

## She-austerity. Women's precariousness and labor inequality in Southern Europe

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**Abstract:** This article presents a comparative and longitudinal analysis of the situation of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian women since the beginning of the crisis. The study follows three specific objectives: expose the female labor market in the three states; analyze women's labor participation from the perspective of precariousness; and analyze the position of women and men in gender relations from the perspective of gender inequality. The research has been prepared by the technique of documentary analysis of secondary sources of official statistics. We conclude that the crisis has affected women from southern European countries in a similar manner because of their greater compliance with traditional gender roles, but at the same time, some differences between them are observed as a result of the different economic structures, labor legislation and social protection regimes.

**Key words:** crisis, women, South Europe, gender, precariousness.

**Resumen:** El artículo presenta un análisis comparativo y longitudinal de la situación de las mujeres en España, Portugal e Italia, desde el inicio de la crisis. Los objetivos específicos son: exponer el mercado laboral femenino en los tres países, examinar la presencia laboral de las mujeres desde la perspectiva de la precariedad y analizar la posición de mujeres y hombres en las relaciones de género desde la perspectiva de la desigualdad de género. La investigación se llevó a cabo mediante la técnica de análisis documental de fuentes secundarias de estadísticas oficiales. Se concluye que la crisis ha afectado a las mujeres de los países europeos del sur de manera similar por su mayor continuidad en el desempeño del rol de género tradicional, pero, a la vez, se observan algunas diferencias entre ellos como consecuencia de las diferentes estructuras económicas, legislaciones laborales y protección social.

**Palabras clave:** crisis, mujeres, Europa del sur, género, precariedad.

## Introduction

The economic-financial crisis started in 2007 in the United States and extended to the European Union and then to the rest of the world; it is also called the Great Recession (Gil-Calvo, 2009; Touraine, 2011; Stiglitz, 2010); this attack started in the 1980's,<sup>1</sup> when there were transcendental changes that ended up in the implementation of the so-called neoliberalism, a term associated to the economists of the Chicago School: Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, and implemented by Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom.

Neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007; Navarro, 1998; Steger and Roy, 2011) responded to the formula of “more market, less State” defended by the Washington Consensus in 1989<sup>2</sup> and characterized by a process of privatization of public goods and labor deregulation using flexibility as a strategy to secure entrepreneurial efficiency (Stiglitz, 2002; 2010; Alonso, 2000; Estefanía, 2012; Todaro and Yáñez, 2004).

The Great Recession is identified by the growth and deregulation of financial capital, increase in inequalities due to fiscal policies that benefit the wealthiest, and by the growth of capital incomes not from employment incomes that decrease due to the fall in wages, decline of middle classes, reduction of public expenditure, especially the corresponding to social protection and labor reforms that benefit deregulation and flexibility (Do Carmo, 2011; 1st and 2nd Report on Inequality in Spain [*Informe sobre la desigualdad en España*], 2013; 2015).

In the context of the European Union, not all the States have been affected by the crisis in the same way. The so called Mediterranean countries (Gálvez-Muñoz *et al.*, 2013) —Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal— are the most affected so far, and in the case of Greece and Portugal there have been rescues, leading to the imposition of severe austerity measures by the European Troika;<sup>3</sup> these measures provoked a reduction of the Welfare State and the application of neoliberal principles. In the Spanish case, the rescue focused on the banking sector, but the austerity measures were equally applied.

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1 Gálvez-Muñoz (2013) pinpoints the differences between the Great Recession and the previous crises referring that nowadays there have been a contraction and a demand crisis.

2 The term was coined by economist John Williamson to describe a set of ten relatively specific formulas, which he considered the package of “standard” reforms for developing countries in crisis.

3 The European Troika refers to the IMF, the European Commission and the European Central Bank.

Because of the crisis, a series of measures was approved for the labor, which fostered more flexibility, wage reduction and a sharp rise in atypical job posts.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, fiscal measures such as an increase in VAT and the reduction of the Welfare State with public expenditure cut-downs were introduced especially in policies of care and support for the families, transferring to the private sectors services which previously were secured by the public sector (Esping-Andersen and Palier, 2010; Casaca and Damião, 2011; Ferreira, 2013; Gálvez-Muñoz, Rodríguez and Addabbo, 2013; Frade and Coelho, 2015; Rodríguez, 2010; 2014); all of this within a context of annual GDP drops in the three aforementioned countries.

Bearing in mind the common fact of these southern countries, in relation to the severity of the impact from the crisis and austerity, such nations present specific and particular characteristics in terms of the organization of protection and social welfare that affirmed the existence of a model of a Mediterranean Welfare State, characterized by scant public expenditure, stressing familism in the citizens and social protection, marked asymmetries in the sexual division of labor, influence from the Catholic Church, and low rates of feminine participation in labor markets (Esping-Andersen and Palier, 2010; Silva, 2002; Tobío, 2015).

In this context of crisis and austerity, one of the most noticeable consequences of labor flexibilization has been the expansion of employment pauperization (Bourdieu, 1999; Alonso, 2000; Giordano, 2009; Standing, 2013; Recio, 2007). The so called Fordist worker, characterized by a fulltime steady job for an indeterminate time with stipulated weekly schedule and social security has made room for precarious and “de-standardized” employment (Prieto *et al.*, 2008), characterized by instability, lower wages and scarce social protection (Standing, 2013). Pauperization, then, is a consequence of labor flexibility and the changes in labor relations (Leite, 2013).

Standing (2013) includes in “precariousness” temporary workers, part-time jobs, call center employees, trainees, independent and dependent contractors, in relation with self-employment and replacement of labor contracts by civil or commercial contracts that at present are distinguished in outsourcing and subcontracting.

All these jobs are characterized by de-structuring existence, and also by generalized and institutionalized insecurity that turns the mere survival into the central incentive, thereby a disciplinary tool in current society

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<sup>4</sup> Law 3/2012 of July 6<sup>th</sup> emergent measures for the Labor Reform (Spain). Law 92/2012 *Fornero* Reform and in 2014 the Jobs Act (Italy). Law 53/2011, Law 23/2012, Law 35/2014 of June 20<sup>th</sup> and General Law on Public Service Labor.

(Bourdieu, 1999; Alonso and Fernández, 2013). To sum up, precariousness is characterized by three “i’s”: Instability, Insecurity and Insufficiency (Todaro and Yáñez, 2004).

Together with the characteristics of precariousness and labor flexibility mentioned above as a consequence of the crisis, additionally, for women there is another characteristic related to gender roles. Roles that reinforce the process of feminine precariousness in relation to the performance of their role of citizens and that determines, most of times, the how, the when and the where of labor activity (Cano, 2000; Del Boca and Sarraceno, 2005; De Luigi and Martelli, 2009; Casaca and Damiao 2011; Scott, Crompton and Lyonette, 2010; Ferreira, 2013; Ferreira and Monteiro, 2013; Castaño, 2015).

Such performance of citizens’ tasks goes hand in hand with the traditional sexual division of labor established by the patriarchy (Lerner, 1990; Walby, 1990; Connell, 1990) and that still defines southern Europe countries. This continuity in the fulfillment of domestic chores and caretaking contributes, together with other issues such as labor segregation, to the inequality of women in labor market.

In the context of economic crisis, austerity and shrinking of the Welfare State, we wonder if in spite of the progressive incorporation of women into remunerated employment, such access has occurred in more precarious conditions for women than for men, and if the impact generated by the crisis has been similar for women in Spain, Italy and Portugal.

The general objective of the present article is to perform a comparative and longitudinal analysis of the situation of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian women as of the start of the crisis. This objective includes three specific objectives: to expose the labor status of women in Spain, Italy and Portugal, in relation to employment and unemployment; to examine the labor presence of women from the perspective of precariousness; and finally, to analyze the position of men and women in gender relations from the perspective of gender inequality.

The hypothesis states that the crisis has affected, in similar manner, women from European countries in the south because of their continuance in the performance of the traditional gender roles, however at the same time, they observe some differences between them as a consequence of various economic structures, labor legislation and social projections.

## Methodology

The present research was carried out by means of the technique of documental analysis of official secondary statistical sources. Since the objective is to make a comparison between these three countries, we opted to analyze European data, even if on occasion, clarified in the text, we have resorted to state sources such as the National Institute of Statistics (NIS), the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) or the Portuguese Statistical Institute (PSI).

The most consulted source is Labor Force Survey (LFS) included in Eurostat, European Office of Statistics, in charge of producing and harmonize data from the European Union countries. Eurostat information allows us to include verified and reliable data related to Spain, Italy and Portugal from a longitudinal perspective differenced by sexes.

In the classification by sectors, the one-digit National Classification of Economic Activities has been utilized (CNAE\_2009)<sup>5</sup> and for the classification of occupations we have followed the indications of ISCO-08 of the European Union.<sup>6</sup> The framework to build ISCO-08 is based upon two main concepts: the sort of labor performed and competences.<sup>7</sup>

ISCO-88 comprises four aggregation levels: the most disaggregate comprises 436 occupation categories (four digits); the 3-digit category comprises 130 categories; two-digit, 43; and, the 1-digit category, 10.<sup>8</sup> In the present article, we have used the 1-digit classification, while two-digit

5 Agriculture, livestock rearing, forestry, and fishing; extractive industry; manufacturing industry; electricity, gas, vapor and air-conditioning supply; construction; wholesale and detail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; transport and storage; catering; information and communications; financial and insurance services; real estate activity; professional, scientific and technical activities; administrative activities and auxiliary services; public administration and defense, compulsory social security; education; sanitary and social-service activities; artistic, recreational and entertainment activities; other services; household activities such as employers of domestic staff, producers of goods and services for their own use; activities of organizations and extraterritorial organisms.

6 The background of ISCO (International Standard Classification of Occupations) dates back to 1958 (ILO). Later adaptations have been made.

7 For further information on this topic see "Introducción a la CNO-11" [Introduction to CNO-11] (2012) at [www.ine.es](http://www.ine.es)

8 Directors and managers; scientific professionals and intellectuals; mid-level technicians and professionals; administrative support personnel; service workers and clerks in businesses and markets; farmers and skilled workers; agricultural, forestry and fishing; officials, operators and artisans of mechanical arts and other trades; operators of machinery and installations and assemblers; elemental occupations; and, armed forces.

for masculinized, feminized and mixed occupations, as it provides more concretion and facilitates a more rigorous classification<sup>9</sup>

For the analysis of uses of time, the Harmonised European Time Use Survey (Hetus Project) (2007) was utilized. HETUS database makes a comparison of the surveys on uses of time in 15 countries of the European Union based on the activities performed over the day. This classification allows comparing between countries, in this case Italy and Spain, as the activities included are identical. No information on the uses of time has been found for Portugal, because last survey took place in 1999.

Out of the consulted sources, we have selected statistical data related to the objectives of this research and built a listing of indicators<sup>10</sup> that will make it easy the comparison between the three countries and the measurement of the concept in question:

*a.* Indicators of feminine labor structure: closing the gap in employment and unemployment of women in southern Europe; feminine labor segregation; sectors and occupations.

*b.* Indicators of labor precariousness: being precarious in southern Europe; temporality; part-time shifts; wage gap as a manifestation of precariousness; self-employment.

*c.* Indicators of inequality in the role of caretakers: distribution of daily time as inequality axis; leaves of absence and permissions to take care of children and dependent people; leaving jobs because of caretaking.

The spatial context is the countries of southern Europe: Spain, Italy and Portugal.<sup>11</sup> While the temporal scope comprises the last ten years: 2004-2014. This decision comes from the intention to include new data about the crisis, previous, during and current.

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9 Masculine occupations are those in which men account for 60% or more of the job posts: mechanics and metalworkers, drivers, construction workers, engineers and computer scientists, industry workers, managers and operators. Feminized occupations, with 60% or more the posts held by women, are: health professionals, white collars, caretakers, education, maintenance and cleaning workers, saleswoman, costumer-care employees. Mixed occupations are those related to food, furniture, fabrics, public administration, advocacy, and scientific, financial and trade professionals (ISCO-08, two digits).

10 Carmona (1977) defines social indicators as “the statistical measure of a concept or dimension of a concept or a part of it, based on a previous theoretical, integrated analysis into a coherent system of similar measures useful to describe the state of society”.

11 Greece is not included in spite of being considered a southern country because of its historic and cultural differences in respect to the other three countries.

## Feminine labor structure

### *Closing the gap; employment and unemployment of women in southern Europe*

Studies and researches carried out in Europe since the beginning of the crisis point out that, at a first stage (Torns, 2011; Ferreira, 2013; Bettio, Corsi *et al.*, 2013; Karamessini and Rubery, 2013; Pavolini, 2014; Castaño, 2015), the crisis affected men more (2008 second quarter) and which later when the austerity measures imposed by the Troika began to be applied, women became more affected, due to cuts in the public sector.

Feminine employment rate<sup>12</sup> has maintained since the beginning and the distance between masculine and feminine employment has shortened (Alcañiz and Guerreiro, 2009; Ferreira, 2010; Leon, 2013; Alcañiz, 2015), nowadays it is 8.5 percentage points in Spain, 17.9 in Italy and 6.2 in Portugal. Bettio and Verashchagina (2014) consider that the leveling down comes from the worsening of masculine participation rather than from the improvement women's labor results.

Women, being more sensitive to economic cycles than men, enter the labor market out of their families' economic need, as it is the case if the partner is unemployed (Gálvez *et al.*, 2013). Nowadays, there are more married women who have a job than young women due to the difficulties youths have to find a job before 24 years of age. In this respect, there has been a change in relation to previous crises, when women went back home to leave their posts for men (Gálvez-Muñoz *et al.*, 2013).

Graph 1<sup>13</sup> shows the evolution of the feminine employment rate in the three countries. We notice that masculine employment maintains homogeneity between the three, while in the feminine employment profile there are differences; Portugal is the country with the largest feminine presence in the labor market.<sup>14</sup>

The crises have had disastrous consequences in relation to unemployment, with noticeable differences between the three countries (Ingellis and Calvo, 2015; Ferreira, 2013). The most notorious is the tripe increment in the unemployment rate for Spanish men and double for Spanish women. Italian and Portuguese men and women have increased their unemployment rate, but not in the same proportion as in Spain (see graph 2).<sup>15</sup>

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12 Referred to women between 16 and 64 years of age.

13 All graphs and tables are at the Annex, at the end of the article (Editors' note).

14 Over the European mean in 2014.

15 Initially the crisis affected heavily masculinized sectors such as construction and industry.

Unemployment aggravates for people who have been in this situation for more than 12 months; these are called long-lasting unemployed (LLU). In Europe, as a whole, LLU have a relevant weight in total unemployment. In fact, almost a half (between 40 and 45%) of total unemployment corresponds to LLU (De la Rica and Brindusa, 2014). In relation to these three countries, the evolution of the crisis up to 2015 is shown in table 1.

This increase in LLU is due to the economic recession and economic structural reasons (De la Rica and Brindusa, 2014): from the labor offer, mismatch between the abilities or skills demanded and those offered; from the demand, reduction of demand owing to an interest to cut down on wages; from labor and State fiscal policies, high contributions to social security, high protection of employment and generous unemployment long-lasting subsidies that discourage looking for a job in the current crisis contexts.

### *Continuity in segregation; sectors and occupations*

From the configuration of labor society, the participating social agents established a differentiation —segregation— between posts destined for women and men (Scott, 1995), establishing a gender division that persists at present. Segregation is the materialization of the sexual division of labor in the labor market, which establishes inequality in wages, hierarchy and labor conditions (Ibáñez, 2008). Its causes are cultural, on the one side, in short because of gender roles; and on the other, the configuration of the labor market that establishes a classification of posts with “gendered assignation”, hindering the inclusion of women.

Segregation generates inequalities in four aspects (Burchell *et al.*, 2014): 1) it reduces employment options and reinforces gender stereotypes; 2) it produces both vertical segregation (men’s tendency to take better jobs) and horizontal segregation (women and men choose different types of jobs); 3) it can be the result of choosing jobs that allow conciliate labor with family life; 4) it facilitates the undervaluing of jobs largely taken by women.

Moreover, a segmented labor market restricts women’s opportunities to change the sexual division of labor at home, because they have a more restricted access to qualified paid jobs than men.

The analyses carried out for the European Union (Smith *et al.*, 2013) refer to marked labor segregation by gender, due to the permanence of gender stereotypes about the posts and the women’s election to work on schedules that allow conciliating labor and family life, thus reinforcing segregation. Graphs 3 and 4 show changes in female labor participation by sectors.



Commerce is the sector where the most women participate in Spain and Italy, and it is the second in importance in Portugal. Education, health care and social services are feminized sectors as well; for its part, manufacturing industry has presence at the three countries, but at different positions: Portugal in the first place; Italy, second; and Spain, fourth place (see graph 4).

The changes observed in female labor participation by sectors over these crisis years point at the disappearance of manufacturing employment from the ranking of the four sectors in Spain, remaining in Italy and Portugal, but at a reduced proportion. Commerce, Health care and education are the three priority sectors in feminine employment, and in Spain, catering is among the first four.

As a conclusion about where women are employed, data reflect a noticeable increase over the studied years and for the three countries in public administration, education and health care. There is a slight increase in transport and storage and in professional activities, and continuity in the rest of the sectors.

In order to find out the segregation index of various occupations, a classification was produced<sup>16</sup> based on the analysis of men and women's occupation, considering an occupation aggregated if in it there is more than 60 percent of men or women. Results show masculinized, feminized<sup>17</sup> and mixed occupations. Table 2 presents the distribution of employed population by sex and classification type.

Spain and Portugal have a heavier segregation than Italy, because of the larger number of women working in feminized sectors and fewer in mixed or masculinized sectors; while in Italy, feminine occupation has a higher proportion in mixed jobs. By and large, for the three countries, women's access to masculine occupations is lower than men's access to feminized jobs.

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16 Exposed in Methodology.

17 Feminized occupations were called "pink-collar" by Louise Kappe Howe (1977). They became popular in the 1990's with the mass increase of women in the labor market as nurses, secretaries, teachers in nurseries and elementary schools.

## **Being a precarious woman in southern Europe**

### *A feminized labor figure: part-time work*

Part-time work makes labor reorganization, flexibility and precariousness for women evident, stressing the gendered segmentation<sup>18</sup> that appears in this crisis context (Torns and Carrasquer, 2007; Monteiro, 2010; Ortiz, 2014; Pace, 2014). From 2008 to 2015, part-time employment rate increased in Spain and Italy, but not in Portugal, a country where this sort of working hours is less visible due to low wages.<sup>19</sup>

Part-time work exhibits the uneven segregation that exists nowadays in the labor market from gender reasons. Its growth refers to the possibility of allowing the conciliation of labor and family life and the creation of job posts with this flexible profile. In both cases, women are the most affected, because of their caretaker role and the consideration of these working hours, the worst payment, with no possibilities of promotion and lower future pension, related to groups not considered in the breadwinner model, clearly displaying the survival of patriarchy in society (Casaca, 2012; Alcañiz, 2015).

If we cross the classification by masculinized, feminized or mixed sectors with the type of working day, we obtain the results shown in table 3.

Women employ in part-time work largely in feminized sectors. Then, there is double inequality, in segregation and segmentation, since together with poor valuing and subsequent lower wages of employment in feminized sectors, the fact of being part-time adds, with which precariousness and inequality become acuter in the case of working women in feminized sectors in part-time work in Spain and Portugal.

### *Permanent instability: temporary employment*

A temporary contract meets the demands of entrepreneurial flexibility according to production needs, making room for another labor segmentation in which women also lose (Juan, 2015). Temporary work has degraded labor

18 The theory of labor market segmentation was stated by Piore and Sabel (1990), who divide it as: 1) primary labor market with skilled workers, good wages and possibilities of promotion; and, 2) secondary labor market, characterized by temporality, instability, job rotation, low wages and scant possibilities of promotion. Precarious workers would be identified in this last segment.

19 In Portugal, minimum wage is 589 EUR and in Spain, 655.20 EUR. From 2009 to 2016, in Spain minimum wage increased 31 EUR.

conditions and has served, together with mass unemployment, to discipline labor force in its salary demands and in the defense of its individual and collective labor rights (Alonso and Fernández, 2013; Lorente, 2014).

Differences are noticeable between southern European countries because of the different regulations and structure of labor and economic markets.<sup>20</sup> Even if Spain has reduced its proportion, it is still the country with the highest rate in temporary jobs. In Otaegui's (2014) opinion, the drop of temporality is caused by the crisis, which swept temporary jobs—the first affectation—, this way, surely temporary workers became unemployed, the ultimate expression of precariousness (Larrañaga, 2014).

In Portugal, it is verified that with the crisis there was an increase in temporality for men and a drop for women; this reflects the phenomenon which Virginia Ferreira (2013) calls “feminization” of the men's labor conditions, now subject to forms of precariousness previously largely for women. This fact has also occurred in Italy, where feminine temporality, in spite of being lower than the masculine, has remained constant, while that of men has increased.

Ingellis and Calvo (2015) state that in Italy labor market is more rigid, so temporality is lower; this way, there is a duality between male and female workers in relation to social protection, as in Italy it is lower than in Spain.

### *Make your own job post: self-employment*

In the European Union and according to recent data (Hatfield, 2015), 14% of European workers are self-employed. The sectors in which they work range from agriculture, freelance professionals and cleaning staff. The European country with most self-employment is Greece, however Spain and Italy also present high proportions.

It is considered a precarious labor figure as it is a fast way to enter the labor market, but labor conditions are worse since there is neither unemployment coverage nor social security, wages are low (up to 40% lower) and jobs are unstable. Hatfield (2015) alludes to their greater satisfaction than other salaried workers as they are their own bosses and organize their working day themselves; however, insecurity and instability make them search for a job that covers these demands.

There is more masculine self-employment than feminine; nevertheless, la latter is on the rise with the crisis and especially in less skilled employment

<sup>20</sup> It is important to bear in mind the relation between temporality and economic sectors; for instance, tourism and construction.

where labor conditions are bad but allow conciliation. In Hakim's (2005) opinion, it is another manifestation that women look for a job that enables them to perform their roles of caretakers in a satisfactory manner.

The European Union and governments are setting initiatives into motion to incentivize self-employment in the shape of help for entrepreneurs: facilitating low-interests loans to create autonomous enterprises. In like manner, the European Social Fund facilitates nonrefundable subventions to support new initiatives. Graphs 5 and 6 show the changes in feminine precariousness between 2008 and 2015.<sup>21</sup>

*Pending objective: decrease wage gap*

As a consequence of segmentation and segregation, there appears another inequality between men and women: the one related to wages. Even if the objective has been present in the European Union since its inception,<sup>22</sup> truth is such objective is still the Achilles' heel regarding equality in the European Union, for no country has attained it. This made the European Commission establish the European Equal Pay Day, an event organized to sensitize people on this fact.

This day varies depending on the wage gap between men and women; the first day it was observed was on March 5th, 2011.<sup>23</sup> According to the European Commission (2014), in 2011 wage gap was 16%, slightly descending in relation to 2008, when it was 17.3%. As for Spain, it was slightly superior, 17.8%, while in Italy it was surprisingly lower, 6.7%. Both countries have increased their wage gap over recent years: this way, in 2013, according to the latest data from Eurostat (2015), the gap increased to 19.3% in Spain, to 13% in Portugal, and in Italy 7.3%.

Inequality between men and women in wage gap is superior in Spain, this makes it evident the greater feminine labor precariousness related, for its part, to the other aforementioned precariousness factors.

The reasons for wage differentiation between men and women are fundamentally these (European commission Report, 2014): in the first place, women and men are in the labor market in different occupations and sectors; post held by women are usually poorly paid.

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21 In both cases, third quarter data are included.

22 The Treaty of Rome, 1957, and the new approved directives that refer to the equal retribution for work of the same value. (Directive 2006/54/CE).

23 This year 2016, it was observed on February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Secondly, women frequently have the part-time jobs that are paid the least. Thirdly, the cultural aspect of gender roles, in which women are largely responsible for house chores and caretaking, a fact that limits their greater involvement in the job and possible promotion. In the fourth place, the underrating of posts held by women produces lower retributions in the wage system. Finally, the stereotype of the woman's wage as a second income, not the main one; public imagination still assigns men the role of breadwinner, as it was initially institutionalized.

### *Persistent inequality: gender roles' performance*

As previously stated, the crisis affected women and men in different ways. On the one side, it has made women incorporate into labor market, reducing the gap in the presence of men and women in the labor market; and on the other side, it has increased their precariousness by means of labor flexibility and segregation and their role of caretakers (Carrasco *et al.*, 2011).

If we add the cutbacks the States have made to their social expenditure, the situation becomes complicated for women, and in words by Gálvez *et al.* (2013), a feminine *austericide* is committed, and it especially affects women with the least resources.

### *Time uses as inequality axes*

The study of uses of time as a measurement in the sociological analysis of gender has turned into a basic tool that makes inequalities between men and women evident (De la Fuente, 2007; Durán and Rogero, 2009; Martín Criado and Prieto, 2015; García Sainz, 2015). Even if time is the same for everyone, its use differs in function of social variables, among which gender is one of the most important; hence, the interest in measuring the temporary distribution of the activities carried out along the day and also interpreting them from a gender perspective.

Data obtained by means of the surveys carried out have also been criticized (Carrasco *et al.*, 2011), because of the consideration that caretaking jobs are much more complex to measure than the rest of tasks performed along the day, as it cannot be done solely by counting hours and minutes (see table 5).

Spanish women devote more time to employment than Italian women, thereby less caretaking tasks. As for men, distribution is similar, and for both sexes, free time is superior in Spain than in Italy.

The asymmetrical involvement of men and women to house chores and caretaking lead to the so called “caretaking gap” and demonstrates women’s continuity in the performance of house chores and caretaking<sup>24</sup> (Orloff, 2009; Tobío, 2005; Sarraceno, 2004; Pandolfini, 2014; Alcañiz, 2015).

*Leaves, permits and resignations due to caretaking*

As previously stated, the interests of the European Union<sup>25</sup> in incorporating women into the remunerated labor market favored the approval of various regulations encompassed in the concept of conciliation of labor and personal life, so that people with little children or dependents have a series of measures related to temporary leaves, flexibility or reduction of working hours, without implying giving up the job. Among these measures distinguishable are caretaking leave, reduction of working hours, nursing leave and labor flexibility.

Regarding the interruptions in labor life or reduction of working hours, data show that fundamentally “it is a women’s thing”; this is to say, despite the conciliation laws approved in Italy, Spain and Portugal addressed both sexes, they were “neutral”, the decision of altering labor trajectory is still something feminine (Alcañiz, 2012). It is important to point out that Portugal is the country of southern Europe in which the presence of children under 8 years determines the abandonment of the job, due to the low wages (see table 6).

The continuity in the performance of domestic and caretaking roles is verified with these data, and then reaffirms when it is corroborated that the reduction in women’s working hours increases according to the number of children under 6 years of age they have. This way, in 2013, 34.1% of the Italian women with one child works part-time, while those with three children account for 42.6%.

This dissimilarity is even more stressed in the European Union, where the percentage difference between women with one child and those with three or more in relation to part-time is almost 14 points. This variation does not

24 In this performance there are noticeable differences between women: according to living in a State with better provision of caretaking services, social class or sharing a more egalitarian ideology between genders.

25 The Luxembourg European Council in 1997 approved the European Employment Strategy. It encouraged the States to set up policies that introduced part-time working days, parenting leaves and caretaking services for children and dependents. In Spain, the Law 39/1999 was approved to promote the conciliation of family and working life. In Italy, in 2000, the Law for the support of maternity and paternity, for the right to health care and training and coordinate schedules in cities (*Turco Law*), much more complex than the Spanish one.

take place in Spain, where part-time percentages do not vary according to the number of children, (29.5% in 2004 and 30.1% in 2013) (Eurostat, 2015).

### *Caretaking as labor “inactivity”*

The inactive population in a society comprises people who are not in the remunerated labor market, either because they are studying, were previously employed and now are pensioned, or because they are physically or psychologically challenged. It also includes women exclusively devoted to domestic chores and caretaking, a much discussed topic deemed as “labor” by feminists, and claimed to be included in the country’s GDP, which most surely would increase because of the important number of women devoted to house chores in southern Europe countries.

In the three analyzed countries the proportion of inactive women has decreased between 2008 and 2015: in Spain the decrease has been 5 percentage points, two in Italy, and 1.3 in Portugal. This is to say, the traditional figure of a woman devoted to family care as a fundamental task<sup>26</sup> is changing; it is making room for another model of women incorporated into the labor market, however —and this is the most important (and uneven)— also devoted to house chores and caretaking.

Albeit, this last is still the main explanatory factor to why many women, even intending to enter the labor market, do not look for a job and give priority to such task instead of having a remunerated job outside the household (see graph 7).

## **Conclusions**

The crisis and austerity policies have affected in a very significant and disproportionate manner women in southern Europe, aggravating the current gender regimes. As for unemployment, it has increased in these three countries, with noticeable differences, nevertheless. The most noticeable is the triple increase in the unemployment rate of Spanish men and twice for women. Italian and Portuguese men and women have increased their unemployment, but not in the same proportion as Spain.

Self-employment is more masculine than feminine; however, the latter is on the rise due to the crisis and especially in less skilled posts, in which labor conditions are bad but allow conciliation.

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26 Model defended by the Catholic Church and Franco’s dictatorship in Spain up to 1978 and by Portuguese *Estado Novo* up to 1976.

Data indicate that Spain and Portugal have higher segregation than Italy, because of the larger number of women working in feminized sectors and fewer in mixed or masculinized sectors, while in Italy feminine occupation has a higher proportion than mixed occupations. By and large, for the three countries, the access of women to masculine jobs is lower than the access of men to feminized posts.

A double inequality takes place: segregation and segmentation, as together with the undervaluing and consequential lower remuneration of employment in feminized sectors, add to the fact that it is part-time, with which precariousness and inequality become acute in the case of women in feminized sectors working part-time in Spain and Portugal. Between 2008 and 2015, the unemployment rate for part-time work increased in Spain and Italy, but not in Portugal, where this sort of working day is not so present because of the low wages. There are differences between the countries in southern Europe in the evolution of temporary work because of the various regulations and structures of their economic and labor markets. In spite of decreasing its proportion in recent years, Spain is still the country with the highest temporality rate. In Portugal it is verified that with the crisis the situation of temporality worsened for men and there was a fall for women, which reflects what Virginia Ferreira (2013) calls “feminization” of men’s labor conditions, now subject to forms of precariousness previously largely experienced by women.

This fact has also been accounted for in Italy, where the feminine temporality rate, despite being higher than that of men, has remained constant, while that of men has increased. Ingellis and Calvo (2015) state that in Italy labor market is more rigid and because of this temporality is lower, which produces a duality between male and female workers in relation to social protection; in Italy is lower than in Spain.

Wage gaps have increased in other countries, more in Spain, this way, higher feminine labor precariousness is noticed related to other precariousness factors.

With the crisis, precariousness increased for European women in the south because of three aspects (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2014): in the first place, the degree of segmentation and segregation of the labor structure that affects feminine employment; secondly, the presence of traditional gender roles makes women take posts in in function of the possibility to conciliate with their “other role”; thirdly, the retrenchment of the welfare states, help from the State, not only related to conciliate labor and family life, but to



caretaking services that help “defamiliarization”,<sup>27</sup> being the State the one that assumes the tasks (Moreno, 2007).

The generalized austerity policies had provoked that families are again the main providers of caretaking services, being women the main responsible to do it.

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27 The term “defamiliarization” was introduced by Gosta Esping-Andersen (2000), after receiving criticism from feminist women. It is defined as a process by means of which individuals have accomplished emancipation from family dependencies by means of State actions.

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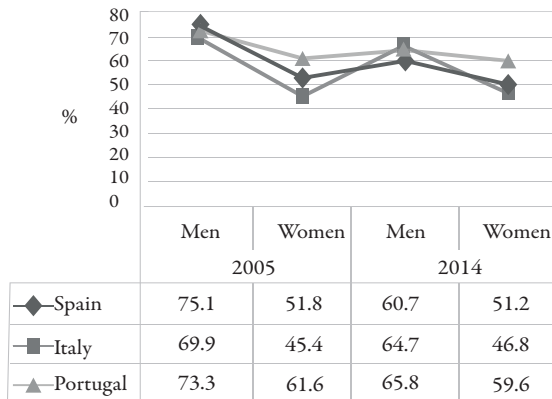
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## Annex

Graph 1

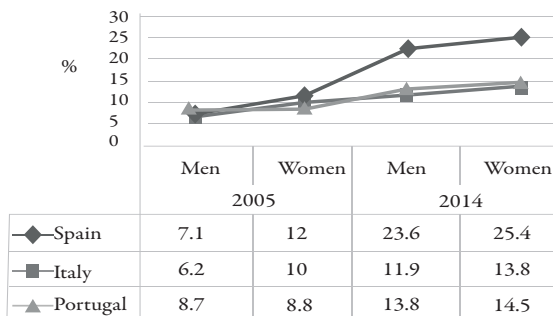
Employment rate by sex (%)



Source: own elaboration based on Eurostat (2015). Available at: [www.eurostat.eu](http://www.eurostat.eu) [January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016].

Graph 2

Unemployment rate by sex (%)



Source: own elaboration based on Eurostat (2015). Available at: [www.eurostat.eu](http://www.eurostat.eu) [January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016].

Table 1

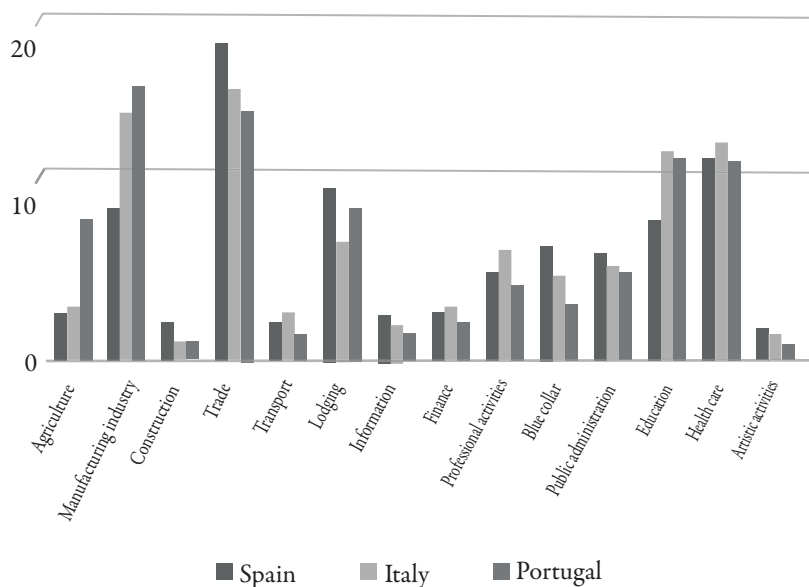
**Long-lasting unemployment by sex over total unemployment (%)**

	2008		2015	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Spain	21.4	13.6	52.1	50
Italy	46.6	45.2	58.7	59.4
Portugal	45.7	40.9	55.7	45.6

Source: own elaboration based on Eurostat (2015). Available at: [www.eurostat.eu](http://www.eurostat.eu) [January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016].

Graph 3

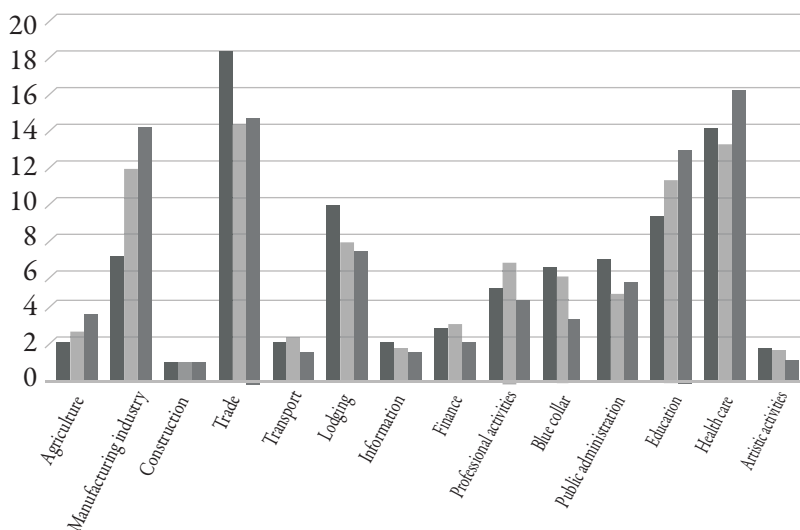
**Feminine employment by sectors 2008 (%)**



Source: own elaboration based on Eurostat (2015). Available at: [www.eurostat.eu](http://www.eurostat.eu) [January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016].

Graph 4

Feminine employment by sectors 2015 (%)



Source: own elaboration based on Eurostat (2015). Available at: [www.eurostat.eu](http://www.eurostat.eu) [January 30th, 2016].

Table 2

Employment rate by occupation (2010)

	Women (%)			Men (%)		
	Mixed	Masculinized	Feminized	Mixed	Masculinized	Feminized
Spain	16	11	72	13	58	30
Italy	42	11	59	26	45	14
Portugal	18	8	74	15	54	31

Source: own elaboration based on Brendan Burchel *et al.* (2014).



Table 3

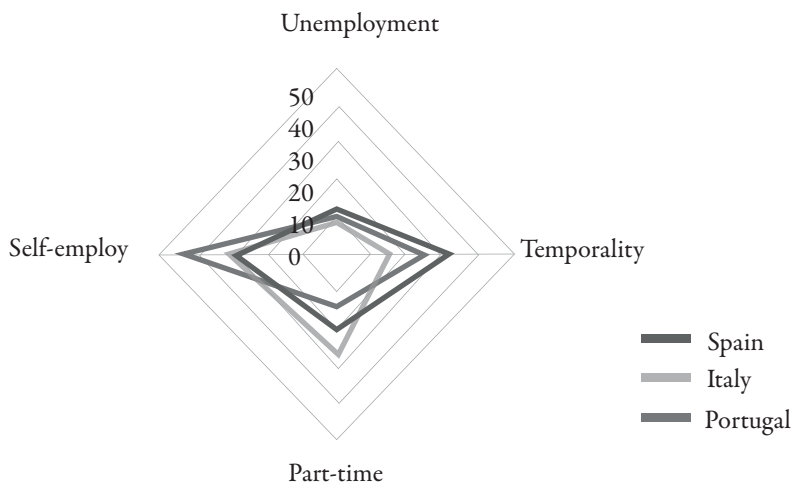
**Feminine employment rate according to sort of working day and occupation**

	Women employed fulltime (%)		
	Mixed	Masculinized	Feminized
Spain	18	13	69
Italy	42	17	41
Portugal	19	9	72
	Women employed part-time (%)		
Spain	9	5	86
Italy	40	11	49
Portugal	4	4	92

Source: own elaboration based on Brendan Burchel *et al.* (2014).

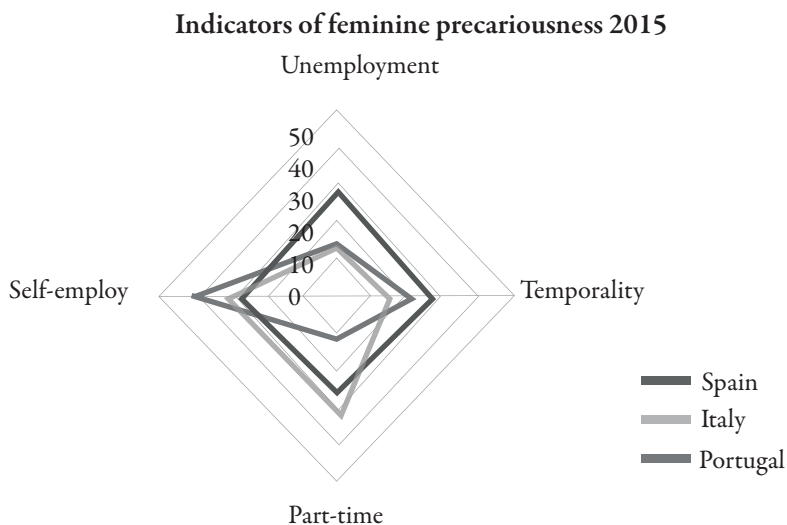
Graph 5

**Indicators of feminine precariousness 2008 (%)**



Source: own elaboration based on Eurostat (2015). Available at: [www.eurostat.eu](http://www.eurostat.eu) [February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016].

Graph 6



Source: own elaboration based on Eurostat (2015). Available at: [www.eurostat.eu](http://www.eurostat.eu) [February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016].

Table 5

Uses of time in Italy and Spain (20 and 74 years)<sup>28</sup>

	Italy		Spain	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Personal care	11 h 16'	11 h 12'	11 h 11'	11 h 5'
Employment	4 h 15'	1 h 52'	4 h 21'	2 h 6'
Study	11'	14'	18'	20'
Caretaking tasks	1 h 35'	5 h 20'	1 h 37'	4 h 55'
Free time	5 h 5'	4 h 6'	5 h 31'	4 h 26'
Travel	1 h 35'	1 h 14'	1 h 10'	1 h 5'
Indeterminate	3'	3'	2'	2'

Source: own elaboration based on Harmonised European Time Use Survey (2007).

<sup>28</sup> In Spain the last survey on time uses was performed in 2009-2010. This is included to offer a comparative reference framework between the two countries.

Table 6

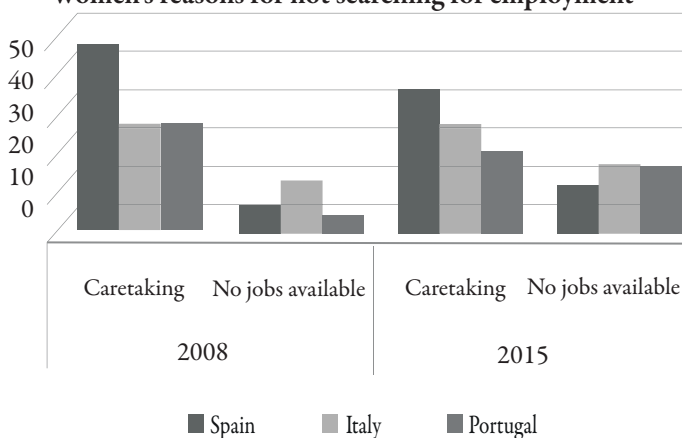
Changes to labor performance from caretaking reasons

	Care taking leaves (3-6 months) % Women	Employment abandonment (+12 months), % women	Reduce working hours % women
European Union	97.3	96.7	79.7
Spain	98	97.7	89.7
Italy	99.2	96.5	85.6
Portugal	97.2	-	78.5

Source: own elaboration based on Eurostat (2015). Available at: [www.eurostat.eu](http://www.eurostat.eu) [March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016].

Graph 7

Women's reasons for not searching for employment



Source: own elaboration based on Eurostat (2015). Available at: [www.eurostat.eu](http://www.eurostat.eu) [February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016].

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