursement, to a maximum of 200 Euros a month for a maximum of eight months, for the use of traditional or innovative early childhood services (crèches, early childhood centres, family nurseries, baby sitting, baby parking, playschools, etc.).

The hiring grant (*Dote conciliazione – premialità assunzione*) instead consists of a voucher of 1,000 Euros awarded to micro, small, and medium-sized firms located in one of the areas involved in the experimental scheme and which notify the hiring – on a contract of not less than 6 months' duration or an open-ended contract – of mothers with children aged up to five years old excluded from the labour market or in precarious employment.

At the end of September 2012, the success of the two initiatives seemed rather limited. The personal services grants paid amounted to around 1,700 (in the

---

<sup>17</sup>The grant is also available to free professionals with separate social security funds returning to work after compulsory leave.

majority of cases for use of day nurseries), to which were added 600 hiring grants, and around 99 bonuses for SMEs that had activated flexibility and/or parental leave plans. A large proportion of the resources allocated to the areas had therefore not been used (Table 3) – a situation that already in the spring of 2012 had led to a one-year extension of the call for applications.

Table 3. Conciliation grants and conciliation bonus, funds and grants assigned (Sept. 2012)

	<b>Grants assigned</b>	<b>Total Funds (Euros)</b>	<b>Remaining funds (Euros)</b>
Conciliation grant - individuals	1.700	2.880.000	977.200
Conciliation grant - firms	600	600.000	194.000
Consultancy Bonus	99	300.000	269.500

Source: [Éupolis Lombardia](#).

By way of summary, with reference to policy innovation, the results of comparison among the monitoring reports seem generally positive in regard to the sensitization and information of a broad array of actors internal and external to the conciliation networks. In some cases a number of significant experiences can be identified in terms of both the design and implementation of conciliation schemes, especially in regard to the promotion of inter-company projects [see Maino 2012b]. The experiment of the conciliation grants has instead raised doubts because of the difficulty of selecting beneficiaries caused by excessively rigid criteria. In regard to the personal services grant, its small amount and its duration limited to eight months in the child's first year of life have drastically reduced its attractiveness to new mothers. Moreover, interviews with the potential beneficiaries showed that, if the grant is not combined with greater flexibility in the workplace, it is not enough in itself to enable family/work conciliation in such a delicate phase of the life-cycle.

## 6. Challenges and prospects for a multi-level and multi-actor policy

The Lombardy regional government's initiative on work-life conciliation is indubitably ambitious, and it raises numerous and diverse challenges. Because it has begun only recently, and bearing in mind that the resignation of the executive council in November 2012 may jeopardize the entire process, an overall evaluation of the project is not yet possible. However, it is worth mentioning the fact that by the end of 2012 the time horizon of these measures was extended to the second half of 2013<sup>18</sup>.

At this stage, however, some considerations can be made in regard to the foregoing analysis of the territorial conciliation networks, which represent one of the project's key components. In fact, a comparative review of monitoring plans and reports allows us to highlight some issues crucial for the strategy's effectiveness in the medium-long term. With reference to governance aspects, the networks have been able to involve a broad array of actors with diverse abilities, resources and interests. The strategy to raise awareness and widespread information about conciliation between family responsibilities and labour-market participation has therefore begun. However, assessment of its results requires a longer period of maturation essential for such far-reaching cultural, organizational, and institutional changes for public actors, but also for private ones – households and firms especially.

Concerning the project as a whole, the thirteen conciliation networks have exhibited marked differences in regard to both commitment to constructing the network and the results in terms of actions and policy initiatives. The main challenge for the regional government is therefore that of encouraging further peer-review in order to disseminate expertise and good practices in areas less endowed with them. Also necessary is a strategy of communication, information and sensitization on these themes which urges to be more effective and targeted, in order to help overcome the obstacles encountered by numerous networks in involving firms – especially smaller ones – in conciliation initiatives.

With reference to policy innovation, a crucial aspect concerns integration and

---

<sup>18</sup> See DGR no. 12138 of December 13, 2012 "*Approvazione delle indicazioni per la partecipazione alle iniziative di welfare aziendale e interaziendale e alla dote conciliazione servizi alla persona*".

coordination. At the regional level, this concerns primarily the multitude of projects run by municipalities at the local level. At local level, the challenge instead concerns integration between zonal social planning and the networks in order to prevent the proliferation of piecemeal micro-interventions, and to direct efforts and resources towards shared goals.

## References

Ascoli, U. and Ranci, C. (Eds.) [2002], *Dilemmas of the Welfare Mix: The New Structure of Welfare in an Era of Privatization*, New York, Kluwer Academic.

Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) [2011], *Empowering people, driving change: Social innovation in the European Union*, Bruxelles, European Commission.

Canale, L. [2012], *Approvato il Piano nazionale per la famiglia*, in [www.secondo.welfare.it](http://www.secondo.welfare.it), 1 July 2012.

Canale, L. [2013], *Unione Europea, innovazione sociale e secondo welfare*, in “Working Paper-2WEL”, no. 1, download at [www.secondo.welfare.it](http://www.secondo.welfare.it).

Carabelli, C. and Facchini, C. (Eds.) [2011], ***Il modello lombardo di welfare. Continuità, riassetamenti, prospettive***, Milano, Franco Angeli.

CNEL [2010], *Percorsi locali di riforma del welfare e integrazione delle politiche sociali*, Roma.

Commissione europea [2010], *Europa 2020. Una strategia per una crescita intelligente, sostenibile e inclusiva*, Bruxelles, COM(2010) 2020.

Ferrera, M. [1998], *Le trappole del welfare*, Bologna, Il Mulino.

Ferrera, M. [2010a], *From the Welfare State to the Social Investment State*, WP/LPF 1/10, Torino, Centro di Ricerca e Documentazione Luigi Einaudi.

Ferrera, M. [2010b], *Fondazioni e welfare di comunità*, in ACRI, *Quindicesimo rapporto sulle fondazioni di origine bancaria*, supplemento a “Il risparmio”, no. 3, pp. 171-203.

Ferrera, M. [2012a], *Idee e crescita: il circolo virtuoso del terziario sociale*, Corriere della Sera, 16 April.

Ferrera, M. [2012b], *L'analisi delle politiche sociali e del welfare state*, in M. Ferrera (Ed.), *Le politiche sociali*, Bologna, Il Mulino, pp. 11-54.

Ferrera, M. and Maino, F. [2012], *Quali prospettive per il Secondo Welfare?*, in M. Bray and M. Granata (Eds.), *L'economia sociale: una risposta alla crisi*, Roma, Solaris, pp. 125-134.



- Gatti, D., Omodei, A. and L. Papetti [2012], *Pari opportunità e conciliazione nel Piano nazionale per la famiglia*, in [www.secondowelfare.it](http://www.secondowelfare.it), 2 July 2012.
- Giddens, A. [1998], *The Third Way: the renewal of social democracy*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Goldsmith, S. [2010], *The Power of Social Innovation*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.
- Gori, C. (Ed.) [2005], *Politiche sociali di centro-destra. La riforma del welfare lombardo*, Roma, Carocci.
- Graziano, P. and Madama I. [2011], *The Dark Side of the (Pink) Moon. The Role of Europe in the Recent Evolution of Italian Conciliation Policies*, in “*European Journal of Social Security*”, Special Issue, vol. 13/1.
- Greve, B. (Ed.) [2012], *The Times They Are Changing? Crisis and The Welfare State*, Wiley-Blackwell.
- Jenson, J. [2010], *Diffusing Ideas for After Neoliberalism. The Social Investment Perspective in Europe and Latin America*, in “*Global Social Policy*”, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 59-84.
- Kazepov, Y. (Ed.) [2009], *La dimensione territoriale delle politiche sociali in Italia*, Roma, Carocci.
- Keating, M. [1998], *The New Regionalism in Western Europe: Territorial Restructuring and Political Change*, Cheltenham, Elgar.
- Kooiman, J. (Ed.) [1993], *Modern governance*, London Sage.
- Maino, F. [2001], *La politica sanitaria*, Bologna, il Mulino.
- Maino, F. [2012a], *Il secondo welfare: contorni teorici ed esperienze esemplificative*, in “*la Rivista delle Politiche Sociali*”, no. 4, pp. 167-182.
- Maino, F. [2012b], *Regione Lombardia, un laboratorio innovativo di politiche di conciliazione*, in “*AREL - Europa, Lavoro, Economia*”, no. 4-5, pp. 38-45.
- Morel, N., Palier, B. and Palme, J. (Eds.) [2011], *Towards a social investment welfare state? Ideas, policies and challenges*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- Naldini, M. [2003], *The Family in the Mediterranean Welfare State*, London, Cass.
- Neri, S. [2010], *Il mercato preso sul serio?*, Paper presented at the XXIV Conve-

gno Sisp, Venezia, 16-18 September 2010.

Osborne, S., Chew, C. and McLaughlin, K. [2008], *The innovative capacity of voluntary organizations and the provision of public services. A longitudinal approach*, in “Public Management Review”, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 51-70.

Pesenti, L. [2008], *Politiche sociali e sussidiarietà. I modelli, gli attori, le esperienze*, Roma, Edizioni Lavoro.

Pierson P. [1998], *Irresistible forces, immovable objects: Post-industrial welfare state confront permanent austerity*, in “Journal of European Public Policy”, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 539-560.

Saraceno, C. [2003], *Mutamenti della famiglia e politiche sociali in Italia*, Bologna, Il Mulino.

Visentini, A. [2012], *Imprese, sistema economico e governance territoriale nel nuovo Piano nazionale per la famiglia*, in [www.secondo.welfare.it](http://www.secondo.welfare.it), 3 July 2012.



**Fondazione**  
**Volontariato**  
**e Partecipazione**

via A. Catalani 158

55100 Lucca

Tel. +39 0583 587645

Fax +39 0583 312748

E-mail [info@volontariatoepartecipazione.eu](mailto:info@volontariatoepartecipazione.eu)

[www.volontariatoepartecipazione.eu](http://www.volontariatoepartecipazione.eu)