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— REALIZZA IL CAMBIAMENTO —



RIGHTS AT STAKE

Income, housing, and employment for
the socio-economic empowerment of
women recovering from violence

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Abi	Associazione Bancaria Italiana (Italian Banking Association)	Fse	Fondo sociale europeo (European Social Fund)
Anci	Associazione Nazionale dei Comuni d'Italia (National Association of Italian Municipalities)	Fesr	Fondo europeo di sviluppo regionale (European Fund for Regional Development)
CdL	<i>Contributo di libertà</i> (Freedom subsidy)	Inps	Istituto nazionale di previdenza sociale (National Social Security Institute)
Cnr-Irpps	Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche Istituto di Ricerche sulla Popolazione e le Politiche Sociali (National Research Institute – Institute for Research on Population and Social Policies)	Isee	Indicatore della situazione economica equivalente (Equivalent Economic Situation Indicator)
Dcr	Deliberazione del consiglio regionale (Regional council deliberation)	Istat	Istituto nazionale di statistica (National Institute of Statistics)
Dd	Determinazione dirigenziale (Executive decision)	Map	Moduli abitativi provvisori (Temporary housing units)
Ddl	Disegno di legge (Bill)	Pnrr	Piano nazionale di ripresa e resilienza (National Recovery and Resilience Plan)
Dgr	Delibera di Giunta Regionale (Regional executive deliberation)	Por	Programmazione operativa regionale (Regional Operational Programme)
DL	Decreto-legge (Decree Law)	Rai	<i>Renta Activa de Inserción</i> (Active Inclusion Income)
D.lgs	Decreto legislativo (Legislative Decree)	ReD	<i>Reddito di dignità</i> (Dignity income)
DPCM	Decreto della Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri (Decree of the Presidency of the Council of Ministries)	Rei	Reddito di inclusione (Inclusion income)
Deo	Dipartimento per le Pari Opportunità (Department for Equal Opportunities)	Ria	Reddito di inclusione attiva (Active inclusion income)
Dpr	Decreto del presidente della repubblica (Decree of the President of the Republic)	RdC	Reddito di cittadinanza (Citizenship income)
Dsu	Dichiarazione sostitutiva unica (Single Self-Declaration/Single Substitute Declaration)	RdL	<i>Reddito di libertà</i> (Freedom income)
Enm	Ente nazionale per il microcredito (National Microcredit Agency)	RdLS	<i>Reddito di libertà</i> Sardegna (Freedom income - Sardinia region)
Fsc	Fondo per lo sviluppo e la coesione (Development and Cohesion Fund)	Sae	Soluzioni alloggiative di emergenza (Emergency housing)
		Sia	Sostegno per l'inclusione attiva (Active inclusion support)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- » Access to **fundamental rights**, particularly social and economic rights, is crucial for women to recover from violence and successfully achieve empowerment. Therefore, to guarantee women a life free from violence, the main goal of Italian public policy should be to provide **adequate income, stable and sustainable housing, dignified employment, and access to well-run public services**.
- » The Italian anti-violence framework lacks **structured policies and actions, integrated, and adequately financed**, to comprehensively support women experiencing violence towards achieving full economic autonomy.
- » **From 2015 to 2022** the Italian government spent **157 m euros** to support women to recover from violence of which: about **20 m euros in income support, 124 m** to support **women's participation in the labour market** and **12 m** to provide **independent housing**.
- » In **2018 Sardinia** was the first region to adopt an **income support policy targeted at women recovering from violence**, the so-called '*Reddito di libertà*' (Freedom income), a monthly allowance of 780 euros for a maximum of 3 years. That same year the **Lazio** region created the '*Contributo di libertà*' (Freedom subsidy), a one-off payment of 5000 euros.
- » In 2020 the Italian Parliament established the '*Reddito di libertà*' at national level investing to date **12 m euros**, enough to support no more than **2500 women**. Notably, in 2020 alone, Inps – the National social security institute – recorded **3283 applications**. However, according to Istat, there are **21.000 women enrolled in recovery programmes that would benefit from income support each year**.
- » Some **regional governments** have established dedicated pathways to economically support women recovering from violence within the framework of existing **policies to combat extreme poverty**. For example, the '*Reddito di dignità*' in **Apulia**.
- » Between 2015-2022 the national government invested about **124 m** to promote **women's labour market participation**. Of these **72%** (89.2 m) to support **job retention** and **28%** (35.6 m) to further employment and re-employment. However, in 2020 the share of employed and unemployed women supported by anti-violence centres was respectively 50%.
- » A host of measures were financed to promote **labour market participation**: internships, employment grants, training, advice and tutoring, **pilot tax exemptions** for employers hiring women enrolled in recovery programmes, and **microcredit funds** to promote **self-employment**. None of these are financed on an ongoing basis.
- » In 2015, two structural **job retention schemes** were established: **paid leave for violence victims (12 m per year)** and **cost-free re-allocation for women employed in the public administration**. Since it started, **applications** for the paid leave programme have **grown by 2662%** (from 50 in 2016 to 1331 in 2021) but the number of applications accepted has not increased. In 2021, **only 32%** of applications were **accepted** (432 against 1331).
- » Often, job-seeking and retention policies and programmes do not meet the **specific and intersectional needs of women** who have been victims of violence and do not take into account the **many obstacles** they face to enter the labour market (e.g., care burdens, geographic labour mobility, etc.).

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- » The **quality of employment** and **working conditions** are **key factors** to guarantee the economic autonomy of women recovering from violence. Low employment standards such as low pay, precarious contracts, and forced part-time, hurt socioeconomic empowerment, women's income, and their ability to retain a job and grow professionally.
 - » Compared to the general female population, women facing violence are **four times more likely to live in poor housing conditions**. The situation is worse in areas already affected by marginalisation, exclusion, socioeconomic and environmental fragility such as landlocked areas and locations hit by earthquakes.
 - » National and regional **funds** to promote **independent housing for women recovering from violence** are **scarce** and **programmes** disjointed and often **delegated to anti-violence centres**.
 - » The lack of nation-wide legislation setting clear **standards on minimum service levels to be provided regionally** for income support, labour market participation, and independent housing creates a significant discrepancy of opportunities for women with the risk of **exacerbating** already existing local **inequalities** or creating new ones.
 - » Due to **lack of transparency at the regional level**, it was not possible to comprehensively identify and track funds allocated to the economic, employment, and housing support for women recovering from violence.

INTRODUCTION

In the past year, some important innovations were introduced in the Italian anti-violence framework. The most important one is the **establishment in the statute of a national anti-violence plan, to be renewed every three years**, following the objectives of the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention. Through amendments to the 2022 Budget Law, Italy adopted an anti-violence strategy permanently funded at a rate of **5 m euros per year**. Even though the funding is scarce, it is nonetheless at last statutory and not affected by the whims of political will. Despite this improvement, the **Equal Opportunities minister's duty¹ to submit an annual report to Parliament on the plan's implementation was scrapped**. This decision will negatively affect the transparency and accountability of the public administration and, as a result, the political and administrative processes relative to the implementation of anti-violence policies will be harder to track. In the last few months, the national Observatory on violence against women and domestic violence (*Osservatorio sul fenomeno della violenza nei confronti delle donne e sulla violenza domestica*) came into force. In addition, national and regional governments, and the independent local authorities of Trento and Bolzano reached an agreement on the minimum standards for centres supporting perpetrators and on the review of minimum standards for anti-violence centres and shelters. The Equal opportunities department has also established an internal monitoring system to track the spending of regional funds. Even though the monitoring system is not public yet, it is nonetheless an

improvement. However, it is important to highlight that, almost one year since the launch of **the 2021-2023 Strategic national plan on male violence against women, its implementation programme detailing who must do what, how, when and with what funds is not yet available**.

At a parliamentary level, in addition to the amendment to the budget explained above, Law No. 53/2022 on gender-disaggregated statistics was approved as well as the introduction of the initial implementation decrees² for civil law reform³, which will include the full acknowledgement of male violence against women⁴ in civil proceedings. In addition, another important development was the publication of the final report for the XVIII legislature by the Parliamentary Commission on Femicide and all forms of gender-based violence that lists legal and policy recommendations to improve the Italian framework for prevention and protection from male violence.

The current context certainly shows a strengthened institutional commitment, mostly thanks to the perseverance of a few female political figures. However, male violence against women is still largely seen as marginal in Parliament and in ministries and policies and programmes continue to be inadequate and disjointed. Looking at the steady numbers of femicides or the many obstacles women recovering from violence face on a daily basis, it is clear that a lot more needs to be done. Clearly, the political agenda does not consider it important to ensure that existing laws, policies, and programmes are holistic and structured.

¹ Decreto-legge 14 agosto 2013, n. 93 - Disposizioni urgenti in materia di sicurezza e per il contrasto della violenza di genere, nonché in tema di protezione civile e di commissariamento delle province, convertito con modificazioni dalla L. 15 ottobre 2013, n. 119.

² Decreto legislativo 10 ottobre 2022, n. 149 - Attuazione della legge 26 novembre 2021, n. 206, recante delega al Governo per l'efficienza del processo civile e per la revisione della disciplina degli strumenti di risoluzione alternativa delle controversie e misure urgenti di razionalizzazione dei procedimenti in materia di diritti delle persone e delle famiglie nonché in materia di esecuzione forzata; Decreto legislativo 10 ottobre 2022, n. 151 - Norme sull'ufficio per il processo in attuazione della legge 26 novembre 2021, n. 206, e della legge 27 settembre 2021, n. 134.

³ Legge delega 26 novembre 2021, n. 206 - Delega al Governo per l'efficienza del processo civile e per la revisione della disciplina degli strumenti di risoluzione alternativa delle controversie e misure urgenti di razionalizzazione dei procedimenti in materia di diritti delle persone e delle famiglie nonché in materia di esecuzione forzata.

⁴ For further reading, see: Commissione d'inchiesta sul femminicidio nonché su ogni forma di violenza contro le donne, *Relazione su riordino della normativa in materia di prevenzione e contrasto della violenza di genere*, approvata il 6 settembre 2022.

Looking at the measures to promote women's socioeconomic autonomy it is even more evident how the current approach to combating violence is disjointed and based on emergency interventions.

Starting from this context, ActionAid's research analyses national and regional policies aimed at supporting women's full autonomy as a foundation to be able to leave violent partners once and for all. In particular, the research looks at **income, employment, and housing** as these have been identified by women, shelter caseworkers, local services, and public authorities interviewed as **key factors to realise socioeconomic empowerment**.

The report analyses existing policies and laws, funding, and potential improvements in income support (Chapter 2), labour market participation

and job retention (Chapter 3), and independent housing (Chapter 4). In addition, the report includes a reflection on socioeconomic rights and empowerment processes, key planks of the overall analysis (Chapter 1), as well as conclusions and recommendations. The Annex details data on the first implementation year of the national Freedom income.

At the outset of a new legislature, we hope that the newly elected Parliament and Executive will increase the effort needed to guarantee a life free from violence to all girls and women in Italy, by prioritising gender equality and fighting against discrimination. The only possible way to prevent violence and create effective pathways for protection and socioeconomic autonomy needs to be rooted in the promotion of gender equality. We cannot go backwards. The road of human rights always looks obstinately ahead.

METHODOLOGY

The analysis in this research is based on publicly available quantitative and qualitative data. The references are listed according to each area examined: income support, labour market participation and job retention and independent housing.

National and regional laws, anti-violence plans, and deliberations for national and regional funds programming as well as public tenders, executive deliberations, managerial decrees, and public notices regarding financial resources allocated between 2015 and 2022 were analysed. The data collected on **income support measures** was complemented by 12 semi-structured interviews with institutional representatives of the regional governments of Sardinia, Lazio, Sicily, Apulia, Lombardy and Veneto and anti-violence centres staff in the same regions. Sardinia and Lazio were selected because they established an income support scheme specifically targeted at women recovering from violence; Sicily because it established the Freedom income to support labour market participation; Apulia and Veneto because of the introduction of priority criteria for women victims of violence within their broader anti-poverty measures. Finally, Lombardy was selected to investigate the integrated approach it plans to adopt for the implementation of the anti-violence plan 2020-2023. In addition, an Inps representative was interviewed and the Inps' circular letters as well as the implementing decrees were examined for the income support section of the research. A mapping of legislative provisions for **employment, re-employment, and job retention** was carried out as part of

the EU funded WeGo3 project (2021-2022)⁵ and analysed collectively with staff of anti-violence centres and stakeholders from the private sector as well as regional and national bodies. The same sources were used for the section examining **housing policies**, including international frameworks on the right to housing and regional plans for public housing. The overall analysis was also informed by the outcomes and reflections collected during the WeGo3⁶ policy labs, interviews with two experts in women's socioeconomic rights, and two representatives of the feminist movement *Non una di meno* (Not one less). In addition, a literature review was carried out analysing a range of international academic studies and articles on housing and labour market policies for women recovering from violence. The main measures aimed at increasing socioeconomic autonomy implemented in European countries, in particular Spain, France, and Portugal were also mapped.

To calculate the **financial resources assigned** to implement measures for income support, re-employment and job retention, and independent housing, the following sources were analysed: the budget and financial statements of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (PCdM) and regional governments, strategies and implementation plans of national and local authorities, anti-poverty legislation at national and regional level, policies for labour market participation and job retention and independent housing. In addition, we analysed press statements issued by the Equal opportunities department and Cnr-Irpps reports produced for

⁵ WeGo!3 – From Individual IPV's Empowerment to Community Activation (2021-2023) is the third round of a European project coordinated by ActionAid on economic autonomy for women exiting violence. It is funded by the EU Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme and implemented in Italy, Bulgaria, Greece and France. WeGo! 3 aims to set up and/or strengthen policies and practices to promote job seeking and retention of women who are facing or have faced violence using a multi-stakeholder participatory approach that includes anti-violence centres, national, regional, and local authorities, job centres, employment agencies, trade unions, private sector, and training centres.

⁶ Representatives from the following organisations participated in the six policy labs: Equal Opportunities Department, Inps, Parliamentary Inquiry Commission on Femicide and Any Form of Gender-based Violence (Senate), Lazio, Lombardy, Apulia, and Veneto regional governments; Municipalities of Bari, Este, Milan, Padua, and Rome; Anci (National Association of Italian Municipalities); Cgil and Uil Lombardia; Consorzio Mestieri Lombardia; Fondazione Human Age Institute; Job Centre (Padua); Centro per l'impiego (Padua); Synergie Italia Agenzia per il lavoro; Piano C; Afol Metropolitana (Milan); ConfCooperative Lombardy; Fondazione Adecco; Rel.Azioni Positive (Padua); BeFree cooperativa sociale (Rome); Associazione Sud-Est Donne (Conversano, Bari); Cooperativa sociale Cerchi d'Acqua (Milan); Istituto di ricerca sociale Arco - Action Research for CO-Development (Prato).

the Viva project⁷. Information was sourced from the 'Amministrazione Trasparente' (Transparent Government) sections and pages on prevention and contrast of male violence against women on the official websites of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and of regional governments. In addition, further information from the Sardinian and Apulian regional governments was gained through freedom of information requests. Furthermore, the regional operational programmes of the European Social Fund for the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 cycles were analysed as well as the relative calls for tenders for the allocation of funds dedicated to the social and employment inclusion of women recovering from violence⁸.

There could be discrepancies in the calculation of European funds due to underspend and because it was not possible to separate the funds for

the issues relevant to the research from those allocated to support women victims of trafficking. This is due in many cases to calls for tenders for the regional implementation of the European Social Fund merging both issues.

To conclude, **there might be inconsistencies about programmes and the final calculation of funds allocated and/or planned** due to lack of information or simply because the publication of data was delayed. Moreover, it is likely that additional resources allocated by other EU programmes or private donors could not be counted because it was not possible to track them. Therefore, the relevant public administrations are invited to report possible discrepancies and point towards the source of relevant public information.

⁷ Cnr-Irpps, *Progetto Viva. Progetto di monitoraggio, valutazione e analisi degli interventi di prevenzione e contrasto alla violenza contro le donne 2017-2020*, Rome, 2019.

⁸ In order to do so, data published on OpenCoesione were consulted. OpenCoesione is a web platform coordinated by the Cohesion Policy Department of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers aimed at promoting, on the one hand, programme effectiveness through the publication of data on funded projects and, on the other hand, widespread civic participation.

1- SOCIOECONOMIC AUTONOMY FOR WOMEN RECOVERING FROM VIOLENCE

1.1 From access to socioeconomic rights to the empowerment process

Economic autonomy is crucial for women who are on the recovery path from violence. Having an adequate income, safe housing, and access to well-run public services are essential requirements to recover from violence and speed up the empowerment process, usually supported by anti-violence centres. Economic autonomy offers women the material conditions to consciously exercise control over their life, make decisions for themselves and (if applicable) dependants to meet their own needs⁹.

Economic autonomy is tightly bound with the exercise of fundamental human rights, especially social and economic rights. States must guarantee full access for all to decent work, housing, education, health and broadly to sufficient economic resources for an adequate standard of living. These obligations are laid out in many international frameworks as well as national constitutions, including the Italian one¹⁰. Guaranteeing women who suffer or have suffered violence access to these rights is therefore a matter of legal compliance that public institutions must fulfil. It is therefore necessary to go back to this basic principle as a starting

point to clarify the synergies between social and economic rights, socioeconomic empowerment, and economic autonomy.

Over the past decade **the issue of empowerment has become gradually more relevant** to anti-violence laws and plans at both national and regional level. Empowerment was not present in the 2011¹¹ first national plan against gender-based violence and stalking; it was mentioned, superficially, five times in the 2015-2017 national plan, eight in the 2017-2020 plan, and 22 in the 2021-2023 plan, as a pillar of four out of 22 priorities¹² identified to prevent and combat male violence against women and especially to provide support and protection. These strategy documents gradually increased the conceptualisation of empowerment to the point of defining it as ‘a very important objective to grow and strengthen women’s confidence in their skills (...) rooted in a process of developing self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-determination (...), an essential tool to combat gender-based discrimination’¹³.

In the same strategy document, the conceptualisation of empowerment goes beyond the individual dimension to include the economic, financial and employment sphere. To allow women recovering from violence to regain their potential to achieve personal and professional fulfilment as well as economic autonomy¹⁴, **the current anti-violence plan includes a host**

⁹ UN, *Beijing Declaration*, 1995, para 26; UN Commission on the Status of Women, *Agreed Conclusions on eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle, in a globalising world*, E/2002/27 E/CN.6/2002/13, p. 1.

¹⁰ See Art. 3: ‘È compito della Repubblica rimuovere gli ostacoli di ordine economico e sociale, che, limitando di fatto la libertà e l’eguaglianza dei cittadini, impediscono il pieno sviluppo della persona umana e l’effettiva partecipazione di tutti i lavoratori all’organizzazione politica, economica e sociale del Paese.’ (All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic or social nature constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic, and social organisation of the country).

¹¹ For an in-depth analysis of the concept of ‘empowerment’ at international level, see *We Go!, L’indipendenza economica delle donne, una via d’uscita dalla violenza domestica. Un toolkit per operatrici dei Centri antiviolenza*, 2017, pp. 12-15, whereas on the connection between violence against women and economic empowerment see F. Bettio, E. Ticci, *Violence against women and economic independence*, European Commission, 2017.

¹² Department for Equal Opportunities (Deo), *Piano strategico nazionale sulla violenza maschile contro le donne*, 2021-2023 (National Strategic Plan on Men Violence Against Women, 2017-2020), Priorities 1.1, 1.3, 2.1, and 2.2.

¹³ *Idem*, p. 30.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

of activities such as awareness raising and information, financial education, mentoring and coaching, multi-agency protocols to support employment and re-employment, paid internships conducive to employment, incentives for self-employed entrepreneurship, tax breaks for the private sector, income support programmes, extension of existing paid leave, increase and diversifications of shelters.

At present **these proposals are not yet part of an implementation plan** laying out in detail who is responsible for implementation, timeframes, and available funding. Regardless of this substantial issue, it is helpful to interrogate whether the given definition of empowerment is adequate, at both conceptual and practical levels, to the overall goal – to facilitate women’s active participation in social and economic life by accessing a host of opportunities and gaining full autonomy in decision making and financial resources to be independent and live a life free from violence.

To answer this question, it is helpful to remember that economic empowerment is a process to be understood in a broader conceptual framework that includes the following facets of ‘power’¹⁵:

- » Power in: to have enough individual knowledge, capacity, and self-esteem to support active participation in economic life.
- » Power to: to make economic decisions within the household, the community, and overall in the context where one lives.
- » Power over: to be able to access and control economic and financial resources.
- » Power with: the capacity to organise collectively to advance economic rights.

Power is therefore a multi-faceted concept regarding the individual but also tightly bound to one’s social and family contexts. It is therefore necessary to have adequate awareness of its diverse dimensions, shapes, and how power structures develop and change over time to

understand how they affect women’s daily life and the actual choices that are available to them¹⁶. From a feminist and transformative point of view, such knowledge is necessary to change the power relations between genders by modifying how power is distributed within personal relationships and social institutions¹⁷. It is therefore not enough to offer support to women recovering from violence to access and control their resources, **it is instead crucial to change the culture that creates norms, social roles, and public services re/producing gender-based discrimination** detrimental to socioeconomic self-determination.

Therefore, is the proposal for the socioeconomic empowerment of women suffering from male violence adequate, both from a conceptual and operational perspective? The answer is negative due to the scarce attention given to a fundamental element for the exercise of power such as a socio-cultural and political context free from gender-based discrimination; and the actual prospect to access social and economic rights through a functioning social infrastructure at national level that meets the specific and intersectional needs of women. **There cannot be a real process of empowerment where rights are not guaranteed.** Essentially, socioeconomic independence for women recovering from violence is the end of a process that stems from being able to fully exercise social and economic rights within a gender-sensitive society. Unless it is based on such evidence, the Italian anti-violence framework will continue to develop and finance measures that do not have a structured impact on the actual chance to offer empowerment processes to achieve stable, sustainable, and long-term socioeconomic autonomy.

¹⁵ Eggers del Campo, J.I. Steinert, “The Effect of Female Economic Empowerment Interventions on the Risk of Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis”, in *Sage Journal*, Vol. 23, Issue 3, 2022, pp. 810-811.

¹⁶ S. Batiwala, *All about power. Understanding social power & power structures*, Crea, 2019, p. 10.

¹⁷ We Go!, op. cit., p. 15.

1.2 Rights, priorities, and challenges to overcome

At present, unfortunately, the connection between the full exercise of social and economic rights and women's recovery from violence is given little attention and rarely researched, as proven by the lack of relevant literature. And yet, in Italy, **many fundamental rights are not fully guaranteed** to citizens and even less to women who have suffered violence. Indeed, even though economic and social rights have long been a key part of the legislative framework, there is still a huge gap between what the law says and reality, as highlighted by Inps' yearly data¹⁸.

It is necessary **to turn legislation into policies and services that meet women's specific needs** to start the process of gaining capacities, autonomy, and power to make strategic decision at personal, social, political, and economic levels to have control over their lives. According to the Istanbul Convention, Italy must guarantee to women who suffer violence 'assistance, housing, education, training and assistance in finding employment'¹⁹. The same obligations arise from other European and international frameworks that Italy must implement, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) and its first Protocol, the International convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination (1965), the International convention of economic, social and cultural rights (1966), the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (1979), the Convention of the rights of the child (1989), the International convention on the protection of the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families (1990), the European Social Charter (1996), the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (2006), the European

charter of fundamental rights (2000). In addition to these legal obligations, Italy is accountable for implementing several frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development (2015), the European strategy for gender equality 2020-2025, and the Action plan of the European pillar of social rights (2021).

Adequate income, safe housing and decent work are also the priorities identified by the women supported by anti-violence centres and public services consulted to develop this research²⁰. Often women face:

- » **Fleeing the family home** for safety reasons or because the property belongs to the perpetrator and look for new accommodation.
- » **Taking temporary leave from work** for safety or health issues caused by violence.
- » **The inability to access financial resources**, because they are controlled by the perpetrator or because, due to bureaucratic issues, they cannot access welfare benefits.

Such obstacles force women to live in a very vulnerable socioeconomic situation in need of adequate help from the state provided by policies, services, and income support measures, access to housing, labour market participation and job retention to guarantee the access to social and economic rights. An anti-violence national action plan which does not take a holistic approach to these issues is at risk of failure.

In the following pages, the analysis turns to the main national and regional laws and policies available to women who are in socioeconomic empowerment programmes to achieve full autonomy after having left violent circumstances. Furthermore, the research includes an analysis of the objectives, implementation, and allocated resources of those programmes providing income support, labour market participation, job retention and housing independence to identify

¹⁸ Ministero dell'economia e delle finanze, *Il bilancio di genere per l'esercizio finanziario 2020, 2021*; Istat, *Il benessere equo e sostenibile in Italia, 2022*; --, *Rapporto annuale 2022. La situazione del Paese, 2022*.

¹⁹ Council of Europe, *Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence*, 2011, Art. 20.

²⁰ J.L. Postmus, S.B. Plummer, S. McMahon, N.S. Murshid, M.S. Kim, "Understanding Economic Abuse in the Lives of Survivors", in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (2012) 27 (3); H. McLaren, "Domestic Violence, Housing and Employment: Workers' Perspectives on Employment Assistance in Supported Accommodation", in *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 48 (4): 415-433; R. Ulmestig, "Two sides of the coin – Domestic violence survivors' expectations of financial support and social workers' expectations of survivors within the social assistance system", in *Nordic Social Work Research* (2020), 10:2, 144-15.

positive aspects and opportunities to improve. Only from such an analysis it will be possible to gain a full overview of the current framework, to make recommendations to overcome the current

disjointed policies and, as a result, to ensure respect and access for women to their human rights, including the right to be free from violence.

2- INCOME SUPPORT

Violence has often a negative impact on women's economic autonomy regardless of their employment or financial status. Even women who enjoy economic autonomy can be forced to temporarily leave their job²¹ and/or home and find themselves in financial difficulty due to the safety and health repercussions caused by violence.

'Fear of poverty, extreme poverty, is an obstacle for women when it comes to ask for support to exit violence.'

CAV caseworker

The emancipation process is much more complex for women who are already in a precarious economic situation, or for those suffering economic violence, in addition to physical and/or psychological violence. When economic violence occurs, the perpetrator behaves as to further control, damage, and subjugate the woman. For example, by forbidding her from accessing work or training, depriving her of her salary, controlling her expenses, unilaterally deciding what to buy, transferring debts in her name without consent, not allowing her to access a bank account and so forth.

According to Istat data²², in 2020 38.7% of women who started recovering from violence reported to have suffered economic violence. However, in the same year, **financially dependent women supported by anti-violence centres** were many more: **60.5%**²³. This means that economic vulnerability is not only a result of the type of

violence suffered (e.g., economic violence), but it is shared by a much higher proportion of women. Younger women face greater challenges. **The number of women lacking economic autonomy is inversely proportional to their age:** 69.5% of women aged 18 to 29 live in financial precarity against 40% of those aged 30 to 59. When it comes to **foreign women**, **63.5%** lack economic autonomy as they are more often in occasional or informal work or unemployed and lack friends and family to turn to.

2.1 Current laws and policies

Regardless of Istat data and international and national obligations, **provisions to support women economically and financially are few, disjointed, and inadequate**. Usually, these are national or regional policy measures to combat poverty (e.g., citizenship income, dignity income) or to support families facing hardship (e.g., subsidies for rent and utilities etc.). However, these provisions are not always available to women recovering from violence because they do not comply with eligibility requirements. For example, women are often not able to provide their own Isee (Equivalent economic situation indicator²⁴) form separately from the perpetrator, which means they cannot access many local welfare schemes that require the certificate. Anti-violence centres work day in and day out to find solutions to overcome these obstacles collaborating, where possible, with local social services. However, in several cases, the solution identified is not always effective.

²¹ C.K. Sanders, T.L. Weaver, M. Schnabel, "Economic Education for Battered Women: An Evaluation of Outcomes", in *Affilia*, 22 (3): 240-254; T. Lindhorst, M. Oxford, M.R. Gillmore, "Longitudinal Effects of Domestic Violence on Employment and Welfare Outcomes", in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22 (7): 812-828.

²² Istat, *Uscire dalla gabbia della violenza: i percorsi nei centri antiviolenza*, 2021. Reporting period: 2020 and 2021.

²³ Data from the combined analysis of information regarding the employment status of women supported by CAV and CR and women's responses regarding a question on their economic autonomy discussed during meetings with service staff. The latter information was collected through research carried out in 2020 on the profile of women supported by anti-violence centres. Source: Istat, *Audizione dell'Istituto nazionale di statistica Dott.ssa Linda Laura Sabbadini presso la XI Commissione (Lavoro pubblico e privato) della Camera dei deputati Roma*, 8 February 2022.

²⁴ The Isee is an indicator of the economic condition of a family, necessary to access certain welfare benefits.

An ad hoc income support provision for women recovering from violence was developed only in the past few years. The idea, born by the shared experiences of anti-violence centres and feminist movements²⁵, was progressed further as it gained political support. **In 2018 the first policies were established at regional level in Sardinia and Lazio** and in 2020 at national level. The regional governments of Molise and Veneto also attempted to set up similar schemes. In Molise a law proposal²⁶ was presented but remains unapproved. In Veneto the proposal did not meet the approval of all the stakeholders of the regional coordination mechanism for the prevention and contrast of violence against women and was therefore abandoned²⁷. However, the Veneto Region, as well as Apulia, provide financial support to women recovering from violence through the respective regional anti-poverty policies. As far as other regions are concerned, Abruzzo²⁸ provides financial support through local social services; Campania²⁹ gives income support for

12 months, to cover the expenses incurred when leaving the family home; Friuli-Venezia Giulia³⁰ as well as Emilia-Romagna³¹ invest resources to replenish the national freedom income, the latter has also included a commitment in its anti-violence regional plan. Finally, in addition to the freedom subsidy, Lazio ring-fences part of the regional fund for microcredit³² to women who have suffered violence by providing emergency funds to cover primary needs – housing, health, and long-term purchases.

2.1.1 The *Reddito di libertà* of the Sardinia Region

On 2 August 2018, with the Regional Law No. 33³³, the Sardinia Region was the first to adopt an income support scheme uniquely targeted at women recovering from violence. In Sardinia, in contrast to other regions and at the national level, the policy was established through a political process rather than working with anti-violence organisations, though they welcomed it.

²⁵ B. Kenny, S. Picchi, "Un sostegno economico per le donne che escono dalla violenza", in *InGenere*, 27 November 2017.

²⁶ Progetto di legge n. 146 – Istituzione del reddito di libertà, submitted by Councillor Gianluca Cefaratti.

²⁷ The information was collected in the course of interviews with institutional stakeholders carried out during the policy lab day dedicated to income support programmes (25 February 2022).

²⁸ Regione Abruzzo, Legge regionale 20 ottobre 2006, n. 31 - Disposizioni per la promozione ed il sostegno dei centri antiviolenza e delle case di accoglienza per le donne maltrattate, Art. 10.

²⁹ Regione Campania, Legge regionale 1° dicembre 2017, n. 34 - Interventi per favorire l'autonomia personale, sociale ed economica delle donne vittime di violenza di genere e dei loro figli ed azioni di recupero rivolte agli uomini autori della violenza, Art. 4-bis.

³⁰ Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Legge regionale 6 agosto 2021, n. 12 - Interventi per la tutela delle donne vittime di violenza e per il contrasto e la prevenzione di atti violenti e discriminatori, Art. 6-bis.

³¹ Emilia-Romagna, Delibera Num. 1011 del 28/06/2021, Approvazione del piano regionale contro la violenza di genere ai sensi dell'art. 17 della legge regionale 27 giugno 2014, n. 6, anno 2021.

³² 'Microcredito per donne in situazioni di disagio sociale' provided by Art. 11 of legge regionale 10 gennaio 2021, n. 7.

³³ Regione Sardegna, Legge regionale del 2 agosto 2018, n. 33 - Istituzione del reddito di libertà per le donne vittime di violenza.

TABLE 1

Reddito di libertà (Freedom income) - Sardinia Region

OBJECTIVE	To promote, through economic independence, the autonomy and emancipation of women victims of domestic violence.
DETAILS	A monthly payment of 780 euros – additional payment for children ³⁴ and if one or more persons in the family are disabled. The contribution is for at least 12 months and up to no more than 36 months. The beneficiary must commit to an individually tailored programme that can consist of a legal fee refund, active labour market policies, self-employment support, relocation assistance, independent housing aid, and measures to secure school attendance for dependent children ³⁵ .
ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS	Proof of 'victim of violence' status, certified by local social services, being supported by an anti-violence centre and resident or former resident of a shelter or a similar service in case of shortage of accommodation; ongoing immediate risk that led to the woman being housed in a shelter.
ACCESS POLICY	The application is managed by the 'Ambito Plus' social services where the woman is resident, in collaboration with the staff of the anti-violence centres or shelters. If the budget allocated is not enough, applications are accepted based on the woman's circumstances (health, pregnancy, disability, low education level), whether there are dependent children, income and assets, and length of time spent in a shelter.
PAYMENT	The timing of the disbursement is decided within the project development as to best meet its objectives. Usually, the payment is monthly, conditional upon the provision of an expense sheet detailing how the funds were spent. However, the first instalment is paid in advance.
EXPENSES ALLOWED	The expenses allowed are agreed within the tailored project co-developed by the woman, shelter staff and social services. Expenses such as buying and using tobacco products, alcohol, drugs, and anything related to gambling are forbidden, otherwise the support scheme is terminated.

The goal of the income support programme is to ensure that 'each woman victim of domestic violence who lives in poverty is able to overcome economic dependence, abuse, blackmail, and access essential services, and participate in social life with dignity'³⁶. The Sardinian *Reddito di libertà* (RdLS) is different from other income support measure as follows:

- » **Amount:** even though it is not enough compared to the cost of living, the monthly allowance (780 euros) is significantly higher compared to other similar schemes (400-500 euros) therefore granting a degree of economic independence.
- » **Length:** it is the only subsidy that can be renewed up to three years, a timeframe better suited to completely recovery from violence.
- » **Systematisation:** it is the only measure to be regularly financed as it is based on the law for the 'Freedom Income Regional Fund' (clause 7), which pools together European, national, and regional funding. Around 2.7

³⁴ The amount to be paid is calculated using the Istat formula 'calculation of absolute poverty threshold', considering the residence or domicile of the woman.

³⁵ Regione Sardegna, Deliberazione n. 51/10 del 14.10.2020 – Legge regionale 2 agosto 2018, n. 33 "Istituzione del reddito di libertà per le donne vittime di violenza" e art. 4, comma 17 (contributi per il supporto alle spese legali e per inserimento lavorativo a favore delle vittime di violenza) della legge regionale 29 novembre 2019 n. 20. Linee guida per il triennio 2020-2022 e programmazione fondi anno 2020. Approvazione definitiva.

³⁶ Regione Sardegna, Legge regionale del 2 agosto 2018 n. 33, Art. 1.

m euros have been allocated from its set up to today³⁷.

'Some women have been able to pay rent, to keep a roof over their head.'

CAV caseworker

From 2018 to 2020, 108 women applied for the RdLS but only 59 were successful³⁸. It is a small number considered that, in 2020, there were 6382³⁹ reports for gender-based violence and that half of the women hosted by the D.i.Re⁴⁰ anti-violence services were unemployed and economically vulnerable⁴¹. According to stakeholders interviewed, there are many reasons as to why the RdLS has a low take-up:

- » the **payment is 'discriminatory'** as to be able to access the scheme women need to pay the first instalment in advance. The *Ambiti* administration, in fact, pays the contribution based on expense sheets except for the first one. As a result, some women forgo applying to the RdLS due to lack of economic resources.
- » Another issue is the **controlling nature of the scheme**: the support paid can only be

spent for expenses included in the tailored personal plan and proof of payment must be submitted (receipts or invoices). If a woman faces an unbudgeted expense, she must provide a detailed application to change the project plan and wait for a response.

- » **Compulsory engagement with social services**: women are often wary of engaging with these services and prefer to pass on the support offered.

Over time **some important changes have been implemented** to improve the RdLS, especially **through collaboration with anti-violence centres and cross-institutional work**, often thanks to the perseverance of committed individuals rather than institutions per se. One of the changes was the adoption of a **co-development model** to set out each woman's individually tailored plan. The 2018 approval of the RdLS delegated plan development to the social services '*Ambiti Plus*' with the beneficiary being able to consult it later on. The 2019 one, instead, explicitly mentioned the co-development methodology, hence increasing women's ownership. In addition, the requirement to have spent a certain amount of time in a shelter was dropped. If a woman spent time in a shelter, it is recorded as additional information⁴².

³⁷ Data as of October 2022.

³⁸ Data provided by Sardinia Region on 4 August 2022.

³⁹ Istat, *Banca dati – Denunce forze di polizia, numero di autori di delitto denunciati/arrestati dalle Forze di polizia, anno 2020, Regione Sardegna*.

⁴⁰ The numbers exclude women who do not report or do not speak to anti-violence centres. In addition, in Sardinia, only one CAV out of 11 belongs to the D.i.Re network. This analysis is therefore just an indication of the local demand that requires more regional and national resources compared to those allocated.

⁴¹ The absolute value is not available.

⁴² In the list of the selection criteria of the applications, *Deliberazione n. 51/10 del 14.10.2022* includes, in Art. 4, letter d), any time spent in a shelter or in a similar facility ('l'eventuale tempo di permanenza all'interno di una casa di accoglienza o di una struttura similare').

2.1.2 The *Contributo di libertà* of the Lazio Region

Lazio was the second region to establish, in November 2018⁴³, an income support scheme for women recovering from violence, called '*Contributo di libertà* (CdL)' (Freedom subsidy). The CdL is not a statutory instrument, but a scheme developed following, on the one hand, the regional law to combat violence against women (LR No. 4/2014)⁴⁴, which commits the Region to 'promote programmes to support the economic and psychological autonomy of women victims

of violence'⁴⁵, and on the other the Extraordinary Plan against Sexual and Gender-based Violence, 2015-2017⁴⁶ that included provisions for victims' participation in the labour market.

Therefore, it is not a structured policy but a one-off intervention. The CdL was at first designed to help women to leave shelters, later on in 2020, following consultation with anti-violence centres, it was extended to women supported by anti-violence centres themselves⁴⁷ and further broadened in 2021⁴⁸ to include women living in shelters but, due to administrative issues, not yet part of the regional protection networks⁴⁹.

TABLE 2

Contributo di libertà (Freedom income) – Lazio Region

OBJECTIVE	To support women 'in the sensitive process towards self-autonomy [...] facilitate preventative actions to reduce the risk of returning to the perpetrator as well as actions towards regaining psychological, employment, and housing independence of women themselves and to rebuild a balanced and calm context to benefit children' ⁵⁰ .
DETAILS	Up to 5000 euros per person.
ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS	To have started a recovery programme in the region.
ACCESS POLICY	Anti-violence services apply online and liaise directly with the regional administration.
PAYMENT	The subsidy is transferred by the Lazio Innova company to the beneficiary's bank account within 15 days of being authorised by the regional equal opportunities department ⁵¹ .
EXPENSES ALLOWED	Housing (rent, white goods, utilities); personal expenses (medicines, training, groceries); children's expenses (school materials, transportation, sports activities). Expenses cannot be paid in cash.

⁴³ The CdL was introduced in November 2018 as part of the regional programming (DGR n. 339/2019) of the national resources allocated by the DPCM, dated 25 November 2016, to 'interventions to achieve housing autonomy for women recovering from violence'. The CdL was made operational through the guidelines setting out how to access the contribution first approved in September 2019 (Dd n. G12704/2019) and amended at the request of anti-violence centres in March 2020. (Dd n. G03176/2020).

⁴⁴ Regione Lazio, Legge regionale del 19 marzo 2014, n. 4, Riordino delle disposizioni per contrastare la violenza contro le donne in quanto basata sul genere e per la promozione di una cultura del rispetto dei diritti umani fondamentali e delle differenze tra uomo e donna.

⁴⁵ Idem, Art. 2, para. 1, letter h).

⁴⁶ Deo, Piano d'azione straordinario contro la violenza sessuale e di genere 2015-2017 (Extraordinary Plan against Sexual and Gender-based Violence, 2015-2017), adopted with DPCM 7 July 2015, para. 4.

⁴⁷ Determinazione 24 marzo 2020, n. G03176. Modifica dell'Allegato A contenente le Linee Guida sulle modalità di concessione del '*Contributo di libertà*' per le donne vittime di violenza, finalizzato al sostegno del percorso di riacquisizione dell'autonomia personale, ai sensi della legge regionale, n. 4 del 19 marzo 2014, della DGR n. 339 del 4 giugno 2019 e della Determinazione dirigenziale n. G12704 del 25 settembre 2019.

⁴⁸ In fact, the public tender invitation approved by Dd G08009/2022 explicitly mentions only the services operating within Lazio according to the *Intesa Stato-Regioni* of 27 November 2021, adopted by the region with DGR no. 614/2016.

⁴⁹ Regione Lazio, Determinazione 14 aprile 2021, n. G04210. Emergenza Covid-19. Integrazione e modifica alla determinazione dirigenziale n. G03579 del 01 aprile 2019 "*Contributo di libertà per le donne vittime di violenza, finalizzato al sostegno del percorso di acquisizione dell'autonomia personale*" e modifica dell'Allegato A contenente Linee Guida sulle modalità di concessione del Contributo di libertà.

⁵⁰ Regione Lazio, Determinazione n. G08009 del 20.06.2022 - Approvazione Avviso Pubblico mediante procedura a sportello, relativo al "*Contributo di libertà per le donne che hanno intrapreso il percorso di fuoriuscita dalla violenza presso i Centri antiviolenza, le Case rifugio e Case della semi autonomia, operanti sul territorio della Regione Lazio*", ai sensi della Delibera di Giunta regionale n. 946 del 16 dicembre 2021 e impegno di spesa per l'importo di € 516.000,00 sul Capitolo U0000H41177 Es. Fin. 2022 in favore di Lazio Innova S.p.A. codice creditore 59621.

⁵¹ These are the allocation procedures set out by the public tender invitation approved by Dd G08009/2022. In the first round of the CdL, the contribution was paid in two instalments: the first, 80% of the total amount, within 3 months from the application being submitted; the second, namely the remaining 20%, following the submission of a report and financial accounts within 6 months from the first payment.

The specific features of the CdL are as follows:

- » **Social services are not involved:** the applications are made directly by the anti-violence centres. The choice to exclude social services from the application process was made to ensure the policy would recognise and value the specific role of anti-violence services. The regional government considered that, because of their expertise and, most of all, their direct relationship with women, anti-violence centres would be better able to evaluate those in need of economic support. As a result, women who are wary of interacting with social services feel they can apply and the timeframe to evaluate applications is shortened.
- » **Reporting:** the beneficiary must provide receipts to the anti-violence services which vouch for them⁵². The legal representative of the service that applied on behalf of the woman must present, within six months from receipt of funds, an expense sheet to the region to provide proof of expenditure together with a final report detailing any issues as well as the woman's achievements during the programme.
- » **Access:** there is no need to provide an Isee declaration, to undergo a preliminary evaluation nor to enrol in a job seeking programme⁵³. The only requirement is to be a supported person by an anti-violence centre. The decision to decouple access to the CdL from the Isee is twofold: to acknowledge that the declared income of women victims of violence often does not reflect their financial situation at the time of application and that removing the requirement makes the scheme unconditional to promote the beneficiary's personal autonomy.

Even though the CdL has many positive features, according to interviews conducted for the research, the **accounting mechanism** must be modified as it currently hurts both women and anti-violence services. Several stakeholders highlighted how the requirement for a detailed expense account **mimics the controlling dynamics** the woman escaped from.

'That financial support has been crucial, otherwise leaving the refuge would have been much more difficult.'

CAV Caseworker

In addition, since the **considerable administrative work carried out by anti-violence centres' staff is unpaid**, it forces the service to work for free or dip into core funding. Some stakeholders interviewed propose to overcome this paternalistic model by attaching to the application an individual budget quoting how the woman would like to spend the money and replacing the expense account with an exit interview with staff of the anti-violence centre. In addition, it is necessary to ensure anti-violence centres and shelters have enough core funding to cover the increasing administrative work.

The first round of the CdL (2019) had a **budget of 750 thousand euros** and **supported 153 women**, who used the contribution mostly to cover housing expenses. In July 2022 an **additional allocation of 655 thousand euros** benefitted **76 further women**⁵⁴. In this case too, funding is not sufficient to cover the actual need. The lack of adequate funds is clear considering the official 2020 number of reports of violence against women in Lazio (2223)⁵⁵ and data from D.i.Re on women supported by anti-violence organisations where one in three

⁵² The responsibility of justifying or providing financial support if some expenses are not allowed, and therefore not reimbursed by the region, rests with the authorized representative of the anti-violence service.

⁵³ The obligation of enrolling in a social activation or employment inclusion programme is a feature of anti-poverty policies. This is the case, for example, of the Apulia region 'Reddito di dignità' (see paragraph 2.1.3)

⁵⁴ Information up to date on 15.10.2022. In view of the resources allocated, other women will benefit from the measure in the next few months.

⁵⁵ Data regarding Regione Lazio for 2020 from the Istat database *Denunce forze di polizia, numero di autori di delitto denunciati/arrestati dalle Forze di polizia* (Police reports, number of perpetrators reported/arrested by police forces).

had zero income (32.9%) and less than 40% had a reliable income⁵⁶.

Despite not being on a statutory footing, the burden of accounting and the limited funding, the CdL is considered helpful by anti-violence centres and beneficiaries alike. However, there is **room for improvement**. Firstly, the CdL should **be part of a wider offer encompassing support for independent housing, job seeking or retention in addition to a financial contribution**. Given that it is a scheme similar to the national *Reddito di libertà* (RdL) (Freedom income), it would benefit from **improved coordination between regional and national levels** to ensure all women have equal opportunity to access the benefits. In fact, according to the regional law, women who are granted the national contribution cannot apply for the CdL but this is not the case the other way round. The discrepancy risks creating unintentional discrimination.

2.1.3 Regional anti-poverty policies: the *Reddito di dignità* of the Apulia Region

Unlike Sardinia and Lazio, other regional governments have developed support schemes for women recovering from violence through specific programmes within existing **anti-poverty policies**. For example, the **Apulia region** introduced the '*Reddito di dignità*' (ReD) (Dignity income) with the Regional Law No. 3/2016⁵⁷. The ReD was developed to promote the active inclusion and social and employment re-integration of individuals in severe socioeconomic deprivation⁵⁸. It consists in a conditional

cash transfer tied to a needs assessment⁵⁹ and commitment to an active inclusion programme⁶⁰. The latter is developed within a '*Patto individuale di inclusione sociale attiva*' (Individual agreement for active inclusion)⁶¹ to be agreed with the local authority in charge of the Territorial Area (i.e., a geographical administration unit). **Women recovering from violence were included in the second round of the programme (July 2018)⁶² with a different access modality**. For women, for example, accessing the benefit is not conditional upon committing to an internship or a local social inclusion programme⁶³ but can be accompanied by an empowerment project within the family or in the shelter where the woman lives. Women are not required to present the Isee declaration, and the application can only be submitted by social services, including through a referral made by an anti-violence centre, rather than online or through a Fiscal Assistance Centre. The only requirement is to be supported by social services or an anti-violence centre.

The decision to include women recovering from violence amongst those entitled to the ReD, with different access requirements, was due to:

- » **Evidence from needs assessments:** about 40% of the women supported by anti-violence services in the region is not economically autonomous, the 31% is unemployed, with a middle or high school certification (37% and 40% respectively)⁶⁴.
- » The intention to ensure the ReD is actually meeting its goal of **supporting those who**

⁵⁶ D.i.Re, 2020 *Data collection*.

⁵⁷ The ReD is financed by European funds (FES, FESR, FSC). It was set up to complement and integrate other anti-poverty measures at national level (Sia, Rei, RdC) to reach those not eligible for the national programme.

⁵⁸ The payment differs according to family composition and the weekly hours spent carrying out the inclusion activity. It is paid on every two months up to 12 months and can be extended following a 6-month break. See *Regolamento regionale 23 giugno 2016, n. 8 – Legge regionale 14 marzo 2016, n. 3 recante la disciplina del "Reddito di dignità regionale e politiche per l'inclusione sociale attiva". Regolamento attuativo della legge regionale, ai sensi dell'art. 44 della LR n. 7/2004 modificato dalla LR n. 44/2014, Art. 9.*

⁵⁹ The multidimensional needs assessment is based on the following: number of children, single parent family, gravely disabled family members, Isee score, employment status, see *Regolamento regionale 8/2016, Art. 5.*

⁶⁰ The 'Activation Path' consists in any activity for the promotion of the socio-employment inclusion of beneficiaries, to empower them towards specific objectives of personal and community growth and improve their employability, see *Regolamento regionale 8/2016, Art. 2, letter f).*

⁶¹ The Pact can include the following activities: job seeking, enrolment in training and internships, children's school attendance, health care and prevention, care work, see *Regolamento regionale 8/2016, Art. 11.*

⁶² Regione Puglia, *Deliberazione n. 939/2018 L.R. n. 3/2016 e s.m.i., Reg. R. n. 8/2016 e s.m.i. Indirizzi attuativi per la misura regionale di sostegno al reddito – Red-Reddito di dignità – a seguito del D.lgs. n. 147/2017 e della l. n. 205/2017.*

⁶³ Regione Puglia, *Legge regionale del 14 marzo 2016, n. 3 – Reddito di dignità e politiche per l'inclusione sociale attiva, Art. 4.*

⁶⁴ See Regione Puglia – Ufficio Statistico, *Focus n. 3/2022 centri antiviolenza e case rifugio in Puglia. L'accesso e l'accoglienza delle donne. Anno 2021.*

are not able to access national anti-poverty programmes (such as the RdC). Accessing such schemes is, in most cases, conditional upon an evaluation of the income and financial situation of the applicant usually through the Isee. However, for women who are recovering from violence is **not always easy to obtain an Isee reflective of their present economic situation**: the perpetrator is often still counted as a family member and might benefit from welfare schemes, or the woman could have properties and other material goods in her name but not being able to access them for safety reasons.

According to regional data published between 2018 and 2020, only 451 women, all without any formal qualification⁶⁵, benefitted from the ReD, a very low number compared to those eligible (about 950 women per year⁶⁶). Despite flexible access requirements, the ReD does not seem to be well suited to the needs of women victims of violence. The **requirement to be supported by social services** represents an obstacle and women often prefer other solutions (for example, essentials shopping vouchers, one-off contributions from anti-violence centres). In addition, **tying the benefit to taking part in a social activation process**, even if facilitated, is not always possible for women who are recovering from violence and need more flexibility.

It is important to highlight that the ReD is not an income support comparable to those existing in Sardinia and Lazio. Instead, it is a policy developed with a different goal: to fight absolute poverty. As a result, it can be limited for women who have multiple needs beyond economic vulnerability. However, **the ReD can be considered a good example of 'integrated policy'** as the policy makers have made access requirements responsive to the specific need of a social group such as women victims of violence.

With Law No. 22/2018⁶⁷ the **Veneto regional government** passed a specific regulation, within the legislative framework on preventing and combating male violence against women, establishing the possibility of using regional anti-absolute poverty programmes to promote the social and economic autonomy of women recovering from violence⁶⁸: the so-called *Reddito di inclusione attiva* (Ria) (Active inclusion income). The Ria⁶⁹ provides a financial help to women who are socioeconomically vulnerable and supported with a tailored programme by anti-violence services aiming to promote the person's dignity, capacity building, and the achievement of full autonomy. However, from publicly available information is not clear whether the Ria has facilitated entry requirements nor there are disaggregated data on how women victims of violence might have used it.

'There is a lack of understanding that women who are recovering from violence are a group with specific vulnerabilities who needs an ad hoc approach.'

Public authority representative

Using anti-absolute poverty schemes to provide economic support to women recovering from violence is not unique to Italy. It is an approach also used in **Spain** and **Portugal**. For example, Spanish women can access the *Renta Activa de Inserción* (Rai) (Active inclusion income), a monthly contribution of 430 euros for up to 11 months which can be extended if the woman lacks professional qualifications and requires longer-term support⁷⁰. In Portugal instead, since 2005, women recovering from violence who are unemployed can access a social integration

⁶⁵ Data provided by Regione Puglia on 14 September 2022.

⁶⁶ Regione Puglia - Ufficio statistico, op. cit.

⁶⁷ Regione Veneto, *Legge regionale 21 giugno 2018 n. 22 - Modifiche alla legge regionale 23 aprile 2013, n. 5 Interventi per prevenire e contrastare la violenza contro le donne*, Art. 2, para 2.

⁶⁸ Regione Veneto, *Legge regionale 23 aprile 2013, n. 5 - Interventi per prevenire e contrastare la violenza contro le donne*, Art. 2, para 1, letter b.

⁶⁹ This is the '*Reddito di ultima istanza*' (Last resort income) project, piloted in 2013-2014 and targeted to 'the weakest categories of persons who can hardly participate in the labour market due to ill health, poor training, long-term unemployment, whose age (over 55) hinders their reintegration', modified in '*Reddito di inclusione attiva*' (Active inclusion income) by the *Decreto direttoriale n. 347 16.12.2015*.

⁷⁰ *Ley Orgánica 1/2004, de 28 de diciembre, de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género*.

income through an urgent route⁷¹. Both these examples are measures introduced to respond to a general need in the population but with specific arrangements for women recovering from violence.

Finally, this research does not take into account the *Reddito di cittadinanza* (RdC)⁷² (Citizenship income), i.e., a guaranteed minimum income aimed at the employment and social re-integration of individuals living in poverty. Even though it is used by women recovering from violence, the RdC does not have any specific feature targeted at this group. Applying for the RdC is often made difficult by the requirement to submit an *Isee* for the household as the perpetrator is often still included in it. As a result, the RdC is not very accessible. In addition, the RdC is conditional upon enrolling in a *Patto per il lavoro* (Employment seeking agreement) or a *Patto per l'inclusione sociale* (Social inclusion agreement) with a strict implementation framework, ill-suited to women's needs. For example, accessing the benefit is conditional upon the applicant declaring to be immediately available to start a job⁷³ and accepting either one of two job offers⁷⁴. Unless these conditions are met the person is not eligible for the RdC. The fact that a woman might be recovering from violence does not exempt her from the

requirements. Despite these issues, in some cases, the RdC could play a crucial role for women to rebuild economic autonomy. Therefore, as the government prepares a reform of the RdC, it would be helpful **to introduce a rule to include women recovering from violence⁷⁵ in the eligible population and to exempt them from conditionalities**. In addition, there is a need **to modify the requirement to submit a Dsu (tax returns) and an Isee**, which are necessary to access most welfare services, taking into account women's specific needs. To do so it would be helpful to:

- » Broaden the circumstances⁷⁶ in which cohabiting partners and/or spouses with **different residence** are considered separate households⁷⁷ by including women recovering from violence who are supported by an anti-violence centre;
- » Modify the definition of spouses with the **same residence** details as members of the same family by introducing an exception for women recovering from violence;
- » Ensure that the **certification of 'emotional and economical estrangement'** can be produced by the anti-violence centre supporting the woman, in addition to social services.

⁷¹ *Lei de 21 de Maio 2003 - Rendimento social de inserção*, Art. 17.

⁷² *Decreto-legge 28 gennaio 2019, n. 4 Disposizioni urgenti in materia di reddito di cittadinanza e di pensioni*.

⁷³ *Idem*, Art. 4, para 1.

⁷⁴ *Idem*, Art. 4, para 8, letter b).

⁷⁵ *Idem*, Art. 4, paras 2 and 3.

⁷⁶ With the exception of the following instances: a) as a result of legal separation or the equivalent consensual separation according to Art. 711 of the civil law code, namely when separation was ordered according to Art. 126 of the civil law code. This means that de facto separation is not sufficient and it needs to be sanctioned by a judge; b) when a different residence was agreed according to temporary and urgent injunctions according to art. 708 of the civil law code; c) when a spouse was deprived of parental responsibility or had a restraining order from the family home due to child abuse, according to Art. 333 of the civil law code; d) in one of the cases included in Art. 3 of Law No. 898/1970, and following amendments and there has been an application for the dissolution or cessation of law implications of marriage (divorce); e) on spousal abandonment, legally certified by the public authority for social services, namely there need to already be a judicial or administrative process that confirms the abandonment.

⁷⁷ *Inps, Dsu, Dichiarazione Sostitutiva Unica (DPCM 159/2013). Istruzioni per la compilazione*, p. 10.

2.1.4 The national *Reddito di libertà*

The '*Reddito di libertà*' (RdL) (Freedom income) scheme was set up in May 2020 with the *DI Rilancio* (Re-launch Decree)⁷⁸ to address the specific economic difficulties women recovering from violence faced during the Covid-19 lockdown. For the first time, a dedicated income support provision was included in national legislation, in part responding to the demands of feminist movements and organisations. With the 2022 Budget Law⁷⁹ the RdL was decoupled from the Covid-19 public health emergency and confirmed as

a policy to support the economic autonomy of women recovering from violence and living in poverty. The implementation of the RdL started in November 2021⁸⁰ with a budget of **12 m euros**⁸¹ for **2020-2022**⁸² as well as additional regional funding. All funds allocated by the DPCM to each region must be spent and new applications can be accepted only if regions add their resources to the national pot⁸³. According to Inps data on the first year of implementation, up to 20 May 2022, **600 women** had **received the RdL against 3.238 who applied**. Lombardy accepted the highest number of applications (101), followed by Campania (70) and Sicily (57)⁸⁴.

TABLE 3

Reddito di libertà (Freedom income – Nationwide)

OBJECTIVE	To promote, through economic independence, the autonomy and emancipation of women living in poverty who are recovering from violence.
DETAILS	Monthly payments of 400 euros up to 12 months. It can be accessed in addition to other income support measures e.g., <i>Reddito di cittadinanza</i> , <i>Naspi</i> , <i>Cassa integrazione guadagni</i> , <i>Reddito di emergenza</i> , and other monetary contributions available at the regional and/or local level).
ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS	Past or current enrolment in a recovery programme; to be in a situation of marked vulnerability or poverty; to be resident in Italy (Italian citizen, EU citizen, or with residence permit and/or leave to remain).
ACCESS POLICY	Local social services make an online application to Inps, at the woman's request. Social services must certify the woman's 'need based on extraordinary or urgent circumstances'. The anti-violence centre must declare, through its legal representative, that the woman is enrolled in a recovery programme.
PAYMENT	A one-off bank transfer to the beneficiary's bank account.
EXPENSES ALLOWED	Expenses incurred to secure independent housing and towards economic autonomy as well as education and training for dependent children.

⁷⁸ Decreto-Legge 19 maggio 2020 n. 34 - Misure urgenti in materia di salute, sostegno al lavoro e all'economia, nonché di politiche sociali connesse all'emergenza epidemiologica da Covid-19, Art. 105-bis.

⁷⁹ Legge 30 dicembre 2021, n. 234 - Bilancio di previsione dello Stato per l'anno finanziario 2022 e bilancio pluriennale per il triennio 2022-2024, Art. 1, para 670.

⁸⁰ Local social services were able to commence the procedure for the application to the '*Reddito di libertà*' on 24 November 2021, when Inps issued the new application form including, in addition to foreign women with permanent leave to remain or long-term leave, women with other types of leave but excluding undocumented women. The first Inps circular letter (no. 166) was issued instead on 8 November 2021.

⁸¹ Set up by the *DI Rilancio* with a budget of 3 m euros, the RdL was extended to 2021 and 2022 with 2 m euros per year (Law no. 178/2020, Art. 1, para. 28), later raised by 5 m euros (Law No. 234/2021, Art. 1, para 670).

⁸² The 3 m euros allocated for 2020 were shared amongst regions with the DPCM, dated 17 December 2020, the remaining 9 m euros for 2021 and 2020 with DPCM, dated 1 June 2022.

⁸³ As stated in Art. 2, para. 4, of the DPCM and confirmed in the Inps circular letter no. 1053 dated 7 March 2022, all the applications submitted during the year but not granted due to insufficient funding remain valid and can be processed in chronological order if further funding for the *Reddito di libertà* is made available.

⁸⁴ For further details, see Annex - *Reddito di libertà: The First Year of Implementation*.

'It was first come first served because the money run out in just a few days.'

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The RdL was welcomed by both beneficiaries and anti-violence centres. It was especially appreciated because it did **not require presenting an expense sheet or an Isee declaration**. The RdL was developed as a **no strings attached income support**: a tool that, in the words of some anti-violence centres' staff, allows women to access a small 'treasure' to cover expenses without strict conditionalities. Even though the policy prescribes spending the money to cover independent housing or dependants' expenses, it does not impose restrictions nor requires a balance sheet. According to people interviewed for this research, the design of the policy is especially useful to support women towards economic and social autonomy.

According to key informant interviews the main issues of the RdL are:

- » **Insufficient funding:** the yearly budget allocated is not enough to support all those eligible. In 2020, 3m euros were allocated, enough to only accept 600 applications⁸⁵ and the remaining funds from the 2022 Budget Law will grant 1800 applications. These are small numbers considering that, according to Inps, each year 21000 women could benefit from income support schemes⁸⁶. In addition, the monthly payment is not adequate for the cost of living. Finally, the RdL does not account for discrepancies of purchasing power in different areas, therefore running the risk of exacerbating existing regional inequalities and even creating new ones.
- » **Residency requirement:** this prerequisite discriminates against homeless or foreign women as well as those who, due to violence, are not able to apply in the local authority where they reside.

- » **Discretion:** the national guidelines to assess whether a woman has a 'need based on extraordinary or urgent circumstances' were not adopted. As a result, each service uses its evaluation method. In some cases, the anti-violence centre carries out a first evaluation based on one-on-one meetings with the woman as well as the details of her individual recovery programme. However, in other instances the evaluation is carried out by social services, including a review of the applicant's Isee even though this is not required to apply for the programme. Staff from anti-violence centres interviewed have also highlighted that social services only consider objective data (e.g., income, employment, ownership of property or other material goods) without allowing for the specific violence-related issues affecting women (such as, amongst others, owning a property which might be occupied by the perpetrator, part-time, precarious or low pay employment, inability to access a joint bank account). Anti-violence centres too use a discretionary approach: due to the lack of a shared definition of 'client service' as well as scarce funding available, many staff explained they had to establish prioritization criteria to access the RdL according to women's individual circumstances. For example, some anti-violence centres decided to sign the declaration confirming a woman's status as a client only to those staying in a shelter, others only for women supported through specific services such as psychological and/or legal assistance. Other anti-violence centres declined to set internal priority criteria given that neither the RdL rules nor anti-violence networks had provided any guidance. In addition, some women who had completed a recovery programme in the past returned

'Once the money run out the issue returned and she has not been able to pay rent and so had to go back.'

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⁸⁵ Idem.

⁸⁶ Istat, Audizione... op. cit.

to anti-violence centres to apply for the RdL but they were not always successful. As a result of the inconsistent approach of social services and anti-violence centres, the

administrative process is uneven across Italy and, in some cases, even between different councils within the same city.

BOX 1 - THE ROLE OF ANTI-VIOLENCE CENTRES

Even though, according to the policy, anti-violence centres are only supposed to certify women's status as 'supported persons', in practice the centres ended up carrying out several activities as part of the RdL, from training social services on how the scheme worked to evaluating women's circumstances. Even though, according to the policy, anti-violence centres are only supposed to certify women's status as 'supported persons', in practice the centres ended up carrying out several activities as part of the RdL, from training social services on how the scheme worked to evaluating women's circumstances. As it is often the case, anti-violence centres worked as an informal one stop shop, even though local authorities are the ones responsible for implementing the RdL. Given that no information on access procedures and the role of CAV was circulated, except from a note by Inps, the staff of anti-violence centres had to study in detail the operational document, memos, and communications by Inps and independently identify and agree ways of working with the social services responsible for managing the applications submitted. In some instances, anti-violence centres got in touch with all the local authorities covered by their services to collect information on how applications would be managed, to be able to assist women in compiling and submitting their claim.

2.2 National and regional funding

The national funding allocated by Parliament to finance income support for women recovering from violence is mostly allocated to the national *Reddito di libertà*. Between 2020 and 2022 the budget was **12 m euros** as well as 1.5 m of regional resources for 2022. Regional governments can boost funding allocated for the funding share '*Fondo per il Reddito di libertà per le donne vittime di violenza*' (Freedom Income Fund for women victims of violence) allocated to their area by transferring part of their budget directly to Inps. According to data available up to 15 October 2022, only two regions adopted

this policy: Emilia-Romagna⁸⁷ transferred **1.3 m euros** and Friuli-Venezia-Giulia **250 thousand euros**⁸⁸. In the years 2018 to 2022 five regional governments budgeted about **6.2 m euros**⁸⁹ to fund income support measures for women recovering from violence in the respective regions. Funding was allocated by:

- » **Lazio: 1,4 m euros** to fund the *Contributo di libertà*, of which 167 thousand euros allocated from regional funding and the rest from the share of national funding redistributed to regions to implement the national anti-violence plans for 2015-2017 and 2017-2021⁹⁰.
- » **Sardinia: 2.7 m euros** to implement the regional *Reddito di libertà*, of which 2.1 million out of the regional budget and the remaining 638 thousand euros from national funding⁹¹

⁸⁷ Regione Emilia-Romagna, *Delibera n. 650 del 28/04/2022 - Assegnazione e concessione di finanziamento ad Inps, quale ente erogatore del reddito di libertà individuato dall'art. 3, n. 6) del DPCM 17 dicembre 2020, delle risorse destinate alla misura nazionale reddito di libertà ai sensi dell'art. 2, comma 2, DPCM 17 dicembre 2020.*

⁸⁸ The Friuli-Venezia Giulia regional government amended its regional law on preventing and combating male violence against women by including a specific provision allowing the regional government to increase funding for the national *Reddito di libertà*, see: *Legge regionale, 6 agosto 2021, n. 12 - Interventi per la tutela delle donne vittime di violenza e per il contrasto e la prevenzione di atti violenti e discriminatori, Art. 6-bis.*

⁸⁹ The share included resources budgeted by the Umbria regional government, about 167 thousand euros, within the *Programmazioni regionali integrate* 2021 and 2022. The funding was allocated for programmes that included income support activities. However, in the absence of disaggregated data, it is not possible to deduct the sum spent on those.

⁹⁰ Namely funding allocated to regions with the DPCMs, dated 25 November 2016, 13 November 2020, and 16 November 2021.

⁹¹ Of which: 214.800,00 euros underspent from the *Fondo per le politiche relative ai diritti e alle pari opportunità* (Fund for policies concerning rights and equal opportunities) and reallocated to the regional *Reddito di libertà* fund to tackle the economic challenges caused by the pandemic; 177.599,74 euros from the national *Fondo per le politiche relative ai diritti e alle pari opportunità* allocated with DPCM, dated 13 November 2020, to pay for housing autonomy and labour market participation programmes and to complement the regional funding for the *Reddito di libertà* and resources for Women's

plus 250 thousand euros of regional funding for the '*dote educativa*' (education grant)⁹² for children of women benefitting from the RdLS;

- » **Puglia: 2.1 m euros** to finance the *Reddito di dignità*⁹³ from the funding budgeted to implement the *Programma Operativo Regionale* (POR - Regional Operational Programme) Puglia 2014-2020.
- » **Tuscany: 165 thousand euros** to fund 'income support programs, even as an exception from local authority policy'⁹⁴, of which 82.6 thousand out of regional budget and the remaining from the share of national funding allocated with the DPCM, dated November 4, 2019, to implement the national anti-violence plan 2017-2020.
- » **Sicily: 243.364 thousand euros** to finance the regional *Reddito di libertà* in 2022, which was modified from support for self-employment⁹⁵ to allow for a broader set of expenses (e.g., rent, utilities).

In addition to the funding above, we need to look at resources budgeted as part of **regional funding for anti-poverty programmes** used to support women recovering from violence and the **funds allocated to anti-violence services to promote women's economic autonomy**. The following examples represent the latter type of funding:

- » 'Empowerment and autonomy endowment' budgeted by the **Apulia** region as well as funded through national resources allocated to the anti-violence sector⁹⁶.

- » The **Umbria** region allocated about 166 thousand euros budgeted within the integrated regional programme 2021-2022 to fund pilot projects women's employment, economic, housing and personal autonomy.
- » The **Veneto** region budgeted 2.9 m euros to support anti-violence centres to promote employment, housing, and social autonomy programmes co-developed with women victims of violence⁹⁷. These include income support schemes.

However, the lack of disaggregated data on funds spent, as well as the lack of any publicly available evaluation on implementation, make it almost impossible to exactly calculate the resources solely allocated to income support and therefore to provide a detailed analysis.

2.3 Options for the future

Accessing welfare benefits or anti-poverty programmes is usually means-tested against the family, income or employment status of the applicant. This can be a considerable challenge for women recovering from violence. Their family or income status often do not reflect their lived experience. Their actual economic and employment status could be different from what is known by social services that is often based on the previous year. In the meantime, a woman might have had to take a break from work, leave her job or reduce her hours to part-time and could need money to cover necessary expenses for herself and well as her children. Women need income support that provides economic security in the medium to long-term thus allowing them to rebuild their lives without

individual projects; 246.000 euros out of the resources allocated to the *Fondo per le politiche relative ai diritti e alle pari opportunità* with the DPCM, dated 16 November 2021.

⁹² According to the DGR no. 29/12, dated 21 July 2021, women's individual plans can be complemented by an education subsidy for children consisting of 'a basket of goods (food, computer devices) and services to bridge the digital divide and/or specific activities to increase cultural and educational opportunities, social relationships, and training activities.' The education bursary can be spent, for example, on school expenses, extracurricular activities (trips, sports, music), computer devices, tutoring, transportation to/from school.

⁹³ Data as of July 2022, source: Apulia Region.

⁹⁴ Regione Toscana, *Delibera 828 del 6/7/2020 - Individuazione criteri e modalità di ripartizione delle risorse di cui al decreto del Presidente del Consiglio dei ministri (DPCM) 4/12/2019 relativo a "Ripartizione delle risorse per l'anno 2019, di cui all'art. 5 e 5-bis del decreto-legge 14 agosto 2013 n. 93 convertito nella legge 15 ottobre 2013 n. 119", come modificato con DPCM 2/04/2020, e delle risorse della Regione Toscana.*

⁹⁵ See paragraph 3.1.2.

⁹⁶ Resources allocated according to Art. 5 and Art. 5-bis of DI 93/2013.

⁹⁷ Giunta regionale del Veneto - Direzione servizi sociali unità organizzativa famiglia, minori, giovani e servizio civile, *Relazione sull'attività svolta in materia di prevenzione e contrasto alla violenza contro le donne gennaio - dicembre 2021 Legge regionale 23 aprile 2013, n. 5 "Interventi regionali per prevenire e contrastare la violenza contro le donne"*, pp. 16-19.

worrying about the need to find a job to survive. Therefore, training and employment seeking programmes are useful but should not be a requirement to access income support.

Against this background, the provision of income support that meets the specific needs of women recovering from violence is crucial. **The national *Reddito di libertà* could fulfil this mandate provided it is improved.** In particular:

- » **Statutory status:** the minimum amount of funding to be allocated should be put on a statutory footing in the national budget and calculated on actual need, based on the number of women supported by anti-violence centres. Equally, the maximum funding spent by each region should be based on an analysis of local needs rather than being calculated on the number of female residents (see Annex).
- » **Flexible duration:** the RdL should be provided for at least 12 months and up to another similar amount of time, to meet the specific needs of each woman. Assessing the length of the contribution should be based on the evaluation of anti-violence centres and social services, according to national guidelines.
- » **Shared evaluation methodology:** it is crucial to identify indicators that must be used nationwide, to avoid arbitrary approaches and potential discrimination.
- » **Payment:** it would be helpful to adjust payment according to personal needs (e.g., monthly instalments or a one-off payment).
- » **Expertise of social services:** to evaluate women's needs social services staff should

be trained not only on procedures and the evaluation of the RdL but also about male violence against women as well as women's protection and support needs.

- » **Funding to anti-violence centres:** the role played by anti-violence centres and shelters should be recognised with adequate funding to cover the cost of staff evaluating applications.
- » **Reducing geographical inequalities:** to avoid an inequality of opportunities, regions should contribute to financing the RdL taking into account discrepancies in purchasing power in different areas of the country. The disjointed nature of the interventions funded and the scattered allocation of funds exacerbate existing geographical inequalities as well hinder a punctual evaluation of the effectiveness of the RdL and of the actual need in each region.

A temporary income might not be enough. Some women could need information and capacities to best use their resources. Therefore, it would be beneficial to finance **financial literacy and/or inclusion programmes** to allow all beneficiaries to be more competent at tackling daily economic challenges. For example, information on how to close and/or open a bank account, how the fiscal system works and how to pay taxes and potential debts, on available micro-saving and micro-investment schemes and so on. To provide these services, the strands of the National anti-violence plan 2021-2023⁹⁸ dedicated to financial information and education must be timely implemented. Eligibility should be broadened to include those women who are already enrolled in a recovery programme.

⁹⁸ Deo, *Piano strategico nazionale sulla violenza maschile contro le donne, 2021-2023* (National Strategic Plan on Male Violence against Women, 2021-2023), p. 31.

3 - LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION AND JOB RETENTION

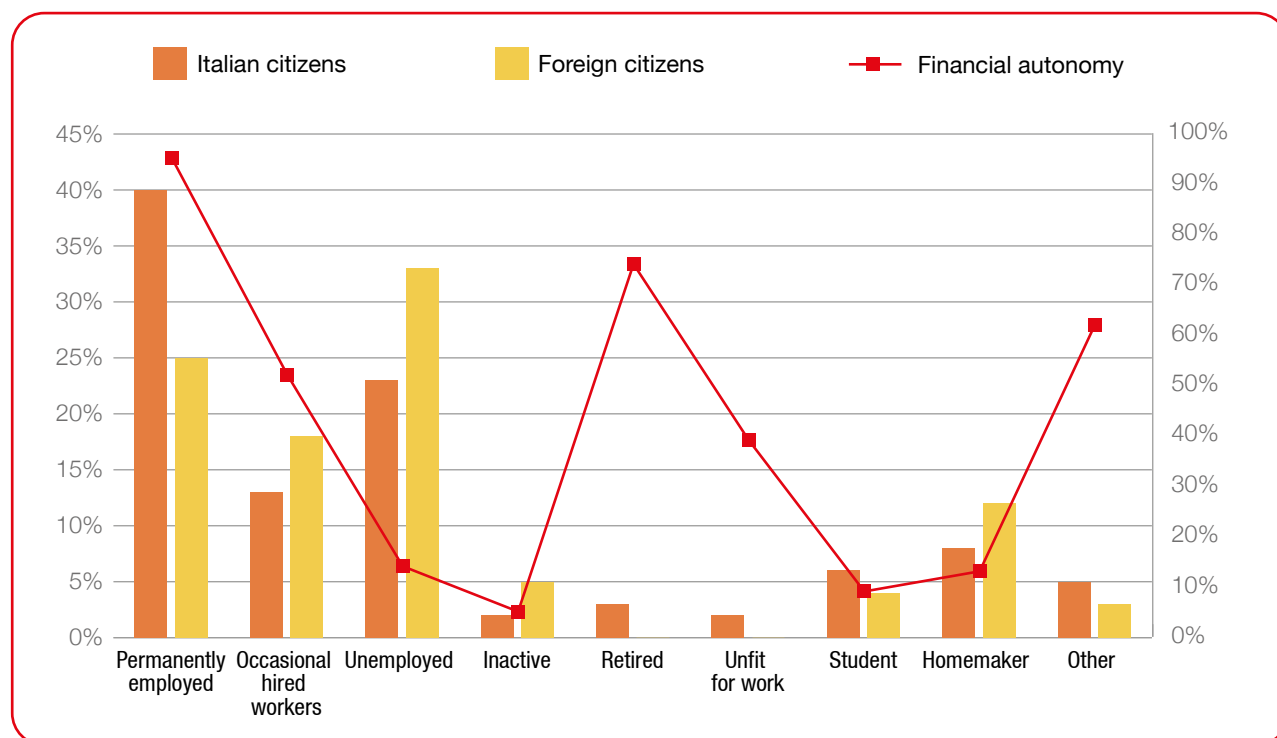
Employment status has a considerable impact on women's recovery process. Available data⁹⁹ (Figure 1) clearly show that women with stable employments have a higher degree of economic autonomy (95%) compared to those who work occasionally (51%) or are unemployed (15,7%).¹⁰⁰

Employment provides women with secure and adequate economic resources to leave the perpetrator's house or the shelter, makes them more autonomous and contributes to boosting their self-esteem, consequently

speeding up the empowerment process. Hence, active labour market policies¹⁰¹ have often been used to increase economic autonomy, in particular for those on low incomes¹⁰². However, **employment is not only about seeking and finding a job but also about retaining it**. Working can make it difficult to start or continue the recovery process, especially for those women who have a precarious job or lack access to care services. On the other hand, current policies and programmes do not

FIGURE 1

Relationship between employment status and financial autonomy reported by women supported by anti-violence services (2020).



Source: ActionAid calculations based on Istat data (2022).

⁹⁹ Istat, *Audizione... op. cit.*

¹⁰⁰ This percentage includes women who are unemployed (13.6%), inactive (4.6%), unfit for work (38.5%), students (5%), and homemakers (12.9%).

¹⁰¹ Namely all the programmes implemented by national and local authorities to promote employment and labour market participation (e.g., training and professional advice, employment support, training promotion), see *Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali* (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies).

¹⁰² A.E. Adams, R.M. Tolman, D. Bybee, C.M. Sullivan, A.C. Kennedy, "The Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Low-Income Women's Economic Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Job Stability", in *Violence Against Women*, Vol. 8, no. 12, 2012, pp. 1345-1367.

effectively meet women's needs and do not provide the opportunity to take leave from work as long as it might be necessary to recover from violence. The circumstances of **foreign women** are especially complex as they often have precarious jobs and lower economic autonomy (Figure 1). In addition, they face more challenges to enter the labour market due to language barriers or the lack of friends and family networks that can help manage the demands of care.

3.1 Current laws and policies

In Italy policies dedicated to labour market participation and/or job retention for women recovering from violence are **few and disjointed**. Interventions **to promote job seeking** have been funded in a disorganised fashion, usually at regional level, and include **training, internships, self-employment and entrepreneurship support** as well as **tax breaks** for the private sector (in the form of pilot projects at national level) to encourage hiring women victims of violence in permanent employment.

The Italian national government adopted a more strategic approach to **job retention** instead. In fact, in 2015, **paid leave for victims of gender-based violence** and the opportunity of **re-allocation for women employed in the public administration** enrolled in recovery programmes were set by statute. In addition, in 2022, emergency permits for women victims of gender-based violence in the armed forces were agreed. Both are structural instruments, i.e., they are established by law as part of the labour policy legal system.

3.1.1 Training, internships, and employment grants within anti-violence programmes

The main national policy on preventing and combating male violence against women (**Decree Law No. 93/2013**)¹⁰³ **does not include any provisions to fund and implement programmes aimed at labour market participation for women recovering from violence**. No policy regarding women's needs was included in the national law on employment and re-employment. The task of accompanying and advising women about the labour market was initially **delegated to anti-violence centres** with the Agreement of 17 November 2014¹⁰⁴, stating that anti-violence centres had to provide employment advice 'through information and relationships with social services and job centres to identify an individually tailored employment inclusion project to achieve economic autonomy'¹⁰⁵. This agreement was then included in the Extraordinary national plan against sexual and gender-based violence 2015-2017, which aimed at promoting women's participation in the labour market through a 'integrated intervention model' based on the coordination of relevant local services. This multi-sectoral approach was tasked with facilitating women's access to job centres to match their professional skills with the needs of the local labour market. However, **no structural funding was budgeted** neither to employ professionals with expertise in such services nor to train relevant local stakeholders e.g., job centres, training and employment agencies.

¹⁰³ L. n. 93/2013 *Disposizioni urgenti in materia di sicurezza e per il contrasto della violenza di genere, nonché in tema di protezione civile e di commissariamento delle province* (Decree Law No. 93/2013 on "Urgent provisions on safety and for the fight against gender-based violence, as well as on civil protection and compulsory administration of Provinces").

¹⁰⁴ Presidenza del Consiglio Dei Ministri, Conferenza Unificata, Intesa 27 novembre 2014. *Intesa, ai sensi dell'articolo 8, comma 6, della legge 5 giugno 2003, n. 131, tra il Governo e le regioni, le province autonome di Trento e di Bolzano e le autonomie locali, relativa ai requisiti minimi dei Centri anti-violenza e delle Case rifugio, prevista dall'articolo 3, comma 4, del D.P.C.M. del 24 luglio 2014.* (Rep. Atti n. 146/CU), Art. 4, para 1, letter f).

¹⁰⁵ The provision was amended as part of the review of the Intesa, which currently states that anti-violence centres, in agreement with women, interact with social services and job centres to identify employment inclusion opportunities and to sponsor economic autonomy and employment advice. Employment advice is therefore no longer included amongst the minimum service levels that anti-violence services must guarantee. The amended Intesa of 27 September 2014 has not yet been published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* (Official Gazette of the Italian Republic, i.e., the Official Journal).

'We need to make sure women have a real opportunity to re-enter the labour market. As things currently stand with job centres and training courses, this is not feasible.'

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In November 2016, the first funding for labour market participation programmes within the National anti-violence plan were distributed amongst regions¹⁰⁶ to finance projects for **3.6 m euros**¹⁰⁷. In addition, in July 2017¹⁰⁸, **4.4 m euros** were tendered and in 2019 the Equal opportunities minister decided to permanently¹⁰⁹ delegate to regional governments funding allocations to promote women's socioeconomic empowerment. As a result, about **10 m euros**¹¹⁰ per year are distributed to regional governments to implement programmes for labour market participation as part of the National anti-violence action plan. On the one hand, this decision allows regions to budget according to their needs, on the other hand, it risks deepening existing geographical inequalities. Each region has its own legal framework and strategic plan regulating anti-violence programmes. Some regional governments, within their laws on male violence against women, set out policies targeted at promoting women's participation in the labour market by funding **job seeking advice**¹¹¹ and, in some cases, **employment**¹¹² and **training grants**¹¹³. Other regions

decided instead to simply **delegate advisory services to anti-violence services**¹¹⁴ or to promote a more integrated approach for **local services**¹¹⁵. Further regions set out specific provisions for women recovering from violence within **labour market and female employment policy**¹¹⁶. Thus, each region chose whether and how much of their own resources to invest or, instead, to just avail of national and European funding to promote the labour market participation of women affected by violence, also according to the overall political agenda and/or regional needs. As a result, **women have different opportunities based on where they live**. Some women have been able to access an employment grant, others just training and others had to make do with the skill assessment offered by anti-violence centres' staff. **Without a nationwide policy on minimum service provision at regional level to promote women's labour market participation, there will continue to be marked inequalities of opportunity.**

'A contribution of 500 euros for 6 or 12 months – what kind of breakthrough is this supposed to be for women?'

CAV caseworker

¹⁰⁶ DPCM 25 November 2016 - *Ripartizione delle risorse del «Fondo per le politiche relative ai diritti e alle pari opportunità» previste dal paragrafo 4 del Piano d'azione straordinario contro la violenza sessuale e di genere, di cui all'articolo 5 del decreto-legge 14 agosto 2013, n. 93, per essere ripartite tra le regioni e le province autonome per la realizzazione delle quattro linee d'azione ivi previste, destinando le risorse nazionali in modo complementare rispetto all'impiego di risorse proprie.*

¹⁰⁷ L. Molteni, *Allegato 2 "Il DPCM del 25 novembre 2016 di riparto delle risorse previste dal paragrafo 4 del Piano d'azione Straordinario contro la violenza sessuale e di genere"*, in Cnr-Irpps, *Rapporto di valutazione del Piano d'azione Straordinario contro la violenza sessuale e di genere 2015-2017*, June 2021.

¹⁰⁸ *Avviso pubblico per il finanziamento di progetti volti alla prevenzione e contrasto alla violenza alle donne anche in attuazione della Convenzione di Istanbul* - 18 luglio 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Art. 1, para 149, letter d) of Law No. 234/ 2021 introduced a provision in Art. 5, para 3, of the DI No. 93/2013 stating that resources budgeted for regional programmes are allocated to regions by the President of the Council of Ministers or the delegated authority for equal opportunities, on an annual basis, following an agreement by the *Conferenza permanente per i rapporti tra lo Stato, le regioni e le province autonome di Trento e di Bolzano* based in the same provision of para. 2, Art. 5-bis of the DI No. 93/2013.

¹¹⁰ The DPCMs, dated 4 December 2019 and 16 November 2021, budgeted 10 m euros for the activities provided by Art. 5 of the DI No. 93/2013, whereas the DPCM, dated 13 November 2020, allocated just 6 m euros for their implementation.

¹¹¹ This is the case of Regione Campania (LR 34/2017, Art. 4), Lazio (LR 4/2014, Art. 2), Liguria (LR 12/2007), Marche (LR 32/2008, Art. 9), Molise (LR 15/2013, Art. 8), Apulia (LR 29/2014), Sicily (LR 3/2012, Art. 3), Umbria (LR 14/2016, Art. 25), Valle d'Aosta (LR 4/2013, Art. 2).

¹¹² In Regione Basilicata (LR 9/99, Art. 2), Calabria (LR 20/2007, Art. 9), Sicily (LR 3/2012, Art. 9).

¹¹³ As in Regione Calabria (LR 20/2007, Art. 8).

¹¹⁴ This is the case for Regione Abruzzo (LR 31/2006, Art. 6 and Art. 7), Calabria (LR 20/2007 Art. 5), Campania (LR 2/2011, Art. 2), Emilia-Romagna (LR 6/2014, Art. 14), Friuli-Venezia Giulia (LR 12/2021), Marche (LR 32/2008, Art. 8), Molise (LR 15/2013, Art. 3), Sicily (LR 3/2012, Art. 8), Valle d'Aosta (LR 4/2013, Art. 7).

¹¹⁵ This is the case of Regione Lombardy (LR 11/2012, Art. 2, DGR XI/999/2020), Piedmont (LR 13/2016, Art. 13), Sardinia (LR 8/2007), Tuscany (LR 59/2007, Art. 5), Umbria (LR 14/2016, Art. 25 and Art. 31), and Veneto (LR 5/2013).

¹¹⁶ In Regione Lazio (LR 7/2021, Art. 8 and Art. 10), Emilia-Romagna (LR 14/2015, DGR 1011/2021), Veneto (LR 3/2022, Art. 6).

Modifying norms, strategic and operational plans at national and regional levels for the labour market participation of women facing violence is therefore crucial and at the very least the following should be reviewed:

- » **Equal opportunities:** all women should have access to the same opportunities for training and labour market participation regardless of their residence or domicile. There should be clear nationwide guidelines as well as guaranteed funding to meet regional needs.
- » **Training:** the mismatch between women's skills and what the labour market requires is often an obstacle. It is necessary to offer diversified training opportunities to meet both women's requirements and the needs of private sector companies, cooperatives as well as the public administration. In addition, it is essential for training to be free or affordable and accompanied by income support to allow women to attend regularly and free from worries.
- » **Remove gender stereotypes that inform training and labour market participation:** often women are offered training and employment opportunities heavily influenced by gender stereotypes that produce inequalities in terms of access to the labour market, career progression, salary, employee benefits, pension and so on. In addition to investing in diversifying the offer (e.g. bursaries for a wider range of professions, richer and well-developed

regional training offers), it is necessary to educate and train staff in employment and training agencies, and employment centres on gender stereotypes as well as labour market segregation (both horizontal and vertical) to avoid limiting women to a smaller range of jobs compared to men and lower levels of management opportunities, regardless of their educational qualifications and the needs of the local labour market.

- » **Inclusion of local labour market stakeholders:** internships offered are often short-term, under paid, and do not lead to stable employment. This risks to frustrate women rather than contribute to economic autonomy and improved self-esteem. Internships and employment grants are propaedeutic to employment and should lead to adequate professional opportunities. This often does not happen because of the lack of opportunities in the local job market. To improve the situation the following elements are needed: up to date mapping of locally sought-after skills; ongoing collaboration with employers, including in agreement with anti-violence regional or local services; allocation of adequate resources to guarantee income support. These are just a few of the changes to ensure internships and job offers meet their ultimate goal, namely to support women to find permanent and gainful employment to be fully independent in the long-term.

3.1.2 Self-employment and entrepreneurship

For a long time, **policy makers have used self-employment and access to favourable credit terms to promote the labour market participation of women recovering from violence.** However, this was done **without considering women's specific needs and the challenges they may face.**

The approach was strengthened by the Equal opportunities minister Elena Bonetti in the context of the Extraordinary Plan against Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2015-2017, which included access to microcredit amongst the programmes to promote labour market participation¹¹⁷. In December 2020 the Fondo di garanzia per il microcredito di libertà (Guaranteed fund for microcredit for freedom) was set up based on an agreement with *Associazione Bancaria Italiana* (Abi – Organisation of Italian Banks), *Federkasse*, *Ente nazionale per il microcredito* (Enm – National Microcredit Institution) and *Caritas Italiana*¹¹⁸. The fund's goal is twofold: to promote self-employment ('entrepreneurial microcredit') and to guarantee personal loans to purchase essential goods and services ('social microcredit')¹¹⁹. The *microcredito di libertà* was funded with 3 m euros but its implementation only started in April 2022, when the Enm published the first tender for financial services to participate in the

microcredito di libertà for women with experience of violence (*Avviso pubblico di manifestazione di interesse rivolto agli intermediari creditizi per la partecipazione al Progetto Microcredito di Libertà per l'emancipazione delle donne che hanno subito violenza*). To date there is no publicly available information to evaluate the effectiveness of the fund.

'Engaging with the local job market is one of the main challenges in supporting women to enter the labour market.'

Public authority representative

Some regions such as Basilicata¹²⁰, Campania¹²¹, Lazio¹²², and Sicily¹²³ also promote self-employment to support labour market participation within their legal framework to prevent and combat male violence against women. **Sicily** established the *Reddito di libertà* (Freedom income) for women with educational/professional qualifications or verified work experience. The programme aims at offering sustainable employment opportunities to those who have marketable skills while, at the same time, tackling the lack of jobs in the local labour market. Given the high rate of unemployment and the low levels of labour demand, the regional government allocated **non-repayable funding** up to 10 thousand euros¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ Deo, *Piano d'azione straordinario contro la violenza sessuale e di genere 2015-2017*, p. 37.

¹¹⁸ Protocollo d'Intesa tra la Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri – il Ministero per le pari opportunità e la famiglia, Prof.ssa Elena Bonetti e l'associazione Bancaria Italiana (Abi) e la Federazione Italiana delle Banche di Credito Cooperativo (Federkasse) e l'Ente Nazionale per il Microcredito (Enm) e la Caritas Italiana – Microcredito di libertà – Protocollo di microcredito per l'emancipazione economica delle donne che hanno subito violenza, Roma 3 dicembre 2020.

¹¹⁹ Including: medical expenses, rent, upgrading of housing systems and energy efficiency interventions, expenses to access essential public services (transportation and energy), school and training expenses, see Ente nazionale per il microcredito, *Avviso di manifestazione di interesse rivolto agli intermediari creditizi per la partecipazione al progetto Microcredito di libertà per l'emancipazione delle donne che hanno subito violenza*, April 2022, Art. 4.

¹²⁰ Legge regionale 29 marzo 1999, n. 9 - Istituzione di un fondo di solidarietà a favore di donne e minori vittime di violenza di genere, Art. 2.

¹²¹ With legge regionale 26 ottobre 2021, n. 17 e il conseguente regolamento attuativo approvato con DGR n. 226 del 10 maggio 2022, the Campania Region established the 'microcredit for women at social and personal disadvantage'. The fund is allocated to either start or manage micro-enterprises or self-employment and included 'women victims of violence' amongst those eligible. (Art. 11, para 2, letter b).

¹²² Legge regionale 19 marzo 2014, n.4 - Riordino delle disposizioni per contrastare la violenza contro le donne in quanto basata sul genere e per la promozione di una cultura del rispetto dei diritti umani fondamentali e delle differenze tra uomo e donna, art. 2; Regolamento regionale 24 maggio 2022, n. 5 - Attuazione e integrazione della legge regionale 10 giugno 2021, n. 7, recante "Disposizioni per la promozione della parità retributiva tra sessi, il sostegno dell'occupazione e dell'imprenditorialità femminile di qualità nonché per la valorizzazione delle competenze delle donne. Modifiche alla legge regionale 19 marzo 2014, n. 4 di riordino delle disposizioni per contrastare la violenza contro le donne".

¹²³ Legge regionale n. 8 dell'8 maggio 2018 - Disposizioni programmatiche e correttive per l'anno 2018. Legge di stabilità regionale, Art. 53.

¹²⁴ The first public tender for the local authorities where women reside was issued on 21 December 2018 (DDG 2718/2018) and funded 18 projects. For the period 2019-2020, instead, the Sicilian *Reddito di libertà* was funded with national resources allocated with the DPCMs of 1 December 2017 and 9 November 2018. The multi-activity tender issued on 31 July 2019 (DDG 1360/2019, open to anti-violence services rather than local authorities, funded 3 projects. Finally, for 2021-2022 resources budgeted for the programme were again assigned to local authorities. In 2021 funding was shared amongst those local authorities that had shelters in their area (DDG 2678/2021) and for 2022 by issuing a public tender requiring local authorities to apply, cooperating with anti-violence centres (DDG 1739/2022).

per year **for self-employment programmes and the establishment of economic activities in the artisan, commercial and professional sectors**. Despite good intentions, the *Reddito di libertà* did not meet expectations because it is challenging for women recovering from violence to enrol in a programme that requires, in addition to adequate managerial capacity, personal competencies and abilities that, due to their lived experience, often need strengthening. As a result, the Sicily regional government modified the latest iteration of the programme in September 2022, which now allows for resources to be spent to achieve housing autonomy¹²⁵, in addition to starting self-employment.

Facilitated access to credit or incentives for self-employment might not be the best strategy to support women towards economy autonomy and even less to promote their participation in the labour market. Together with easy or non-repayable access to credit, it is important to offer **integrated programmes** including

financial literacy, specialised training, tutoring, and ongoing tailor-made technical assistance. In addition, individual projects must include **long-term sustainability plans** considering both the specific needs and competences of the beneficiaries and the requirements of the local labour market. To be able to evaluate the effectiveness of existing self-employment support programmes, and the potential to include them in national and regional programmes, it is necessary **to assess existing practices** (e.g., *Scelgo di essere libera*, see Box 2)¹²⁶. It would also be helpful if existing programmes to support self-employment at national level, such as the *Fondo impresa femminile* (Female entrepreneurship fund)¹²⁷ or the *Fondo di sostegno al venture capital* (Venture capital support fund)¹²⁸, managed by the Economic development ministry, included facilitated support or ring-fenced funding for women recovering from violence.

BOX 2 - **SCELGO DI ESSERE LIBERA (I CHOOSE TO BE FREE)**

In November 2020 the Lazio regional government, through Lazio Innova S.p.A, implemented a social innovation project to assist CAV in supporting women's participation in the labour market. Developed together with the Global Thinking Foundation, '*Scelgo di essere libera*' is an **entrepreneurship workshop to develop a project supporting the autonomy of women recovering from violence**. It consisted of:

- » An online training (40 hours) to strengthen awareness of women's professional skills using the 'Team & business coaching' methodology.
- » The development of a business plan.
- » A support services 'go-to-market' for those who developed a business plan.
- » A prize of 1000 euros for the first eight projects turned businesses within six months from the end of the workshop.

About 30 women attended the project.

¹²⁵ DDG n. 1739 del 30.09.2022, *Avviso pubblico a sportello per il finanziamento del reddito di libertà da destinare alle donne vittime di violenza e ai loro figli*.

¹²⁶ The Puglia Region also finances projects supporting self-entrepreneurship and the creation of new businesses for women recovering from violence are financed as part of the tender '*Renaissance*' within the POR Puglia FESR-FSE 2014-2020, see DD 29 luglio 2022, n. 181 - POR Puglia FESR-FSE 2014-2020. ASSE IX. "Promuovere l'inclusione sociale, la lotta alla povertà e ogni forma di discriminazione". Azione 9.5 "Interventi di contrasto alle discriminazioni". Approvazione avviso pubblico "*Renaissance*" per la selezione di progetti di accompagnamento all'autoimprenditorialità o alla creazione di nuove imprese per persone a rischio di discriminazione. The tender, funded with 3.2 m euros, includes women who have faced violence amongst those eligible; Sicilia Region in the POR Sicilia FSE 2014-2020 and specifically the public tender 31/2019 'Lavoro ed impresa artigiana donne: percorsi per l'inserimento lavorativo e l'avvio d'impresa', targeted at women recovering from violence.

¹²⁷ Introduced by Art. 1, paras 96-107, of Law No. 178/2020, the *Fondo a sostegno dell'impresa femminile* (Female business support fund) is a programme of the Economic Development ministry Ministry to promote the start, development and strengthening of female-headed businesses through non-repayable funds and easy access to credit. Its budget is about 200 m euros – 160 m euros out of the PNRR and 40 m euros earmarked with the 2021 Budget Law. It includes activities such as training, tutoring, and promotion of women-led entrepreneurship approaches.

¹²⁸ For example, the fund, set up by Art. 1, para 209, Law No. 145/2018, was increased by 3 m euros for 2021 (Law No. 178/2020, Art. 1, paras 107-108) to fund capital risk for high innovation women-led enterprises, established within Italy and whose corporate capital belongs mostly to women.

3.1.3 Business incentives

Law No. 205/2017¹²⁹ introduced as a pilot project tax breaks to promote the labour market participation of women with experience of violence. The law established, from 2018 to 2021, a contribution of up to 36 months and up to 1 m euros per year as tax relief from national insurance, and employer's pension contributions to those **cooperatives hiring women on a permanent contract, either full-time or part-time**. To be eligible, women must be enrolled in a recovery programme as certified by social services, anti-violence centres or shelters. The pilot was then extended with the Decree Law No. 137/2021¹³⁰ for the year 2021¹³¹ up to 12 months. To date, October 2022, there is no disaggregated data available to be able to gauge how the programme worked and its potential effectiveness.

Inps, instead, analysed the impact of incentives established as a pilot with the Law No. 178/2020¹³² to hire women, including on fixed-term contracts¹³³. The research shows that **tax relief measures have a positive impact on female employment rates**¹³⁴. It would therefore be helpful to gauge whether these policies can be broadened to include women recovering from violence, providing working conditions that consider the challenges identified in labour market participation schemes by anti-violence services, private sectors, job centres, and public and private employment agencies.

During the XVIII legislature¹³⁵, in the *Camera dei Deputati* (Chambers of Deputies), draft laws were

presented to include women victims of violence within the **protected workers categories**¹³⁶ for mandatory access to employment. The law proposals, assigned to be scrutinised by the XI Commission Public and private employment, never returned to Parliament. However, the proposals are problematic because, by subjecting women to further trauma and psychological and social pressure, risk to set in motion a process of **secondary victimisation**. To avoid this, if the incentives were proposed again, it should be modified to consider women's condition as 'temporary' instead that permanent, as it is the case for other protected workers categories. To implement the incentive, the duty to certify women's enrolment in a recovery programme should be assigned solely to anti-violence services rather than social services as it is now. Many women feel that interacting with social services is stigmatising and prefer to deal with anti-violence centres with whom they have a trusting relationship. Having social services as part of the certification process would decrease the number of potential beneficiaries and would require staff training as well as making women interact with social services just for bureaucracy's sake, thus making the whole process more burdensome.

Business incentives were set up also at **regional level**, within the parameters of European and national laws regulating state subsidies to the private sector:

- » The **Campania** regional government with LR 17/2021¹³⁷ introduced tax relief

¹²⁹ Law No. 205/2017, Art. 1, para 220.

¹³⁰ Decreto-legge 28 ottobre 2020, n. 137 - Ulteriori misure urgenti in materia di tutela della salute, sostegno ai lavoratori e alle imprese, giustizia e sicurezza, connesse all'emergenza epidemiologica da Covid-19 - convertito, con modificazioni, dalla legge 18 dicembre 2020, n. 176, Art. 12, para 16-bis.

¹³¹ Up to 12 months.

¹³² Legge 30 dicembre 2020, n. 178 - Bilancio di previsione dello Stato per l'anno finanziario 2021 e bilancio pluriennale per il triennio 2021-2023.

¹³³ These are tax breaks available for companies hiring women on temporary contracts, equal to 100% of the overall employer's share of social security tax for 12 months (extended to 18 if contracts are permanent or changed from temporary to permanent) and up to 6.000 euros per year.

¹³⁴ Inps, *Incentivi all'occupazione. Focus sulle agevolazioni contributive per le assunzioni e le variazioni contrattuali*, 2022; L. Incoronato, A. Raute, "Può un taglio ai contributi previdenziali ridurre il divario di genere? L'esperienza del Bonus Donne", in Inps, XXI Rapporto annuale, 2022.

¹³⁵ AC 1458 - Introduzione del comma 220-bis dell'articolo 1 della legge 27 dicembre 2017, n. 205, in materia di benefici per l'assunzione delle donne vittime di violenza di genere; AC 1791 - Disposizioni per l'inserimento lavorativo delle donne vittime di violenza di genere; AC 1891 - Modifica all'articolo 18 della legge 12 marzo 1999, n. 68, in materia di inserimento delle donne vittime di violenza nelle categorie protette ai fini del collocamento obbligatorio al lavoro; AC 2816 - Modifiche alla legge 11 gennaio 2018, n. 4, concernenti l'estensione dei benefici alle donne vittime di violenza di genere; AC 3404 - Modifica all'articolo 18 della legge 12 marzo 1999, n. 68, in materia di inserimento delle donne vittime di violenza domestica nelle categorie protette ai fini del collocamento obbligatorio al lavoro; AC 3483 - Disposizioni per l'inserimento lavorativo delle donne vittime di violenza di genere.

¹³⁶ This refers to 'protected workers categories' according to Law No. 68/1999.

¹³⁷ Legge regionale 26 ottobre 2021, n. 17 - Disposizioni per la promozione della parità retributiva tra i sessi, il sostegno dell'occupazione e dell'imprenditoria femminile di qualità, nonché per la valorizzazione delle competenze delle donne, Art. 10.

for companies hiring women supported by anti-violence services in permanent and full-time employment. The tax relief **covers up to 100% of IRAP**¹³⁸ **rate** for the fiscal years 2021, 2022 and 2023¹³⁹. These companies also benefit from **additional points** if they apply for regional tenders.

- » The **Lazio** regional government with LR 7/2021 established a subsidy for businesses hiring women supported by anti-violence services on permanent contracts, covering up to 100% of the cost of **training** for new employees to skill up. In Lazio too these businesses receive **additional points** when it comes to evaluate applications to regional tenders.
- » The **Veneto** region with LR 3/2022¹⁴⁰ created a reward system for companies hiring women supported by anti-violence services on permanent contracts.

In addition, in 2019, the **Liguria** Region implemented a pilot project aiming to encourage employment by funding, via the regional employment agency Alfa Liguria¹⁴¹, subsidies to companies that hired women recovering from violence on temporary or permanent contracts or provided internships for three months or longer. The project was funded with resources allocated to the regions with the DPCM, dated 25 November 2016, in two cooperatives to employ four women¹⁴².

Based on existing information on incentives, to successfully foster the employment of women

recovering from violence the following changes are recommended:

- » **Awareness raising:** women recovering from violence have specific needs that employers often do not know how to meet because they are not knowledgeable about gender-based violence and how to guarantee a safe working environment, free from gender stereotypes. It is thus necessary to provide ongoing training for all staff. It would also be helpful to introduce mandatory and refresher training for staff and senior managers within the requirements to obtain the gender equality certificate¹⁴³, established in 2021 with the so-called Gribaudo Law¹⁴⁴. Training should be implemented in collaboration with anti-violence services and supported by sectoral stakeholders according to the Law No. 4/2021, which ratified the ILO Convention No. 190 on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work. Equally, companies must adopt policies to prevent all forms of harassment and violence and to support women employees by signposting local anti-violence centres and sharing information on existing schemes (e.g., paid leave)¹⁴⁵.
- » **Information:** there is a need to ensure information about incentives to facilitate the employment of women recovering from violence is shared widely as businesses and cooperatives, especially small ones, are not aware of what is available.
- » **Training for women recovering from violence:** it is crucial to ensure that, within

¹³⁸ The regional production tax (Irap) is a local tax on productive activities realized within a regional territory.

¹³⁹ The grant's amount, defined within the parameters for the preceding period, is halved for businesses exempt from paying Irap.

¹⁴⁰ *Legge regionale 15 febbraio 2022 n. 3 - Disposizioni per la promozione della parità retributiva tra donne e uomini e il sostegno all'occupazione femminile stabile e di qualità.*

¹⁴¹ *Regione Liguria, DGR 14 dicembre 2018, n. 1058 - Inserimento lavorativo delle donne vittime di violenza - Impegno di € 137.410,00 a favore di ALFA Liguria; Aliseo, Avviso pubblico per la concessione di contributi finalizzati a supportare l'inserimento lavorativo di donne vittime di violenza di genere di cui alla DGR n. 1058 del 14/12/2018.*

¹⁴² Cnr-Irpps, op. cit., 2021, p. 26.

¹⁴³ The National system for gender parity certification is part of Mission 5 – Cohesion and Inclusion, Component 1 – Active labour policies and employment support, Investment 1.3. of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) was commenced following the adoption of the *Prassi di riferimento per l'ottenimento della certificazione* (UNI/PdR 125:2022); the set-up of (Decree of the Minister for Equal Opportunities, dated 5 April 2022); the appointment of the members for the Permanent roundtable on gender parity certification (Decree of the Minister for Equal Opportunities dated 29 July 2022).

¹⁴⁴ *Legge 5 novembre 2021, n. 162 - Modifiche al codice di cui al decreto legislativo 11 aprile 2006, n. 198, e altre disposizioni in materia di pari opportunità tra uomo e donna in ambito lavorativo.*

¹⁴⁵ The Lombardy regional government has sponsored awareness raising activities, for example as part of the Four-year plan for equality policies and the prevention and contrast of violence against women 2020-2023. Namely, the plan includes activities targeting the private sector to incentive the adoption of existing protection mechanisms as well as further corporate provisions for income or management support for employees who are victims of domestic violence, see DGR 25 February 2020, N. XI/999, *Piano quadriennale per le politiche di parità, di prevenzione e contrasto alla violenza contro le donne 2020 – 2023*. LR 11/2012, p. 30.

a job placement process, employers provide women with the necessary training to properly carry out their job.

- » **Contract types:** restricting incentives only to permanent employment runs the risk of nullifying their impact because it limits the number of companies that could commit to hire women recovering from violence. On the one hand, the capacity of a business to increase permanent headcount should not be overestimated, on the other hand it is necessary to recognise that women recovering from violence, given their temporary vulnerable condition, might not be able to commit to a job long-term and sustainably. Therefore, 'temporary contract' should be included amongst those entitled to incentives thus allowing businesses and not only cooperatives to benefit from tax breaks.
- » **Geographical features:** the national policy for incentives must reflect peculiarities in local labour markets and provide amendments to guarantee the same employment opportunities to all women, irrespective of their residence or domicile. For example, incentives targeted at companies with at least 150 employees might not be useful where there are many family-owned businesses.

3.1.4 Paid leave for women victims of gender-based violence

Paid leave for women victims of gender-based violence¹⁴⁶ was introduced within the scope of the labour law reform, the so-called the 'Jobs Act'¹⁴⁷, specifically as part of the mandate on work-life balance¹⁴⁸. It was set out in clause 24 of the D.lgs. 80/2015 and affords **up to 90 days of paid leave**

to women who have experienced violence and are enrolled in a protection programme sponsored by local social or anti-violence services. The law applies in the following instances:

- » **Public and private sector female employees**¹⁴⁹ can use paid leave, daily or hourly, within three years from the start of the sponsored protection programme¹⁵⁰ receiving a payment equal to the last salary awarded¹⁵¹. The employee has also a right to change her employment conditions from full-time to part-time (vertical or horizontal) compatibly with business needs. Later, she can request to go back to full-time hours¹⁵².
- » **Female employees on short-term contract ('continuative and coordinate collaboration')** enrolled in the '*Gestione separata Inps*' (Inps Separate Pension Scheme, a social security scheme for para-subordinate workers) are entitled to pausing their contract for three months¹⁵³ within three years from the start of the sponsored protection programme. They are not entitled to any payment.
- » **Self-employed women** are entitled to a daily allowance equal to 80% of the minimum daily wage for up to three months, according to Law No. 232/2016¹⁵⁴.

Since its introduction in 2015, the paid leave scheme has seen an **increase in applications year-on-year**. Even though the scheme is not widely known by women, employers, and fiscal assistance services, according to data from Inps, applications have grown **by 2662%** (from 50 in 2016 to 1331 in 2021).

However (Figure 2), **this growth has not been matched by an increase in the number of**

¹⁴⁶ D.lgs. 80/2015, Art. 24.

¹⁴⁷ Legge 10 dicembre 2014, n. 183 - *Deleghe al Governo in materia di riforma degli ammortizzatori sociali, dei servizi per il lavoro e delle politiche attive, nonché in materia di riordino della disciplina dei rapporti di lavoro e dell'attività ispettiva e di tutela e conciliazione delle esigenze di cura, di vita e di lavoro*, Art. 1, para 9, letter h.

¹⁴⁸ Law. No. 183/2015, Art. 1, para 8.

¹⁴⁹ D.lgs. 80/2015, Art. 24, para 1.

¹⁵⁰ D.lgs. 80/2015, Art. 24, para 5.

¹⁵¹ Paid leave is directly disbursed to the employer for direct employees, according to the policies regulating paid maternity leave. However, when it comes to seasonal workers, agricultural workers, occasional or temporary workers in the entertainment sector and domestic workers the payment is paid out directly from Inps through postal order or bank transfer.

¹⁵² D.lgs. 80/2015, Art. 24, para 6.

¹⁵³ D.lgs. 80/2015, Art. 24, para 2.

¹⁵⁴ Legge 11 dicembre 2016, n. 232 - *Bilancio di previsione dello Stato per l'anno finanziario 2017 e bilancio pluriennale per il triennio 2017-2019*, Art. 1, para 241.

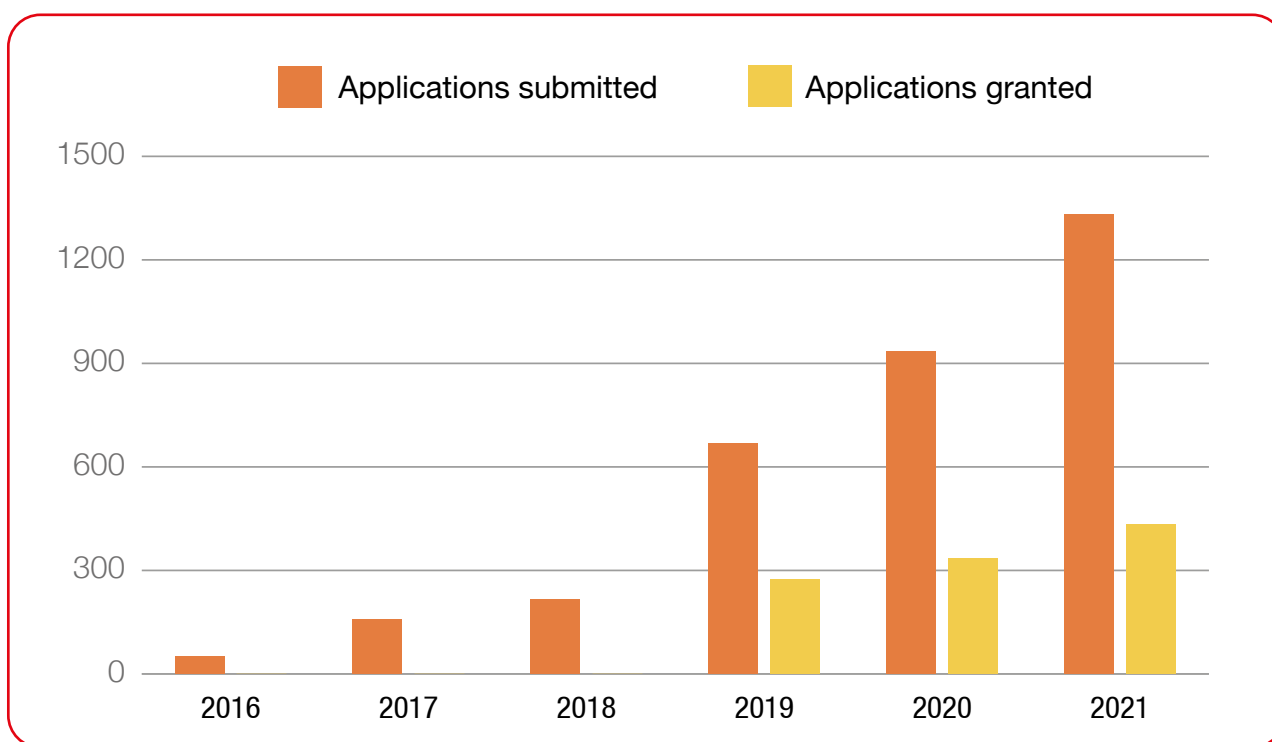
applications accepted (from 275 in 2019 to 432 in 2021)¹⁵⁵. **The percentage of applications accepted has decreased 9 points (from 41% to 32%)** in 2019-2021 rather than growing, likely because of insufficient funding. The increment in resources over the past three years was just over a few thousand euros (from 12.2 m euros in 2019 to 12.7 in 2021). Inps data also show that, between 2016 and 2021, most applications were submitted by women on permanent jobs in Piedmont (523), Lazio (468), Lombardy (399), Emilia-Romagna (354), and Friuli-Venezia-Giulia (338). No applications were submitted in Basilicata, Molise, and Valle d'Aosta. Data available show that no female employees on short-term contract ('continuative and coordinate collaboration') benefitted from pausing work in 2019-2021¹⁵⁶. The same geographical divides

affecting tax breaks are present in the use of the paid leave scheme, reflecting the **specificities of local labour markets**.

Paid leave for women victims of gender-based violence is useful, but there is room for improvement. Being able to take leave from work for only 90 days is not enough given that, according to Istat data¹⁵⁷, the average length of stay in a shelter is 137 days and overall recovering from violence is usually even longer as women might need ongoing legal, and or medical, and psychological support for many months. As a result, **extending paid leave from three to six months** was not only a demand from women and anti-violence services, but included as a priority in the Strategic national plan on male violence against women 2021-2023¹⁵⁸. On 20 April 2022, with the approval of the DPR 57, a

FIGURE 2

Paid leave for women victims of violence. Applications submitted and granted (2016-2022)



Source: Inps monitoring of paid leave for women victims of violence – Art. 24 of D.lgs. 80/2015

¹⁵⁵ Inps data on the number of applications approved is available only for 2019, 2020, and 2021.

¹⁵⁶ Inps disaggregated data on types of contract is available only for 2019, 2020, and 2021.

¹⁵⁷ Istat, *Il sistema di protezione per le donne vittime di violenza. Principali risultati delle indagini condotte sulle Case rifugio per le donne maltrattate e sui Centri anti violenza. Anni 2020 e 2021*, May 2022.

¹⁵⁸ Deo, *Piano strategico nazionale sulla violenza maschile contro le donne 2021-2023*, p. 37.

similar provision called ‘emergency permit for women victims of violence’¹⁵⁹ was introduced for women working in the civilian as well as military law enforcement, but it does not apply to executives and voluntary staff on permanent duty¹⁶⁰. The leave scheme started on 15 June 2021.

3.1.5 Re-allocation of women employed in the public administration

Another important provision to support women recovering from violence was set in Law No. 124/2015 for the reform of public administration, the so-called ‘Riforma Madia’ (Madia Reform). The law **offers to women employed in the public administration and supported by anti-violence services transfer to another office outside of their local authority area**¹⁶¹. An application must be submitted to the women’s current office that, within 15 days, must transfer the employee to the office of her choice where an equal level vacancy is available. There is no expenditure attached to the provision and therefore it is cost-free for the state. However, it might be **useful to attach funding to the**

programme as it is the case in Spain with a similar law¹⁶². **Funding could be used to compensate women for what they spend to move** (travel, moving furniture, housing, and support for children) and the **possible salary gap** between the old and the new job¹⁶³. In addition, there could be a **support service, adequately funded and managed** by the relevant public administration branch, implemented by the new local authority or anti-violence centres to support with bureaucracy (e.g., change of residence, finding a family doctor, and so on), finding a place to live and managing the paperwork needed for children (e.g., school enrolment, looking for a paediatrician, care services, etc.).

At present, there is no available data the use of the scheme. Therefore, analysing it in depth and evaluating its effectiveness, as well as gauging whether it could be **extended to women employed in the private sector**, is challenging. On the other hand, as women and anti-violence centres are not familiar with it, **detailed and up-to-date information must be shared widely**, reaching out to the public administration, anti-violence centres, and shelters as well as the women they support.

¹⁵⁹ DPR No. 57, Art. 25 and Art. 56.

¹⁶⁰ Ministero della Difesa, *Circolare n. M_D Ab05933 reg2022 0316368 - Specchio riepilogativo delle licenze, dei permessi e dei riposi fruibili dal personale militare in servizio permanente*. Edizione 2022.

¹⁶¹ Law No. 124/2015, Art. 14, para 6.

¹⁶² According to the Spanish *Ley organica 1/2004*, women employees are entitled to a contract break for up to six months with compulsory reinstatement, transfer to another office for safety reasons, flexible working (with a salary reduction), the permits needed to commit to their exit programme, entitlement to unemployment benefits even in case of voluntary resignation made necessary to achieve the goals of the exit programme, income support for expenditures incurred when moving office (travel, moving, housing, support to children and dependants), incentives to compensate the potential salary gap between the job they had to leave due to violence and the new job. Self-employed women have the right to a tax break for up to six months if they need to put their work on hold and well the possibility of breach of contract without paying any penalties. Unemployed women who are signed up to the public job seeking programme are entitled to an individually tailored training and socio-employment participation programme underpinned by benefits and income support provisions, such as incentives to start a self-employed activity and priority access to social housing.

¹⁶³ *Real Decreto 1917/2008, de 21 de noviembre, por el que se aprueba el programa de inserción sociolaboral para mujeres víctimas de violencia de género*.

3.2 National and regional funding

National government's funding to support the **labour market participation** of women recovering from violence has been, to date, very limited. Since the current statutory anti-violence system commenced (with the DL 93/2013), the state has only budgeted **15.8 m euros**¹⁶⁴, allocated as follows:

- » **3.6 m euros** budgeted by regional governments out of funding allocated with the DPCM, dated 25 November 2016, to fund programmes for employment and re-employment¹⁶⁵.
- » **4.4 m euros** to fund 'projects aimed at improving the methods of job placement' (public tender of 20 July 2017 as part of the Emergency national plan against gender-based violence 2015-2017).
- » **4 m euros** (in 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022) to pay for tax breaks for social cooperatives to promote the permanent employment of women recovering from violence.
- » **153 thousand euros** to manage the *Fondo per il microcredito di libertà* (Freedom Microcredit Fund).
- » **3.6 m euros** allocated regionally to implement job placement programmes according to the Anti-violence plan 2017-2020. The total amount earmarked by the DCPM in 2019, 2020, and 2021¹⁶⁶ was about 26 m euros¹⁶⁷. It is likely that further resources to promote labour market participation were budgeted, however, due to lack of transparency, they

cannot be traced as they were planned jointly with funds for housing autonomy.

Programmes for **job retention**, instead, were supported with **89.2 m euros** between 2016 and 2022. Yet, these are only the funds budgeted to finance the paid leave scheme for women victims of violence¹⁶⁸ as the provision to reallocate women employed in the public administration is cost-free.

At regional level, nine regions budgeted **8.3 m euros** overall to fund labour market participation programmes. Abruzzo, Calabria, Lombardy, Marche, Apulia, Tuscany, Umbria, and Veneto¹⁶⁹ invested mainly in career guidance services, tutoring, training, job grants, and internships by allocating funds to public services or those private entities managing anti-violence services. Only Lombardy, Apulia, and Veneto budgeted on an annual and/or biannual basis, the other regions have instead either co-funded national budgets or sponsored pilot projects. Out of this money, 3.1 m euros were spent on programmes entailing multiple activities, some aimed at housing autonomy. Given the lack of disaggregated data, it is not possible to understand how much regional governments spent solely on labour market participation programmes of women recovering from violence.

Some regions availed of **European funds** as set out in the Extraordinary National Plan against Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2015-2017¹⁷⁰ and in the Strategic plan on male violence against women 2021-2023¹⁷¹. To fund internships, training and tutoring activities, regional governments mostly used resources from regional operational

¹⁶⁴ This sum excludes the 3 m euros allocated to the *Fondo per il Microcredito di libertà*, as they are targeted to the provision of personal loans to buy goods and services to meet essential needs.

¹⁶⁵ DPCM 25 novembre 2016 - *Ripartizione delle risorse del «Fondo per le politiche relative ai diritti e alle pari opportunità» previste dal paragrafo 4 del Piano d'azione straordinario contro la violenza sessuale e di genere, di cui all'articolo 5 del decreto-legge 14 agosto 2013, n. 93, per essere ripartite tra le regioni e le province autonome per la realizzazione delle quattro linee d'azione ivi previste, destinando le risorse nazionali in modo complementare rispetto all'impiego di risorse proprie* (G.U. 25 gennaio 2017, n. 20).

¹⁶⁶ DPCMs dated 4 December 2020, 13 November 2020, and 7 December 2021.

¹⁶⁷ The DPCM delegates regional governments the option to select which programmes to fund amongst the following: strengthening public and private services through prevention, assistance, support and accompaniment of women victims of violence; activities aimed at supporting housing, labour market participation and support to exit violence overall; activities to improve the ability to support migrant women, including second-generation women; project for girls under 18 victims of violence and to children victims of witnessed violence, information, communication and training activities, projects for perpetrators including following the issuing of specific national guidelines.

¹⁶⁸ Cap. 3520 dello Stato Previsionale del Bilancio del Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali.

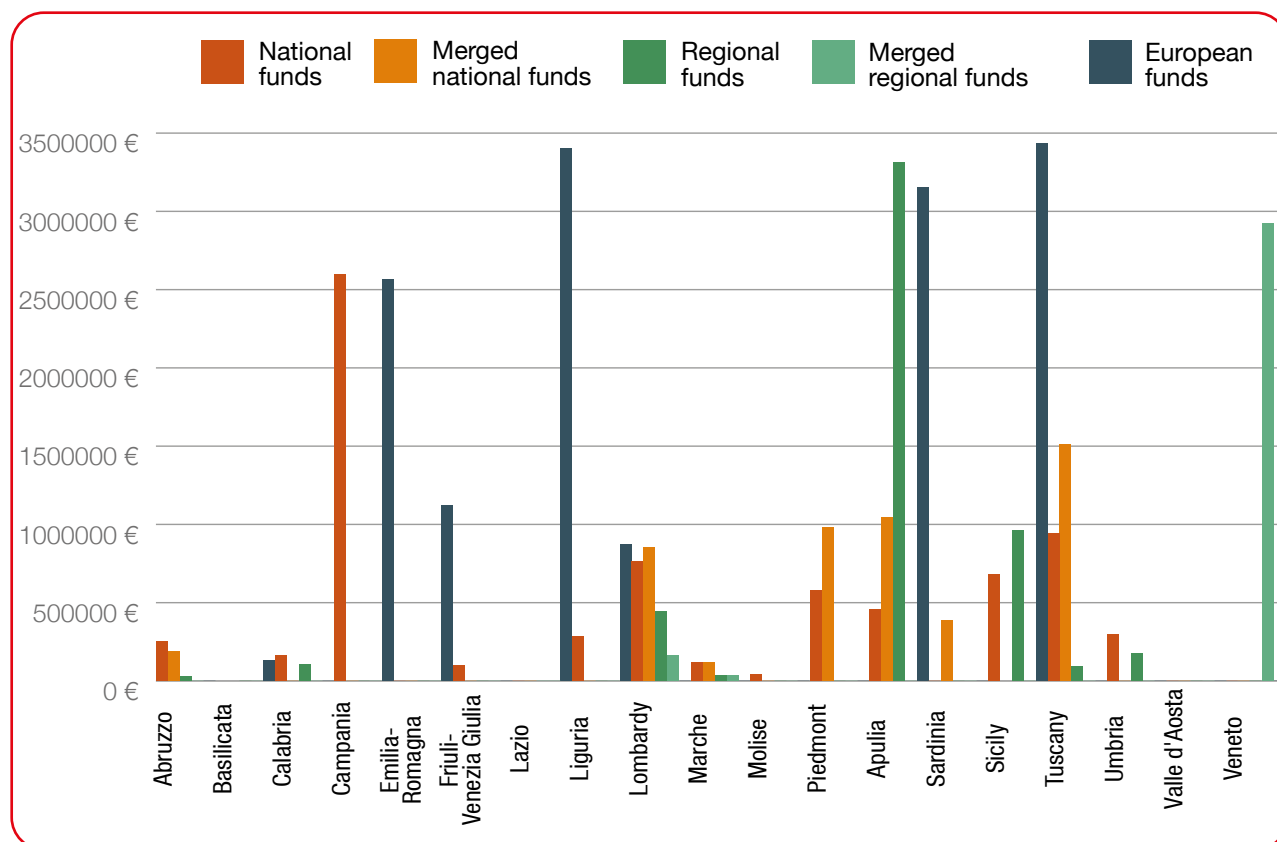
¹⁶⁹ There are no disaggregated data for Veneto. The share included in the total amount is for 'empowerment projects' which included housing support activities as well as actions to promote labour market participation, work-life balance, and geographical mobility.

¹⁷⁰ Deo, *Piano d'azione straordinario contro la violenza sessuale e di genere 2015-2017*, p. 40.

¹⁷¹ Deo, *Piano strategico nazionale sulla violenza maschile contro le donne 2021-2023*, p. 22.

FIGURE 3

Type of funding budgeted by Regions to promote labour market entry and retention (2015-2022).



Source: ActionAid calculations based on regional executive deliberations and managerial decrees (2015-2022) .

plans co-funded by the European Social Fund (POR-FSE). Basilicata¹⁷², Campania¹⁷³, Emilia-Romagna¹⁷⁴, Lazio¹⁷⁵, Liguria¹⁷⁶, Apulia¹⁷⁷, and Sicily¹⁷⁸ spent about **14 m euros** to support women recovering from violence to enter the

labour market. In addition, further resources were broadly targeted at women experiencing violence, including victims of trafficking and other beneficiaries. It is not possible to add these resources to the total because there is no

¹⁷² Avviso pubblico "PO FSE Basilicata, Asse 2 "Inclusione sociale e lotta alla povertà, obiettivo specifico 9.1 riduzione della povertà dell'esclusione sociale e promozione dell'innovazione sociale - Azione 9.1.2 - "Avviso pubblico per la presentazione di proposte progettuali innovative finalizzate alla creazione di percorsi di accompagnamento a persone in particolari condizioni di vulnerabilità e fragilità sociale - Edizione 2020" approvato con D.G.R. n. 679 del 29 settembre 2020.

¹⁷³ Avviso pubblico "S.V.O.L.T.E. Superare la Violenza con Orientamento, Lavoro, Tirocini, Esperienze formative" approvato con DD n. 104 del 9 agosto 2017; Progetto Sete e moda contro la violenza", presentato da E.V.A. Società Cooperativa Sociale finanziato nell'ambito dell'Avviso pubblico "Supporto alla gestione dei beni confiscati" approvato con DD n. 35 del 19 luglio 2019.

¹⁷⁴ Invito a presentare operazioni per l'inclusione attiva di persone ospitate in comunità pedagogico/terapeutiche o in strutture riabilitative aventi sede nel territorio regionale, e di persone vittime di tratta e/o di violenza, anche di genere, in carico ai servizi competenti approvato con DGR n. 1018 del 20 giugno 2022; Invito a presentare operazioni per l'inclusione attiva approvato con DGR n. 1429 del 26 ottobre 2020.

¹⁷⁵ Avviso pubblico pluriennale per la presentazione di progetti di presa in carico, orientamento e accompagnamento a percorsi di inclusione sociale attiva approvato con DD n. G14928 del 14 dicembre 2016; Avviso Pubblico "Iniziative in favore di Comuni, di Circoscrizioni di decentramento comunale (Municipi di Roma Capitale) e di Reti di Comuni del Lazio per progetti di prevenzione e contrasto della violenza di genere, empowerment delle donne e promozione delle pari opportunità", in attuazione della DGR n.709/2021 approvato con DD n. G09826 del 25 luglio 2022.

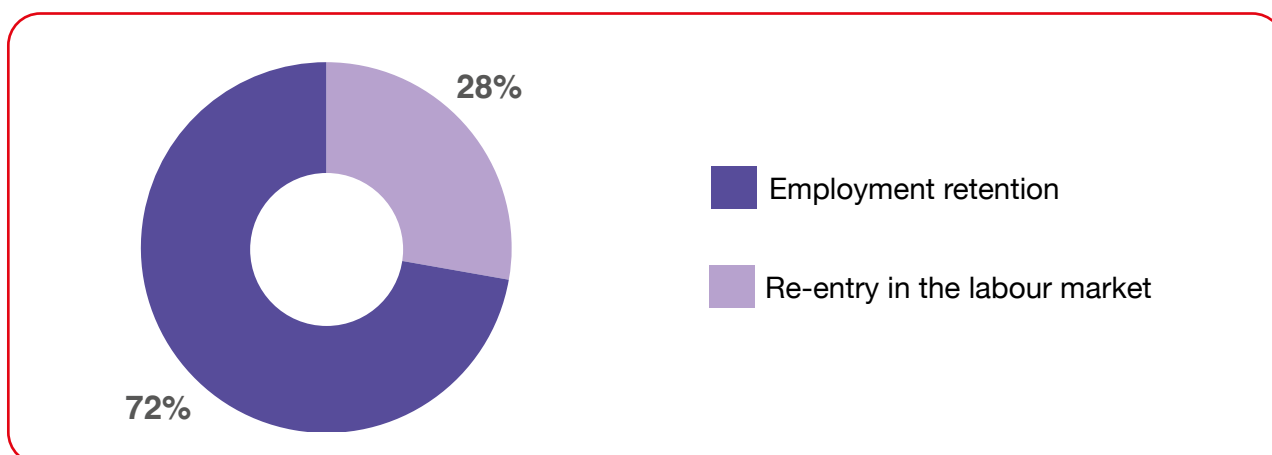
¹⁷⁶ Avviso pubblico per la presentazione di operazioni finalizzate alla realizzazione di servizi sociali innovativi di sostegno a nuclei familiari in situazione di disagio socioeconomico e a rischio di esclusione sociale e di servizi sociali innovativi di contrasto alla violenza di genere approvato con DGR n. 200/2017.

¹⁷⁷ Avviso pubblico per la realizzazione di progetti di contrasto alle discriminazioni "Discrimination free Puglia" approvato con AD n. 34 del 18 giugno 2018; Avviso pubblico per la selezione di progetti di accompagnamento all'autoimprenditorialità o alla creazione di nuove imprese per persone a rischio di discriminazione approvato con AD n. 181 del 29 luglio 2022.

¹⁷⁸ Avviso 19/2018 presentazione di azioni per l'occupabilità di persone con disabilità, vulnerabili e a rischio di esclusione approvato con DDG n. 1739 dell'11 ottobre 2019; Avviso n 30 / 2019 formazione delle persone disabili, maggiormente vulnerabili e a rischio di discriminazione approvato con DDG n. 2364 del 18 dicembre 2019; Avviso 31/2019 lavoro ed impresa artigiana donne: percorsi per l'inserimento lavorativo e l'avvio d'impresa approvato con DDGR n. 4031 del 21 novembre 2019.

FIGURE 4

Economic resources to promote the re-entering in the labour market and employment retention (2015-2022).



Source: ActionAid calculations based on data from national and regional budgets, executive deliberations, and managerial decrees 2015-2022.

disaggregated data on the different categories of beneficiaries¹⁷⁹.

Each region independently decided to invest in labour market participation using national, regional, and/or European funding according to local needs and priorities as well as the capacity of regional governments and public administration (Figure 3).

Overall, according to available data¹⁸⁰, national and regional governments budgeted a total of about 124 m euros between 2015 and 2022 to sponsor programmes to promote participation, retention and reallocation of women recovering from violence in the labour market. Namely, 72% (89.2 m) was spent on job retention and 28% (35.6 m) on participation in the labour market (Figure 4).

It is important to note that the **resources planned for employment retention** were solely spent on the paid leave scheme and were **not enough to meet the number of applications submitted**. In addition, data collected by Istat shows that 36% of women who approached anti-

violence services in 2020 had a stable job, 14% were working occasionally, and the remaining 50% was unemployed. There is then a **need to invest in equal measure in the promotion of labour market participation (entry and re-entry) and employment retention**.

Finally, funds named so far must be added to national funding allocated by the DPCMs in the past three years (there is no data disaggregated by sector) as well as European programmes. Despite being limited, **funds were spent mostly on training, job seeking advice, internships as well as projects for self-employment**. Only **Lombardy, Tuscany, Piedmont, and Veneto** adopted an integrated approach encompassing **services for active and passive labour market policies, work-life balance, and geographical flexibility**. Regional governments where **institutional anti-violence networks** exist relied on those to manage resources and implement programmes, the others disbursed funds directly to **anti-violence centres**.

¹⁷⁹ As an example, see the public tender of Calabria Region "Dote lavoro e inclusione attiva asse 8 – promozione dell'occupazione sostenibile e di qualità" approved with the DGR 243/2016 with a funding allocation of 66 m euros; the public tender of the Lazio Region "Reti per lo sviluppo dell'agricoltura sociale per l'inserimento socio – lavorativo di soggetti in condizioni di svantaggio" approved with DG0 6817, dated 21 May 2015; the public tender "Invito a presentare operazioni finalizzate alla realizzazione di interventi integrati per favorire l'inserimento socio lavorativo di soggetti a rischio di emarginazione sociale" approved by the Liguria Region with the DGR 732/2016.

¹⁸⁰ This refers to data published online by the relevant national and regional authorities. Valle d'Aosta is not included in the total amount because information on the resources budgeted for the promotion of labour market participation from 2015 to 2022 are not publicly available.

3.3 Options for the future

There are still many gaps in the legal framework supporting women recovering from violence to participate in the labour market. **Programmes to promote job seeking and retention are not adequately funded and do not fully meet the needs of women with experience of violence.** Current policies and services are set up to make women economically independent but fail to consider their specific needs or the many challenges they face when looking to access the labour market. The quality of work, long-term sustainability, and working conditions are not considered in these programmes, despite being critical. Due to low wages, precarious work, forced part-time, lack of care services, and discriminatory behaviours, being employed does not necessarily translate into a better quality of life and therefore a reduced risk of violence. On the contrary, it can become a further obstacle to recover from violence.

To ensure policies and services can successfully meet what women require, the starting point must be mapping women's needs and the challenges they face when accessing the labour market¹⁸¹, to develop programmes that can successfully remove these obstacles. Firstly, it is necessary to guarantee women sufficient support in terms of income, housing, and the **management of care demands**. Promoting job placement and retention does not work unless there are good quality care services for children and the elderly. There must be a priority avenue for the children of women recovering from violence to access public nurseries. If the latter are not sufficient, there should be an economic support to access private or subsidised nurseries. Women need to free their time to invest it in themselves and their journey towards autonomy, which is key to avoid experiencing violence again.

Secondly, investing in **public transport policies** is crucial. The shakiness of the Italian public transport network, especially in the South and the outskirts, has a considerable impact on women's

lives and even more on women recovering from violence. Attending a class-based training course, going to work, or accepting a job at 10 km from home can sometimes be an insurmountable obstacle. Being able to travel is both a logistic and an economic issue. Therefore, transport policies should help women recovering from violence and their children as well as provide alternative solutions where the public transport network is not adequate (e.g., subsidised private transport, easy access to credit to buy a vehicle).

The **quantity and quality of available work** are essential elements to guarantee the economic autonomy of women recovering from violence. Low quality work (e.g., low wages, precarious jobs, forced part-time, and so on), limited retention and career opportunities cause low and/or unreliable income and negatively affect socioeconomic empowerment. Thus, it is necessary to provide women with well-paid and sustainable work, flexible working patterns, and a safe working environment free from harassment and violence.

Job seeking and retention also need integrated policies. First and foremost, active and passive labour market laws and policies must include ad hoc provisions for women recovering from violence. In addition, passive and active labour market policies must be interwoven with social, housing, anti-poverty, and transport policies, amongst others. Delegating solely to anti-violence centres the duty to identify the best way to support women towards economic and social autonomy (e.g., job seeking and internship advice, tutoring) is not sustainable anymore. To reach this goal the law must be changed to establish inter-agency coordination involving all stakeholders working on anti-violence, labour, social, and housing policies at national, regional and local levels.

All labour policies, especially at **national level**, must meet the specific needs of women recovering from violence by establishing ongoing collaboration between the departments leading on labour as well as anti-violence prevention and

¹⁸¹ S. Tarshis, "Intimate partner violence and employment-seeking: a multilevel examination of barriers and facilitators", in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 2022, Vol. 37(7-8).

contrast. This approach would make sure there is ongoing coordination and monitoring of which policies to adopt, finance and/or implement to address all the facets of women's labour market participation (e.g., training, job seeking and retention, labour market exit, leave, permits, long-term leave, changes in terms and conditions). Such cooperation would allow to develop overall as well as targeted labour policies and to supplement existing plans with further actions to support women recovering from violence. It would be helpful to consider practices from other European countries, such as:

- » Being able **to access unemployment benefits even when a woman voluntarily resigns** as she must move due to domestic violence and it is not possible to reintegrate her in another office on the same conditions, as it occurs in France¹⁸² and in Spain.
- » **Early availability of severance pay** for women experiencing violence, as established in France¹⁸³.
- » **A tax break for at least six months** for self-employed women, as in Spain¹⁸⁴. A similar policy is already in place in Sardinia and allows a 12-month regional tax break for a one-person business owned by a woman victim of violence¹⁸⁵. However, this policy is not fully implemented due to insufficient funding.

At **regional level** laws and policies on job services (such as job centres) and both financial and non-financial decisions on programmes (e.g., *Garanzia di Occupabilità dei Lavoratori* – Gol programme¹⁸⁶, Workers' Employability Guarantee Programme) must include ad hoc requirements to meet the needs of women experiencing violence. It is also important to encourage partnerships between public services, anti-violence centres, the private sector, and cooperative networks

to promote employment programmes that meet local skills gaps¹⁸⁷ as well as to finance awareness raising programmes in collaboration with employers' associations, trade unions, and anti-violence centres.

At **local level**, there should be **shared protocols and standard operating procedures** between local networks' stakeholders (anti-violence centres, job centres, social services, training agencies, employers' associations) to develop, improve, and formalise promising relations and practices to support women to develop skills and manage job opportunities as well as other needs such as housing and care services, all crucial to achieve autonomy. Effective collaboration between local stakeholders' networks has the added benefit of creating **synergies between the different welfare programmes** women are entitled to and **avoiding duplication in the development of individually tailored projects**. Adopting a shared approach would assure that empowerment programmes and job seeking and/or training advice are effective and well-rounded.

Finally, the **private sector**, with the support of trade unions and employers' associations, can play an important role by making available to women employees existing anti-violence provisions for a working environment free from harassment and violence. It is vital, for example, to provide information on the anti-violence and stalking hotline 1522, on local anti-violence centres as well as on the option to avail of paid leave for women victims of violence. Private sector employers should go further by developing corporate policies to support employees who have experienced violence such as remote working or reversible part-time arrangements, amongst others. Trade unions need to play a role in co-developing such policies while employers' association can disseminate best practices and promote their adoption at scale.

¹⁸² Décret n° 2019-797 du 26 juillet 2019 relatif au régime d'assurance chômage, Art. 2, para 2.

¹⁸³ Décret n° 2020-683 du 4 juin 2020 autorisant le débloccage anticipé de l'épargne salariale en cas de violences conjugales.

¹⁸⁴ Real Decreto 1917/2008, de 21 de noviembre, por el que se aprueba el programa de inserción sociolaboral para mujeres víctimas de violencia de género.

¹⁸⁵ Regione Sardegna, Legge regionale 2 agosto 2018, n. 33, Art. 10.

¹⁸⁶ The GOL programme is a reform to re-organise the services responsible for active labour policies. It is implemented by regions and independent provinces based on regional plans approved by Anpal and funded with 4.4 billion euros. The implementation of Gol is related to the *Piano di potenziamento dei centri per l'impiego* (Plan to Strengthen Employment Centres) and the *Piano nazionale nuove competenze* (National Plan for New Skills).

¹⁸⁷ Anpal, *Previsioni dei fabbisogni occupazionali e professionali in Italia a medio termine (2022-2026) scenari per l'orientamento e la programmazione della formazione*, 2022.

4- HOUSING AUTONOMY

One of the primary needs of women recovering from violence is access to safe and affordable housing in the medium to long-term¹⁸⁸. **Women recovering from violence are four times more likely to be in insecure housing than women at large**¹⁸⁹. This means having trouble paying rent or a mortgage, frequent moves, evictions, and overcrowded housing¹⁹⁰. Regardless of location and social context¹⁹¹, women lack housing autonomy due to several reasons, such as, physical and mental health issues and precarious employment caused by violence, shortage of affordable properties, lack of material and financial means to access safe and sustainable housing, lack of awareness

of available opportunities, and scarce support services. Women face **more challenges** in recovering from violence **in those areas already hit by socioeconomic and environmental marginalisation, exclusion, and fragility**. In Italy, **landlocked areas and regions hit by earthquakes over the past two decades still suffer from a structurally precarious housing situation**. Namely in Abruzzo, Umbria, Marche, and Lazio most of the population still faces housing insecurity several years after different earthquakes hit and women recovering from violence are excluded from local housing policies (Box 3).

BOX 3 – HOUSING AUTONOMY AND WOMEN RECOVERING FROM VIOLENCE IN EARTHQUAKE AFFECTED AREAS

In areas affected by earthquakes over the past two decades the housing situation of women recovering from violence, already complex, is worsened by a critically damaged residential and social housing stock. Emergency housing units (Sae) and temporary housing shelters (Map) are sometimes the only living space for women waiting for reconstruction work to be completed, which can take many years. The sudden change in the geography of a town or a city caused by an unexpected and destructive event, such as an earthquake, makes it very challenging for a woman experiencing violence to leave the perpetrator by remaining in her local authority area or moving somewhere else. The current progressive transformation of Sae and/or Map in residential social housing does not facilitate women recovering from violence nor support their housing autonomy. Even though their needs are evident, there are no priority avenues to access reduced rent housing when women leave the perpetrator nor when their stay in a shelter comes to an end. Local authorities treat women facing violence as a vulnerable group like others and do not consider that, without safe housing, they risk going back to the perpetrator. Following an earthquake, anti-violence services, shelters, women and feminist organisations must tackle the lack or uncertainty of having a physical space to work from. In those areas where they were able to use temporary housing units as offices, this was not followed up with a long-term policy to secure safe housing for women and ongoing capacity to work for local services. To date, the housing situation for women facing violence depends on how much each local authority cares about the issue. Even those public authorities that developed good practices (e.g., temporary allocation of flat to allow women to leave the house shared with the perpetrator) have not been able to make them permanent. As a result, it has not been possible to translate these initiatives in public policies and practices that can be replicated elsewhere.

¹⁸⁸ L.B. Klein, B.R. Chesworth, J.R. Howland-Myers, C.F. Rizo, J.M. Macy, "Housing interventions for intimate partner violence survivors: a systematic review," in *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, Vol. 22(2), 2021, pp. 249-264.

¹⁸⁹ J. Pavao, J. Alvarez, N. Baumrind, M. Induni, R. Kimerling, "Intimate partner violence and housing instability", in *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Vol. 32(2), 2007, pp. 143-146.

¹⁹⁰ Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, *America's rental housing: Evolving market and needs*, 2013.

¹⁹¹ H. McLaren, "Domestic violence, housing, and employment: workers' perspectives on employment assistance in supported accommodation", in *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 46, No. 4, 2013; C.F. Rizo, L.B. Klein, B. Chesworth, R.J. Macy, R. Dooley, "Intimate partner violence survivors' housing needs and preferences: A brief report", in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 37 (1-2), 2022, pp. 958-972.

4.1 Current laws and policies

Inadequate policies and services make it hard to **access the right to housing, a fundamental human right**. The right to housing was established by Art. 25 of the Universal Declaration of human rights and Art. 11 of the International Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights (1966) as well as Art. 31 of the European social charter (1961)¹⁹². It was further developed by the UN Committee on economic social and cultural rights in General comments 4¹⁹³ and 7¹⁹⁴. These conventions have in fact broadened state obligations to guarantee effective access to the right to housing by providing quality, safe and affordable housing¹⁹⁵, assurance of property¹⁹⁶, access to housing despite low economic resources¹⁹⁷, and protection from evictions¹⁹⁸. The state's obligation to deliver safe housing is established in **Art. 20 and Art. 23 of the Istanbul Convention**. The first obliges states to adopt laws to facilitate women's recovery from violence, including by providing a house. The second requires the provision of 'appropriate, easily accessible shelters in sufficient numbers to provide safe accommodation for and to reach out pro-actively to victims, especially women and their children'. However, signing or ratifying these international conventions does not by itself give citizens access to human rights. Moreover, these instruments do not entail sanctions in case of violations or negligence but only accountability mechanism consisting in national periodic reports that identify potential issues and violations and provide recommendations to governments.

Too often women facing violence must leave their home for safety reasons¹⁹⁹. The DL no. 93/2013, in compliance with Art. 23 of the Istanbul Convention, funds shelters to meet women's need for temporary accommodation. However, there is no law guaranteeing safe and sustainable housing in the medium to long-term to women recovering from violence, as set out by Art. 20 of the Convention. In Italy, as highlighted²⁰⁰ by the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), the right to safe housing for women victims of violence is only partially accessible, despite the right to housing being included in the Constitution²⁰¹ as a primary asset to protect.

4.1.1 Housing options within anti-violence programmes

Housing autonomy was included in anti-violence national plans in 2015 but never concretised into a structured and adequately funded programme. At **national level** only limited activities were financed, usually merged into broader initiatives to strengthen women's access to services, labour market participation, and economic autonomy. In practice, accessing safe and sustainable housing has been **delegated to anti-violence services** that, due to scarce resources, have fallen back on lengthening women's stay in shelters, secondary housing, and other temporary accommodation, going over the time necessary to achieve safety. At **regional level**, too many governments continue to devolve the promotion of women's housing autonomy to anti-violence services, often cost-free or within wider projects for

¹⁹² Council of Europe, *European Social Charter (revised)*, (Ets 163), Strasbourg, dated 3 May 1996.

¹⁹³ CESCR, *General Comment No. 4: The Right to Adequate Housing (Art. 11 (1) of the Covenant)* Adopted at the Sixth Session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, on 13 December 1991 (Contained in Document E/1992/23).

¹⁹⁴ CESCR, *General Comment No. 7: The right to adequate housing (Art. 11 (1) of the Covenant): forced evictions*, adopted at the Sixteenth Session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on 20 May 1997, (Contained in Document E/1998/22v).

¹⁹⁵ CESCR, *General Comment No. 4*, op. cit., Art. 8.a.

¹⁹⁶ Idem, para a).

¹⁹⁷ Idem, para c).

¹⁹⁸ CESCR, *General Comment No. 7*, op. cit.

¹⁹⁹ Notwithstanding the introduction in the penal code, with Law No. 69/2019, of a new typology (breach of occupation orders and restraining orders), which entails a prison sentence of 3 to 6 years for 'Anyone, who, being subject to a legal requirement, breaches the obligations or the prohibition from the protective provision as per Art. 282-bis (Departure from the family home) and 282-ter (Restraining order from the locations attended by the victim) and 384-bis (Emergency removal from the family home) of the code of criminal procedure', there are still many women who are forced to leave the family home for safety reasons, see Ministero della Giustizia, *Il Rapporto: un anno di "Codice Rosso"*, 2020.

²⁰⁰ Grevio, *Baseline Evaluation Report, Italy*, Council of Europe, 2020.

²⁰¹ Italian Constitution, Art. 47.

socioeconomic autonomy. Anti-violence centres are thus required to carry out several activities, such as, looking for accommodation, supporting and/or coordinating with housing services, and developing evaluation frameworks to assess women's entitlement to housing support.

'The projects allow funding to be disbursed only for legal tenancy agreements which women cannot afford.'

CAV caseworker

Most regions pass on to anti-violence centres the task of programming interventions to promote housing autonomy, especially as part of nationally funded programmes for the implementation of the National anti-violence plan. Regions adopting **a more holistic and multi-stakeholder approach to meet women's housing needs** are an exception, such as Lombardy and Tuscany. On the one hand, devolution to anti-violence centres fulfils the need of regional governments to rely on specialised services with more knowledge and expertise to assist women, however, on the other hand, **the disjointed way in which activities are delegated to anti-violence centres risks slowing down women's personal development and full emancipation**. Funding to anti-violence centres for housing autonomy projects is time-bound and therefore not very efficient. Resources mainly pay for rent, deposits, and utilities but only partially and for a short time. Afterwards women themselves must pay in the long-term even though they often do not have enough money yet.

Against this background, there is **a need to invest in integrated, multi-stakeholder programmes to develop different ways to secure women's housing autonomy in the long-term**. On the contrary, regions tend to fund one-off projects using national resources rather than adopting long-term solutions. To date only a few areas promote a very much needed holistic approach of integration and collaboration amongst services for housing, labour, the prevention and contrast of male violence against women. As an example, Lombardy planned an integrated approach to promote socioeconomic and housing autonomy under the Regional anti-violence action plan 2020-2023.

4.1.2 Semi-autonomous housing

Regional governments have another mean of supporting women's economic autonomy: **semi-autonomous accommodation**, namely **short to medium-term temporary housing**, usually flats, provided to those women who are finalising their recovery programme and are not in immediate danger but need more time to return home or to find a new one. Semi-autonomous housing is promoted within the **current National anti-violence plan**²⁰² and included in regional laws in Basilicata²⁰³, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Emilia-Romagna²⁰⁴, Lazio²⁰⁵, Liguria²⁰⁶, Lombardy²⁰⁷, Marche, Molise²⁰⁸, Piedmont²⁰⁹, Tuscany²¹⁰, Umbria²¹¹, and Veneto²¹². The options vary in terms of type of accommodation (family or shared flats), length of stay (from 3 to 24 months), and use (free, partially or entirely paid for). These

²⁰² Deo, *Piano strategico nazionale sulla violenza maschile contro le donne 2021-2023*, p. 37.

²⁰³ Regione Basilicata, *Legge regionale 29 marzo 1999*, n. 9 - Istituzione di un fondo di solidarietà a favore di donne e minori vittime di violenza di genere, Art. 2.

²⁰⁴ Regione Emilia-Romagna, *Piano regionale contro la violenza di genere ai sensi dell'art. 17 della legge regionale 27 giugno 2014*, n. 6, anno 2021 adottato con Delibera della Giunta regionale n. 1011 del 28 giugno 2021.

²⁰⁵ Regione Lazio, *Legge regionale 19 marzo 2014*, n. 4 - Riordino delle disposizioni per contrastare la violenza contro le donne in quanto basata sul genere e per la promozione di una cultura del rispetto dei diritti umani fondamentali e delle differenze tra uomo e donna, Art. 6.

²⁰⁶ Regione Liguria, *Legge regionale 21 marzo 2007*, n. 12 - interventi di prevenzione della violenza di genere e misure a sostegno delle donne e delle minori vittime di violenza, Art. 8.

²⁰⁷ Regione Lombardia, *Legge Regionale 3 luglio 2012*, n. 11 - Interventi di prevenzione, contrasto e sostegno a favore di donne vittime di violenza, Art. 7; Regione Lombardia, *Piano quadriennale regionale per le politiche di parità e di prevenzione e contrasto alla violenza contro le donne 2015/2018* adottato con D.c.r. 10 novembre 2015 - n. X/894.

²⁰⁸ Regione Molise, *Legge regionale 10 ottobre 2013*, n. 15 - Misure in materia di prevenzione e contrasto alla violenza di genere, Art. 5.

²⁰⁹ Regione Piemonte, *Piano triennale degli interventi per contrastare la violenza di genere 2017-2019* adottato con Deliberazione della Giunta Regionale 22 dicembre 2017, n. 37-6229.

²¹⁰ Regione Toscana, *Legge regionale 16 novembre 2007*, n. 59 - Norme contro la violenza di genere, Art. 8.

²¹¹ Regione Umbria, *Legge regionale 25 novembre 2016*, n. 14 - Norme per le politiche di genere e per una nuova civiltà delle relazioni tra donne e uomini, Art. 37.

²¹² Regione Veneto, *Legge regionale n. 5 del 23 aprile 2013*, Art. 5.

are therefore temporary solutions, inconsistently distributed across the country, lack any structured national or regional funding and, in some cases, require women to partially pay. In addition, the National anti-violence plan 2017-2020 deems semi-autonomous housing insufficient to promote women's housing autonomy due to its short-term nature. Regardless, some regions have used the national plan funds to specifically pay for semi-autonomous housing.

4.1.3 Social housing

All national anti-violence plans mention **social housing** as a useful tool to promote the housing autonomy of women recovering from violence. The national **Extraordinary Plan against Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2015-2017**²¹³ committed regions to introduce priority criteria to access social housing²¹⁴ and the **current plan**²¹⁵ includes the same amongst the actions to provide women with safe housing²¹⁶. However, there are no national laws

or guidelines to promote a uniform approach across regions. The **only regulation in place at national level removes the eligibility to social housing for perpetrators of domestic violence**²¹⁷. The same rule extends to regional laws in Abruzzo²¹⁸, Liguria²¹⁹ and Tuscany²²⁰. In addition, the rule states that the co-habiting person, in other words the woman suffering violence and dependent children, will not lose the right to housing and will become the sole tenant.

'Even though violence rates are the same in every region, women's quality of life is very different region to region.'

Equal opportunities expert

Regional laws present a mixed picture. Eleven regions have specific policies to address the needs of women recovering from violence in the laws and/or regulations establishing access to social housing: Calabria²²¹, Campania²²², Friuli-Venezia-Giulia²²³, Lazio²²⁴, Liguria²²⁵, Lombardy²²⁶,

²¹³ Deo, *Piano d'azione straordinario contro la violenza sessuale e di genere, 2015-2017*, p. 16.

²¹⁴ Idem.

²¹⁵ Deo, *Piano strategico nazionale sulla violenza maschile contro le donne, 2021-2023*.

²¹⁶ Idem, p. 37.

²¹⁷ DI No. 93/2013, Art. 3 bis.

²¹⁸ Legge regionale 25 ottobre 1996, n. 96 - Norme per l'assegnazione e la gestione degli alloggi di edilizia residenziale pubblica e per la determinazione dei relativi canoni di locazione, Art. 3, para 1, letter 2) quinquies.

²¹⁹ Legge regionale 29 giugno 2004, n. 10 - Norme per l'assegnazione e la gestione del patrimonio di edilizia residenziale pubblica e modifiche alla legge regionale 12 marzo 1998 n. 9, Art. 16.

²²⁰ Legge regionale 2 gennaio 2019, n. 2 - Disposizioni in materia di edilizia residenziale pubblica, Art. 36.

²²¹ Legge regionale 25 novembre 1996, n. 32 Disciplina per l'assegnazione e la determinazione dei canoni di locazione degli alloggi di edilizia residenziale pubblica, Art. 31.

²²² Regione Campania, Regolamento regionale 28 ottobre 2019, n. 11. "Nuova disciplina per l'assegnazione, per la gestione e per la determinazione dei canoni di locazione degli alloggi di Edilizia Residenziale Pubblica", Art. 10, para 4, letter o).

²²³ Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Regolamento di esecuzione per la disciplina delle modalità di gestione degli alloggi di edilizia sovvenzionata gestiti dalle Ater regionali, dei finanziamenti a favore delle Ater stesse a sostegno della costruzione, dell'acquisto e del recupero degli alloggi di edilizia sovvenzionata e del finanziamento del Fondo Sociale di cui agli articoli 16 e 44 della legge regionale 19 febbraio 2016, n. 1 (Riforma organica delle politiche abitative e riordino delle Ater), Art. 6.

²²⁴ The rules for the allocation and management of social housing for housing support, as per Art. 17, para 1 of the Legge regionale 6 agosto 1999, n. 12 of the Lazio Region, include women who have faced violence who are part of legal proceedings amongst the reserved quote that each local authority can assign to families in certain specified housing emergency circumstances that must be documented. However, the rules do not set out priority criteria for women recovering from violence, as per Art. 2. In addition, with the DGR Lazio 21 aprile 2020, n. 204 - Situazione straordinaria di emergenza abitativa. Legge regionale n. 1/2020 and legge regionale n. 4/2014. Destinazione di alloggi Ater ad integrazione della rete di strutture a sostegno delle donne vittime di violenza e dei loro figli in particolare condizione di disagio economico, the Region has taken action to request Ater (Aziende Territoriali per l'Edilizia Residenziale, i.e. local agencies for residential housing) to identify a list of available housing to assign to women victims of violence and their children who live in particularly severe economic deprivation, exacerbated by the Covid-19 emergency.

²²⁵ Regione Liguria, Legge regionale 29 giugno 2004, n. 10 - Norme per l'assegnazione e la gestione del patrimonio di edilizia residenziale pubblica e modifiche alla legge regionale 12 marzo 1998 n. 9, Art. 16.

²²⁶ Reg. reg. 10 febbraio 2004 n. 1 Criteri generali per l'assegnazione e la gestione degli alloggi di edilizia residenziale pubblica l. reg. 1/2000, art. 14, comma 1, lettera d), modificato dall'art. 1, comma 1, lett. u), del r.r. 27 marzo 2006, n. 5.

Marche²²⁷, Molise²²⁸, Apulia²²⁹, Umbria²³⁰, and Veneto²³¹. However, rules differ region to region. For example, **in some regions** (Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Marche, Molise, Apulia, Umbria and Veneto) **women facing violence are included amongst those living in critical circumstances or housing emergency and eligible for social housing**. Campania instead assigns a **priority mark** in housing assignment rules. Other regions (Calabria²³², Emilia-Romagna²³³, Friuli-Venezia Giulia²³⁴, Lombardy²³⁵, Piedmont²³⁶, Sardinia²³⁷, and Veneto²³⁸) introduced guidelines on the option to use social housing in the documents regulating regional anti-violence plans or amongst the objectives of the regional law on preventing

and contrasting violence. Nevertheless, **rules do not always translate into reality**, especially when implementation rests with local authorities. In some instances, specific provision regarding women recovering from violence have been promoted by civil society. For example, the *Istituto Autonomo Case Popolari* (Autonomous Institute for Social Housing - Iacpc) in Catania included, in July 2022, women subject to violence amongst the priority groups for the allocation of social housing²³⁹. Tools such as social housing and co-housing are not very used by regional governments, and neither are controlled rents or agreements with private landlords. Only Piedmont is scoping out these options²⁴⁰.

²²⁷ Regione Marche, Legge regionale 16 dicembre 2005, n. 36 - Riordino del sistema regionale delle politiche abitative, art. 20 quinquies, 2, lettera g), modificata dalla l. reg. 15 luglio 2021, n. 16 - Modifiche alla legge regionale 16 dicembre 2005, n. 36 (Riordino del sistema regionale delle politiche abitative) e alla legge regionale 27 dicembre 2006, n. 22 (Modificazioni ed integrazioni alla l. reg. 16 dicembre 2005, n. 36: "Riordino del sistema regionale delle politiche abitative"), Art. 4.

²²⁸ Regione Molise, Legge regionale 4 agosto 1998, n. 12 - Nuove norme per l'assegnazione degli alloggi di edilizia residenziale pubblica e per la determinazione dei relativi canoni, Art. 16.

²²⁹ Legge regionale 7 aprile 2014, n. 10 - Nuova disciplina per l'assegnazione e la determinazione dei canoni di locazione degli alloggi di edilizia residenziale pubblica, Art. 12.

²³⁰ Regione Umbria, Legge regionale 28 novembre 2003, n. 23 - Norme di riordino in materia di edilizia residenziale sociale, Art. 34-ter.

²³¹ Regione Veneto, Legge regionale 3 novembre 2017, n. 39 - Norme in materia di edilizia residenziale pubblica, Art. 46.

²³² LR 20/2007, Art. 7.

²³³ LR 6/2014, Art. 15, paras 6 and 7.

²³⁴ LR 12/2021, Art. 2, para 2.

²³⁵ LR 11/2012, Art. 10.

²³⁶ Regione Piemonte, Piano triennale degli interventi per contrastare la violenza di genere 2017-2019 in attuazione dell'art. 23 L.R. 4/2016 approvato con DGR 22 dicembre 2017, n. 37-6229.

²³⁷ LR 8/2007, Art. 8, para 2.

²³⁸ Amongst the activities to prevent and contrast violence against women, as per Art. 2 of LR 5/2013, the region includes those listed in the Legge regionale 3 novembre 2017, n. 39 "Norme in materia di edilizia residenziale pubblica".

²³⁹ Istituto Autonomo Case Popolari Catania, Bando per l'assegnazione degli alloggi sociali a canone sostenibile riqualificati a valere sulle risorse del POR Fesr Sicilia 2014/2020 in favore di soggetti versanti in situazioni di fragilità socioeconomica siti a Catania in corso indipendenza n. 146, 4 luglio 2022.

²⁴⁰ Regione Piemonte, DD 1162/A1419A/2021 - DGR 123625 del 30.7.2021. Approvazione dei bandi per l'accesso ai finanziamenti destinati al sostegno di interventi regionali attuativi nell'ambito del Piano Operativo di cui al "Piano strategico nazionale sulla violenza maschile contro le donne 2017-2020" per gli interventi previsti dall'art. 5, comma 2, lettere a), b), c), e), f), h) e l) del D.L. del 14.8.2013 n. 93. Spesa di euro 430.799,87 su cap. vari del bilancio regionale annualità 2021 e 2022.

4.2 National and regional funding

Housing autonomy programmes for women recovering from violence have been funded mostly as part of national anti-violence plans. Resources allocated to regional governments were budgeted according to activities already being implemented locally, sometimes based on needs assessments carried out in the relevant areas. Yet, this money is part of the overall funds allocated to different programmes (labour market participation, strengthening of anti-violence networks, systemic actions, programmes for perpetrators) rather than solely to housing autonomy.

In November 2016²⁴¹, as set out in the Extraordinary National Plan against Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2015-2017²⁴², the Department for Equal Opportunities distributed 13 m euros to regions to be used, for the first time, to sponsor housing autonomy programmes, amongst other things. According to data from Cnr-Irpps²⁴³, only 31.6%, about **4.2 m euros**,

were used by regions to combat housing poverty. In addition, **12 regions** (Abruzzo, Calabria, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Marche, Molise, Apulia, Sardinia, Sicily, Tuscany and Umbria) used the funds just to pay for **housing vouchers and contributions to expenses** such as rent, utilities, furniture etc in the context of individually tailored recovery projects. Only the governments of Lombardy and Piedmont used the funds to invest in programmes already under way, with a more holistic approach. Lombardy used the resources for the housing-employment programme already underway since 2017²⁴⁴; while Piedmont financed strategic plans developed by anti-violence centres to support women house searching in collaboration with social housing agencies (Aslo)²⁴⁵ tapping into, when necessary, the social guarantee fund to support rent payments and prevent arrears²⁴⁶. Only Lazio chose to use the funds to set up semi-autonomous housing. Further national resources were allocated in December 2019²⁴⁷, November 2020²⁴⁸, and November 2021²⁴⁹ with the DPCM assigning funding to anti-violence services. In fact, since 2019, the Equal opportunities minister

²⁴¹ DPCM, dated 25 November 2016, - *Ripartizione delle risorse del «Fondo per le politiche relative ai diritti e alle pari opportunità» previste dal paragrafo 4 del Piano d'azione straordinario contro la violenza sessuale e di genere, di cui all'articolo 5 del decreto-legge 14 agosto 2013, n. 93, per essere ripartite tra le regioni e le province autonome per la realizzazione delle quattro linee d'azione ivi previste, destinando le risorse nazionali in modo complementare rispetto all'impiego di risorse proprie.*

²⁴² Deo, *Piano d'azione straordinaria contro la violenza sessuale e di genere*, p. 16.

²⁴³ Cnr-Irpps, *Primo rapporto di valutazione sul piano d'azione straordinario contro la violenza sessuale e di genere 2015-2017*, dicembre 2019, p. 46.

²⁴⁴ The home-work programme funded by the Lombardy regional government since 2017 develops specific tailor-made programmes of up to 12 months, such as, social housing, subsidized rent housing, the inclusion in rent-controlled housing programmes, and the use of private properties, see Consiglio della Regione Lombardia, *Seconda relazione al Consiglio regionale ai sensi dell'articolo 11 della LR n. 11/2012. Attuazione e risultati della LR n. 12/2012* "interventi di prevenzione contrasti e sostegno a favore delle donne vittime di violenza, 10 aprile 2020, p. 38.

²⁴⁵ The ASL (Azienda Sanitaria Locale, Local Health District) are tasked with promoting house seeking by coordinating private landlords and vulnerable families. See DGR n. 36-1750 del 13 luglio 2015.

²⁴⁶ Regione Piemonte, DD 20 novembre 2017, n. 1147 - L. 119/2017 e LR 4/2016. *Approvazione delle modalità per l'accesso ai finanziamenti statali destinati all'attuazione delle azioni del Piano Straordinario contro la violenza di genere, della relativa modulistica e del piano di riparto preventivo dei fondi. Accertamento di euro 933.400,00 sul cap. 24105/2017 e contestuali impegni tecnici sui capitoli vari del bilancio 2017 e 2018 mediante utilizzo del FVP.*

²⁴⁷ The DPCM, dated 4 December 2019, distributed 10 m euros amongst regions to prioritise the implementation of one or more of the following: a) strengthening the public and private service network through prevention, assistance, support and accompaniment activities for women victims of violence; b) activities so support housing, labour market participation and overall accompanying women in their exit programme; c) activities to improve support for migrant women, including second-generation women, victims of violence; d) projects targeting girls under 18 victims of violence and children witnesses of violence; e) information, communication and training activities; f) programmes for perpetrators, including based on specific national guidelines.

²⁴⁸ The DPCM, dated 13 November 2021, distributed 6 m euros amongst regional governments to prioritise the implementation of one or more of the following: a) programmes to tackle the challenges arisen out of the Covid-19 emergency and to support the economic and social recovery of women in their journey towards exiting violence, according to each region's plans; b) strengthening the public and private service network through prevention, assistance, support and accompaniment activities for women victims of violence; c) activities to support housing, labour market participation and overall accompanying women in their exit programme; d) activities to improve support for migrant women, including second-generation women, victims of violence; e) projects targeting girls under 18 victims of violence and children witnesses of violence; f) information, communication and training activities; g) programmes for perpetrators, including based on specific national guidelines.

²⁴⁹ The DPCM, dated 16 November 2021, distributed 10 m euros amongst regional governments to prioritise the implementation of one or more of the following: a) programmes to tackle the challenges arisen out of the Covid-19 emergency and to support the economic and social recovery of women in their journey towards exiting violence, according to each region's plans; b) strengthening the public and private service network through prevention, assistance, support and accompaniment activities for women victims of violence; c) activities so support housing, labour market participation and overall accompanying women in their exit programme; d) activities to improve support for migrant women, including second-generation women, victims of violence; e) projects targeting girls under 18 victims of violence and children witnesses of violence; f) information, communication and training activities; g) programmes for perpetrators, including based on specific national guidelines.

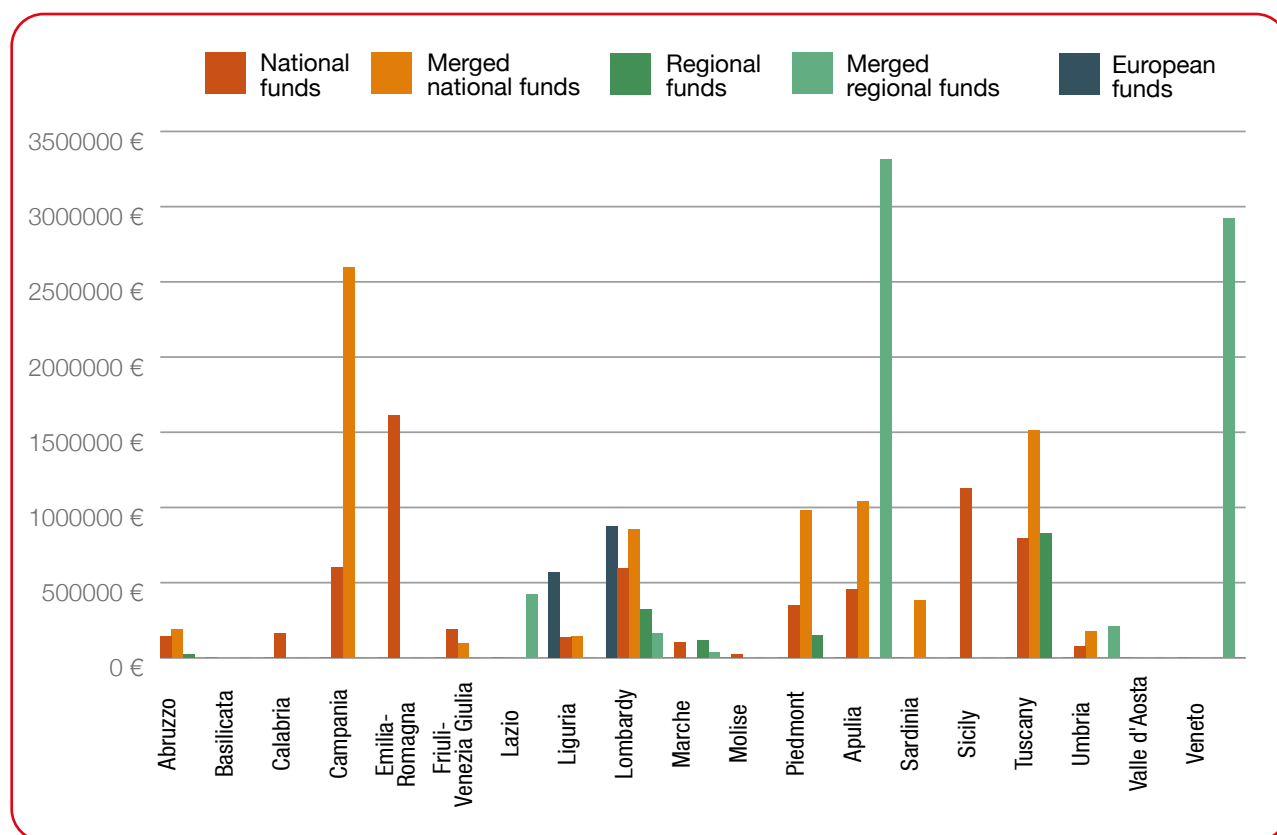
has allocated to regions about 10 m euros per year to implement some of the actions set out in the national anti-violence plans. This procedure was put on a statutory footing with an amendment to Art. 5 of the DL 93/2013 introduced with the 2022 Budget Law. However, the DPCM²⁵⁰ merged housing autonomy and labour market participation in one single programme making it impossible to gauge the amounts spent by the regions on housing. Moreover, the 2019-2021 regional programmes and national funds allocation plans loosely refer to 'labour market participation and housing autonomy programmes' so it is not feasible to understand which specific projects were supported. Usually, money is transferred to anti-violence services or the local

authorities leading anti-violence networks and used mostly to **financially support women's emancipation plans**. Such approach fulfils the housing autonomy objective set in anti-violence plans, to bolster – within service provision pathways – all necessary means for women to achieve housing autonomy and therefore leave shelters and temporary accommodation. Yet, according to interviews, this approach fails to consider the need for sustainable and long-term housing support.

In addition, **3 m euros** were allocated to finance the so-called social microcredit set up by the Equal opportunities minister Elena Bonetti by signing, in December 2020, the Microcredit protocol for the economic emancipation of

FIGURE 5

Types of funding budgeted by Regions to promote independent housing (2015-2022).



Source: ActionAid calculation based on data from regional executive deliberations and managerial decrees (2015-2022).

²⁵⁰ Namely the DPCM by which the political authority delegated to equal opportunities assigns funding to regions on an annual basis according to Art. 5 and Art. 5-bis of the DI No. 93/2013.

women subject to violence²⁵¹. The programme offers zero-interest rate liquid funds to cover expenditure for house searching up to 10.000 euros, to be repaid in monthly instalments up to 60 months, including pre-amortisation where relevant. In this case as well, given that the resources are a 'personal loan' to be spent on essential needs, including housing, it is not possible to estimate the actual monies set aside to promote housing autonomy.

The situation is no different at **regional level**. Only Abruzzo, Lazio, Lombardy, Marche, Piedmont, Apulia, Tuscany, Umbria, and Veneto invested, or invest, part of their budget to specifically promote housing autonomy for women recovering from violence: between 2015 and 2020 these regions allocated about **8.5 m euros** overall to housing autonomy programmes. However, out of this amount, 6.6 m euros were spent on programmes including a labour market participation component²⁵². These are one-off investments, often added to project sponsored with national funding, which translate solely in financial support to individually tailored projects. The aim is more to support women to leave shelters rather than securing long-term housing autonomy.

National and regional authorities have allocated about **12 m euros** overall (9.3 m and 1.8 m respectively). Amongst the regions, only Lazio and Liguria have used European funding for a total of 1.4 m euros. The shares allocated to multi-action projects including housing autonomy components must be added to these figures s: 7.9 m euros at national level and 6.6 m euros at regional level (Figure 5). There could be some discrepancies due to the challenge of identifying specific programme strands for housing autonomy within wider regional anti-

violence programmes. This is caused by lack of transparency on how funding is used and for which activities.

4.3 Options for the future

Even though housing autonomy is important for women subject to violence all over the world²⁵³, there is a lack of data on whether dedicated housing policies are effective²⁵⁴. However, available evidence highlights the **need to use a diverse range of tools to tackle the needs and challenges women face in their journey towards housing autonomy**. A shared need is the **access to safe housing** – physically, mentally, and emotionally – **located in an accessible area** and close to amenities. Lack of affordable housing on the private market, difficulty in paying rent, long waiting lists to access social housing: these are shared issues regardless of geographical context²⁵⁵. Economic insecurity makes it impossible to pay for housing and, as a result, women often return to the perpetrator, especially when children are present. In addition, according to some research²⁵⁶, housing poverty harms women and children, exacerbating the risk of mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, or anxiety. Hence, **it is crucial to guarantee access to housing beyond the short to medium-term**. Shelters meet the need of emergency housing but, even though they act as a reference point and provide ongoing support, they can also be a source of stress and worry for women, especially if they have children. As told by interviewees, because of lack of privacy, house rules, and the related power structures within the accommodation itself women turn to shelters in an emergency. Semi-autonomous housing, instead, meets a short to medium-term need and, in many cases,

²⁵¹ Protocollo d'intesa tra la Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri – il Ministero per le pari opportunità e la famiglia, Prof.ssa Elena Bonetti e l'associazione Bancaria Italiana (Abi) e la Federazione Italiana delle Banche di Credito Cooperativo (Federkasse) e l'Ente Nazionale per il Microcredito (Enm) e la Caritas Italiana – Microcredito di libertà – Protocollo di microcredito per l'emancipazione economica delle donne che hanno subito violenza, Roma 3 dicembre 2020.

²⁵² See paragraph 3.2.

²⁵³ R. Kefee, Hahn S.A., "Policy roles in promoting affordable housing for survivors of intimate partner violence", in *Violence against women* 2021, Vol. 27, pp. 1317-1336.

²⁵⁴ L.B. Klein, B.R. Chesworth, J.R. Howland-Myers, C.F. Rizo, J.M. Macy, "Housing interventions for intimate partner violence survivors: a systematic review", in *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, Vol. 22(2), 2021, pp. 249-264.

²⁵⁵ Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, *op. cit.*

²⁵⁶ C. Rollins, N. Glass, N.A. Perrin, K.A. Billhardt, A. Clough, J. Barnes, T.L. Bloom, "Housing instability is a strong predictor of poor health outcomes as level of danger in an abusive relationship: findings from the SHARE study", in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 27, 2012, pp. 623-643.

requires women a partial payment. However, in Italy, the provision of semi-autonomous housing is inconsistent across the country. As a result, in addition to developing an anti-violence system to offer widespread semi-autonomous housing, authorities need to promote more sustainable solutions, for example by:

- » **Piloting co-housing projects.**
- » Adopting **nationwide statutory priority criteria to access social housing**, including for the housing stock being restored in landlocked and post-earthquake areas.
- » Adopting **rent controls for the social housing** stock belonging to building cooperatives in receipt of public funding, as well as in the private sector, through brokerage by public services.
- » Including women recovering from violence amongst those eligible for **funding to cover defaulting rent payments as well as flexible personal loans** (e.g., subsidised rates, higher monthly contributions in case of default, etc.).
- » **Freezing evictions.**

- » Disseminating **agreements for a zero-rate mortgage repayments freeze.**
- » Introducing **tax breaks for the private landlords renting properties to women recovering from violence.**
- » Providing **financial and logistic support for house hunting.**

The identification of new ways of promoting housing autonomy must be rooted in strong and ongoing collaboration between housing policy makers and those public services supporting and protecting women facing violence. It is also critical to guarantee, taking into account local needs, equal access opportunities for women, regardless of their residence or domicile. To do so, **national policies and guidelines must be defined with a shared approach for the effective implementations of regional and local programmes.** Even though housing policy is devolved to regions²⁵⁷, the state retains the duty to set overall principles and goals, monitor and drive policies and the related implementing authorities and, above all, to make sure the less economically privileged are not left behind.

²⁵⁷ Italian Constitution, Art. 117.

CONCLUSIONS

Economic autonomy plays a crucial role in women's journey towards freedom from violence. Being financially secure affects women's decision to leave the perpetrator, if they co-habit, and to move out of shelters. The **positive impact is therefore two-fold**: on the one hand **it allows women to walk away from violence and prevents a potential backslide** and, on the other hand, **it contributes to freeing up spots in shelters quicker thus allowing access to more women**. The journey towards recovering from violence needs shelter, social, psychological, legal and employment support but also real and effective financial support for women to successfully go through the journey to emancipation. However, despite policies for income support, easy access to credit, the adjustment of anti-poverty programmes, and support for self-employment, to date the Italian anti-violence system does not have a structured and adequately funded programme providing women with 360-degree support to achieve full economic autonomy and therefore be free from violence.

Social and economic rights: The only possible way forward

Ongoing access to fundamental human rights, especially economic and social rights, is key to the successful socioeconomic empowerment of women subject to violence. This translates into **guaranteeing full access to decent work, housing, education, health** and, overall, to **enough economic resources for a dignified life**. Italy must fulfil the rights established in national, European, and international treaties, including the Istanbul Convention. However, too often women face significant challenges to the full exercise of rights. It is therefore urgent for relevant authorities at all levels, national, regional, and local, to **work towards ensuring rights are**

realised through policies and services that meet women's specific and intersectional needs. Only by doing so women recovering from violence will be able to acquire competencies, autonomy, and the power to make strategic decisions at personal, social, political, and economic levels, thus gaining control over their lives.

Return to legislation to overcome disjointed programmes

Existing programmes offering financial support for housing and employment are totally inadequate and do not increase the economic autonomy of women recovering from violence, as stated by the women's organisations in their 2018 shadow report on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention²⁵⁸. Little has changed since then. **National and regional authorities continue to fund disjointed projects rather than programmes as part of strategic and structured policies**. Activities to promote labour market participation consist in career guidance, tutoring, and low-paid internships, with the implementation often delegated to anti-violence centres. As far as housing autonomy is concerned, the policies adopted are short-term vouchers to pay rent and deposit whereas, with the introduction of the freedom microcredit programme, women can access personal loans at favourable credit terms to find a safe place to live. When it comes to income support, Parliament approved a law to financially support women victims of violence only because of the economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. To date, not even in the context the National recovery and resilience plan (PNRR) with its about 235 billion budget, it has been possible to develop structured programmes for the labour market participation and housing autonomy of women recovering from violence. **It is necessary to**

²⁵⁸ D.i.Re et al., *L'attuazione della Convenzione di Istanbul in Italia. Rapporto delle Associazioni di Donne*, 2018.

make legislation a starting point to overcome the current disjointed approach to programmes and ensure financial sustainability. The first step must be to modify Law Decree No. 93/2013, which set up the Italian anti-violence system, by **introducing compulsory funding for income support, assistance to find and retain employment, and access to housing that is safe and sustainable in the long-term**. Compulsory funding must tie resources solely to the implementation of the priorities mentioned, to be realised collaboratively with other authorities, where necessary. The share allocated must be set according to actual need, namely the number of potential beneficiaries, to avoid creating an institutional indirect discrimination based on a ‘first come, first served’ approach. It is also necessary for Parliament to include specific procedures to meet the needs of women recovering from violence within labour and housing policies. **Income, employment, and housing are the three pillars on which to base a holistic policy to promote women’s economic independence** as they are three specific needs that women put in front of everything else and are strongly intertwined.

Adopting shared models to overcome geographical inequalities

The decision to delegate programmes and resources to promote women’s economic autonomy to regional governments allows for a more tailored approach to local needs but risks exacerbating existing geographical inequalities. The lack of **shared guidelines on minimum service levels**, including modes of access and provision, risks maintaining inequalities of access to income support, labour market participation, or safe and sustainable long-term housing. There is a **need to rethink the funding modalities of the anti-violence plan** by tying a share of the resources allocated to the implementation of programmes to achieve minimum service levels, by considering the number of women supported by anti-violence services in the preceding year.

Access to income support must be consistently guaranteed nationwide by **ensuring that the national *Reddito di libertà* (Freedom income) is available to all women, regardless of their economic status**, as well as **including priority criteria for women recovering from violence in regional anti-poverty frameworks**. In addition, it is crucial for labour market participation programmes to appraise the specific characteristic of the local economy and which skills are in demand. Bridging geographical gaps entails acknowledging the diverse needs of women living in suburban or isolated areas and offering them the same opportunities of those living in cities. This means **making sure that, nationwide, public services (e.g., transport and care services) function well and meet the specific and intersectional needs of women** (Gender Responsive Public Services²⁵⁹) to support their participation in the labour market. Beating geographical inequalities is essential for housing too: priority criteria to access social housing, currently in place only in certain areas of the country, should be extended nationwide by law. The provision should be complemented by other policies such as co-housing, rent controls, and agreements between local authorities and private landlords to pilot innovative housing models providing safe housing to all women in need.

Restart from integrated policies

Amending the DL 93/2013 and the funding framework of the anti-violence plan is critical, but not enough. To date, the sectoral approach to the prevention of male violence and the protection of victims has not yielded what was hoped for. Over the past three years, the number of women killed in a family context has remained the same, but it now accounts for about 32% of ‘voluntarily committed murders’²⁶⁰. The number of reports of violent crimes against women is also stable, about 22.400 per year²⁶¹. This is because violence against women is a

²⁵⁹ ActionAid, *Gender-Responsive Public Services*, 2018.

²⁶⁰ Ministero dell’Interno – Dipartimento di Pubblica Sicurezza, *Servizio Analisi Criminale - Omicidi volontari*, 10 October 2022.

²⁶¹ Istat, *Autori e vittime dei delitti denunciati dalle forze di polizia all’ autorità giudiziaria, Anni 2018, 2019, 2020*.

structural issue, deeply rooted, and affecting the whole of society. A patriarchal and sexist culture, underpinning social and legal norms, cannot be fought solely by poorly funded sectoral policies but rather with **integrated policies and programmes touching on every aspect of the Italian social, cultural, political, and economic life, from North to South, from cities to the outskirts**. In a national context where it is already challenging for women to participate in society fully and effectively, it is pointless to believe that the economic independence of women subject to violence can be achieved through disjointed policies, implemented almost solely by the Equal opportunities department and local authorities. What is needed, instead, is for institutions and politics to commit to **include provisions for women recovering from violence across laws and policies to combat poverty, seek and retain employment, and housing autonomy**. To promote women's self-determination and their participation, including at economic level, in public life, it is surely more effective to **amend existing policies** by complementing them with actions and criteria meeting women's specific needs to guarantee them easy access to services. This approach would also weigh positively on state's budgets, by streamlining human and financial resources in the public administration.

Policy making is not possible without data

Policy development cannot overlook precise, complete, up to date, and transparent data. For example, the decrees for the allocation of

funding for protection programmes are too often made based exclusively on the total resident population in regions and autonomous provinces. At national level, to allocate shares of funding for the *Reddito di libertà*, only female population is taken into account and no data is examined on how many women are supported by anti-violence services. The picture at regional level is mixed. Over the past few years, regional governments have increasingly relied on data collected by anti-violence services to inform programme development. Using detailed and up-to-date information about women's needs and challenges in accessing existing services is vital to complement income, employment or housing support policies with specific provisions tailored to women recovering from violence. As a result, **the commencement of Law No. 53/2022 on violence related statistics²⁶² must be sped up and include data collection about the use of existing programmes for income support, job seeking and retention as well as housing autonomy**. The adoption of adequately funded policies meeting women's specific needs will only be possible through an accurate analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of what is currently in place. Therefore, **Law No. 53/2022 should be amended by introducing a duty on the Labour and social policy ministry** to collect data on the use of programmes and services promoting the job seeking and retention of women recovering from violence (e.g., incentives for cooperatives, re-allocation of public administration employees, use of services provided by the employment guarantee programme, etc.).

²⁶² Legge n. 53/2022 – Disposizioni in materia di statistiche in tema di violenza di genere.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of this research, ActionAid urges the Italian government to adopt an integrated approach to guarantee the rights to a dignified life, decent work, and housing for women recovering from violence, considering their specific and intersectional needs. To this end, the government must **promote integrated policies as well as structured and competent collaboration** between the Labour and social policy ministry, the Transport ministry, the Equal opportunities department, the Regional affairs department, and all the stakeholders tasked with anti-violence, social, and labour policies. For this strategy to be complete it is also necessary to amend existing provisions as well as introducing new ones.

Namely, it is critical to:

» Ensure women have **adequate economic and financial support** to sustain their journey to recovery from violence.

» **Government:**

- Ensure **annual funding** for the *Reddito di libertà* (Freedom income) is **calculated on the actual number of potential beneficiaries**, by taking into account the **number of women supported** by anti-violence services in the preceding year.

» **Parliament:**

- Amend Decree Law No. 34/2020, namely the law establishing the *Reddito di libertà* (RdL), by **introducing a statutory funding requirement** starting in 2023 and then agreed annually according to the **number of women supported** by anti-violence services in the preceding year.
- Make the **RdL accessible to all women recovering from violence**,

regardless of their income and financial circumstances, by scrapping the requirement for women to be living in poverty to be eligible to apply (Art. 105-*bis*, para 1).

» **Labour and Social Policy Ministry:**

- Consider, within the **reform of the** *Reddito di cittadinanza*, the opportunity to introduce **amendments** allowing women recovering from violence to be eligible, for example by including them amongst those beneficiaries exempted from the requirements defined in art. 4 of Decree Law No. 4/2019.
- Promote a **review of the rules for the filing of the** Dichiarazione sostitutiva unica (Single Substitute Statement - Tax return) **and the processing of the Isee** (Equivalent economic situation indicator) by ensuring women supported by anti-violence centres are accounted for as a distinct family unit separated by the spouse/cohabiting partner, regardless of whether the latter has the same or a different residence.

» **Equal Opportunities Department:**

- Change the **criteria for the allocation of regional funding** for the *Reddito di libertà* by considering the number of women supported by local anti-violence services in addition to the resident female population.
- Ensure the **duration of the** *Reddito di libertà* is **flexible**, 12 months at a minimum, and **with the possibility to extend it further** based upon

consultation with anti-violence services, so that the specific needs of individual women can be met. The length of the support afforded should be assessed by anti-violence centres and relevant services, according to **nationwide guidelines**.

- Develop and adopt, at national level, **shared criteria to evaluate and manage applications made by anti-violence centres and social services** to avoid a discretionary approach and prevent indirect discrimination.
- Strengthen **training for public service staff** tasked with managing application for the *Reddito di libertà*.
- Introduce the **option for anti-violence centres to apply online** for the *Reddito di libertà*, by clarifying their role within the implementation decree and **acknowledging the economic cost of the work carried out by anti-violence centres' staff**.
- Strengthen and **adequately fund income and financial support programmes** included in the National strategic plan on male violence against women 2021-2023 and include women who have already started a recovery programme.

» **Regions:**

- Contribute to **funding the national *Reddito di libertà*** and, if necessary, take corrective actions to tackle disparities in purchasing power across different areas to avoid resources being scattered and the deepening of existing geographical inequalities.
- Introduce **priority criteria** for women recovering from violence **within anti-poverty policies and services**.

» To guarantee **adequate tools to promote labour market participation and job retention for women recovering from violence**.

» **Parliament:**

- Extend **paid leave** for women victims of violence (Art. 24 D.lgs. 80/2015) **from three to six months at least** and **increase the related annual resource allocation** according to data on women's labour market participation, types of employment contracts, and number of women supported by anti-violence services to ensure all women receive support regardless of their job.
- Add fixed-term contracts to the employment contracts eligible for incentives, allowing companies, not only cooperatives, to benefit from tax breaks.
- Identify **corrective measures** that take into account the different characteristic of local economies so that all women are offered the same opportunities regardless of their residence or domicile.
- Amend Law No. 53/2022 by introducing a **data collection duty for the Labour and social policy ministry** on the use of job seeking and retention programmes for women recovering from violence.

» **Labour and Social Policy Ministry:**

- Promote a labour policy reform with access to **unemployment benefits available even for resignation** due to a change in residence caused by domestic violence and the impossibility to transfer the employee to an equal grade vacancy in another office.
- Ensure **early severance payment** for women victims of violence and

a **tax break** of at least six months for self-employed women.

» **Equal Opportunities Department:**

- Change the minimum requirements for the gender parity certification (UNI/PdR 125:2022) by including **compulsory training for staff and managers on male violence against women**, in collaboration with anti-violence services and the support of sectoral stakeholders, ensuring a safe working environment for women recovering from violence, and the adoption of guidelines to support employees affected by male violence, signposting local anti-violence services.
- Publish **data and evaluations on the re-allocation of public administration employees' scheme** to assess its effectiveness and potentially pilot the same scheme in the private sector.

» **Regions:**

- Ensure the policy regulating employment services includes **ad hoc provisions to meet the needs of women recovering from violence**.
- Promote **partnerships** between public services, anti-violence centres, private sector networks, cooperatives, and businesses to promote the implementation of labour market participation programmes tailored to local labour demand.
- Introduce **priority criteria to access public nurseries** for the children of women recovering from violence and provide financial support to access private or subsidised nurseries where public services are insufficient or do not exist.

- Invest in **transport policies** by introducing subsidies for women recovering from violence and their children and offering alternatives where the public transport network is wanting (e.g., concessions for private transport, easy access to credit to buy a vehicle).
- Monitor and **evaluate regional labour market participation programmes** and **publish relative data** to inform potential replication at national level.
- Develop **awareness raising and training activities targeting businesses and trade associations** as part of the programme to strengthen job centres. Such activities should be delivered with anti-violence centres and shelters to promote sensitivity and awareness of the causes and impacts of violence at work as well as safe working environments, free from any form of violence, harassment, and gender stereotypes.

» **Guarantee adequate tools to reach housing autonomy for women recovering from violence**

» **Parliament:**

- Amend Art. 3-bis of DL 93/2013 by setting an obligation to **establish a specifically reserved quota of social housing properties** for women recovering from violence in regional laws.
- Establish and/or change existing **guarantee funds** by making women recovering from violence eligible to apply (e.g., for potential defaults and/or loan applications) and introducing criteria to meet women's needs (e.g., larger reimbursement in case of missed payments, easy access to credit, etc.).
- Introduce a national law for an **eviction freeze** when the property is occupied

by a woman supported to recover from violence, the length of which should be agreed in consultation with support services.

- Provide a **free mortgage payment break** on a first property owned for women recovering from violence.

» **Equal Opportunities Department:**

- Ensure the Steering committee of the national anti-violence plan provides **coordination** amongst ministries, national and regional public administrations, and other **stakeholders responsible for programmes to secure housing autonomy** for women recovering from violence, ensuring ongoing consultations with other relevant third parties.
- Promote the identification and adoption of **housing solutions that are sustainable in the long-term** (e.g., co-housing, social housing), including by **piloting projects** and

collaborating with national and regional public administrations.

- Promote the amendment or establishment of **national and regional schemes to ensure women recovering from violence can obtain financial guarantees** to rent and/or buy a property.

» **Regions:**

- Revise policies regulating access to social housing by introducing **priority criteria** for women recovering from violence, taking into account the specific needs of **landlocked areas** and **post-earthquake regions** in the process of converting temporary housing to social housing.
- Promote **controlled rent contracts for the social housing stock** owned by housing associations recipient of public funds, as well as **subsidised rent agreements in the private sector** with the facilitation of public services.

ANNEX - REDDITO DI LIBERTÀ: THE FIRST YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION

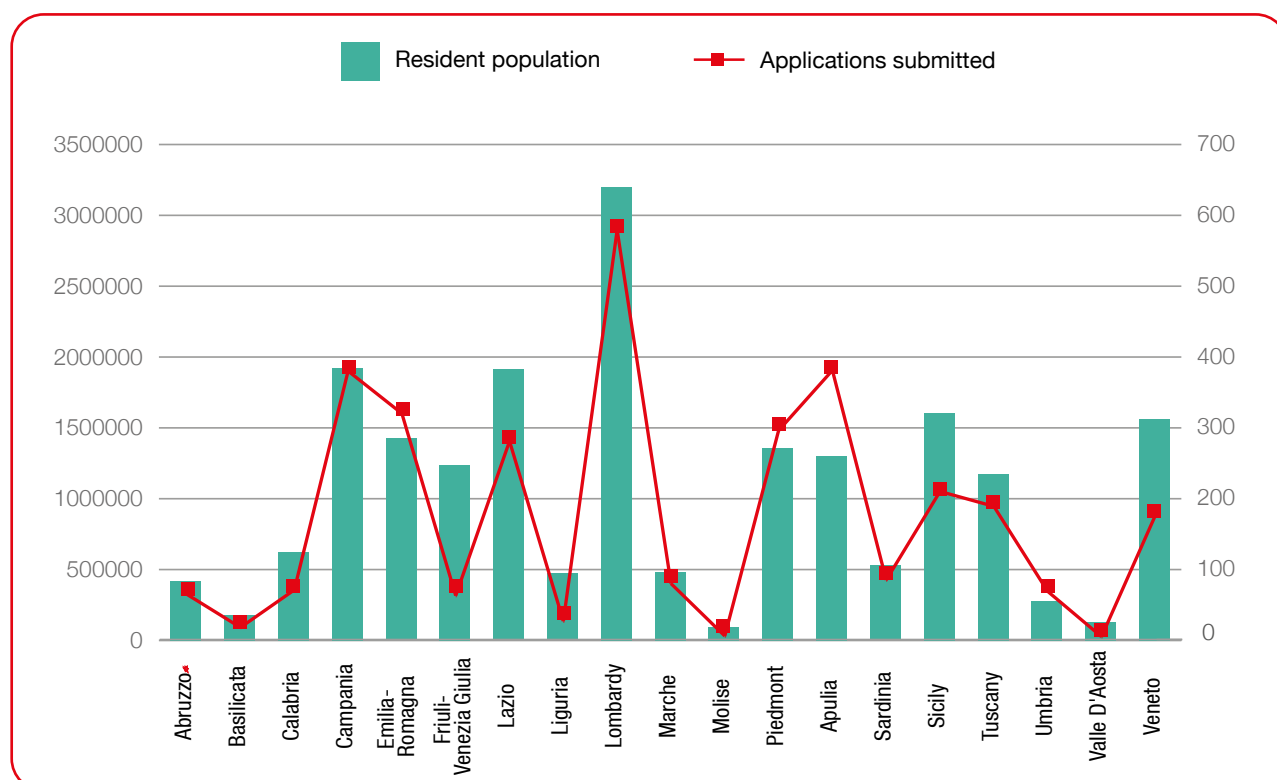
The Equal opportunities department allocated **3 m euros** to the *Reddito di libertà* (RdL) for **2020** which were fully disbursed by 20 September 2022. Resources budgeted for **2021 and 2022**, about **9 m euros**, were allocated to regions with the DPCM, dated 1 June 2022, and transferred to Inps (National social security institute)²⁶³, but information on their use is not yet available.

According to Inps data, up to 11 July 2022²⁶⁴, **600 women, out of 3.283 applicants, benefitted**

from the funding allocated for the first year of the RdL²⁶⁵. The highest number of applications was submitted in Lombardy (578), followed by Apulia (380), and Campania (379). The first and the third are the most densely populated regions in Italy, while Apulia ranks sixth. Therefore, there is no correlation between the share of women aged 18 to 67 who are resident in the region²⁶⁶ and the number of applications submitted.

FIGURE 6

Relationship between number of applications submitted for the Reddito di libertà and female population resident in each Region (2020).



Source: ActionAid calculation based on data from Istat (2020) and Inps (2022).

²⁶³ Inps, *Messaggio n. 3363 del 13 settembre 2022*.

²⁶⁴ Inps, *Conoscere il paese per costruire il futuro. XXI Rapporto annuale*, 2022, p. 379.

²⁶⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶⁶ The criteria for the allocation of regional funding to pay for the programme is based upon Istat data of 1 January referring to female population residing in each region's local authorities aged 18 to 67.

Figure 6 confirms this hypothesis showing there is no linear relationship nor connection between the resident population at regional level and the number of applications submitted to Inps. Therefore, the data highlight questions on the allocation of quotas for each region which is agreed based on the resident female population aged 18-67, without any consideration for the number of women annually supported by anti-violence centres.

Figure 7, instead, shows that the regions with the highest number, in absolute terms, of **applications granted** are Lombardy (101), Campania (70), and Sicily (57). The figure shows a high percentage of applications, about 77% of the total, refused across all regions, mostly due to **scarcity of funding**.

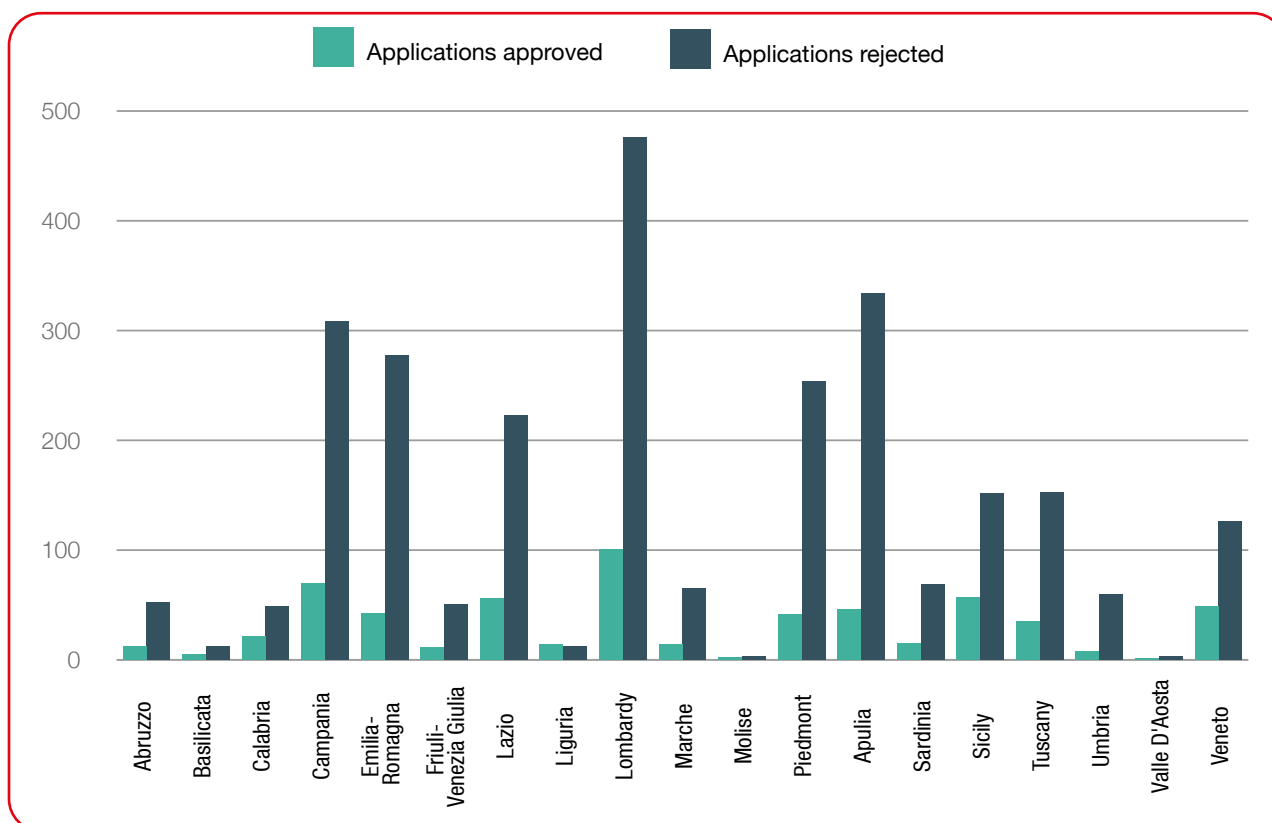
The regions with the **highest share of unsuccessful applications compared to applications submitted** were **Umbria** and **Apulia** (88%), Emilia-Romagna (87%), and

Piedmont (86%). The regions with the **highest number of applications approved** were **Liguria** (54%), Molise (40%), Calabria (30%), and Basilicata (20%). These, except Calabria, are the regions with the lowest percentage of applications submitted compared to resident population, together with Valle d'Aosta, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and Veneto.

It is not clear why, even though a low number of applications were submitted, the share of request approved in these regions was higher. This could be related to the number of women supported locally or to social services being more aware of the programme. The **lack of widespread and timely information about the programme**, which meant social service and anti-violence centres' staff **lacked competence** on how to manage applications, surely had an impact on the ability of women to access the *Reddito di libertà*.

FIGURE 7

Number of applications granted or rejected by Region (2020).



Source: ActionAid calculation based on data from Inps (2022).

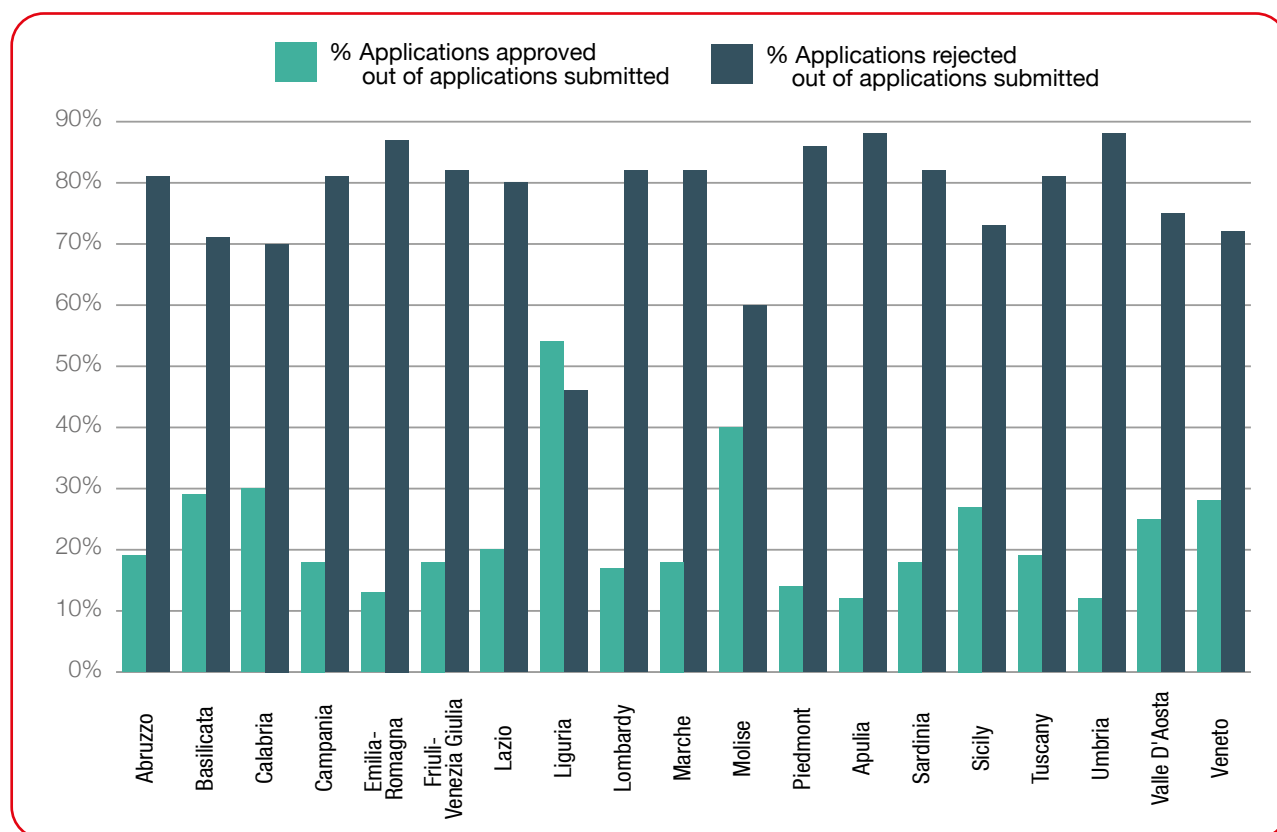
The **setting up of the scheme was widely reported in the media**. The Equal opportunities department, together with Inps, organised a webinar to present it to the public whereas Anci (National Association of Italian Municipalities) took charge of disseminating detailed information to all local authorities. However, this was not enough. Many women who approached social services, including through anti-violence centres, were turned down because staff did not know about the programme. In some cases, staff of anti-violence centres interviewed for this research said they studied in detail the rules of the *Reddito di libertà* and informed or trained social service staff responsible for uploading applications on the Inps website. In other instances, they accompanied women to social services or gave heads up to the service in charge (e.g., by phone, email). The situation across geographical areas is diverse according to the activism of anti-violence

centres and local authorities' understanding of violence or the effectiveness of their internal communication.

Lack of communications affected anti-violence centres too. Even though the programme envisaged their active role in certifying women's status as supported persons, they did not receive any official communication. As a result, anti-violence centres collected information on the scheme and on how to submit applications by themselves. According to anti-violence centres' CA staff, women received information firstly from media and then from the centres, which were often contacted directly by women themselves to know more about the scheme. **Media reports raised great expectations which were later frustrated due to the paucity of resources allocated.**

FIGURE 8

Relation between applications granted and rejected and the female resident population expressed in percentage points (2020).



Source: ActionAid calculation based on data from Inps (2022).



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