

Portuguese Analytical Paper

Regaining life for precarious women at work



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Executive Summary

This report was prepared in the context of the REGAL project, "Regaining the balance for life of precarious women at work". The project goals are: empowering women in a vulnerable situation to recognize their rights and their empowerment; raising awareness among policy makers, civil society, employers, workers in a vulnerable situation and disseminating alternative solutions co-built with women in a vulnerable situation.

It is a project financed by the European Commission and is promoted by the Belgian association BEWEGING. Each partner works with a specific audience according to its mission, vision and values. The GRDR Groupe de Recherche et Realisations pour le Development Rural will work with women with a migrant past; Focus Ireland will work with women who have already been homeless; EAPN – European Anti-Poverty Network Portugal will work with women in a vulnerable situation and / or poverty; the Romanian Foundation The Open Network for Community Development will work with women living in rural areas and the Belgian association BEWEGING will work with single parent families with young children.

The established partnership is based on the knowledge and experience of working with people in a vulnerable situation, as well as cooperation with trade unions, employers and policy makers.

Compared to other partners Portugal presents a legal framework and a set of answers that are more favourable to the reconciliation between professional, family and personal life. However, we realize that there are discrepancies between real life and legislation and possibilities of finding a better balance for women in a vulnerable situation that go against the fundamental principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which determines the promotion of equal opportunities for under-represented groups.

Foreword

First of all, we would like to thank the availability and participation of the women who actively integrated the focus groups held within the framework of the REGAL project, devoting a few hours of their weekly rest time to the discussion and critical reflection on work life balance.

Unfortunately, our work was abruptly interrupted at the beginning of the year 2020 by SARS-COV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic that took over individual and collective lives on an unprecedented global scale. Even so, we would like to thank all those who were able to talk to us again with resource to digital platforms because without their participation it would not have been possible to make this report.

Also thank the Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association for their support in contacting the participants and welcoming the initiatives. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you for the work carried out in the defence and promotion of the rights of people in a vulnerable situation and of the local community.

Finally, to recognize that the successive states of emergency we experienced during the year of 2020 and the civic duty of confinement that we still live at the moment leaves deep marks and does not allow the final product to be as profound as it was dreamed of at the launch of the project. The first state of emergency began in Portugal on March 19, under the Decree of the President of the Republic no. 14-A / 2020, of March 18. Due to two renovations, the state of emergency lasted until the 2nd of May, having ceased from that moment. From then on, the state of calamity came into force. Subsequently, the contingency situation in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon and the alert situation throughout the continental national territory was declared. On 6 November, a new state of emergency was declared, through Decree of the President of the Republic no. 51-U / 2020 of 6 November, for the entire national territory, with a duration of 15 days, which was renewed for another 15 days (under the terms of Decree of the President of the Republic no. 59-A / 2020, of 20 November, regulated by Decree no. 9/2020, of 21 November and,)), having been renewed again, for the same period, by the Decree of the President of the Republic no. 61-A / 2020, of 4 December.

In light of this reality, and the emerging needs, we seek to adjust the project activity and overcome the challenges posed by these demanding and complex times, namely through individual interviews on Microsoft Teams platform with some of the focus group participants. We leave in these words the possible contributions that we believe have the power to inspire other initiatives that add to the discussion on work life balance of people in a vulnerable situation.

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Introduction

The REGAL project seeks to investigate the possibilities of achieving a better balance between work and family and personal life for groups in a vulnerable situation. Within the scope of this project, measures for work-life balance aim to achieve a high level of employability between women and men through a better balance between meeting the needs of family life and the demands of work.

The REGAL project starts from the precarious situation of families for whom precariousness is an additional barrier to finding employment and a condition of vulnerability. Precariousness results from poor working conditions, poor housing conditions and / or a poor financial situation and all these elements can be an obstacle to achieving individual well-being and a balance between work and family and personal life.

The REGAL project looks at how promoting a balance between work and family and personal life can ensure better well-being for families in a vulnerable situation and provide them with an incentive to work.

In Portugal, we try to understand how women reconcile work time with family responsibilities and individual fulfilment, always seeking to broaden group reflections to social contexts and to the Portuguese reality by calling for knowledge of public policies.

1. The socio-economic position of women in Portugal

Women represent 53% of the population living in Portugal. The life expectancy of women at birth is 83 years. And 40.8% of women aged 15 and over in Portugal live as a couple. As life as a couple is the most usual, it is also women who make up 88% of single-parent families¹.

When observing the level of education, typified according to the International Standard Classification of Education, based on Eurostat² data for 2017, we realize that 47.8% of Portuguese women aged 25 to 64 years have completed basic education, 23.7% secondary education and 28.5% higher education.

According to the same source, in that period the employment rate of women of working age was 64.8% and if we look at the cut-off of working mothers, we see that the employment rate of women with 1 child was 79%, with two children 80.5% and with three or more children 71% which demonstrates the relevance of work for women in Portugal and the pattern of double employment in Portuguese couples. The unemployment rate among women, on the other hand, was 9.5%.

1.1 Horizontal segregation of the labour market

In a publication³ of the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG), a set of data on work and employment in Portugal is made available, namely the distribution of employment by sectors of activity where there is still a horizontal segregation of the labour market.

According to the bulletin, women represent 65.7% of the administrative staff, 64.4% of the personal services, protection and security staff and salespeople and still 59.2% of the specialist staff of intellectual and scientific activities. However, they only represent 35.9% of the representatives of the legislative and executive bodies, directors and managers.

In Portugal, only 12.1% of women work part-time and more than half of them just because they cannot find a full-time job. In Europe, female part-time employment exceeds that of men, and several studies point out the persistence of traditional social representations and the asymmetry in the sharing of tasks between men and women as an explanation for this trend that we will talk about later.

¹ Retrato dos Homens e das Mulheres. 2018. Accessed on November 16, 2020 in: <https://www.pordata.pt/ebooks/PT2018v20180530/mobile/index.html>

² A vida das mulheres e dos homens na Europa. Um retrato estatístico. Edição 2018. Accessed on November 16, 2020 in: https://www.ine.pt/scripts/wm_2018/index.html?lang=pt

³ Igualdade de Género em Portugal: Boletim Estatístico 2017. Accessed on November 16, 2020 in: <https://www.cig.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Boletim-estatistico-2017.pdf>

1.2 Wage inequality

This distribution in the labour market has serious consequences for pay and wage inequality, as we can see in the analysis⁴ of the pay gap between men and women published by the Portuguese National Observatory for the Fight against Poverty in February 2019, which states that for all professions, women's pay is about 15.9% lower than that earned by male workers.

The high participation of women in the labour market, the reduced expression of part-time work and the various gender inequalities urge us to better understand the obstacles to reconciling professional life with family and personal life that condition the socio-economic position of women in Portugal.

1.3 Poverty

Vulnerability to poverty and the impacts of the current crisis accentuate the precarious situation of women with low incomes. According to the EAPN Europe document⁵ on gender issues and poverty, women experiencing poverty are at a greater risk and suffer discrimination on the basis of gender and their poverty status.

The increased risk of poverty among women results from their socio-economic positioning and a stereotyped view of the gender roles of women and men.

The 2020 Report⁶ on Poverty and Social Exclusion in Portugal, of the National Observatory for the Fight against Poverty, promoted by EAPN Portugal / European Anti-Poverty Network assumes that despite the pandemic caused by SARS-COV-2 (COVID-19) has transformed the situation of poverty and social exclusion in Portugal it is important to analyse the data from the 2019 Living Conditions and Income Survey as these allow us to understand the vulnerabilities of Portuguese society and may contribute to identifying possible areas of greater social fragility.

For our report, it is important to highlight the fact that the female population remains highly vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. In fact, while the risk of poverty or social exclusion rate for men decreased by 0.2 percentage points in 2019, the risk of poverty or social exclusion rate for women increased slightly by +0.1 pp. According to the National Observatory for the Fight against

⁴ EM FOCO: “Disparidades Remuneratórias entre Homens e Mulheres”. Accessed on November 16, 2020 in: <https://www.eapn.pt/documento/631/em-foco-disparidades-remuneratorias-entre-homens-e-mulheres>

⁵ Gender and Poverty in Europe - EAPN Briefing Note - 2017. Accessed on November 16, 2020 in: <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/EAPN-2017-EAPN-Briefing-Gender-and-Poverty-final.pdf>

⁶ Pobreza e Exclusão Social em Portugal - Relatório 2020. Accessed on November 16, 2020 in: <https://on.eapn.pt/produtos/relatorios>

Poverty, this rate increase is more pronounced in some age groups, especially the younger ones. The data show that there is a strong increase in the risk of poverty or social exclusion among girls aged 18 to 24 compared to 2018. The risk of poverty or social exclusion rate among women in 2019 was 22.2%.

2. Work Life Balance

In Portugal, the Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment (*Comissão para a Igualdade no Trabalho e no Emprego*, CITE) is, since 1979, the national mechanism that has among its main attributions to pursue work life balance.

CITE has the particularity of being a collegial, tripartite and equilateral body, composed of one representative of the ministry with attributions in the area of employment, one representative of the ministry with attributions in the area of equality; one representative of the ministry with attributions in the area of public administration; one representative of the ministry with attributions in the area of solidarity and social security; and from those with a seat in the Standing Committee for Social Dialogue come from two representatives of each of the trade union associations and one representative of each of the employers' associations.

2.1 Legal framework

Regarding the celebration of the 40th anniversary of CITE, celebrated in 2019, Professor Maria do Rosario Palma Ramalho wrote an article⁷ that allows us to have an overview of the legal documents that frame the theme of reconciliation between professional and family life.

In Portugal, the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (CPR) is the basis of the legal regime of reconciliation between professional and family life, namely the rule in article 59, number 1, paragraph b), which establishes the right to reconciliation between professional and family life as a fundamental right of workers, as well as article 67, paragraph h), which includes the topic of reconciliation in family policies.

Noteworthy is the Equality Law (DL number 392/79, September 20) which established the general framework on equality between men and women at work and in employment.

The Maternity and Paternity Protection Law (LPMP - L number 4/84, April 5), which establishes both the specific guardianship rules for pregnant workers, workers who have recently given birth, and workers who are breastfeeding, including the right to prenatal consultations, paid maternity leave, the conditioning of night work, and guardianship in the event of dismissal, as well as the father's right to be absent at the time of the child's birth and several additional family care leaves that could be enjoyed by both parents.

⁷ Conciliação equilibrada entre a via profissional e familiar: uma condição inatingível a Igualdade de género no trabalho e no emprego. Accessed on November 16, 2020 in: http://cite.gov.pt/pt/acite/concretizar_igualdade_004.html

The current Labour Code ensures several rules, namely in the formation of the employment contract; during the execution of the employment contract and finally at the termination of the contract, which pass maternity and paternity protection and the right to reconciliation between professional and family life, treating all these aspects in an integrated manner.

Regarding leaves, Professor Maria do Rosário Palma Ramalho systematizes the following categories: leaves related to pregnancy (including due to clinical risks or in case of pregnancy interruption) and maternity, but also adoption leave, which our law fully equates to biological maternity leave (articles 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, and 44 of CT); and leaves for early follow-up of children by the mother, father or both: maternity leave, now called initial parental leave, in the part that exceeds the period of exclusive enjoyment of the mother and intended for her physical recovery from childbirth, and which can be shared between the parents or even partially enjoyed simultaneously by both (article 40); paternity leave, extended by Law number 120/2015, September 1 (article 43 of the Labour Code); complementary parental leave, which can be used by either parent after the initial parental leave, as provided for in article 51; and special leaves to care for chronically ill or disabled children, which may be used following or as an alternative to complementary parental leave (articles 52 and 53).

The Labour Code also provides for the right to reduce working hours by up to 5 hours a week to provide assistance to a child under one year of age who is disabled or chronically ill (article 54), as well as the right to so-called flexible working hours for two, three or four years to meet the needs of children up to 12 years of age or who are disabled or chronically ill (article 56). The justification for these measures is, of course, the health of the mother and / or the health of the child itself.

The right to time off for pregnant workers, workers who have recently given birth or workers who are breastfeeding (which is extended to parents in the case of breastfeeding) from some forms of work organization, such as adaptability schemes, time banks and concentrated hours (article 58), as well as the right to time off from overtime (article 59) and night work (article 60).

Finally, the Labour Code determines the possibility of practicing two special employment contracts: the part-time employment contract; and the telework contract.

The part-time employment contract may be used in accordance with article 55 of the Labour Code, and determines that workers with children under the age of 12 or with disabilities or chronic illnesses have the right to transiently modify their full-time employment contract into a part-time employment contract, for a period that can range from two to four years depending on the case, and which can be distributed between parents in successive periods.

The telework contract based on the needs of reconciliation is provided for in article 166, number of the Labour Code and gives the worker who has a child under the age of 3 the right to start carrying out his activity in a telework regime, provided that such activity is compatible with such regime and that the employer has the necessary resources and means for that purpose.

2.2 The provision of care

Regarding the provision of care, we made use of the 2018 ad hoc module on the reconciliation of work and family life, which was carried out together with the Employment Survey by the Portuguese National Institute of Statistics in the 2nd quarter of 2018⁸.

According to the survey, the caregivers were mainly women (54.7%), aged between 35 and 44 years old, who had completed at most the 3rd cycle of basic education, employed, female workers by account of others and who worked full time.

Only 50.8% of caregivers said they resort to childcare services. Although with very similar percentages, it was men who made the most use of these services.

The main reason pointed out for not using those services was that the care is provided by the person himself / herself or together with the spouse. This was followed by the indication that the care is provided with informal support and that children take care of themselves. The percentage of men who presented these reasons was always higher than that of women.

However, women were the ones who most mentioned the cost of childcare as a reason. These percentages illustrate how a conservative view of motherhood and an inequality in the division of tasks based on stereotypes still prevail.

84.3% of caregivers said they did not feel the effects of parental responsibilities at work and only 5.9% indicated they had changed jobs or employers or had reduced working hours to better reconcile work and family life.

The characteristic of the professional activity that made it more difficult to reconcile work and family life of caregivers was the unpredictability of the schedule or the atypical schedule, followed by long working hours and demanding or strenuous work.

55.9% of caregivers indicated that it was generally possible to make changes to their entry and / or exit times in at least 1 hour, this percentage being higher among women than men. As for the

⁸ Módulos ad hoc do Inquérito ao Emprego - Conciliação da vida profissional com a vida familiar - 2.º Trimestre de 2018. Accessed on June 14, 2019 in: https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_destaques&DESTAQUESdest_boui=316333584&DESTAQUEESmodo=2&xlang=pt

possibility of being absent from work for full days, only 38.7% of the caregivers indicated that it is generally possible, with this facility being mentioned more by men than by women.

The survey also sought to assess the use of initial parental leave and / or extended parental leave as a strategy to reconcile work and family life.

It should be noted that initial parental leave and extended parental leave are considered as career breaks.

Only 8.1% of men reported having interrupted their careers for at least one month to care for their children. At least 39.8% of women reported having interrupted their careers for at least one month to care for their children.

The most extensive interruptions were reported almost exclusively by women. 22% of the women indicated a total absence between 6 months and 1 year.

55.8% of caregivers indicated not having used the extended parental leave, but only the initial parental leave.

2.3 The uses of time

The brochure⁹ of the INUT Project - National Survey on the Uses of the Time of Men and Women, promoted by the *Centro de Estudos para a Intervenção Social* – CESIS (Social Intervention Study Centre) in partnership with the Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment (CITE) gives us very interesting data on the patterns of participation of women in professional life, family life and personal life.

With regard to time allocated to paid work, women devote 40 hours and 47 minutes per week to their main professional activity. Paid work refers to paid professional activities performed in the context of the labour market.

Regarding the organization of paid work time, fixed hours are the predominant form of work time organization, followed by shift work, and both have a negative impact on the articulation of paid work with family and personal life.

With regard to time allocated to unpaid work, we have to look at the tasks and responsibilities carried out in the context of households, without any monetary counterpart, that is, domestic chores and care work.

⁹Inquérito Nacional aos Usos do Tempo de Homens e de Mulheres – 2016. Accessed on November 16, 2020 in: http://cite.gov.pt/pt/destaques/complementosDestqs2/INUT_brochura.pdf

Concerning domestic chores, women spend an average of about 3 hours and 6 minutes and, to provide care, women occupy about 3 hours and 14 minutes a day.

Childcare is often provided at the same time as domestic chores. Almost half of the women consider that they do not have enough time to do everything they want to do on weekdays.

3. The REGAL Project

The REGAL project seeks to explore the theme of work life balance with a group of women who live or work in the Bairro da Cova da Moura, a neighbourhood in the municipality of Amadora, in the parishes of Damaia and Buraca. It is one of the largest and oldest neighbourhoods with a large number of migrant populations in the metropolitan area of Lisbon. The majority of the population comes from Cape Verde, and it is also worth noting the significant presence of immigrants from Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, as well as people from the centre and north of Portugal. In recent years, the settlement of migrant populations from Eastern Europe and Brazil has accentuated the population's heterogeneity in the neighbourhood.

As a Research and Participatory Action project, it involves the participants in order to highlight their particular knowledge of their own situation and the context in which they work professionally, seeking to promote a real change in the difficult situation of work life balance of vulnerable women starting with their own awareness.

The project addresses social issues taking into account the Capability Approach, which is based on the works of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, in particular the capability to aspire / dream.

This approach is based on the reflection on what women consider important to achieve in life with a particular focus on seeking a balance between professional, personal and family life. How women negotiate reconciliation depends on their resources, on conversion factors, that is, on the conditions that facilitate or not the use of resources and also on the motivation to make choices.

Naturally, the vulnerable situation not only limits the resources available and the possibility of making use of them, but also, in certain situations, limits their capability to aspire to a better situation.

The project also seeks to explore storytelling as a tool to strengthen the capability to think and express aspirations in the group and to co-build solutions for greater well-being and a better balance between professional, personal and family life of women in a vulnerable situation.

3.1 An initial portrait

The awareness that working with vulnerable groups requires time to build relationships of trust has led EAPN Portugal's associates to look for an entity that could ensure logistical issues and support the implementation of the project. The initial choice was the *Associação Cultural Moinho da Juventude* (Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association).

Moinho da Juventude Cultural Association was born from the collective effort of the residents of the Cova da Moura neighbourhood, in Amadora, to overcome the difficulties they encountered in their community, namely the mobilization for the right to basic sanitation.

The association aims to develop partnerships and projects that promote community welfare, citizenship and equality.

This partnership was fundamental for the selection and constitution of the group, as well as for hosting the project. The sessions took place in the multipurpose room of Moinho da Juventude Association, whose team also ensured the logistics and in particular welcomed the children while the mothers participated in the focus groups.

The average age of the women who participated is thirty-nine, the youngest being twenty-one and the oldest seventy.

Eight women are from Cape Verde, seven from Portugal, one from Guinea Bissau and one from Brazil, eleven of whom are Portuguese, three Cape Verdean, one Guinean and one Brazilian.

Regarding the level of education, one woman did not provide information regarding her situation, six indicated that they had secondary education, nine indicated that they attended university and only one indicated that she knew how to read and write despite not having any formal level of education.

Regarding the employment situation, one woman indicated she was retired, another was unemployed and the rest were employed.

The profession / occupation that three women claimed to have is that of sociocultural mediator with the Foreigners and Borders Service, two are educational assistants, one is a nanny, one is a psychologist, one is a documentalist, another identifies herself as a business prospecting technique, another is a receptionist, one woman is a geriatric assistant, another is a free time occupation monitor, another sociologist and one woman is a kitchen assistant.

In terms of household composition, six women live in households of three, five women in households of two, two in households of six, two in households of four and two women live alone. The majority of the households are made up of women and their children, with one woman living with three uncles / aunts, one woman living with her parents, one woman living with her mother and daughter.

Four women have no children, eight women have only one child, three women have two children, one woman has five children, and the other seven children.

Not all mothers have indicated the age of their children, but some are babies and others are young adults with the smallest child having fourteen months old and the oldest thirty-one years old.

We also do not know the age of fathers, mothers and uncles / aunts who live in households, but in some cases, we do know that they are people to whom the women in the group provide care.

3.2 *What women say about work and family*

The construction of narratives about social problems does not always arise spontaneously in groups. In the REGAL project, we use strategies to promote reflection and the construction of narratives taking into account the need for time to build relationships of trust and let reflections flow.

To build the narrative about work and family, we started by asking each woman to choose two objects to illustrate our story about the balance between professional life and family and personal life. The choice process activated the individual reflection process itself and the presentation of the objects allowed the construction and collection of the following narratives.

In order to promote trust building the forms were filled out anonymously and the names of the participants were replaced by alternative names assigned by the facilitator during the production of reports.

Sandra chose some "little packages" of sugar to talk about her new job as a kitchen helper and the discovery of the use of sugar in Portuguese cuisine. The importance of work as a means of survival and maintenance of the family. She didn't bring any object to identify her family, but in the discussion, she ended up revealing a lot about her family, in particular the coming from Guinea Bissau to Portugal to find her father.

Isabel showed the key of her home to talk about her family and the achievement of having the capability to pay for the house she shares with her daughter. Mobile phone as a representation of work, contact and permanent connection between companies and people looking for an opportunity.

Alexandra revealed a heart-shaped Christmas ornament made during her the work of free time occupation monitor with elderly people, a work of the heart. And a Mozambican *capulana* to represent the family and her father's origins.

Paula showed us her work notebook which, as the name indicates, is a working tool and a reminder of the importance of work. To reveal the family, a photo album offered by a family member and which features photos of a family vacation that recall the "reason for life".

Helena chose her headphones that represent a large part of the attendance / screening she does at SEF and that makes her reflect on the importance of knowing how to listen. The house key represents this unit, a safe haven, a place where one dreams and, as a home for women, it is a space of hope and freedom.

Catarina brought us the cutlery to tell us about the importance of Sunday lunches that make it possible to gather the family and share affections and time that hectic lives do not allow. Books and legislation were the choice regarding the work and the appreciation of quality information that is passed on to those who seek it in their work as SEF mediator.

Fatima presented a plant to identify the idea of family and the notion of roots, origin and identity but also of leaves to enumerate the diversity and abundance of family elements. To the work she associated the idea of savings and the object chosen was a "piggy bank". Savings are a legacy of her mother, who always sought to prepare her daughters for financial independence.

Elisabete, on the other hand, opted for her agenda that represents the importance of work, relationships and independence. The electronic game "GoodGame" is a childhood memory of sharing with her brother but also of her father's taste and the awareness of the different roles and her mother's burden with the care of the family and the house.

For Graça, family and work coincide: she has seven children and twenty-three grandchildren. A very traditionalist and valuing view of Cape Verdean culture and a family photo / portrait as her object of choice.

Rita introduced glasses as a family brand, since all elements of her family wear glasses and this is a relevant feature for identification in the neighbourhood, and the telephone as a professional contact element that identifies the fact that as a worker she is always available to communicate with the families of children she looks after.

Cátia brought us baby shoes to talk about the family relationship, the experience of caring and expansive motherhood. First felt as an aunt and then with the birth of her child. Work as a responsibility for autonomy was also represented by a "piggy bank", not so much due to a materialistic feeling but to the appreciation of work and effort.

Patricia, a nanny, chose the diaper as an object to represent her work. And a family photo with her six children.

This exercise made it possible to conclude that women highly value their family, but value also work as a form of personal fulfilment and, therefore, more than the tensions that exist to reconcile work with family and personal life, narratives highlight the importance of work for building a personal identity, strengthening autonomy and valuing women within the family and community.

3.3 Conclusions

The moments of discussion also allowed us to reflect on the relevance of the division of roles in the family and the emotional problems associated with the traditional model of father provider and mother carer since the father is often absent and it is women who assume both roles.

Still regarding family life management, most women reject the role of grandparents as a "supporting institution", although some women assume that on certain occasions they resort to this support, and naturalize the use of social care equipment / answers for their children.

In their speeches, we heard a hyper appreciation of the elderly and care of the elderly within the family, and there is a demand for more public support in order to be able to articulate care with work. This concern is even more important if we consider that Portugal is a country with a high aging rate.

3.4 What women say about the use of time

Regarding the actual and daily use of time, women say they spend, on average, about 29% of their time doing paid work; 22% of their time on care tasks; 17% of their time is devoted to unpaid work and only 12% of their time is devoted to personal life. Sleeping takes up about 19% of their time.

The greatest criticism of this division of time is related to unpaid work and in particular to the time spent doing domestic chores that many would prefer to exchange for leisure and personal activities if they had more income or other support that would allow them to outsource some tasks.

As to paid work and despite the fact that the majority of women work full time, they are called upon to work during time considered free in order to answer different requests, which is also noted as a constraint to reconciliation.

Asked directly whether paid work had implications on their personal and family life, some women assumed that work prevented them from devoting the time they would have liked to their family and the majority pointed out that they felt too tired after work to do some of the necessary domestic chores and / or to enjoy personal life.

3.5 Conclusions

Regarding the use of time, it is interesting to note that most women associate working time and family time as the most fulfilling times.

Time spent on domestic chores, unpaid work, is pointed out as the main factor for the lack of time for themselves. And the greatest challenge in reconciling work and family life is really finding time for personal life.

The reconciliation strategies that women adopt include a lot of complicity and community solidarity networks, as well as the use of social and public answers for childcare.

The migration experience and the confrontation of some situations of discrimination and racism have made it possible to draw a parallel with gender discrimination and the importance of valuing women's work and their participation in the public sphere and the time to reflect and participate in collective activities that promote citizenship and fight isolation and precariousness.

4. Discrepancies between real life and legislation

Regarding discrepancies between real life and legislation, we know that people in a vulnerable situation have greater difficulty in enforcing their rights.

Although it is not possible to detail specific situations, data reveal that the participants recognize that there is a tendency for male and female workers to be available to continue working outside of working hours and that it is not always easy to take advantage of flexibilization measures and others related to reconciliation, which, according to the literature, is mainly due to conventional management models and a decrease in collective bargaining and negotiation capacity of male and female workers.

This situation was reinforced by several participants and taken up in at least one of the individual interviews:

"I think these are all situations in which, although there is legal protection, in practice as it is not applied and is not accompanied by government bodies, I think people feel a little lost because they always have to put work first because it is it that at the end of the day will allow that family to have sustainability. So, I think it's important that if there were policies that were operationalized, but well, if there were proper follow-up, not punitive but educational, to work to achieve something better, yes, I think it would make all the sense and all the difference". Isabel

5. The stakeholders' opinion

The presentation of the preliminary results of the project to stakeholders gave rise to very positive comments. We contacted several organizations working in the areas of Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Human Rights, trade unions and business organizations as well as the main State Institutions with responsibility in the area.

One of the participants was the Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment (CITE), a collegial body composed of representatives of the government, trade unions and employers' associations, which has as one of its main duties to pursue the reconciliation of professional, family and personal life. CITE recognized the importance of the project and the inclusion of its goals in what is the mission of the organization itself. It emphasized the importance of rights literacy and the need to empower people to know and exercise their right to reconciliation by making available the sharing of resources necessary for the project.

The High Commissioner for Migration (*Alto Comissariado para as Migrações*, ACM) is a Public Institute that intervenes in the implementation of public policies on migration. Its representative argued that the project can be of great importance if it succeeds in producing recommendations for public policies for the integration of immigrant people that have a gender perspective. And she agreed that immigrant women and Roma women are those where intersectional inequalities are most deeply profoundly.

GRACE is a non-profit association devoted to the promotion of Corporate Social Responsibility that brings together more than 160 companies, committed to deepening the role of companies in the social development of people and organizations. GRACE showed great interest in the project and suggested bridging the agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and continuing to raise awareness among the business community about the importance of SDG 5 - Gender Equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The General Confederation of Portuguese Workers (*Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses*, CGTP) is a member of the European Trade Union Confederation and was one of the participants who reinforced the importance of identifying a good diagnosis to build coherent recommendations so that rights are not only "rights in law but rights in life". The representative stressed the importance of women's economic independence for their freedom and capability to dream. And she suggested the need to think about reconciliation solutions that would simultaneously allow to increase employment, such as reducing working hours without loss of pay.

The Family Planning Association (*Associação para o Planeamento da Família*, APF) spoke to us

about the importance of free and informed choice of people and families in a vulnerable situation. It highlighted the need for time to reflect on people's concepts, rights and life itself.

The *Casa do Brasil* in Lisbon highlighted the cut in migrations and gender and the need to build public policies with an intersectional basis.

The Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights (*Plataforma Portuguesa para os Direitos das Mulheres, PpDM*) is a member of the European Women's Lobby (*Lobby Europeu de Mulheres, LEM*) and highlighted the project's potential to deepen reflection on intercommunity ties and for greater visibility of women's work and the care sector.

We need to highlight the participation of the Union of Women for Alternatives and Answers (*União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta, UMAR*), a women's association represented on the Advisory Council of the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) that claims a socially committed feminism and that highlighted the methodology used by the project as it contributes to the empowerment of women and the construction of knowledge relevant to people.

Conclusions

The reality experienced and the reflections elaborated by women that made possible the implementation of the REGAL project in Portugal showed that, despite the challenges that exist, women in a vulnerable situation seek to use the available resources to articulate their professional life with their family and personal life.

When they do not have economic resources to access public or market services or answers, they mobilize community networks and seek local support in order to remain in the labour market.

The sphere of work is valued even when employment is not ideal and prevents the performance of other activities, either because of long hours or atypical hours, or especially because of low income. Family life is equally valued, but when we enter the private sphere it is the unpaid work that most occupies women and contributes to the lack of time for personal fulfilment. Motherhood and care for dependents are responsibilities that they assume, often without a partner, and that prolong daily journeys.

The participants in our research have no income to invest in their training or in leisure and / or personal development activities that will allow them to enhance their skills for the job market or strengthen their opportunities to devote more resources to the family.

Long daily routines, economic concerns and reduced hours of rest do not provide an environment conducive to critical reflection on rights or foster the capability to aspire to better living conditions. The opportunity created by the realization of focus groups had an impact on the awareness of the common discriminations suffered by women and in particular by women in a vulnerable situation. And this is one of the aspects valued by women and stakeholders that it is important to highlight, the appreciation of the REGAL project for the spaces of reflection it provided to women who valued being questioned and the recognition of their experience as people with specific knowledge. The discussion also awakened the need to question public policies and the investment that is made in women and families. The understanding that the State has a role in promoting their well-being and that it is necessary to encourage corporate social responsibility has stimulated the desire to know more about the role that European institutions can also have in building a more inclusive society capable of listening and dialoguing with women in order to build a fairer social policy that promotes gender equality.

Sharing personal wishes or aspirations demands more time and a less uncertain and disturbing social climate than the state of emergency we live in allows. However, it was possible to agree on some proposals that facilitate the reconciliation of professional, family and personal life.

First of all, a strong bet on women's empowerment in order to know their labour rights and specific reconciliation measures.

As it is not enough to know the rights, it is necessary to have a favourable climate for their exercise, so a second proposal involves raising the awareness of employers to the importance of reconciliation as an instrument to motivate women workers that allows management gains and an increased productivity.

The increase in income from work is a demand to the extent that low wages limit the options for reconciliation and above all prevent investment in resources that promote the well-being of women and their families.

The promotion of a public discussion on the reconciliation between professional, family and personal life that allows to know good practices, promote equality and deepen other issues such as inclusive management, work relations and citizenship.

Women expect European institutions and national policy makers to deepen a strategy to promote the reconciliation of work, family and personal life taking into account the specificities of people in a vulnerable situation, in particular discrimination and increased difficulties resulting from belonging to gender, territory of origin, economic situation and social condition.

It is necessary to look at the real daily lives and look for creative solutions that allow one to recover time to live. Only with bold policies in the labour market and in social protection policies will it be possible to recover the balance for the lives of precarious women at work and thus contribute to the improvement of their quality of life.

We suggest that the policies of equal opportunities to be redefined, taking into account the specificities of minority groups, their life experiences and their contexts. It is also essential to rethink private-public spaces and promote greater equality between men and women in sharing domestic and family responsibilities.

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