

WILPF's Recommendations For The Pre-Session Of The Universal Periodic Review Of Italy

In 2014 the Comitato Interministeriale per i Diritti Umani (CIDU) of the Italian Foreign Ministry organised three meetings on 17th April, 30th July and 10th September 2014 to present the draft Report of Italy and exchange views with Italian CSOs. The President of CIDU, Min. Plen. Gianludovico De Martino also met civil society representatives in May 2014 in Geneva. WILPF regards this latter initiative as a positive practice for broad and inclusive consultations with civil society and hope that timely meetings will be programmatically scheduled in the follow up of the second review of Italy.

Moreover, WILPF encourages the Italian government to elaborate a Mid-Term Report on the implementation of the UPR Recommendations, which was not done after the first review in 2010.

I. Women in the Workforce

A. Follow-up to the first review

Women in Italy face strong discrimination in the job market. Although Italy's female employment rate has risen in the past decade, it is still below 50%, women earn substantially less than men on average and are severely under-represented at the top of organisations.

At the first Universal Periodic Review of Italy in 2010, Cuba made a recommendation (n°34) regarding the lack of equal opportunities for women in the marketplace, which was accepted by Italy.

B. New developments since the first review

The government introduced the principle of gender balance on the governance boards of listed companies and state-owned corporations, and allocated a 20 million Euro fund to promote female entrepreneurship.

However, these measures look insufficient to overcome the strong discriminations between women and men that persist in the job market. In addition to traditional imbalances, the consequences of the ongoing economic crisis are affecting disproportionately women. According to the National Institute of Statistics, female unemployment is on the rise and it is higher than male unemployment. Female occupation index has decreased from 47,3% in 2012 to 46,5% in September 2013.

As reported in the Job Market Report of 2012-2013, women encounter numerous disadvantages in access to employment. They represent over half of temporary work and are more likely to stay unemployed than men for a longer period of time. They are also prone to undertaking involuntary part-time work and the least paying jobs.

Overall, women have lower salaries and are less economically independent than men.

Care work continues to be borne especially by women due to a lack of investments in child and elderly care services and insufficient attention to work-life conciliation measures by businesses. The women's inactivity index is stable at 46%, compared to 26.5% of men.

In 2012 the Department for Equal Opportunities (DEO) signed a new agreement (Intesa 2) with the Italian Regions for the conciliation of life and flexible working modes in order to extend and strengthen initiatives to support women and men with children or adults in care, also with the aim of promoting female employment, focused on care and family/community based services.

Far from promoting a full and equal participation of women in the economic and social life, these new measures perpetuate the mentality rooted throughout the country that care work is a woman's duty, which in turns reinforces negative stereotypes and exacerbates gender inequality also at home.

C. Recommendations

In this context, we suggest the following recommendation for the UPR of Italy:

- Develop a specific national policy to encourage women's employment, which allocates necessary funds for the creation of public child and elderly care services, incentives to businesses which hire women with stable contracts and other measures to reduce occupation instability.

II. Femicide and Gender-Based Violence

A. Follow-up to the first review

The first Universal Periodic Review of Italy in 2010 already highlighted the urgency of addressing gender-based violence. In that occasion, Israel made a recommendation (n°35) relating to the promotion of initiatives to protect women from violence and the elaboration of a national plan to combat all forms of violence, including domestic violence.

Italy accepted this recommendation and reports on its implementation in its National report.

B. New developments since the last review

The number of murdered women, particularly in the family, has been increasing in every region. In 2013, 150 women were killed and 47 were nearly murdered. This happens mainly in the home (63%). The majority of these crimes takes place in the North of the country. There are many foreign women victims of violence (31%), but mostly Italian men are responsible for them (73%).

WILPF welcomes the government's commitment on this issue. At the national level, the recent Law 193/2013 acknowledges the seriousness of the situation and establishes repressive measures for perpetrators and protection actions for victims of violence. Alongside the reinforcement of Italian criminal code, free legal aid is now available for the victims of violence and a €10 million fund has been allocated to finance an anti-violence action plan, including the increased capacity of shelters for women.

Nevertheless, issues remain regarding the allocation of these funds and the lack of attention given to preventive measures and the involvement of civil society. A specific policy on gender-based violence is needed, with a clear and adequate budget, and a focus on prevention and not only penal aspects.

C. Recommendations

In this context, WILPF suggests the following recommendations for the UPR of Italy:

- Allocate sufficient budget for a policy on gender-based violence that includes a focus on prevention, mainly: assistance services, education in schools on gender equality and tolerance, data collections and training of operators
- Guarantee the protection of women who denounce violence against them.

III. Arms Trade and Women's Human Rights Protection

A. New developments since the last review

WILPF welcomes the Italian ratification of the Treaty earlier this year. Yet, this ratification should not be seen as an end goal in itself. If the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is to be an effective legal instrument in preventing human rights violations, a serious, strict national implementation must follow. To this end, it is essential to include a solid assessment of the specific potential impacts that a range of conventional arms and their international transfers have on women's human rights.

Given the gender dimensions of the arms trade and its links to a broad range of acts of violence against women – such as rapes, human trafficking, enforced pregnancies, and other sexual abuses widely reported by women in many different contexts worldwide – it is crucial for Italy to apply solid criteria for gender-based violence (GBV) in its process of risk assessment before authorising any arms transfer.

A gender-sensitive risk assessment in arms transfer is also consistent with the objectives expressed in the latest National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, namely to strengthen the implementation of initiatives to reduce the impact of conflict issues on women, while promoting their participation in the resolution and conflict prevention as 'agents for change'.

The availability of arms impedes women's enjoyment of all their human rights. Particularly small arms and light weapons contribute to insecurity within communities and increase the risk for women to experience violent situations. By

depriving civilians of a safe environment, arms and violence contribute to perpetrate control based on fear, which can prevent women from fully enjoying civil, political, social and economic rights.

B. Recommendations

In this context, WILPF suggests the following recommendation for the UPR of Italy:

- Conduct strict gender-sensitive risk assessments in order to stop authorisations of any transfer of conventional arms whenever there is knowledge that the arms or items would be used in the commission of gender-based violence, such as violence against women.

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