

Work Package 2 – Deliverable 2

REPORT ON HOME CARE SERVICES' EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AT COUNTRY LEVEL BEFORE AND AFTER THE COVID-19 CRISIS

ITALY

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Employment Conditions and Industrial Relations in Italy

1. Introduction

This report is focused on analysing working conditions and industrial relations in the Italian organization of domestic work, which includes home care work. The report starts by providing the definition of domestic work, to later detect the main statistical dimensions of the sector as concerns the size of the labour force, workforce composition and demographics, and working conditions. In the second section, we will provide a literature background on the topic of employment conditions in domestic work by relying on existing literature. Then, the third section will specifically focus on industrial relations in domestic work, mostly relying on the reference national collective agreement, as well as previous research on trade unionism and domestic work.

The definition of domestic work appears a necessary starting point, given its peculiar nature. Italy was the fourth ILO member state and the first EU member state to ratify the Domestic Workers Convention 189/2011 in 2013, adopting its definition of domestic work, identified with “*the work performed in or for a household or households*”, while the term domestic worker “*refers to any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship*”. It also specifies that a person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not on an occupational basis is not a domestic worker. What clearly defines domestic work, thus, is not the type of tasks performed by domestic workers, but rather the specific spatial, temporal and occupational dimension where it takes place, namely private households. The national collective agreement of the sector incorporates ILO definition, relying on the same ‘spatial attribute’, while the NACE (Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community)¹ system identifies domestic work with code T97– namely ‘Activities of households as employers of domestic personnel’. Nevertheless, we can find other care workers working in private homes, such as non–residential social assistance workers –defined by NACE code Q88 under the label ‘Social work activities without accommodation’– involved in the provision of home–based personal assistance services for the elderly and the disabled, provided by both public or private organisations at national or even local level. The NACE system also defines residential care work –code Q87, ‘Residential care activities’– namely the provision of health services in both private and public residences, yet in this case we cannot define involved workers as domestic workers because they are not hired by households. This care work’s internal heterogeneity translates into a multiplication of both employment and working conditions reflecting each specific care work segment. In this report, we will focus specifically on domestic work, including both caring and housekeeping activities performed within private households by workers directly hired by the family. The spatial dimension, and the specificity of the employer being a household, determine the ‘*special attribute*’ of domestic work (Triandafyllidou, 2013), namely

¹ Which is translated into the ATECO system by the Italian National Statistical Institute.

the very peculiar condition of transcendence in the distinction between public and private spheres underlying the employment regulation in this sector.

As for the statistical dimension of domestic work, the first step is highlighting that the special attribute of domesticity paves the way to a very high informality rate. According to DOMINA (2023), one of the National Domestic Work Employers Associations that are involved in collective bargaining, there are overall 1,85 million domestic workers in Italy, of which 48,2 are regularly employed and 51,8² are irregular. The statistical description of domestic workers' composition, relying on National Social Security Institute (INPS)³ data, only refers to the regular segment of the workforce, yet mirroring overall dynamics. As emerges from DOMINA (2022) estimates on irregular employment, domestic work is the first employment sector in Italy as concerns informality rate.

Figure 1- Irregular employment



Source: Osservatorio DOMINA (2022)

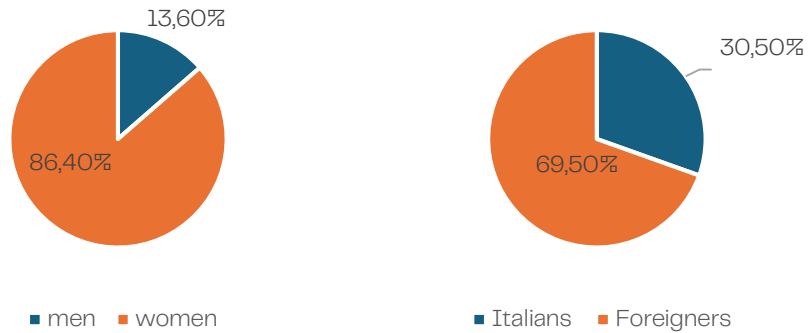
As emerges from these data – while referring to 2020, when the overall rate of irregularities in the sector was 52.3%, while it is now 51,8% – the specificity of domestic work, namely workplaces being private households, meets cultural factors such as the social undervaluation of domestic and caring activities and the related difficult definition of domestic work as “real work” in defining the high rate of informality in the sector.

As concerns the composition of regular employment, the last DOMINA report (2023) detects the following picture, with women representing the 86,4% of domestic workers and foreigners the 69,5%.

Figure 2- Domestic workers' internal composition.

² We should bear in mind that the 2020 Covid-related amnesty for undocumented migrants had an impact in reducing domestic work's informality rate on the short term. But, as we witnessed also with other amnesties in the past years, on middle-to-long terms the informality rate tends to increase again.

³ National Social Security Institute



Source: Osservatorio DOMINA (2023) on INPS data

Focusing on foreigners' composition, workers from East Europe are overall 35,4%, those from Asia are 17,2%, those from Latin America are 9,9% and those from Africa are 6,7%. The main nationalities are Romania (21,1%); Ukraine (14,7%); Philippines (10,6%); Peru (6,0%); and Moldova (5,6%). Domestic work, thus, is a highly racialised, ethnicized and feminised sector, yet we have witnessed an increase in the workforce native section in recent years, due to the combined effect of both the 2008 and COVID-19 crises, and to the lockdown-related downsize of foreign workforce.

Figure 3 –Historical series of Italian domestic workers (thousands)

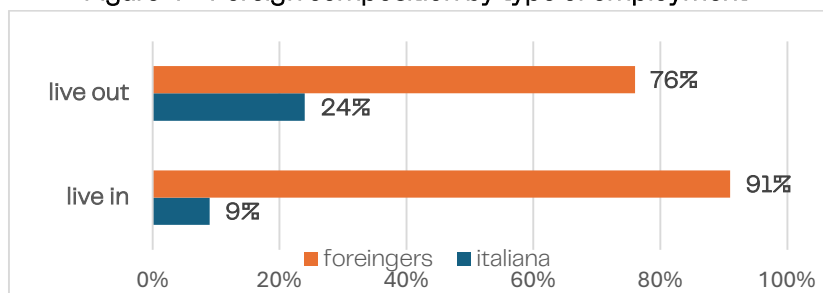


Source: Osservatorio DOMINA (2023) on INPS data

The steady increase of Italian domestic workers between 2019 and 2021 is in line with the simultaneous increase of overall regular domestic workers in the same sector, who shifted from 859 thousand in 2019 to 971 in 2021, going back to 894 in 2022. In 2021 we registered the impact of both the Covid-related wave of regularisation due to restrictions on workers' mobility, and the -limited- effects of the 2020 extraordinary procedure of emergence for undocumented migrant workers.

If foreign workers are the clear majority of the labour force in this sector, the internal composition in terms of nationality and typology of employment -namely, live-in and live-out arrangements, where the former involves 33% of the workforce and the latter 67%- sheds light on one of the most appealing factors of domestic work for migrants (Bettio et al, 2006), namely having access to food and shelter reducing the overall cost of the migration process at its first stages.

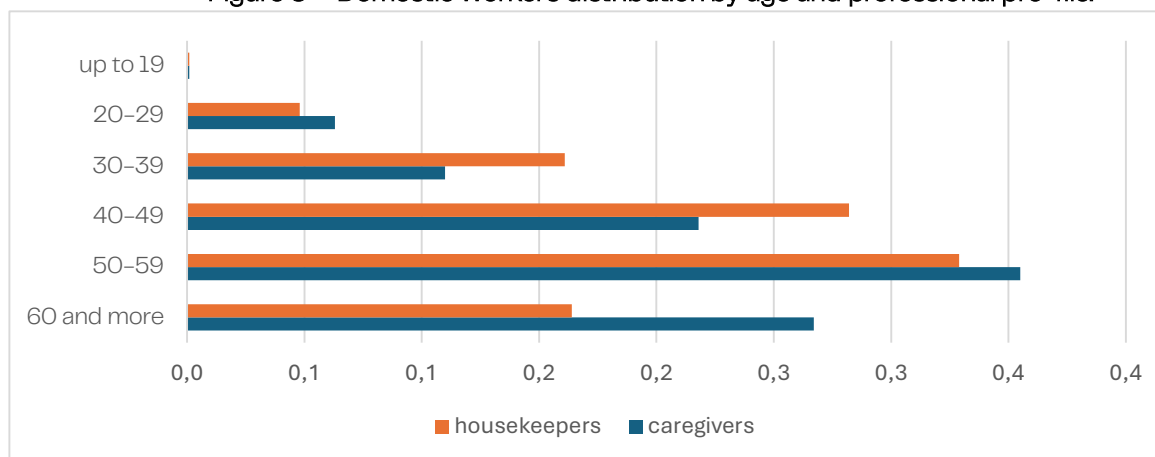
Figure 4 – Foreign composition by type of employment



Source: Osservatorio DOMINA (2023) on INPS data

As for age, the average age of domestic workers is 49,6: for housekeepers it is 48,2 and for caregivers 51,3 (DOMINA, 2023) showing how caregivers are usually older than housekeepers. The average age of carers is rising sharply: in 2006 it was 41. Moreover, whereas at the beginning of the 2000s only 20.6% of caregivers had been in Italy for at least 6 years, in the 2020s this share rose to 85.7% (Pasquinelli, Pozzoli 2021).

Figure 5 – Domestic workers distribution by age and professional profile.

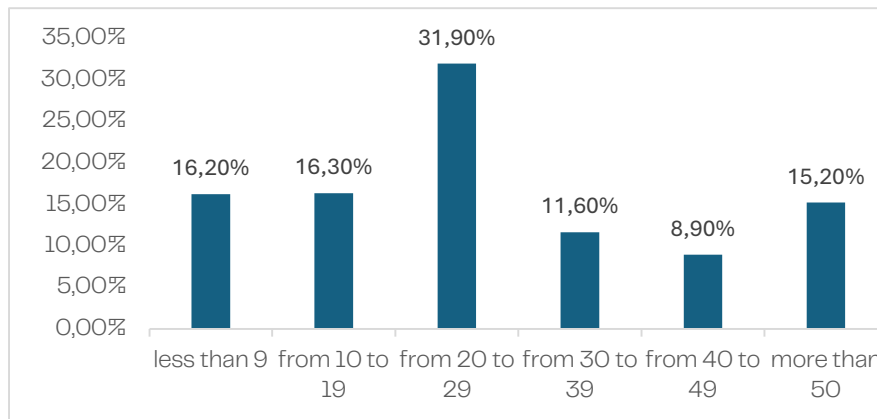


Source: Osservatorio DOMINA (2023) on INPS data

As concerns the professional profile of workers, in 2022 regular workers hired as housekeepers were 52% and regular caregivers 48%. Nevertheless, if caregivers recorded about +10% during the last decade, shifting from 38,6% to 48% in line with the ageing process of the Italian population; housekeepers have shifted from 61,4% to 52%.

As for overall working conditions in the sector, another interesting aspect is that of regular workers distribution by weekly working hours.

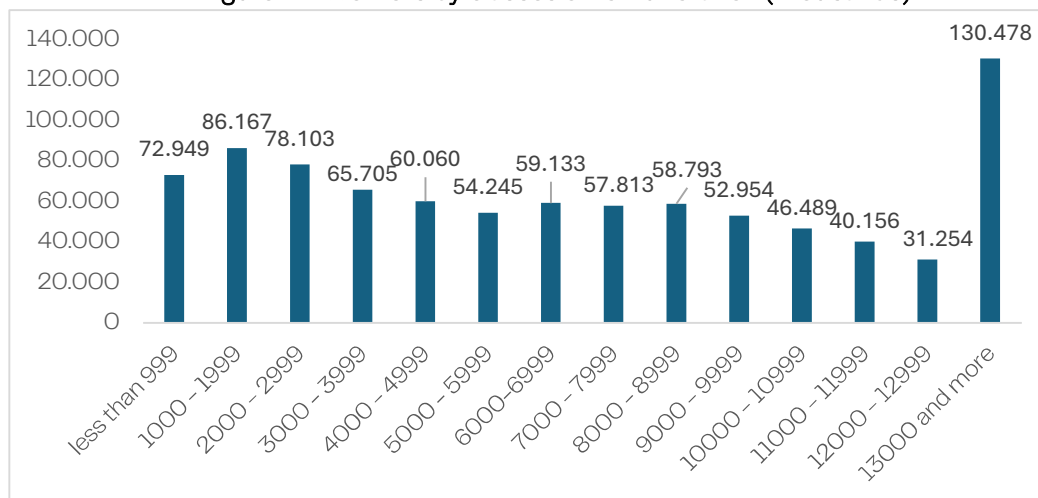
Figure 6 – Workers distribution by weekly working hours.



Source: Osservatorio DOMINA (2023) on INPS data.

Most domestic workers are hired for about 25 hours per week – if we consider only housekeepers, the percentage reaches the value of 38%, while for caregivers this category represents the 25%. This emerges as a convergence point between employers’ and workers’ interests. Migrant workers need an employment contract of at least 25 hours for residence permit renewal, while families pay lower taxes and contributions in this way, informally paying the remaining undeclared hours. As for classes of remuneration, INPS data show the following framework.

Figure 7 – Workers by classes of remuneration (thousands)



Source: Osservatorio DOMINA (2023) on INPS data.

We can notice a kind of polarization of remuneration, where –beyond the higher class encompassing a larger value– most workers are positioned in the first three classes, namely the less–paid. When confronted with worked weeks, it emerges that 30% of domestic workers may be defined as working poor (DOMINA, 2023). Overall working conditions in the sector may be defined as bad, being domestic work low–paid and low socially estimated, thus becoming one paradigmatic example of dirty jobs (Anderson, 2001). As highlighted by Pasquinelli and Pozzoli in their analysis of caregivers living and working conditions (2021), among caregivers willing to change their working conditions, 55,5% would work as condominium caregivers, 65,8% would work for service center/cooperative assisting

families, and 61,6% would use technological and domestic support to carry out one's work, in a constant effort to become more autonomous in managing their employment and working conditions.

With respect to the platform work, existing data indicate an increase in domestic work brokered by digital platforms. The most recent data comes from the Inapp-Plus report (Bergamante et al. 2021), which is based on a sample of 46,000 people aged between 18 and 74. The report states that domestic workers in Italy represent 9.2% of the total number of people working through a digital platform. However, it should be noted that these figures refer to all workers operating in a domestic context, including also repair and maintenance work. This percentage is lower than that identified by the survey Colleem carried out by the JRC in 2018 (Pesole et al. 2018), according to which, in Italy, on-location platform workers corresponded to 19.8 of the total platform workers, with a remarkable increase compared to 2017 (10.9%).

2. Domestic workers' employment conditions: a literature review

The gender regime (Lett, 2012) of Italy which, as in many other countries, grounds on the feminization of social reproduction⁴, defines only directly productive activities as jobs worthy of a fair remuneration. This implies a consequent detachment between (waged) social production carried out in the public extra-domestic sphere and the (unwaged) reproduction of everyday life taking place in the private dimension of the home (Federici, 2010; Fraser, 2016). Here the familistic dimension of Italian welfare comes out (Saraceno, 2016; Leitner, 2003), resisting even the increased presence of Italian women in the national labour market by outsourcing domestic and caring responsibilities to domestic workers. Under these circumstances, domestic work is characterized by specific internal dynamics, which can be related to its "special attribute" (Triandafyllidou, 2013), namely being private and public at the same time. This is the necessary starting point to detect why domestic work is featured by an overall high rate of labour irregularity and overall bad employment and working conditions (Borelli, 2020; Osservatorio Domina, 2023). Within the Italian familistic welfare, domestic work is defined by a two-faceted notion of invisibility: the spatial invisibility of private homes, and the juridical invisibility of migrant workers' specific legal status: it is precisely this mix that determines the overall derogatory approach of the sectoral regulation (Borelli, 2020). As for the spatial invisibility, domestic work still faces resistance to being conceived as "real work" due to its identification with unpaid domestic tasks traditionally performed for free by female components of the households (Sarti et al, 2018).

The second invisibility factor is related to the juridical status of most migrant domestic workers and, thus, to Italy's migration regime (Williams, 2012). Within the familistic Italian welfare, migrant women have substituted Italian ones in performing home-based care and domestic activities, in line with the so-called migrant-in-the-family model of care (Bettio et

⁴ We refer here to "the structures, practices, activities and realms aimed at the daily and intergenerational regeneration of life and capitalist relations" (Mezzadri, 2022, p.381).

al. 2006). Immigration has been the answer to the structural tension between Italy's familistic welfare and women's progressive entrance into the labour market (Sciortino, 2004). As highlighted by van Hooren (2012), the structural demand for migrants in the home-care sector meets the concrete organization of migration flows in defining what she calls migrant care work.

It is the limited development of Italian welfare in terms of public and universal services (Ferrera, 1996; Saraceno, 2016) which has determined the structural invisibility of domestic work. If domestic work, as feminized reproductive activity, has always been made invisible, now this dimension meets that of migration, with migrant women suffering from an enhanced process of social marginalization and invisibilization. The structural informality of this sector, thus, is intrinsically interconnected with these broader social aspects.

As emerges from the statistical section, the informality rate in domestic work is 51,8%, referring to both conditions of total and partial non-compliance with contractual and legal provisions. According to several annual reports issued by Osservatorio DOMINA, hiring workers without an employment contract is less frequent nowadays, especially in home-based caring, while this is still a common trend among housekeepers working a few hours per week. In this case, formally hiring the worker seems not appealing for either the employer and the worker who can avoid paying taxes. Moreover, the specific configuration of Italy's migration regime forces migrants to be formally hired before entering Italy –quite an unrealistic provision, given the intimate relationship underlying domestic work– leading some scholars to talk about “unlawfulness by necessity” (Ambrosini, 2013). Under these circumstances, if domestic work provides the best solution for these newly arrived undocumented migrants given the privacy it relies upon, this also determines the complete dependence of these workers on their employers, which often translates into a worsening of working conditions (Parreñas 2001; Catanzaro, Colombo, 2009). Nevertheless, workers are starting to turn to unions when the employment relationship ends, to have their money back *via* arbitration, and thus families are more afraid of hiring a domestic worker completely informally (Osservatorio DOMINA, 2023).

Partial non-compliance with labour law is much more common, testifying for the structural weight of informality in domestic work. Here a formal employment contract exists, yet not being applied in all its provisions. One of the most common practices is to register fewer hours than those effectively worked, usually a maximum of 25 worked hours per week. On the one hand, the migrant worker accomplishes the requirements for the residence permit renewal while being exonerated from paying taxes if s/he earns less than 8.150 euros a year; on the other hand, the employer too saves money. Other common forms of informality are contractual dumping – namely, the application of contracts that guarantee less than the reference collective agreement; deductions applied on workers' payslips; the registration of full-time workers as part-time; the lacking payment of social security contributions; the multiplication of tasks required on employers' request; underqualification – namely, applying much lower contractual frameworks, not in line with workers' effective tasks (Borelli, 2020; 2021; Osservatorio Domina, 2023).

As highlighted by several scholars (Borelli 2020; Farris, Marchetti 2017, Sciortino 2004; Da Roit, Weicht 2013), the structural informality of the sector is directly related to households

need to lower domestic work labour costs within the Italian DIY welfare. Given the unproductive nature of this work, which can be rather defined as emotional work (Hochschild, 1983), lowering the labour costs necessarily implies lowering workers' wages (Lutz 2017; Marchetti, Scrinzi 2014; Borelli, 2020) and worsening overall employment conditions. It is in these terms that informality seems structural to domestic work, with economic explanations meeting cultural ones in defining the overall low value attributed to this work.

The structural informality of domestic work has also implications in terms of labour inspections, given that the institutional approach has always been to protect families as *sui generis* employers. Obligations and penalties for families are milder than those provided for traditional employers (De Vita and Corasaniti 2022): families that fail to declare a worker may be liable to an administrative fine per irregular worker that is much lower than the normal fine for undeclared work in the private sector. As highlighted by Hobden (2015), then, labour inspectors cannot enter a private house, so controls are rare and the only way to proceed is by starting from worker's charges or complaints, something unusual given the vulnerable condition of these workers and the difficulties faced in reporting and proving abuses and violations. In 2022, inspections relating to domestic work accounted for just 1.3 per cent of total inspections (Ispettorato Nazionale del lavoro, 2022). The Labour Inspectorate officer interviewed confirmed the limitations of inspections and their implications for platform work:

“If a platform just brings together job supply and demand and is registered with the Ministry of Labour, everything is fine; if it is not registered, a minimum penalty is imposed on it, within the range of EUR 1500[...] We don't have such a timeliness that we can affect these platforms, which we know have only been operating for a couple of years. Furthermore, a family that has an illegal worker cannot be sanctioned for undeclared work because it is not an entrepreneur”(Labour Inspectorate officer).

To conclude this section, we should mention the latest changes in domestic work's organizing and employment arrangements. The overall care corporatization process (Farris, Marchetti, 2017; Farris, 2020) has impacted also on Italy's familistic welfare. We have witnessed the proliferation of both for-profit and not-for-profit intermediaries presenting themselves as drivers of domestic work formalization. Not-for-profit actors, despite acting on the behalf of public institutions providing low-cost home care services to poorer households, also operate in the private market as business actors (Marchetti, Scrinzi, 2014), following a kind of “double track”. For-profit actors have defined their positioning on the market relying on a strong competition structured on both costs and quality of the offered services (Amorosi, 2023). As emerges also from other contexts (Farris, 2020; Fudge and Hobden, 2018), these market actors may contribute to formalising domestic work when the national regulation is transparent, simple, and effective, while they may have the reverse outcome in case of insufficient – or not effective – regulation (Eurofound 2016). As for Italy, intermediaries' focus on profit-making meets the structural informality of domestic work, and the lack of a simple, transparent, and effective regulation, in re-articulating existing

informality rather than overcoming it (Amorosi, 2023). This paves the way for several irregularities and offences such as fake autonomous work, contractual dumping, imposition of fees to agency workers, unwaged overtime, and fictitious labour intermediation (Amorosi, 2023). Once again, the private and intimate dimension of domestic work proves to be the main obstacle in ameliorating both the employment and working conditions of the sector.

3. Industrial relations in the sector

As concerns the specificity of industrial relations in domestic work, a brief historical approach is needed to understand both the concrete evolution of labour regulation in this sector, as well as current legal loopholes (Borelli, 2020; Marchetti et al., 2021).

Domestic work was first addressed by the Italian legislature in the 1950s when, thanks to the mobilisation of ACLI-COLF⁵, Special Law 339/1958 was enacted, requiring the Italian state to regularize the sector, but focusing only on workers working at least 4 hours per day. The absence of a national collective contract in this sector was due to the legal ban on collective bargaining in domestic work. After the abolishment of the ban on domestic work collective bargaining in 1969, thanks to a sentence of the Italian Constitutional Court, time was ripe for a national collective contract, which was finally signed in 1974 (Sarti, 2020). Despite the decisive role of both unions and feminist movements in the 1970s, the issue of paid domestic work was left in the shade. If –women– unionists focused more on the needs and necessities of working women, feminists concentrated especially on the issue of unpaid domestic work, while nobody paid attention to waged domestic workers, or the “worker-housewife,” as defined by Olga Turrini (Frisone, 2020). Unionists and feminists shared the belief that domestic work would have been overcome by technological developments and by the provision of public social services. Nevertheless, domestic work has remained essential in our society, and it has even increased its importance due to both demographic and social changes. Since the signature of the first national collective contract in 1974, things have gradually improved, but some challenges are still open. Moreover, as Borelli (2020) highlights, given the existence of 21 domestic work contracts, there is a great risk of contractual dumping and the issue of the effective representativeness of both unions and employers’ associations is crucial in determining this reality. Meanwhile, Italy’s 2013 ratification of ILO Convention 189/2011 on domestic work occurred in an already institutionalized setting, in which domestic workers’ right to collective bargaining was formally recognized and employment and working conditions had already been defined through the national collective contract. This top-down kind of ratification, then, was not backed by workers’ participation, nor by public debates (Marchetti et al., 2021).

As for contractual norms, the national collective bargaining agreement FIDALDO/DOMINA with CGIL, CISL, UIL (hereinafter “NCBA”) is considered the reference one, since it is to this contract that the judicial authorities refer to identify the standards to be applied in terms of

⁵ ACLI COLF – *Associazioni Cristiane di Lavoratori Italiani-Collaboratori Familiari*, namely the Christian Associations of Italian Workers-Family Workers

wages and social security in the event of a dispute, being signed by the trade unions supposedly considered more representatives⁶. On the employers' side, only employers who are members of the Italian Federation of Domestic Employers (FIDALDO) and the National Association of Families of Domestic Workers (DOMINA) – the two national federations of domestic employers signing the collective agreement – are obliged to apply this contract, as are other employers who conclude contracts explicitly referring to this contract. On the workers' side, this contract was signed by the Service Federations of three traditional trade union confederations (FILCAMS–CGIL, FISASCAT–CISL and UILTuCS–UIL), and the Italian Federation of Domestic Workers (FEDERCOLF).

The NCBA was recently renewed by social parts in 2023. Article 1 itself defines that the contract “*applies to family assistants (domestic helpers, caregivers, babysitters and other professional profiles referred to in this CCNL), including those of non-Italian nationality or stateless persons, who are paid in any case, and who are employed in the functioning of family life and family-structured cohabitations, taking into account certain fundamental characteristics of the relationship*”. The NCBA states that live-in workers can work a maximum of 10 hours a day (a total of 54 hours a week), and live-out workers a maximum of 8 hours a day (a total of 40 hours a week). In the 54 articles that make up the NCBA, it covers all the most important aspects of domestic work, meeting the requirements of Art 7 of the ILO Convention⁷: stipulation of the contract in written form, definition of professional levels and consequent salaries, definition of the probationary period, night care work, working hours and overtime, daily and weekly rest and holidays, possible repatriation, maternity and sickness protection, protection of working conditions, social security. The NCBA introduced some relevant novelties compared to the previous version, signed in 2013. First, the contract introduces the single definition of the “family assistant” for the whole of different professional figures involved in domestic work, restoring uniformity and homogeneity in this sector, while preventing the use of discriminatory or offensive definitions, such as that of “*badante*”. Then, Art. 3 recalls that the contractual provisions represent the required minimum standards, but nothing excludes more favourable “*ad personam*” treatments; Art. 6 introduces the obligation to indicate the presence of audiovisual systems within the home to protect workers' privacy; and Art. 7 incorporates the most recent changes concerning temporary work. Then, Art. 9 defines new workers' professional classification: the 12-month entry level is no longer valid, while 4 levels are identified, with corresponding “super” levels involving workers dealing with personal assistance. Super levels depend on whether workers have specific certified training (at least 500 hours).

⁶ If Art. 39 of the Italian Constitution delegates the definition of trade unions' representativeness to the law, given the silence of the national legislator, employers' associations and traditional trade unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL) signed the Interconfederal Agreement of 2011, the Memorandum of Understanding of 2013, and the Consolidated Text on Representativeness of 2014 (Carrieri, Pirro, 2019), establishing some basic criteria to evaluate trade union representativeness.

⁷ Article 7 of ILO Convention 189/2011 states that “*Each Member shall take measures to ensure that domestic workers are informed of their terms and conditions of employment in an appropriate, verifiable and easily understandable manner and preferably, where possible, through written contracts in accordance with national laws, regulations or collective agreements*” So the article defines the key elements of the employment relationship that must be specified in the written contract.

Figure 7– Workers' classification profiles.

Level	Profile
A	cleaner; laundry attendant; kitchen help; groom; pets assistant; people in charge of cleaning and watering green areas; common worker
A super	Personal assistant for self-sufficient people
B	multipurpose generic family collaborator; custodian of a private house; ironing worker; waiter; gardener; qualified worker; driver; room tidying up and breakfast service also for guests of the employer
B super	family assistant for self-sufficient people, including, if required, activities related to the cleaning of the house where the assisted lives; Children (babysitter), including, if required, activities related to board and cleaning of the house where the assisted live
C	chef
C super	family assistant (not trained) who assists not-self-sufficient people, including, if required, activities related to board and cleaning of the house where the assisted live
D	administration of family assets; butler; housekeeper; head cook; head gardener; tutor
D super	family assistant (trained) who assists not-self-sufficient people, including, if required, activities related to board and cleaning of the house where the assisted live; house manager; trained family assistant educator

Source: NOBA

Then, Art. 12 introduces some changes in the trial period. If the previous contract recognized a 30 days probationary period for workers of the D and D super levels and a 8 days one for all the others, the current contract establishes a probationary period of 30 days only for D and D Super workers and for all cohabiting workers. Art. 19 extends the reasons for workers' individual permits, including not only medical examinations but also the duties determined by the renewal of the residence permit. Art. 20 introduces special training permits for permanent workers with more than 6 months of seniority, while Art. 21 establishes that the worker inserted in gender-violence special protection programs can be absent for a maximum period of three months, having right to receive an indemnity paid by INPS. The main innovations, however, can be found in Art. 35, which introduces various specific allowances, including that of 150 € per month for those workers looking after children up to 6 years, and 100 € per month for those working with more than one not-self-sufficient person. The article finally recognizes the existing difference in terms of effort and attention in caring for one or more people, enhancing the formal recognition of domestic work value.

The allowance recognized to workers employed in levels B, B Super, C Super and D Super and in possession of appropriate training certificates, encourages domestic worker professionalization, which seems to be the general purpose of the overall contractual innovations. For the recognition of training, the national collective agreement refers to the UNI standard 11766:2019 'Unregulated professional activities. Family assistant: domestic helper, baby-sitter, carer - Knowledge, skill and competence requirements'. Standard UNI 11766 defines the requirements of each professional figure, in accordance with the European Qualification Framework, and lists all the knowledge, skills and competences needed to be qualified by an accredited body. For each type of family assistant, it defines specific tasks and activities that the assistant must be able to perform, as well as providing for compliance with the code of ethics for domestic workers. To obtain certification, in addition to knowledge of the Italian language, it is necessary to have attended a training course, to acquire the skills required by the standards, and to have worked legally in family assistance for at least 12 months.

"We are renewing the collective agreement and we want to give more value to certification, because training is important and we want to ensure that it is recognised by families (...) It would be nice to recognise this standard at European level, also because these women workers have no problem moving around"(DOMINA).

However, the NCBA still presents some critical issues: domestic workers do not receive the same treatment as other workers regarding normal working hours, overtime, daily and weekly rest, and annual leave (Borelli, 2020). Moreover, the national legislation on safety at work (Legislative Decree 81/2008) does not apply to domestic workers, nor does the discipline on individual dismissals (Borelli, 2020). Domestic workers can benefit only from maternity leave, but not from parental leave, and the indemnity paid by INPS is recognised only if a certain number of contributions have been paid in the previous months (52 weekly contributions in the previous 25 months, or 26 monthly contributions in the previous 12 months). Then, art. 28 ends with a joint declaration in which the parties, recognizing that *"violence and harassment, including sexual harassment in the domestic workplace, constitute an abuse and a violation of human rights,"* commit themselves to promote initiatives countering such conduct. This appears necessary if we consider the high rate of abuse and harassment in domestic work, obviously linked to the invisibility spatial dimension of this work. As for sickness allowance, according to Art. 26, the regulation remains unchanged: the payment of the sickness allowance is up to the employer and not to INPS, and only for a limited period. This seems a factor of great vulnerability and blackmail for workers, who are often reluctant to declare their real health conditions to avoid any repercussions.

In addition to the collective agreement, for housekeepers hourly vouchers can also be used. These vouchers cover workers' social protection with the INPS and insurance coverage with INAIL, up to a maximum of EUR 5,000 net per worker and per individual client per calendar year. This sum decreases to EUR 3,000 net in total per calendar year for workers receiving income support. They do not give entitlement to sickness, maternity, unemployment or

family benefits. The vouchers have a value of EUR 10 each, which includes the contribution to the Inps Separate Management Fund (13%), the Inail insurance (7%) and a fee to the INPS for managing the service. The net value to the service provider is EUR 7.50.

Moreover, domestic work's structural invisibility reverberates also on the limited workers' unionization. Hobden (2015) highlights the main obstacles to engaging domestic workers in trade unions: the very extensive working time, the difficult management of private and working lives also for live-out workers, the obvious obstacle of high labour informality rates, and the impossibility to strike due to the individualized and intimate employment relationship. Moreover, in this sector traditional trade unions represent both domestic workers in their Service Sector Federation and their employers in the Pensioners' Federation, increasing workers' sense of distance from trade unions.

Overall, the regulation of domestic work still differs from that of other working sectors, maintaining the idea of the exceptionality of this work. The overall derogatory approach of the domestic work regulatory framework can be understood only when considering the crucial role it plays within the (dis)organization of Italian familistic welfare.

As for the next contractual renewal, social parts are focusing on some main key points on which it is necessary to intervene (DOMINA, 2023): provide for the recognition of the certification of skills, especially those recognized by local authorities and regions; provide for a 15% wage increase for overtimes; increase the number of holiday days to 30 working days; extending leave for women victims of gender-based violence with the same financial coverage; grant greater allowances for those attending specific training courses; extend the ban on mothers' dismissal until the child reaches one year of age and introduce parental leave; extend the days of sick leave by promoting health care contractual integrative; strengthening contractual rules on safety at work; overall increase in minimum wages and allowances.

Moreover, the awareness of domestic work's complex reality has led social parts to increase social dialogue and effectively cooperate in imagining new solutions for domestic work's organizing, under a comprehensive and broad approach. The claims, rather than between the social partners, are directed against the State.

"When we sit at the table for the renewal of national collective contracts there is a lot of responsibility on our part and on the part of the trade unions, because we have common interests and we also fight together to have domestic workers' rights recognised. Because the main problem is that they are not recognised by the State. We are fighting together for the recognition of maternity, for example. (...) The problem is that we move few votes, because the workers are predominantly foreigners."
(DOMINA).

In 2021 the social parts involved in the renewal of the FIDALDO/DOMINA collective agreement have proposed five direct actions to restore dignity to the sector (DOMINA, 2022). The pandemic has clearly shown the contradiction experienced by employers and workers due to a job that is defined as essential, although it is still unqualified, poorly paid, and socially undervalued. The first action is envisaging sickness benefits paid by INPS:

making the sickness allowance for domestic work the same as in other sectors will reduce employers' costs by providing more protection for workers. The second action is the full recognition of maternity and parental leave, overcoming the inequality between domestic workers and other workers while contributing to the definition of domestic work as decent work. The third action is allowing the deductibility of both contributions and wages for employers, which would substantially reduce costs for households, promoting the formalisation of domestic work and increasing workers' guarantees and tax revenues, with a maximum cost to the State estimated in 1.5 billion euros. The fourth action focuses on immigration law reform, introducing temporary permits for both job-seeking and proven integration, re-establishing the previously existing sponsor system⁸, and abolishing the crime of illegal immigration. Lastly, the fifth action is the introduction of universal allowance for dependent persons which would regroup all existing fragmented specific allowances, giving overall more resources to dependent persons, while creating new jobs with positive consequences in terms of tax revenues. These actions highlight social parts' awareness of the complexity underlying domestic work social and its economic undervaluation, but they have not been implemented and seem still distant from reality. The introduction of such measures, in fact, would imply the State's willingness to define domestic and caring responsibilities as a public and political issue; but the familistic dimension of Italian welfare, even when replaced by the so-called migrant-in-the-family model seems still unquestioned.

Interviews with trade unionists reveal a "recognition deficit", with most of them stating that they were unaware of the existence of domestic work platforms and related working conditions due to a "lack of recognition" (Pais and Marcolin, forthcoming). They have never come into contact with platform workers in the care sector, attributing this to invisibility and fragmentation:

"It is difficult for the union to be able to collectivise a totally fragmented work. There is the problem of intercepting them, putting them together, collectivising." (Felsa CISL – national level)

"We as a union generally act if there is demand. In the case of riders, even if the demand didn't arrive, you could see them on the street and so we went. Here, on the other hand, no one contacted us, there was no question. Then you don't meet them." (Nidil, CGIL – territorial level)

"For us, platform work is a challenge, but we don't quite know what tools to tackle it with. We don't know how to intercept them, but then we don't even know what to

⁸ This system, originally envisaged by Turco-Napolitano law of 1998, establishes the possibility for a private Italian citizen to directly call a foreign worker to work in Italy, with the guarantee of adequate financial resources and availability accommodation for the period of stay on the national territory, and facilitating those who have already had previous work experience in Italy or have attended Italian language courses or vocational training.

propose because we can't offer a platform worker what we do in traditional situations.” (Felsa CISL – territorial level)

“A colleague of ours has started to stay on the platforms, to understand how they work. Without saying that he is a trade unionist, just to know how they work.” (Felsa CISL – national level)

Among the strategies that could be activated, the importance of raising awareness, both of workers and families, is mentioned most frequently. *“Campaigns should be made to raise awareness among workers, this has been done with riders. In this case the campaign could also involve the pensioners' union, to signal the agencies to avoid, but also to promote the agencies – even the platforms – which instead operate in compliance with the law”* (Nidil, CGIL – territorial level).

Furthermore, some interviewees draw attention to the traditional levers of trade union action from advocacy to collective bargaining. *“There are different levels. The first is the regulation of platforms. We witness a hyperregulation of rider platforms and a complete absence of regulation of other platforms.”* (Felsa CISL, national level).

To improve working conditions, some trade unionists are open to evaluating different contracts.

“From this point of view, if the person who works through the platform at least opened a VAT number, it would certainly be a step compared to the intermediation of undeclared work. This would mean having the courage to work on a labour market welfare that does not depend on the employment contract and to ensure rights also for the VAT number” (Felsa CISL – national level)

Finally, unions are calling for a strengthening of public intervention in the sector in the form of economic support for families, in the promotion of intermediation tools that favour agencies that adopt ethical behaviour and in the promotion of training courses. *“We should also aim at the state level to introduce training courses in vocational schools to take care of the elderly. Let's start with three years and then later you can get to five, but you have to give this job a value, a professionalism, because our young Italians don't want to do this job”* (Fisascat CISL, territorial level)

4. Conclusions

The report aims to detect the context where domestic work' concrete organization takes place, focusing on employment and industrial relations in the sector in Italy. Analysing the specificity of employment and working conditions in domestic work highlights the specific nature of this work at the intersection between public and private, between visible and invisible. This specificity cannot be understood without being framed in the overall setting of Italy's DYI welfare. If domestic work is invisible, structurally informal, low paid and low valued at the social level, it is because the Italian State outsources social reproductive activities to

households –and thus, women– who, in turn, struggle to navigate this system, outsourcing these same activities to migrant women. In this context, the increasing presence of digital intermediaries may effectively contribute to formalising this work (Mateescu and Ticona 2020 and 2022) or, on the contrary, lead to the ‘uberisation of care’ (Trojanksy 2020) making jobs more casual, pay less predictable, limiting social protection and increasing control (Pulignano et al, 2023; Macdonald 2021; Sedacca, 2022). As emerges from recent research on care corporatization in different contexts and also in Italy (Marchetti, Scrinzi, 2014; Farris, 2020; Amorosi 2023), domestic work structural informality is somehow re-articulated by employment agencies to increase profits and attract more clients when the regulation is incoherent or not adequately applied. As for digital platforms, research is still limited, and we need to detect how these actors concretely act, under which conditions they may contribute to the amelioration of working conditions, and under which conditions they might have the reverse outcome. On the one hand, the presence of these new actors may be the opportunity to frame domestic work through the lens of formal employment; on the other hand, this would imply the State’s will to regulate and control the effective functioning of these new actors. As emerges from the three sections of this report, it is precisely the structural invisibility of domestic work to ground the structural informality of domestic work, and limiting this necessarily implies showing the real economic and social value of domestic work, making it finally visible. Only acknowledging the role of this sector at social and economic levels would lead to a real improvement in both employment and working conditions for involved workers.

5. References

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