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LAB4GE

Learn Abroad to do better at Home for Gender Equality



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WELCOME

Dear Reader,

Since our last Newsletter, we have organised our LAB4GE Transnational Midterm Evaluation Meeting in Bucharest, Romania.

The meeting has brought together partners from the partnership together for the first time since the project has started. During the meeting, we were able to discuss the first year of project implementation and plan our next steps. Also, we were able to plan our first participatory visit in Denmark and continue our work on our online catalogue of best practices which will offer opportunities to deeply understand the topic, to develop broader knowledge, skills and competencies to foster social development and improve female entrepreneurial performances in Europe.

The Learning Abroad to do Better at home for Gender Equality project or simply LAB4GE, is a KA2 Strategic partnership project supported by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

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WHAT WE CAN OFFER WITH THIS NEWSLETTER?

The first edition of our LAB4GE Newsletter was a diverse selection of news from all the partner countries, with statistics, reports, methodologies, good practices and more.

Now we are releasing our second newsletter, which focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on women, specifically on working women.

Through a number of partnership meetings, the partnership agreed on the topic of this newsletter.

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on everyone in society, but we wanted to explore how the pandemic has affected the fight for gender equality. As a partnership, we believe that we can utilise the research that we have discovered below in order to ensure that we continue to effectively strive towards gender equality.

We hope you will find the newsletter useful and stay in touch with our team!

This newsletter has again been a collaboration between 6 organisations, in 6 different countries and as such, we have 6 different articles from interesting and international perspectives:

- Anthropolis Association (Hungary)
- Asfar (United Kingdom)
- Associazione Sud (Italy)
- InterCollege APS (Denmark)
- International Internships (Romania)
- I-box (Spain)



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This Newsletter focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on women, specifically on working women.

THE EFFECT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON WOMEN IS SEVERE - THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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The socio-economic effects of the pandemic fell disproportionately on women, and the negative economic impact has long-lasting effects for them.”

Since the pandemic outbreak, several reports have highlighted its effects on men, women, and children. A majority of reports agree that the socio-economic effects of the pandemic fell disproportionately on women, and the negative economic impact has long-lasting effects for them. Data about the effects and extent of the pandemic's impact is still emerging; however, it is already clear that the already existing gender inequalities worsened the conditions for women both in the domain of work and home.

All over Europe and globally, the pandemic has negatively affected women's lives in different ways. They experienced employment loss, income loss, and reduced paid working hours while their share in unpaid and domestic work increased. Coping with the increased burden has been particularly difficult for already vulnerable groups such as single mothers, young, low-educated and migrant women, or women who have vulnerable labour market positions, such as temporary, self-employed and part-time work.

Also, the majority of the health care workers are women, who were heavily hit by the pandemic in the first place, as their exposure to Coronavirus was high. They were at a greater risk for contracting the virus, their working conditions worsened with longer working hours, and their psychological well-being was negatively affected.

The lockdowns, in general, resulted in a significant decline in total employment both for women and men in the 27 Member States. Many sectors and jobs (except the ICT-related sectors, where employment growth was detected), such as tourism, retail, domestic work, clothing manufacturing, and culture, have not recovered fully despite the member states' adopted employment and income support measures.

Women suffered heavy job losses as they are make up the majority of the workforce in these sectors. An important aspect of the gender inequalities during the pandemic is the under representation of women in decision-making processes; hence their voices and ideas are not included in decisions on an equal basis.

Telework has become widespread, which was not an entirely new working arrangement, but it has created new challenges, difficulties and probably new opportunities for improving gender equality.

The pandemic increased the need for home care both for women and men. Especially for those, who did telework, the lockdowns created a new situation. Household members started to share home duties on a larger scale and men's participation in domestic work increased.

However, it is also true that women usually take a larger share of the unpaid domestic and home care in most EU countries. However, during the pandemic, women's responsibilities at home increased further despite men taking on more care responsibilities than before. In addition, new forms of care work appeared for parents, such as online schooling. Also, more responsibility for home care goes hand in hand with increasing work-life balance pressures. Taking responsibility for more unpaid work likely forced women to reduce work hours which has long-lasting consequences for their labour market prospects, including career progression.

Moreover, it has been well-documented that the pandemic significantly increased gender-based violence and discrimination against women.

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Many Member States introduced various support systems to potential victims, but many did not. Reports on domestic violence are clear that more needs to be done in times of crisis, especially in lockdowns when social distancing is implemented.

Support services and NGOs agree that all countries should implement plans for protecting potential victims, shelters should be reinforced, services need more funding and resources for reaching victims in need.

Hence, the Covid-19 pandemic has greatly affected the lives of the people in Europe, especially disadvantaged women and marginalized groups. So, with the rising inequalities, the UN's achievement of sustainable development goals (2030) seems difficult to achieve; therefore, governments should develop and implement better and more inclusive policies to reduce gender inequalities in all sectors of life in more effective ways. The gendered impact of this pandemic is a major call for all policymakers and organizations. Given the worsening of the COVID-19 crisis, women will continue to be victims of it unless and until steps to bridge the gender gap are taken.

Sources:

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ASFAR

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COVID-19 AND THE WORKING WOMEN IN THE UK

It is clear that, in the UK, lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic was a great disruptor of the lives of working women.

It is undeniable that the COVID-19 pandemic affected almost everyone in the UK and beyond in at least one aspect of their life. Despite the UK being a developed country with a well-equipped healthcare infrastructure, it still has the sixth largest total death toll as a proportion of the population so far - although this is now being mitigated by the strength of the vaccination programme. The UK Government was criticised earlier this year and last year for a lockdown that was less stringent than other countries, with many blaming Prime Minister Boris Johnson for a less successful control of the spread of the virus. For example, France had a confinement strategy which required people to have official documentation to leave the house, and fines which went up to €135, and €1,500 for retreat offenders. Even more extreme was Jordan's measures which meant a one-year prison sentence for those not abiding by the laws.



The moves made by the government to tackle COVID-19 have been criticised repeatedly by the British public who have been through months of lockdown, and constantly tantalised with the possibility of a relaxation of lockdown, before the amendments were revoked.

This has left a sense of general frustration and disappointment in a society which has been stuck at home on-and-off for almost a year and a half.

Whilst almost every life in the UK was impacted by the regular lockdowns and sporadically changing rules, the lives of women have been seen to be disproportionately affected compared to men's; in particular, working women in the UK have seen great detriment to their jobs. These findings in the social scientific research that have emerged within a global pandemic can be attributed to a plethora of reasons, and indeed can be tackled in various ways to help working women as they regain autonomy and the pandemic rules lift.

School Closures

In the UK, schools were closed from the 20th of March, with a brief reopening in mid-June, and then mass closures struck until the end of February 2021. Whilst schools and universities were offering online classes, the parents of primary school children were asked (or indeed instructed) to homeschool their children and encourage them to join occasional online classes led by their teachers. These school closures suddenly placed a huge burden on parents to educate their own children, whilst somehow continuing to work - sometimes from home and sometimes not.

What this issue presented to many parents across the UK was that it was nearly impossible for them to look after and home school their children whilst they were still in full-time employment, meaning many working parents had to rearrange their lifestyle around these government policies.

With hindsight, it is evident that these regulations disproportionately affected women, and meant many working women's lives were changed during the lockdown.

ONS suggests that women took on more homeschooling than men on average, and thus stayed at home for greater proportions of time than male counterparts. Accordingly, many women were forced to give up their job or take furlough and unpaid leave; a study for PLOS Climate showed that it was more likely to be the mother than the father who reduced working hours (21% mother only vs. 11% father only) or changed employment schedules (32% mother only vs. 18% father only). These statistics indicate that women are still considered to be the primary carer for children (even of school age) and hence their careers were put on hold more so than men's in order to carry out this duty.

Interestingly, the UK government published an advert, advocating for people to stay at home to stop the spread of the virus, which was later deemed to be sexist: the advert was issued and then withdrawn by the government, because it depicted "women home schooling children and doing domestic chores, while the only man featured was depicted relaxing on a sofa." (BBC News, 28.1.21). This advert, although amusing, is indicative of the underlying assumptions that women are responsible for the domestic and child caring chores, especially amid the pandemic.



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Job Sectors

Not only did women in the UK experience greater job losses because of the necessity for child care and education, but they were also more affected by the economic crash that hit during the pandemic, because of the sectors of work they more commonly occupy.

The International Labour Organisation (Policy Brief, 2020) rated four labour sectors to be at risk of being most severely impacted by COVID-19 regarding job losses and working hours; namely, these were accommodation and food services, real estate, business and administrative activities, manufacturing and the wholesale-retail trade.

It was found that in 2020, 41% of working women were employed in these sectors, compared to 35% of men. The ILO, therefore, concluded that women were more likely to struggle with unemployment and reduced working hours than men. Not only were women disproportionately affected by the sectors in which they were employed, but in particular many Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women were subject to insecurity in their jobs during the pandemic.

The House of Commons Women and Inequality Committee (2021) found that those in insecure work, including zero-hour contracts and temporary positions offered greater falls in earnings and hours working than those in secure contracts.

The intersectionality of the ways in which working women have been negatively affected by the pandemic means that women have been subject to discrimination not only as a result of gender but also due to ethnicity, race, class, disabilities and age.

Consequences and Effects

Mental Health and Well-being

The affects of women being less able to work has had several knock-on effects through many areas of their lives that go beyond just financial burdens. It should be noted that, whilst these instances are applicable in the UK, it is likely such phenomena occurred elsewhere in the world as well, where similar situations of isolation occurred.

As a result of women using their jobs, reducing their working hours, and having to take on new child care roles, women's movements were suddenly restricted; for many women, the change happened within a few days, as they went from working part or full time, to being unable to leave their house.

The results of these sudden, and drastic changes as the UK went into lockdown were diverse and problematic; many people believed (according to the very first announcement made in March 2020) that the lockdown would only be in place for a few weeks, and yet as the lockdowns got stricter and longer, the seemingly unending incarceration took its toll on people's mental health.

In the case of working women in particular, mental health saw a huge decline, often attributed to staying in indoors for long periods, the inability to socialise, the pressure of home-schooling and their minds not being stimulated by work as they would have been previously.

In May 2021, Deloitte reported that women felt their work-life balance was much worse as a result of the pandemic and, crucially, just 27% of the women in the report said they had good mental health, compared with 68% prior to the pandemic. Jackie Henry, from People and Purpose at Deloitte UK, said: "The last year has been a 'perfect storm' for many women facing increased workloads and greater responsibilities at home and a blurring of the boundaries between the two." Indeed, the report concluded that the aforementioned mixture of factor was leading to great dissatisfaction amongst working women.

It has become evident that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges of working from home, child care, domestic tasks and the possibility of redundancy have had huge knock-on effects, and that this has affected women more so than men, as they have been more likely to lose their jobs, as well as being dubbed the primary carer.

Domestic Abuse

Another issue prevalent in the UK, and indeed in many other countries, was the rise in domestic abuse cases that swept through households during the pandemic.

The Women's Resource Centre in the UK found that "The UK's National Domestic Abuse line has seen a 25% increase in online requests and calls since the lockdown". The cause of this is seen to be linked directly to increased hours staying at home and being unable to leave: between April and June 2020, there was an 8.1% increase in abuse from current partners, a 17.1% increase from family members and a decline of 11.4% in abuse experienced by former partners (LSE and Metropolitan Police).

From such statistics it becomes clear that being in an enclosed space for longer periods of time with those one lives with, is a clear cause of domestic abuse increasing.

There are several stories of women being perpetrated against in their own homes, and feelings of relief that lockdown was ending. Therefore, women - many of whom would have been working full or part-time pre-lockdown - were exposed to new dangers from their family and partners during the pandemic.

Conclusions

Whilst this article has highlighted some of the unfortunate ways in which working women have been affected during COVID-19, it should be noted that, as a result, many online platforms, charities and social organisations have been trying to mitigate these statistics and help the women who have been particularly affected by these phenomena.

It is clear that, in the UK as well as other places around the world, lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic was a great disruptor of the lives of working women. As we look forward and lockdown eases, the questions to be asking next are how these factors may impact women and our society long-term, and can we learn from the mistakes that were made?



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ASSOCIAZIONE SUD

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According to IPSOS data, it is mainly women who are demanding measures in favour of a better balance between work and family and greater sharing of domestic work and care with fathers. But the majority of men are also in favour.

COVID IN ITALY: THE HARDEST CRISIS FOR WOMEN IN A COUNTRY STILL WITHOUT EQUALITY

According to the International Monetary Fund, the pandemic has had a strong negative impact on female and youth employment. According to estimates by the McKinsey Global Institute, which estimates the probability of losing a job for a woman 1.8 times greater than for a man, the lack of measures that take into account gender differences could reduce global GDP growth by 1,000. billions of dollars in 2030. On the contrary, adopting measures aimed at combating gender inequalities could increase the world GDP in 2030 by as much as 13,000 billion dollars.

The pandemic also negatively affected the fertility choices of families (Luppi et al., 2020; Arpino et al., 2020). As expected, a positive relationship emerges between fertility and female employment, driven by women's income and context. In fact, the situation of economic, personal and country uncertainty pushes individuals to postpone the choice of fertility. According to data from the IPSOS survey, 43% of women who had planned or considered having a child have not yet achieved it.



79% of them say they have postponed or temporarily abandoned the idea of having a child due to the pandemic.

According to initial evidence, female leadership seems to have emerged strengthened from the test of the pandemic. The health crisis has in fact brought with it the need for often new and non-ordinary measures and policies. Although the management of the crisis has largely been male, it appears that women have achieved the best results. Coscieme et al. (2020) show that, in countries with female heads of government, there have been fewer deaths and lower peaks of infections. Another study, conducted by Garikipati and Khambhampati (2020), uses a dataset with 194 countries, checking for characteristics such as GDP per capita and the level of gender equality, to show that female pandemic management has led to fewer cases of COVID-19 and fewer deaths. From the United States, on the other hand, research by Sergent and Stajkovic (2020) shows that once again the gender of the state governors matters: the governors applied the restrictive measures before their corresponding men and their states had fewer deaths from COVID-19. Finally, Prophet (2020), using the University of Oxford COVID-19 Response Tracker dataset, which records day-to-day policies implemented to combat the pandemic, finds that women-led countries have been more generous in income support than to those led by men.

What about in Italy?

During the pandemic, nearly one in two Italian working women encountered difficulties in balancing work and private life.

According to the recent IPSOS survey conducted for Laboratorio Futuro more than one in five women have failed to look for work in the last year despite having planned to do so. Women (40%), more than men (36%), fear losing their jobs due to the crisis triggered by the health emergency.

The economic crisis caused by the pandemic has affected sectors of the economy very unevenly. The most affected by far was that of services, which in Italy account for about 60% of male jobs and 85% of female jobs (OECD, 2020). In this sense, it is possible to speak of she-cession, a female recession, unlike the man-cession that had occurred with the previous economic crises and which had mainly affected the industrial sector, with a male majority.

Female employment, already at minimum levels in Italy compared to the rest of the European Union, has been affected, decreasing by more than one percentage point from 2019 to 2020. At the same time, women have been at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic.

The so-called "essential" jobs also include supermarket workers who in about 82% of cases are women.

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 ISTAT
 (National
 Institute of
 Statistic) more
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 million
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 home in smart
 working.*

While the loss of jobs has largely affected women, the segregation of female work in the sectors most exposed to COVID (and among the worst paid) has also made them protagonists in the fight against the pandemic.

At home, the situation seems to be no different. According to ISTAT (National Institute of Statistic) more than four million Italians have worked from home in smart working. While working from home could be an advantage for women in normal times (Angelici and Prophet, 2020), this was not the case during the pandemic. Thanks also to one of the longest school closures in Europe, Italian women have had to shoulder an extraordinary load of domestic work and care: according to a study by Del Boca et al. (2020), more than two in three working women said they spent more time on housework and care during the pandemic.

The context appears even more serious if we consider the increase in telephone calls to the public utility number against violence and stalking 1522: according to ISTAT, in 2020 the calls increased by 79.5% compared to 2019. Considering the period from March to June 2020, calls to 1522 were more than double compared to 2019: that of gender-based violence is the shadow pandemic, the other side of the recession for women.

In the next session we illustrate the main elements that characterize the scenario of gender equality in Italy one year after the pandemic: the challenges on the labor market, in education, in the family and culture. The picture that emerges highlights great difficulties in making progress towards gender equality.

Faced with this scenario, the policies in place will be important to re-establish gender equality whose value is particularly relevant in the period of the pandemic.

The work

In Italy, less than one in two women works. Even before the pandemic, the female employment rate in Italy (population 15-64 years old) was among the lowest in Europe, equal to 50.1%, against a male rate of 68%. According to data from the World Bank, in 2019 84.6% of women employed in Italy worked in the service sector, the most affected by the pandemic.

In 2020, the employment rate fell, reaching 48.4% in the second quarter of the year, the worst quarterly figure since 2017. Overall, in 2020 the female employment rate dropped by 1.1 percentage points, falling to 49.1%. For men, the decline in employment was more contained: with 0.8 percentage points less, the male employment rate in 2020 fell to 67.2%. We are among the last in Europe for female employment, a sadly stable situation for at least a decade.

Even though the effect of the pandemic has hit female employment in all areas of the country, territorial differences remain marked. While the North of the country is not far from the European average, the South is very far away: in the South, less than one in three women is employed.

In 2020, according to ISTAT (National Institute of Statistic), 444,000 jobs were lost, 72.9% of which (324,000) belonged to women. From February 2020 to February 2021, the total number of jobs lost by women was 412,000, 4.2% of the total number of female jobs.

Education

Education also faces the challenges of the pandemic. In Italy, women are more educated than men: out of 100 boys who graduate, 60 are girls and 40 are boys. It is not just a quantitative element. According to the IPSOS survey, 88% of working women and 86% of non-working women say they have pursued their studies with a lot of effort, while for men these percentages are respectively 83% and 79%.

However, the reality is still full of stereotypes, which underlie the disciplinary choices of boys and girls. According to data from the IPSOS survey, 21.7% of men and 16.8% of women strongly or fairly agree with the idea that girls are, in fact, less likely than boys to study science subjects.

The opinion "women are not suitable for careers in the scientific field" is shared, in whole or in part, by 18.5% of men and 13.3% of women. At the same time, just over two in five men and women believe that universities should provide facilities for girls who choose to study STEM disciplines. Men (43.4%) more than women (37.3%) believe that parents play a role in hindering daughters from pursuing scientific studies.

The percentage of participants who had difficulty with math, physics or chemistry in high school are quite different between the two genders, particularly when comparing working men and women. On the other hand, among the unemployed, the percentage of men who have had difficulty with mathematics is higher than that of women.

The shortage of women in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) subjects, who are the highest paid on the job market and also those most in demand by the jobs of the future, has become a real emergency. Having more women educated in STEM would certainly help improve the gender gap. But it is not enough if the general context is not favourable. The educational choices themselves arise in a context in which the role of the family and social norms do not favour equality between men and women.

The role of information and communication technologies was crucial during the pandemic. With lockdowns and social distancing measures, digital assets have often been a crucial factor in the survival of businesses and jobs and, once again, women appear to have been disadvantaged.

According to the European Commission's Women in Digital Scoreboard, which measures female participation in the digital economy, Italy is among the last in Europe. Participation is measured on three lines:

- use of the internet;
- the skills in using it;
- the dissemination of specialist skills on technologies and STEM graduates in the population.

Women continue to use the internet less and worse than men: the biggest gap is in online banking: only 43% of women (versus 53% of men) use them.

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38% of women and 45% of men report having basic digital skills. In the 20-29 age group, male STEM graduates (18.4%) in Italy are almost 6 percentage points more than women (12.5%), and in any case well below the European average, where gender gap is considerably more pronounced (12 percentage points).

Family relationships

Italy is characterized by a strong asymmetry between men and women in domestic work and care work. According to data from the IPSOS survey, mothers are always the primary caregivers for their children, both in preschool and school age. The care of children up to 5 years of age is mainly the responsibility of the mothers. Grandparents are a fundamental figure especially for working women: more than 20% of mothers indicate grandparents as the main caregivers of their children. For children aged 6 to 14, mothers are the predominant figure (followed by mother and father jointly) both during school hours (42%) and after school hours (41%). It is the fathers who take care of their children respectively in 8% and 7% of cases. It is interesting to note that among the most opposed to nursery schools we find women who do not work and men who work.

The coronavirus emergency has overwhelmed Italian families and requires a necessary rethinking of the roles of men and women within the family. The removal of grandparents and the closure of schools have increased the burden of care that seems to have remained mainly on women: more than two out of three working women said they had devoted more time to housework and care during the pandemic.

According to the IPSOS survey, one in two workers worked in smart working at least for a period, with no significant differences between men and women. Smart working can help rebalance the roles of men and women in the family if it encourages greater involvement of men in domestic and care activities. An effect that is currently not very visible, also because what we experienced during the pandemic is not a real smart working or flexible work in time and space, but simply working from home.

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The pandemic has placed an additional burden on, and put at risk, frontline workers such as health and social care employees, shopkeepers, etc.

Culture

The cultural context is the most difficult obstacle to overcome. The IPSOS survey allows us to investigate some interesting aspects. Let's start with the perceptions of the main reasons why women, on average, earn less than men.

Gender discrimination is indicated by 65% of men and 71% of women. More than one in four women say that, unlike men, women are more absent from work for traditional roles of caring for children and the elderly. Finally, 11% of participants believe that among the causes of the wage gap there is also the choice of studies in less profitable sectors. Considering their working reality, almost one in two women and about one in three men say that men earn more than women for the same job. For 71% of women and 61% of men who work, the difficulty in accessing managerial roles is due to gender discrimination. Again, the second most cited cause is the disproportion in the female care workload.

Gender policies

The health crisis triggered by Covid quickly turned into a job crisis, especially in the service sector, where the vast majority of Italian women work. The public policies implemented to counter the effects of the pandemic must also be analyzed from a gender perspective. For example, in a country like Italy, school closures have certainly had a much stronger impact on the care burden for women than for men.

On April 30, 2021, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), developed by Italy to obtain European Next Generation EU funds, was sent to the European Commission. Among its primary objectives is gender equality: the PNRR will mainly move on two directives to combat the inequalities still very present in the country. On the one hand, 3.6 billion will be allocated to upgrading nursery schools and 1 billion will go to preschools to reduce the gaps between the North and South of the country. On the other hand, the Plan provides for direct investments to encourage female employment, such as the "women's business fund", whose implementation measures are being defined, and gender certification for businesses.

All reforms must be evaluated ex-ante in their role of reducing the gender gap: the goal is to increase the female employment rate by 0.9% in 2021, 2.6% in 2022 and 3.4% in 2023. However, what goal are we setting ourselves in terms of gender equality in Italy in the long run?

It is interesting to understand what are the perceptions of men and women on policies to promote gender equality. According to IPSOS data, it is mainly women who are demanding measures in favour of a better balance between work and family and greater sharing of domestic work and care with fathers. But the majority of men are also in favour.

This new role of the fathers is the most positive result of the survey.

Source: Laboratorio Futuro - Istituto Toniolo (<https://bit.ly/3npE6al>)



I-BOX CREATE

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Women are less likely to become entrepreneurs because they face more obstacles to starting a business, according to a UN report. In times of COVID-19 it is important to motivate them to undertake when it is difficult for them to find a job.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE FACE OF COVID19: AN EXAMPLE OF COURAGE FROM SPAIN

Although research suggests that COVID-19 has had a heavier health impact on men, the economic impact of the pandemic has been suffered to a greater degree by women, and especially by female entrepreneurs. The resultant crisis is so bad that it has even been referred to as a “she-cession” by business analysts. Women were already torn between housework and paid work. Additionally, with the pandemic, a new journey was created that consumes time and energy. We refer to the supervision of the distance education of the children. School closures meant that working mothers were forced to juggle full-time childcare alongside their job, which had an adverse impact on work-life balance.



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Businesses created by women expand more slowly and tend to be smaller. However, many female entrepreneurs have demonstrated resourcefulness and innovation in their responses to these structural and societal barriers. Women-owned enterprises are statistically more likely to operate within the sectors that were most adversely affected by the pandemic. **More than 50% of female entrepreneurs work in the wholesale/retail trade**, for example, which **suffered greatly decreased demand due to shutdowns**. Quarantine measures made in-person shopping impossible, reducing the possibility of making sales. In addition, the economic impact of the pandemic more generally meant that potential customers were less likely to have disposable income available to spend. Previous customers were often forced to reconsider their financial priorities as job losses and pay-cuts became widespread.

Women are less likely to become entrepreneurs because they face more obstacles to starting a business, according to a UN report. In times of COVID-19 it is important to motivate them to undertake when it is difficult for them to find a job.

When they seek to reinvent themselves at work, especially in a context of a pandemic such as the current one in which many have been left without a job, the majority discard to undertake and prefer to look for work for others in the same sector, even if they have to perform different functions. However, most men are more inclined to entrepreneurship in the same situation, according to the White Paper on professional reinvention, recently prepared by the Work of the Future Center at EAE Business School.

It remains to be seen if and how female entrepreneurs will “bounce back” following the “she-cession” of the pandemic. And it is uncertain how long the recovery process will take. The economic landscape is certainly challenging; however, women are accustomed to facing increased challenges when they launch a business venture. What’s clear is that changes could be made at all levels of society to better assist their efforts. A more equal distribution of household tasks, greater financial backing from banks and support to diversify into more sustainable sectors, could make a huge difference to their ongoing success.

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More than
50% of female
entrepreneurs
work in the
wholesale/
retail trade,
for example,
which
suffered
greatly
decreased
demand due
to shutdowns.”



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While in 2020, the Danish government set aside a historically large amount of money for the fight against violence and for supporting those in need, more work needs to be done.

COVID-19 EFFECTS ON WOMEN IN DENMARK

Lockdowns due to covid-19 have caused a 30% increase in the number of calls to the national helpline for victims of violence.

When the Danish Prime Minister announced the lockdown of society in March last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several organisations in Denmark working on domestic violence warned that the new situation could cause an increase in cases and will make it harder for victims to reach out for help and guidance.

Statistics show that there are already 38,000 women in Denmark every year, who are subject to physical violence committed by their partners. And the numbers are double for those, who report that they have been psychologically abused. Thus, there is already a great need for help, advice and treatment, however, the corona crisis has made it far more difficult to receive the right kind of help.

During the lockdown, a large number of specialised services for people who have been subjected to violence were closed, which meant that there were longer waiting lists for receiving help than there were before the crisis.



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Furthermore, the organisation “Lev under Vold” (Live without Violence) have said that, immediately after the lockdown was announced in the middle of March, they experienced a decline in the number of calls on the national hotline for violence.

This is probably because it is harder to call for help if you are with the abusive partner 24 hours a day,” says Sine Gregersen, who says that a woman subjected to violence, said she could not call for a whole week because her partner was working from home.

However, when restrictions were lifted in early May, the same organisation noticed a 30% increase in the number of inquiries.

While in 2020, the Danish government set aside a historically large amount of money for the fight against violence and for supporting those in need, more work needs to be done. There is an extraordinary need for us as a society to learn from the corona crisis and make use of the experience we have gained in this specific time, in order to rethink existing efforts and continue helping in the best possible way.

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More women have lost jobs than men, which has led to a significant increase in income disparities between women and men.



InterCollege

INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIP

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THE EFFECTS OF COVID- 19 ON THE ROMANIAN LABOR MARKET

For almost a year since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (12th December 2019) in downtown Wuhan, China, it has spread and now affects all states of the world. The World Health Organization said the coronavirus outbreak became a pandemic three months after its onset on 11th March 2020 [1]. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world were not as severe from a health point of view as predicted at the beginning, but they were severe from an economic point of view.

The limitation of the health effects can also be explained by the radical economic measures applied by the governments of the countries to eradicate this pandemic. The importance of studying the effects of the pandemic on the labour market lies precisely in these imposed measures, with a major impact especially in developing countries, where the effects of economic crises are felt more strongly and over a longer period of time. This article fills the gap by bringing new empirical evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon a developing country, using survey analysis. Romania's case is discussed as an example of how government measures influence the labour market.

Romania is considered a special country for the subject of the labour market, both from the perspective of migration and the discrepancies between salaries in various sectors of activity, so it is worth conducting an in-depth analysis.

In Romania, there are divided opinions among the population regarding the measures taken by the government during the pandemic, some agreeing with them and others opposing.

On Romania, there are divided opinions among the population regarding the measures taken by the government during the pandemic, some agreeing with them and others opposing.



There are two main aspects regarding the labour market in Romania, but also outside it, which people support, namely: Romania is the country with the most emigrants in the European Union, with over 3 million Romanians living in the 27 member countries in 2019, and on the other hand, contrary to this statistical record, the unemployment rate in Romania was lower and lower, reaching 2.9%, before the health crisis.

Before the health crisis, in Romania, given the decrease of the population registered in this country, which directly contributes to the decrease of the labour resource, as well as to its ageing, there was the problem of insufficient labour in the national economies, and of these, agriculture was the most affected, with farmers complaining about the lack of labour.

The Romanian College of Physicians shows that in Romania, the COVID-19 epidemic evolved in the context of the epidemic in Western Europe, having common aspects, but also some peculiarities.

At the time of the appearance of the first case in Romania, there were already cases of COVID-19 in Western Europe: Italy (323 cases), France (14 cases), Germany (18 cases), Great Britain (13 cases), Spain (7 cases).

During that period, hundreds of thousands of Romanians began to return to the country from areas where the epidemic was ongoing. Some of them were infected with SARS-CoV-2. Between 26 February–18 March 2020, out of the 261 cases diagnosed in Romania, 127 (49%) were import cases: from Italy (66%), France, Germany and Spain (5%), Great Britain, Austria (by 4%) and 130 (49.1%) direct or indirect contacts of import cases.

The percentage decreased gradually, reaching 13% at the end of March.

The introduction of the state of emergency on 15 March 2020 contributed greatly to limiting the spread of SARS-Cov-2 infection among the population. However, this effect was achieved with a series of drastic restrictions on the labour market. Thus, economic analysts claim that large companies, employees and employers have been severely affected by the global coronavirus pandemic. They claim that according to the National Institute of Statistics, the hourly cost of labour in the second quarter of this year recorded a growth rate of 11.47% compared to the previous quarter and 16.11% compared to the same quarter of the previous year, mainly determined by the interruption of the activity in the context of COVID-19.

Gender inequality in the labour market during the pandemic is also revealed by a study conducted in Israel. Research shows that the coronavirus epidemic has not levelled gender inequality but, on the contrary, the consequences of the economic recession after coronavirus affects women much more severely than men, more women have lost jobs than men, which has led to a significant increase in income disparities between women and men. As a result, the economic downturn during the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected women's attachment to the labour market compared to men, both in terms of overall employment and working time.

Another important finding is that these negative effects on the economic situation of women were more evident among the youngest employees and the severity of the crisis in this age group is also reflected in their extremely pessimistic prospects for the future. Surprisingly, however, men and women in this age group are just as pessimistic. One possible explanation would be that this view is subjective and quite naive of women's economic prospects, probably because this is the first economic crisis they have experienced. Israeli researchers argue this conclusion by saying that older women in the cohorts, who experienced some economic slowdowns, such as after each major war or after the 2000 crisis and the 2008 financial crisis, are more realistic and understand that their prospects are not and cannot be equal to those of men

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The COVID-19 pandemic has an unprecedented impact on society around the world because as governments impose practices of social distancing and urge nonessential businesses to close to slow the spread of the outbreak

There are many who believe that the COVID-19 pandemic has an unprecedented impact on society around the world because as governments impose practices of social distancing and urge nonessential businesses to close to slow the spread of the outbreak, a major uncertainty about the effect that these measures will have on life and livelihood is born.

Research conducted during this period finds that demand for specific sectors, such as healthcare, is growing in recent weeks, while for other sectors such as air transport and tourism the demand for their services is evaporating.

The questionnaire was completed by a number of 548 respondents, and compared to the population of Romania in 2020, aged over 15 years (17,592,625), it can be established that the confidence interval is lower than the maximum accepted threshold of 5% (4.19%), at a 95% confidence level. Thus, it can be appreciated that this sample is representative, compared to the potential level of the workforce.

Out of the total respondents, 76.3% are female respondents (418 people), and 23.7% (130 people) are male respondents. About 89% (488 people) completed higher education, 10.6% (58 people) completed high school, and 1% (2 people) completed secondary school. Among the respondents, 65.3% (358 people) are between 18–29 years old, 17.2% between 30–39 years old, 12% between 40–49 years old, 5.5% between 50–59 years old years, and there were no responses for segments over 60 years.

Among the fields of activity in which the companies in which the respondents operate, we emphasize: education with 17%, finance and insurance with 13.3%, informatics, telecommunications with 11.5% and trade with 9.3%. Regarding income, almost 30% of respondents earn between 2001 and 3000 lei monthly, 21.9% earn between 3001–4000 lei, 15% earn over 6000 lei, 9.9% earn between 4001–5000 lei, 10.2% earn between 1001–2000 lei, 7.3% earn less than 1000 lei, and 5.8% earn between 5 and 6 thousand lei.

The first question, “What is your status on the labour market?”, aimed to determine the status of the respondent on the labour market.

Analyzing the status of respondents, from Figure 2, 83.6% of them are employees, which is distributed by gender as follows: 63.9% female (350 people) and 19.7% male (108 people). The next status, depending on the frequency of answers, is “looking for a job” with a total percentage of 10.2% of which 48 are women (8.8%) and 8 are men (1.5%). Out of the total number of respondents, 2.6% are unemployed, thus divided, 1.8% women and 0.7% men. The categories of student, entrepreneur, freelancer and student register between 0.4% and 0.7% of respondents.

The second question, “What is the field of the position you hold?”, aimed at identifying the field of the position held by the respondent. According to Figure 3, centralizing the answers to this question, it emerged that the field of the position held, with the highest frequency was financial accounting with 108 people, respectively 19.7%. The second field was education with 14.6% (80 people), followed by marketing with 9.9% (54 people), the technical field included 50 respondents (9.1%) and the sales field included 40 of respondents (7.3%).

In conclusion, we can say that the changes in the labour market have been and will be directly influenced by the evolution of the pandemic situation. It was an expected fact, with the novelty of our research being to highlight both the background and the perspective. In the future, we would see if the results obtained by us in this research will keep their image or will be completely reorganized.

Through this study, we wanted to create a static vision of active people in Romania, with the help of empirical research. As a limitation in determining the optimal impact of the health crisis on the Romanian labour market, it could be emphasized that the survey research was conducted in a fairly short time since the resumption of economic activities, perhaps this impact, under all its forms will be observed in a longer time. However, to provide a more realistic view, longitudinal research should be carried out following the present study, on a larger scale.



ANTHROPOLIS ASSOCIATION

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COVID-19 AND WOMEN IN HUNGARY

Hungary ranks 27th in the European Union on the Gender Equality Index and is 14.9 points below the EU's score (EIGE, 2020). Given these prevalent inequalities among men and women, it becomes evident that women in Hungary may have suffered from the disproportionate effects of the pandemic. Apart from the data on the previously existing gender inequality, available research results similarly strengthen that the pandemic affected women harder than men in Hungary.

One of the striking differences the pandemic caused for women and men emerged in the labour market. Statistical data shows that women lost more jobs than men, which is consistent with findings on global trends of job losses. In Hungary, a significant reason for women losing jobs can be found in the sectoral characteristics of the labour force. A large percentage of employees in sectors such as the tourism, food services, care or services industry are women. These sectors were hit by the pandemic the hardest, and given the large concentration of women in these sectors, many women lost their jobs.

However, similarly to global trends, both women and men gained more employment in the ICT and financial sectors. Self-employed workers are also at high risk of being badly impacted by the pandemic.

Statistical data shows that women lost more jobs than men, which is consistent with findings on global trends of job losses. In Hungary, a significant reason for women losing jobs can be found in the sectoral characteristics of the labour force.



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The number of self-employed people also declined due to the pandemic. Although self-employment is less common among women in Hungary, they tend to have smaller and less profitable enterprises, such as health, social services, and domestic services. Due to the type of their services, they are at higher risk of contracting the virus.

Following the governmental restrictions and lockdowns, many schools and kindergartens were closed on several occasions and for different lengths of time, and also many companies introduced home offices. Many parents worked from home and provided childcare simultaneously, including supporting home-schooling, and they had to perform all these tasks in a limited timeframe.

It also meant that parents had to perform childcare and provide home education without much institutional support. As a result, many women had to give up their jobs as nurseries and schools have been closed or at least reduced the working hours to care for and support the home education of their children.

Research by Fodor et al. (2021) and Geambaşu et al. (2021) indicates that as the country went into lockdown, there was an upwards increase in the number of hours spent on care work at home. Especially, homeschooling multiplied mothers' responsibilities at home. Men were also seen to be contributing to it, and they increased their contribution at the same rate as women.

Women were, however, already doing a lot more childcare before the pandemic; therefore, their contributions were significantly more than men's.

As a consequence, the burden of household work doubled for women. It was also a new experience for women that they have to perform as employees and provide care work simultaneously and in the same place. Nagy et al. (2020) also point out that the several and often conflicting responsibilities of paid work, permanent childcare, homeschooling-related duties and domestic work caused many women unexpected pressure, negatively affecting their mental health. Associated with the increased care work at home, women equally suffered from violence too. This situation was further exacerbated as the Hungarian government refused to ratify the Istanbul convention, directly protecting women from violence.

In particular, middle-class, highly educated women living in the capital and cities experienced that their care work duties significantly increased, suggesting that gender inequality increased the most among this group of women. The intersectional inequalities also had a disproportionate effect on women. For instance, first being from a Roma community and a woman in second place had put them in a much difficult position in Hungary. The Roma community in Hungary already suffered from substandard living conditions and systematic discrimination.

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*responsibilities
of paid work,
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The current COVID-19 pandemic has hit the Hungarian labour force hard and further exacerbated discrimination and gender inequality in the labour market.

Ethnographic-based research demonstrated how Roma communities in Hungary faced extreme vulnerability due to the ongoing pandemic, including limited access to testing facilities and general healthcare services, a drastic reduction in income, increasing level of debt, mental health challenges (which is typically ignored as a taboo), food insecurity, reduced access to online education, and an increasing level of hate crime against them.

Roma women experienced increasing responsibilities for facilitating homeschooling, and domestic violence cases were reported increasing, predominantly against women and children during the lockdown periods. It is sporadic cases among Roma women that they approach authorities or NGO's for assisting and helping them when they experience domestic violence.

Overall, the health crisis has forced many women to give up their jobs to care for and educate their children as nurseries and schools have been closed

Moreover, as women on average earn less than their partners, and both employers and society expect women to care for children and manage the household, men remain the sole breadwinner in many families.

The majority of those who have lost their jobs due to the economic impact of the public health crisis are women who have become entirely dependent on their partners or family members.

At the same time, the pandemic has placed an additional burden on, and put at risk, frontline workers such as health and social care employees, shopkeepers, etc.

In conclusion, the current COVID-19 pandemic has hit the Hungarian labour force hard and further exacerbated discrimination and gender inequality in the labour market. In addition, the pre-existing gender inequality in domestic work was also reinforced by the pandemic.



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