



UNIVERSITY OF GÖTEBORG

Department of Social Work

International Master of Science in Social Work

Who cares about lone mothers in Italy?

International Master of Science in Social Work
Degree Report 10 credits
Spring 2007
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ABSTRACT

Year: 2007

Pages: 35

This paper examines how lone mothers are taken care of in municipality of Parma in Italy, in a welfare model that does not have special social policies for lone mothers. The aim of this study is to see the relationship between lone mothers and the welfare services in a local Italian context. In this study lone motherhood is examined from the perspective of welfare state models. The research has been done with qualitative method and inductive approach. The empirical data was collected with semi-structured interviews. Analyses are based on interviews with five social sector workers in public social services and in voluntary organisations. The data is analysed in the light of theoretical framework including the theories of different welfare models by Titmuss (1974) and Esping-Andersen (1987, 1990, 1992). In Italian welfare model social security is income related and that is why church, voluntary organisations and family are playing a vital role in social services. The public allowances are rare in Italy and that is why Italians are more dependent on their families and private organisations economically that for example in a social-democratic states. This kind of features can influence negatively in lone mothers who are in risk of poverty and exclusion.

Keywords: lone motherhood, welfare model, family policies, gender

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1. INTRODUCTION

Lone mothers are a challenge for social work and social policies. It has been researched that lone mothers are a disadvantaged group in most of European societies, first of all because they have a high risk to face poverty. This can also be said in terms of other resources like time and social networks. (Ruspini, 1999)

In the catholic and conservative welfare states like Italy, lone mothers are few but their situation is not easy. They have difficult access to working life in the same time when Italy is facing low fertility and lack of labour force. That is why it is important to study about the lone mothers' situation and how the welfare state is influencing in their coping, through social policies. (Saraceno, 1998)

Italian social services are decentralized. There are only few national laws giving security for families and lone mothers. The services differ from one region to another and there can even be differences between provinces. In most of the regions it is difficult for lone mothers to find day-care services and other supporting services, so working is not always the way to support one self and the children economically. In this study my aim is to research what kind of support lone mothers can get from public and voluntary organizations in Parma in Italy and to see if these services are sufficient. Parma is a city in northern Italy and belongs to the region of Emilia-Romagna, which has the lowest fertility rates and highest divorce rates in Italy. This kind of situation gives challenges for policy makers as well as its' practitioners, the social workers. (Saraceno, 1998)

Italian welfare state's social services are leaning strongly on families and voluntary organizations. (Ruspini, 1999) Italian welfare model influences in the social policies and that way to the situation of lone mothers. Lone mothers are hidden in Italian society. Their voice is not heard because their problems are hidden and the unofficial social sector is trying to cope with their problems. Lone mothers are more on their own in Italy than in many other European countries.

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between lone mothers and the welfare services in a local Italian context. Using the point of view of social workers, this paper interprets what is social workers role in supporting lone mothers in a familial welfare state with a corporatist model. I am concentrating on the region of Emilia-Romagna and the Municipality of Parma. I am looking at lone motherhood from the perspective of welfare state models and using the theories of Esping-Andersen and Titmuss when describing the Italian welfare model.

Research questions:

1. Who is the main support giver of lone mothers in the municipality of Parma in Italy?
2. How can social workers support lone mothers in the Municipality of Parma?
3. Do lone mothers get sufficient support in a conservative/corporatist welfare state like Italy?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. *Qualitative research*

According to W. Lawrence Neuman (1997), research methodology makes social science scientific. Qualitative research method is used in this study. According to Nigel Gilbert (2001, 34), qualitative research provides a micro-level perspective based on case studies or data collected from individuals or groups. He also states, that it has emphasis on smaller-scale studies, exploring the meanings, which special events or situations have for participants.

Neuman (1997, 331) describes qualitative method: “Qualitative researchers emphasise the importance of social context for understanding the social world.” According to Gilbert (2001), social world consists of multiple, subjective realities, constructed by the individuals and groups.

Inductive approach is used in this study, by building theory from ground to up from the case studies, based on the information collected from the respondents from the municipality of Parma and a voluntary organisation. According to Neuman (1997, 46), in inductive approach, first comes the observation of the world and then “*move towards more abstract generalisations and ideas.*”

Quantitative researchers seek causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings. Qualitative researchers seek instead illumination and understanding to similar situations. Qualitative analysis results in a different type of knowledge than does quantitative inquiry and that is why I thought that qualitative research methods suit well with my research area. In my research area it is important to understand interviewees’ ideas and the deeper meaning of their answers in order to get results and answers to my research questions. (Kvale, 1996)

3.2 *Data collection*

To find data for my study, I used documents and interviews. The way I found empirical data for my study was through semi-structured interviews. I used interviewing as the other method of my study to find answers to my first research question. I asked the same questions from each interviewee, which are the social workers working in Parma municipality and a voluntary organisation in Parma. I sent five questionnaires for five different social workers and met them afterwards to go through the questions together.

All the interviewees had the questions before our meeting. In the interviewing situation we went through the questions together and I wrote down the answers. I did not record the interviews, because I wanted to make sure that I understood everything since the

interviews were done in Italian. It would have been more difficult to come back later for to understand some misunderstood meanings. That is why the interviews took quite a long time, from one to two hours.

3.2.1 Sampling of the interviewees

I used purposive, non-probability sampling methods: network/snowball sampling in this study. It was a natural choice for this study, because according to Gilbert (2001), purposive sampling is realistic for small-scale or qualitative research. Neuman (1997) mentions, that purposive sampling is acceptable when the researcher want to select cases with specific purpose in mind. Gilbert (2001) states also, that network sampling method is for obtaining samples of numerically small groups.

I had difficulties finding people who wanted to take part into my research and be an interviewee. It seemed that the social workers were a bit afraid to take part in an international study and they thought that it was time consuming. After all I was able to get six contacts through my internship organisation in Parma. Three of them were people working for the voluntary organisation which two of them professional social workers and one the president of the organisation who is doing voluntary work for the organisation. I contacted three other social workers which two of them are working in the territorial public social offices of Parma municipality and one how is working for the central social office of Parma municipality. All these six women are working with lone mothers.

After I got the positive answers I sent a questionnaire for all of them so that they could prepare themselves for the interview. Four of them made appointment with me right away while two of them I had to remind twice about the interviews via e-mail. One of the social workers from the territorial public offices cancelled the interview in the end and did not want to do it. In the end I had data from five different interviews.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

I chose to use semi-structured interviewing method since I though I could reach the maximum validity by doing that. I did all the interviews face to face with the interviewees. According to Kvale (1996) semi-structured covers different themes as well as suggested questions. There is in the same time openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the interviewee. (Kvale, 1996) I thought that because I was doing the interviews in Italian language which is not my mother tongues, the semi-structured interviewing method would be suitable. It allows the interviewer to ask extra questions and make the point clear without changing the main structure. Gilbert (1996) describes semi-structured interviews as following: "*The interviewer ask curtain, major questions the same way each time, but is free to alter their sequence and to probe for more information*".

3.3 Data analysis

Kvale (1996) presents in his book *InterViews* six steps of analysis. It shows that it is important to think about the analysing of the text already during the interview. It is important to keep in mind that a good dialogue can influence a lot in the way the researcher can find meanings from the data. A re-interview can help to deeper the meanings and get more validity in to the study, since the subject might be more ready to find new and deeper meanings about the earlier information given. (Kvale, 1996)

When analysing the data that I will gather with the semi-structured interviews, I will use the analysing method called “Ad Hoc Meaning Generation”. It gives the possibility for a researcher to look at the data on a more abstractive level and from different point of views, since it is giving the possibility to look interview material as a whole. There is a more free interplay of different techniques during process of analysis. When analysing some themes I can use counting and in others comparisons and nothing relations between variables. I believe that meaning generation gives a good possibility to find out the real and deeper meaning of the data since no structure is harming the freedom of analysis. (Kvale, 1996)

I also use documents as data in my research. I have to get familiar with the national and regional laws in order to be able to analyse the answers of the interviews. Using documents to support the research can enhance the understanding of the interviews. It can give better ability to analyse and understand the meaning conclusions. So in my study I will also use partly the documentary research method. (May, 2001)

The data is collected from different sources. I used the social science libraries in Finland and Italy as well as many internet sources. I also got lots of material from the Municipality of Parma as well as from some voluntary organisations, such as laws and regulations used in the Parma municipality. I chose the material according to my research questions but the literature that I found also had its’ influence in the way formed the goals of my study later on. In Italy it was sometimes challenging to find up-dated date.

3.4 Validity and reliability

In order to make a good research, validity has to be taken into consideration. It means that the method is really measuring the concept (Gilbert, 2001). In my research it is very important to do anything to gain validity since I did the interviews in Italian, which is not my mother tongue. The questionnaires were translated from English to Italian by a professional interpreter. Semi-structured interviews can produce good validity into research, because it is easy to check the validity since all the questions are in a certain structure. I planed the questions carefully and kept the same structure in every interview in that way I was surer about getting the right answers to the right questions. Even if

there is a structure it is possible to have a good dialogue with the interviewee since the semi-structured interview allows interviewees talk more on their own terms. (May, 2001)

Reliability is also important because it means that the research can be repeated and it is consistent from one measurement to the next (Gilbert 2001). According to Kvale (1996) it is important that the interviewee is not making any leading questions in order to gain reliability. All the interviews that I did were peaceful and the interviewees were able to concentrate well. Only one interview was ones disturbed by another office worker. I was not able to record the data but I did good notes which from my point of view were reliable. I was also allowed to get back to the interviewees if some notes were not clear for me.

I was able to make only five interviews. From the point of view of generalisation it is very small amount of interviews, but in a qualitative study the goal is not to create generalisation of the research area. Moore important goal is to deepen the understanding in that area. In this study the aim is to get first-hand information from the social workers working with lone mothers in the Italian local contexts. This is a study on the context of individual level and not a generalised survey.

3.5 Ethical consideration

When doing social research, it is important to concentrate on ethical issues, since the research area can be close to somebody's personal life and feelings. I explained the principal of the anonymous and respect for privacy for all the interviewees. I told them that their names will be changes when I will analyse their answers in the study. Ethics is a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of the others (Gilbert 2001, 45). All the respondents were aware of the purpose of the study and the reason why asked them to take part in it as interviewees.

3.6 Structure of the study

In the chapter for I will present the theories that are connected to this study. I will present different welfare by Titmuss (1974) and Espin-Anderssen (1991). I will present Italian welfare state model and how it effects on gender issues. Chapter five presents the earlier studies done related to the same subject; lone mothers and gender issues related to welfare models. In chapter six, the reader can get an idea how the Italian welfare state has developed and what kind of family policies the state has. In the last parts of this study I will introduce the empirical data gathered through interviews as well as the analyses of the data together with conclusion.

4. THEORIES

4.1 Different welfare typologies

European social politics have roots in the end of the 19th century when Bismarck created the social security insurance system for Germans in 1883. He thought that social insurance for employees would balance the society. The English were also important developers of social policy. In 1942 Beveridge wrote a report that included a social political programme which goal was to reach a situation where no one of the population would live under the minimum income level. The tools were free health care and social insurance. The development of the modern welfare state in different countries is related to the strength or weakness of the countries' labour movements, the historical background and the democratic movements. (Raunio, 1987)

Social policies have developed differently in different parts of Europe. There are several problems connected into the practise of social policies. It has been researched that behind the social political strategies there are values that the state sees important. Different states try to reach the welfare goals depending on the value goals. In the literature of social politics there are different ways to call these different social political strategies for example the welfare state model, welfare state typology or regime. In this study I will use the term model. These models are giving an idea of the different social political organisations and should be understood as ideal types and generalisations of the strategies. (Raunio, 1987)

4.2 Residual and institutional models

Social policy is often divided into institutional and residual model. When talking about these two different types of social policies one usually refers to Titmuss (1974). Titmuss has described these two types of social policies by analysing them with normative data, so he has not done empirical research about these types of policies, but they give quite a clear view about social policies in practise in different societies. (Raunio, 1987) The differences between institutional and residual models can be seen by analysing the way state is functioning in a society. The state's relationship to other institutions in a society can be very different, for example to the markets. (Titmuss, 1974)

In the residual model the private market and family are playing the most important roles. If family or private market can not respond to the basic needs of an individual, one has to ask for support from the social political actions that the society is having. In a residual society these supports are supposed to be only temporary and means tested. In the collective social politics state is having a marginal role and the interference is minimal. This means that the state does not insure its' citizens basic safety net and

income security. In the other hand the citizens have the maximum freedom and possibility to use his or her income the way he or she wants. (Titmuss, 1974)

The main idea of an institutional model is to have institutional interference into society. Social politics and policies are seen as vital part of a functioning society. Social political institutions are offering universal services independently from family and private markets. The Institutional model wants to offer basic security for all its' citizens. The shearing that is happening in the markets can be unequal that is why social politics are playing a vital role trough income distribution. (Titmuss, 1974)

Social policy in a residual model is selective, because the social benefits are means tested and are meant for the special needs of lower classes. Different insurances have more important roles in the financing of welfare than in the institutional model in which the taxation is playing the central role in financing the welfare. Progressive taxation is higher in the institutional model. In the residual model the markets have the power, which means that the state is not the crucial institution in distributing welfare. It is normal that there are several voluntary organisations and private social services in the residual model. In the institutional model it is typical that all the citizens should be equal and have equal opportunities and rights as well as a chance to receive a curtain level of living standard. Institutional welfare models have wider social politics because it reaches all the citizens. (Esping-Anderssen and Korpi, 1987)

Southern European welfare states, like Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal have been described as residual welfare models. Still in every welfare state one can find examples of different welfare models. In South-Europe family is an important unit when we are talking about the wellbeing and income of an individual. Some social benefits are given only for the head of the family which in South-European countries is the husband. The social benefits are closely connected to ones position in the labour market. The social politics are selective and gives help to people only if there are no other alternatives. In the cases were there family can not function as the safety net, only minimum income is offered. (Esping-Andersen and Korpi, 1987)

4.3 Italian corporatist regime

Esping-Andersen has presented regimes as corporatist, liberal and social democratic regime. The welfare states should not only be seen as an interfering mechanism, which is offering services and income security, but as a stratification system. Welfare state is building classes into societies as well as social rules. Stratification system has power in building the social relationships. The groups between different classes in a society can explain earlier and future development of welfare states. Different welfare states have alternative stratification systems. Liberal regime is presenting social dualism, which can be seen especially trough in means tested allowances and private social insurance. Corporatist regime has two factors that can explain the stratification. First of all, an employee has right for different programmes, which support class forming. Secondly, the citizens trust the monarchy and authoritarian state. Social insurance has been broken

and specialised into labour –and status bases programmes. This way the benefits are different for blue –and white collar workers. The social democratic regime has been understood as welfare for citizens. It includes all the citizens in the social programmes and tries to eliminate classes with income distribution. The universal social security system develops the equality of “status”. (Esping-Andersen, 1992)

Authoritarian and paternalistic conservatism has had an important effect in the development of welfare state. In the 19th century, the conservatism saw liberalism and socialism as the biggest opposition and in the 20th century also the communism. The most important units were the family, church and army, which gave the strong moral order. The labour unions and employers have decided about social benefits which also secure families’ lives. Corporatism is based on status order and it has been build around groups of professionals. (Esping-Andersen 1990, 59-60)

Italy is a strongly corporatist welfare state. Social insurances are written in law and are obligatory, but they are connected to class and status. The states that have corporatist regime are found about professionalism and social status, which means that social benefits are usually meant only for people in the labour force. That is why for example housewives are outside the system. Children’s day care and family services are underdeveloped. Only if the families own capacity is not sufficient, the state will interfere. (Esping-Andersen 1990, 27; Esping-Andersen 1992, 111-112)

The power of Catholic Church has influenced positively in corporatism. Strong Catholic party, absolutism and authoritarian state has forced private organisations to take care of citizens’ welfare. Private organisations have mainly development under the influence of church, and they have reached quite an important role in social politics. The corporatist principles have become institutional and that is why it is hard to make changes. (Esping-Andersen 1990, 124, 134-135)

4.4 Italian welfare model from the gender perspective

The outcomes of different welfare models can influence in men and women differently. If a state wants to reach equal economical outcomes for both genders, the states needs to concentrate on equalising men’s and women’s commitments to the home and the labour marker. The development of gender equality is influenced by traditions and culture but also by economic incentives. Social policies can influence so that women are encouraged to stay home or so that women are penalised if they stay home. According to Ståhlberg, Italy has a family model that encourages women to stay home. In a family model the men is the head of the family and he duty is to support the family with a full-time job. The social political support systems are meant for the nuclear family. The wife’s right to get benefits is based on a status as a dependent family member and on husband’s record of contribution. (Ståhlberg, 2000)

The way Esping-Andersen is dividing welfare states has been under a critical eye especially among feminists. There is not much talk about women in the analysis if they have not been part of the labour market. Ilona Ostner, Stephen Leibfried (1991) and Mary Lang (1990) have accomplished Esping-Andersen's typology with Latin-Rim model, which is placed to South-Europe. Their welfare typology has been developed in a feminist framework. (Julkunen 1992, 28-29)

Latin-Rim regime is a regime for the Mediterranean countries especially for South-Italy, Portugal, Spain and Greece. Also Ireland has been seen as a welfare state that belongs in the same group with the Mediterranean countries. The agrarianism and church have developed these welfare regimes. These countries or areas are characterised with high unemployment and poverty. They have got their freedom from dictators relatively late and many people are living under poverty line. The citizens do not know their right well enough and public services have arrived late. (Estivill 1992, 4)

The states, which have the Latin-Rim regime has been described as areas where social security and care taking is the responsibility of family and relatives. They have had problems in economical development and the welfare states have remained poor and non-functioning. In South-Italy it is typical that women are working on unofficial sector without working contracts, which means that they are also outside of social security systems. In the mean while men's salaries have risen to high level so that they could take care of the whole family. (Julkunen 1992, 34-35) Latin-Rim welfare states are close to countries with conservative regime. They both give importance to residualism and labour markets. Most of the Latin-Rim countries or areas are connected to Catholic Church. (Leibfield 1991, 20-23)

It is a fact that the view of a welfare state has an important influence in the power relations between men and women. Also the gender-based norms are influencing in the relations. The welfare state is influencing in the gender relations directly and indirectly by deciding how they see the nature and distribution of resources, social roles and power relations. (Daly & Rake, 2003)

If we look at the way Italian welfare state policies are trying to equalize gender roles in labour market, it can be seen that there are not many effective policies for that. When analyzing the situation in the labour market and the policies related to that, it is quite obvious that the aim of the Italian welfare state is to keep women at home. It is usual that women do domestic work in Italy, which can also be seen in the statistic of <http://stats.oecd.org>. The employment of men is 69, 7 and 45, 2 of women (2004). Women are taking responsibility of childcare, care for the elderly, the disabled and the chronically ill (D'Apice & Fadda, 2003). The unemployment rate for women in 2006 was 8,4 per cent and for men 5,3 per cent. (<http://stats.oecd.org>). The southern Italian families have typically male breadwinner. There is very limited presence of women in the labour market in the south (<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk>). In year 2000 the economic inactivity rate of women in the whole country was 53.7 percent. No Italian woman has

ever become the Head of State, Prime Minister, President of the Senate, or President of the Constitutional Court in Italy. In the 2001 elections only 96 women were elected to a Parliament of 945, for a total of 10.1 percent. (<http://www.italyun.org> [1])

Since Italy is a welfare state with familial model, the policies or the non existing policies are making it difficult for women to enter the labour market. This problem is changing in the north but is very current in south Italy. The policies in the conservative Italy want to promote traditional family model and because of that the access to public childcare is poor. The leaves for paid and unpaid childcare are short or hard to get, so it is easier for women to stay home. According to Daly and Rake the Italian women are least likely to be at work or to seek work in Western Europe. The state is not showing much interest in this, because its' ideology is that family is an important unit in producing welfare and giving social services. (Daly & Rake, 2003)

The state is still trying to act as an agent in balancing the income inequalities. The Italian welfare states agency to female income can be seen in the public sector's incomes. Women were earning 100 per cent of them men's income on the public sector when the percent in the private sector was 76.5. The female-headed families still have bigger risk to face poverty and remaining in poverty ones fallen into it. In Italy the females actually remain just a husband away from the poverty, especially in the south part of the country. The redistribution of income plays an important role in gender equality. (Daly & Rake, 2003)

If Italy would want to achieve equal economical outcomes for both genders, they would need to introduce measures to make men's and women's commitments to the home and work market more equal. They should also try to make it easier for women to get jobs with high salary as easily as men. Women's situation in Italy is not only a product of traditions and culture, it is a product of economic conditions, since the social policies are designed to penalise working women. (Stålberg, 2000)

Italian government has improved the situation of women by some relevant laws during past twenty years. *“Governments have approved laws against sexual discrimination. Violence against women is now considered a crime against humanity. Yet although the condition of women at the global level has improved, there is grave cause of concern in the growing synergy between religious fundamentalisms, which once more have chosen the bodies of women as their battleground”* (<http://www.italyun.org> [2]).

Italian education system is equal to both genders. Women are now even more highly educated than man, but the job opportunities have not increased in the same time. Progress in educational attainment has been driven by increased completion rates among females. *“While 45-to-54-year-old women had received slightly more than half a year of education less than their male counterparts 2 decades ago, the situation has reversed and 25-to-34-year-old women now have slightly more than half a year of education more than males”* (OECD Briefing Note for Italy, 2006).

In chapter four I have presented Italian welfare model. It can be understood that Italian welfare state is residual. The market is the core welfare giver in residual model. The state's role is minimal while private organisations and families are taking care of citizens' wellbeing. Social political functions are seen as something that is meant only for the poorest groups of the society. Women are playing a vital part in giving social services. They are taking care of children, elderly and disabled citizens. Men's and women's commitments are not equal towards home and work market. If Italian state wants to equalise men's and women's opportunities, there is a real need to make some heavy changes in the way Italy is making social political actions.

5. EARLIER RESEARCH

There have been several studies done about lone mothers in Europe. Lone mothers can be studied from many different perspectives. I found studies about lone mothers that were related to welfare models and social services. Most of them are comparative studies. There is a working paper written in the Institute of Social and Economical Research by Elisabetta Ruspini (1999), which title is "Lone mothers and poverty in Italy, Germany and Great Britain". The paper focuses on lone mothers' poverty in the Italian familistic welfare model. The outcome of Ruspini's study shows that in Italy family plays a crucial role. The welfare model is not giving much attention to lone mothers. Family is giving a safety net for lone mothers in Italy and that is why lone mothers' problems and poverty is more hidden in Italy than in the other countries. The absence of explicit family policies is compensated by very strong family solidarity.

Riitta Kyllönen (1998) has made a case study about the social construction of lone mothers in the municipality of Venice. The paper examines how the welfare services of the municipality of Venice deal with lone-mother clients in a welfare system that has no provisions specifically for lone mothers. The study shows that from the point of view of the welfare system, one-parent families really appear to be 'incomplete' families, due to their limited resources to face the principal role assigned to the Italian family (especially women) in the provision of care for children and the elderly. The actual organisation of the income support policies in Venice appears partly also as a discouraging measure to break off the welfare contract with the conjugal (but also the extended) family that is able to guarantee personal services (compensating in this way the welfare state). By refusing to acknowledge the reproductive labour done without remuneration in marriage, and by not offering coverage against risks for homemaker mothers, the welfare system discourages them from leaving marriage. If the marriage ends, the welfare state receives the ex-homemakers only in a stigmatised manner.

Council of Europe has published a study about fertility and new types of households and family formation in Europe written by Pinnelli, Hoffmann-Nowothy and Fux in 2001. The aim of the report is a theoretical analysis of interdependencies between reproductive behaviour on the one hand, and the dissemination of new household and family types on the other.

Rodriguez Sumaza (2001) has studied about lone mothers in an international context in her study "Supporting Lone-parent Families...through Work: A Challenging Issue for British Social Policy" Her study showed that one of the most significant changes in the British family structure in the last few decades is the growth in the number of families headed by a lone parent. The study highlights the political and social debates. It also

reviews the evidence that supports the public response to lone-parents' needs. The results of her study also show that new policy directions assume that the lack of work among lone parents is a matter of barriers to employment.

Thomas Andren (2002) has made a study called 'A Structural Model of Childcare, Welfare, and the Labor Supply of Single Mothers. His study considers the simultaneous relationship of lone mothers' decision for paid childcare, welfare participation and labor supply. The results of his study show that there is an association between social assistance, paid childcare and labor supply, but the relationship is non-symmetric. The study shows that an increase in the social assistance norms has a relatively small effect on paid childcare utilization, but a relatively larger effect on the mean labor supply. A decrease in childcare cost increase the labor supply of those working rather than making non-workers to start work, which implies that childcare cost foremost is a barrier to fulltime work rather than a barrier to work at all. (Andren, 2002 at www.iza.org/iza/en/papers/)

6. THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITALIAN WELFARE MODEL

The first compulsory social insurance was developed in 1898 to receive better working conditions in dangerous jobs. Until 1919 it stayed as the only compulsory programme. Until the First World War charity organizations were the only ones taking care of the poor. In 1919 new insurances were introduced for old-aged and unemployed people. This was early compared to the neighbour countries and the speciality of the insurance was that it was also meant for the agricultural workers. After 1922 the fascist regime started to have a negative impact in the insurances. With the fascist strategy their regime had a direct political control over all public agencies. When the Post-war revolution came, the Christian Democrats started to lead the country. In the election of 1948 Christian Democrats got majority of the votes against the Socialist and Communist party, which was the biggest opposition party. They were in power until 1990's when the entire party system of Italian government collapsed and the Christian Democrats were also separated into two parties. From the 1950's to 1980's the development of Italian social protection went to a direction, which led to a situation where 80 per cent of the social expenditure went to pensions, while only 10 per cent was spent to family allowances. (Fargion, 2001, p. 185-186).

The fall of the Berlin wall started the hard times for Christian Democratic Party in fight against the communism. It was an impossible fight and what Christian Democrats left behind was corrupt and inefficient state administration. In the 1990s the Maastricht treaty had an important influence in the discussion about the Italian social policies and it created new challenges. Also the taxation system was reformed. The reforms done in the 1990s were strongly influenced by the centre-left to centre-right government. (Alcock and Craig 2001) At the beginning of 1992 the Italian social security system suffered from three serious inequalities. There were financial imbalances, distributional inequities arising from the system fragmentation and powerful stimulations to early retirement (Fornero and Castellino, 2001). In 1995 there was a big change in the structure of Italian welfare state since the pension system was reformed. The aim of the reform was to limit the public pension spending beyond 16 per cent of GDP. (Fargion, 2001)

Italy has about 58 million inhabitants. In 1999 Italy spent 25.3 percent of GDP to social protection (D'Apice & Fadda 2003). Italy has polarized social distribution. Most of the allowances are going to aged people through pensions. The losers of the distribution are the ones with a large family, total lack of work or resources and people with housing problems. 64% of overall social spending is spent for the pension system, compared with an average of 46% in the 15 EU member states (according to 1999 Eurostat social protection data). The other main items of expenditure are: healthcare/sickness/disability,

which accounts for 30% of Italian welfare expenditure, compared with an EU average of 35%; unemployment, which accounts for 2%, compared with an EU average of 7%; family/children, which accounts for 3.8%, compared with an EU average of 8%; and housing/social exclusion, which accounts for 0.2%, compared with an EU average of 4%. (<http://www.eiro.eurofound.eu> [1])

In February 2003, the Italian government published a White Paper on the welfare state. The document is not a completed package of proposals, but is intended to provide the basis for discussion of a new model of social policy with trade unions and employers' organisations. The state's aim was to introduce a decentralised system of social protection. This system was supposed to be with selective and flexible measures, tailored to the needs of local communities. (<http://www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int> [2])

6.1 Geographical differences

Italy is two countries in one at least what comes to social and economical issues. The northern regions of Italy are well connected in to international markets and the economics are working more strongly. The regions in south Italy have been slower in economical growth. They have also been left behind in the social and political modernisation. South Italy has been seen more similar to Greece and Portugal than to northern Italy. (Fargion, 2001)

The situation has been like this far back in the history. The unification of Italy in 1861 did not make the situation better. From 1922 to Second World War, the fascist regime had the power in Italy. There was also nothing done about the differences between the conditions of south and north during that period. When the Post-war government started to lead the country, something was done to break the imbalance. They started state-assisted industrialisation. They set up big industrial and petrochemical plants. This plan did not succeed to balance the situation, since most of the state-owned firms were closed down in 1980's. (Fargion, 2001)

6.2 Family and religion

Different institutions inside a state have had influence in the way welfare states have been developed. One important institution is family. During the last century the meaning of family has changed specially in western countries. Still in southern Europe, like in Italy, family has quite central position in the state. Another important institution in Italy is religion. Religion has been seen as a social institution, since it has been commonly accepted among the citizens. (Allardt, 1988)

After the World Wars there have been big changes in the situation of women in Italy. Those changes have had an influence into family as an institution. Italian women got their political rights only in 1945. Italian women are expected to take care of all the house work even if she is working. Italy is one of the European countries with the

lowest participation rates in labour markets of mothers with young children. Even though there has been little growth in the labour market participation since 1970's, both the Italian welfare system and the labour market are still characterized by limitations. The supply of child care services, both public and private, has not increased markedly. Especially in the Southern areas of the country, child care services are limited not only in terms of availability but also in terms of opening hours. Women's participation in labour is still seen as something temporal in women's lives. (Del Boca, Locatelli, Vuri 2004, p. 2, 25)

Divorce is legal in Italy since 1970's. The judge will sort out which one of the parents will have custody of the children and decide the type and amount of support the other spouse will provide. *"At any time after the separation, the spouses may request a review of the conditions on which the separation was granted, especially in regard to the exercise of parental authority, amount and type of child support"* (<http://www.international-divorce.com> [1]). Spousal support may also be applied if the spouse that is seeking support was not the one who's fault the divorce was and has no means or insufficient means for the support. (<http://www.international-divorce.com> [2])

Italian families have become smaller and family members are moving more than earlier. Despite the changes, family is still a central institution in Italian state. There are some geographical differences in the forms of Italian families. In south children are seen more important to have, while the northern people are more typically without children or with one child. (Olegnero, 1991) Births out of wedlock are few among all age groups. Italian married couples end up into divorce most rarely in European Union. (Ruspini, 1999)

The most typical type of household in Italy is a household with two adults and children. Household with one adult are rare. Only 3,2 per cent of Italian households are with single mothers (Eurostat, 1996). It is also very typical have more than two adults in a household. 16.2 per cent of Italian households have grandparent or other relatives living in the same house while for example in Finland the amount is 4.9 per cent. (Rekola, 1997) The family in Italy forms a safety net against poverty and social exclusion. Personal connections, networks for exchange and non-cash economy makes peoples' situations better when facing lack of resources or poverty. (Ruspini, 1999)

In some states religion has had a vital role in developing a welfare state. Catholicism has not had a real influence in developing Italian welfare state, because the Catholic Church has not recognised the phenomenon of social citizenship. Catholic Church has always seen charity work very important but because of their doctrine they have never been able to make a commitment with social politics. The misunderstandings between Catholic Church and state has influenced more negatively into the development of a welfare state than positively. (Van Kersberg, 1994)

Catholic Church sees that women's place is at home to act as a mother and a wife. Women's work has not been seen as payable work. This has been one way for families

to practise Catholic religion. After 1970's religion has become less important and women's role in families have changed. The Church's role plays a less vital role in people's every-day-life in today's Italy. (Andall, 1996) Through these changes it can be seen how important role Church as an institution has played in people's lives and rights before. The change of Church's role in Italian society has also influenced in the amount of divorces in Italy. Still divorce is not easy and Italy has still the least divorces in European Union. One of the reasons might be that lone mothers are in big risk to face poverty in Italy.

6.3 Italian family policies

When trying to understand the Italian welfare system and the way it deals with lone mothers, it is vital to consider the lack of national family policies during the post-war times. There are no national support policies for lone mothers, but a variety of local means-tested policies often aimed at minors and families with problems. Local policies for lone mothers are meant only for mothers in financial need. Italy is missing a national law on social assistance. The social sector was decentralised in the 1970s and jurisdiction on welfare services given to the regions. Five regions (out of 21) have a specific family support law. In other regions family policies have been integrated into the more generalised regional laws or in the local resolutions defining the allocation forms for the supports, both of an economic nature and not, fixed for individuals and family nucleus (Bosco 1997; Saraceno 1998).

The municipalities have the formal competence in the fields of social work. The local forming of the policies leads to great differentiation and heterogeneity. Policies vary from one region to another and even within the region itself there can be big differences. (Saraceno 1998). There can be different solutions to different types of needs (Bosco 1997). Apart from big differences between Northern and Southern Italy, the different social territorial settings have formed the creation of different welfare systems even in the regions of Northern Italy.

In 2003 the Italian government published the so called "White paper" to meet some of the new needs of families. One of the goals mentioned in the web pages of the European Industrial Relations Observatory (<http://www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int> [3]) was to support families with following aims:

-The family is recognised as constituting the core of the welfare system. In this regard, the White Paper recommends a tax system which takes account of expenditure on the care and upbringing of children (scaling taxes according to the size of the household, low-income ones in particular), the purpose being to improve the demographic balance and to revive the birth rate. (<http://www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int> [4])

-Work re-entry after interruption for childbirth should be promoted, by means of measures intended to reconcile child-rearing and work by offering training or re-training courses to women on maternity leave. (<http://www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int> [5])

-Access to credit should be facilitated for a first-home purchase by young couples who are either married or about to marry (as also provided by the 2003 budget law). (<http://www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int> [6])

6.3.1 Family benefits

There are some benefits that the families have right to get. The benefit for a family unit is a subsidy that was set up in order to help employees' families and retired employees, whose family units comprise a number of persons with an income below the income brackets laid down every year by the law (<http://ec.europa.eu> [2]). The amount has a direct proportion to the number of family members. There is a special benefit for large families. A municipality can give an allowance for a family that has at least three minor children. If there is a disabled member in the family the benefit can be higher. The incomes of the claimant, spouse and children under 18 years of age (or older if disabled) are considered (even if they do not all live in the same household). There is a separate provision for self-employed agricultural workers, self-employed and formerly self-employed pensioners. (Sgritta, 2002)

The family benefits are among the lowest in Europe. In the beginning they were universal and a large part of the population was able to receive them. Over the years, the number of people who have right for the benefits has declined. Until 1996, 50 per cent of those receiving benefits were old age pensioners. Since the benefits were not indexed, they lost almost 40 percent of their real value between 1988 and 1996. Between 1996 and the present both the number of beneficiaries has increased and the benefit level has been raised by about 20 percent, and by 25 percent in cases of families with a disabled child. At the end of the 1990s, legislation reducing family allowances for those with income over a certain level was enacted. A new means-tested benefit was introduced in 1999 for all families with more than three children below 18. This creates increased assistance to low-income families but also increases the financial disincentive to work, for those who qualify. Family allowances are higher for a lone parent with a child. (Sgritta, 2002)

The maternity benefits consist of medical care and economic subsidies. Because of the 28 March 2000 reform, more flexibility was introduced both on the demand and the supply side. Both working parents got the right to take parental leave during the child's first 8 years of life. If both parents want to take the leave, both parents have the right for 6 months, but no more than 10 months can be accumulated (can be 11 if the father's leave is not less than 3 months in a row). If only one parent is on leave, the leave will be in total 10 months. (Sgritta, 2002)

The benefit for the mandatory 3 months after the delivery is up to 80% of the earnings. Parents are now also allowed to take a 6-months optional leave within the child's third year of life by receiving 30 per cent of their salary. Between the child's third and eighth year, parents can be on leave without receiving any salary at all. There is an exception for parents whose income is lower than 2, 5 of the minimum pension level, who are entitled to 30% of their salary. Mothers can postpone 1 month to their mandatory leave period by working 1 month prior to the birth of the child. Employees can ask for a part of their severance pay to cover their no-salary parental leave. Self employed and small firms with workers on parental leave can temporarily replace them by hiring new workers (in which case, firms with less than 20 employees are entitled to a 50% reduction on the social contributions for the newly employed workers with fixed-term contracts). Firms can also have a grant (and 50% of the total amount will be assigned to firms with less than 50 employees) as an incentive to flexible (working time, teleworking, working at home, etc.) and to give preference for vocational training to employees after their parental leave. (Sgritta, 2002)

6.3.2 Early Childhood Education and Care ECEC

Almost all the Italian children aged 3 to 6 are enrolled in preschool programs. The rate of enrolment is about 95 per cent, which is among the highest rates in the European Union. The ECEC programs in Italy are divided by age and follow a pattern almost similar to those in France and Belgium. Italian children start the compulsory primary school at age 6. Italian preschool program (*Scuola Materna*), is financed mainly by the national government and is functioning under the Ministry of Education. About a century ago, this preschool program began as in several other countries as a private activity carried out under religious auspices. There was not much development before 1968, when national legislation was enacted, which gave responsibility for the establishment of preschools to the Ministry of Education. In 1970s there was an explosion of provision, along with the increase of female labour force participation. The *Scuola Materna's* are open from about 8:30 am to 4:30, 5:00, or 6:00pm, depending on location and program. One of the cities in Emilia-Romagna called Reggio Emilia has this programme and is world renowned for its quality and creativity. (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/17/33915831.pdf>, OECD country note, Early childhood education and care policy, 2001)

Italian leaders in the field, account for the explosion in demand for public preschools to five factors: (a) increasing awareness of the value of a group experience for a child's social development and a child's right to have such an experience; (b) the recognition of the value of preschool as preparation for primary school; (c) smaller families and parents concern about the growing isolation of young children (e) the declining availability of qualified staff in religious schools; and (e) parental belief that state schools were of higher quality and more convenient because of their longer hours (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/17/33915831.pdf>).

The child care centres (*Asilo Nido*), for under three years old began first as a social service and after a while became a support service for working women. Recently it has finally begun to be viewed also as an important developmental experience for children. It is still not viewed in the same way as the Scuola Materne which is now universally viewed as an essential socialization and educational experience for all children. (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/17/33915831.pdf>)

The Asilo Nido is the publicly funded and largely publicly operated child care program serving children aged three months to three years. The Asilo Nido is open 11 months of the year and charging income-related fees. The program has the same history and institutions as the scuola materne. However, national legislation enacted in 1971 gave all mothers the right to use these programs for the under three years old children but gave working mothers priority for places. Now the lone mothers, poor mothers, and handicapped children have the priority. It is still very hard to get children to enter the Asilo Nido and the ones who attend are from middle and upper class families. That is because there are not enough places and families often feel that the service is too expensive, so it is worth to stay home and not work. (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/17/33915831.pdf>)

The law says that the national government should play an active role in funding these facilities. Employers have their own responsibility in day care services and they should contribute 1 percent of payroll taxes to support them, but that regional and local governments should have responsibility for their operation. Regional and local governments are the responsible agencies for funding and operating the program. (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/17/33915831.pdf>)

The *Asili Nidi*'s are open for the full workday and are often open 11 hours a day from 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Children usually enter into the *Asilo Nido* in the age of 9 months but one can take the child there in the age of 3 months. Centre serves from 30 to 60 children normally. Nationally the coverage is modest, about 6 percent of the age group, but in the north in some regions such as Emilia-Romagna, coverage may reach 30 percent. All centres are public and almost all are operated under municipalities. Quality varies enormously, but is excellent in certain parts of the north. There is little or no family day care. Most children of working mothers are still cared for by domestic servants who provide in-home care. (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/17/33915831.pdf>)

According to the OECD Thematic Review, *Starting Strong*, a proposal has been submitted to transfer responsibility for the 0-3s from regions and municipalities to the Ministry of Education. There has also been talk about improving to share of knowledge and expertise between the northern and southern municipalities to develop the day care services. There is need for increasing staff training and skills, such as requiring teachers and co-ordinators to have a university degree. Other contact staff will be required to hold a 3-year, tertiary diploma. (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/17/33915831.pdf>)

6.4.3 Family policies in the region of Emilia-Romagna

Parma province and municipality belong to the region of Emilia-Romagna, which capital is Bologna. Emilia-Romagna is famous of its' relatively developed social policies in Italy. They have had good balance between politics, society and economics. There is a low level of polarization and high social control compared to other regions in Italy. According to Barbari et al (2005) the citizens of Emilia-Romagna are in general satisfied in their region and the way it is governed. One of the biggest challenges of Emilia-Romagna right now is the lowest fertility in Italy and Europe. From the year 1965 to 1995 the fertility rate has declined from 2, 08 to 0, 99. In 1997 the fertility rate was one of the lowest in Europe, witch was 1, 22. The highest in the same year was 1, 92 in Ireland. The main reasons for the fact that fertility rates are staying very low in Italy according to Barbagli et- all are economical situations and new roles in families. Barbagli et. All are stating in their article that the authorities should take more responsibility about the problems which are making it too difficult for couples to have children. (Barbagli, Pisati and Santoro, 2005, p. 1-4)

In 1997, 8,2 per cent of all the households were lone mother families and in Emilia-Romagna, which is the third biggest per cent in Italy after the region of Roma which is called Lazio and the island of Sardinia. 1.4 of all the households were lone father families. Emilia-Romagna had the highest amount of separations and divorces in the year 1997, which was in total 214, 5 per 100 000 inhabitants while in the most southern region Calabria the amount was 66, 4 per 100 000 inhabitants. (Barbagli, Pisati and Santoro, 2005)

The amount of single parent families have rased because of the divorces and separations, but the attitude of the authorities have not yet recognised that it is also a possible way to have a family. The children who have only one parent in the nuclear family are invisible from the point of view of Italian national social politics according to Barbagli et. al (2005). The lone parents pay a high amount for being able to stay in the labour force. Not all the families with lone parents are poor or in risk to be poor. Some of them are doing fine and are not in risk to be excluded, but it would be important to recognize this type of parenthood and give special, individual support when it is necessary. Emilia-Romagna has the highest amount of female's labour participation in Italy. 39, 6 per cent of the female over 15 year or older are working and the pre cent for male's is 58 per cent. (Barbagli, Pisati and Santoro, 2005 p. 27-28) That goes well together with the numbers of lowest fertility. The numbers of fertility stay low when females are working more.

The municipality of Parma is following the national family policies as well as the regional law for social services of the region Emilia Romagna. This regional law points out five titles concerning social service and their cooperation. The regional law of

Emilia-Romagna recognises the role of the voluntary sector and private initiative and introduces as an alternative to the public service legitimate actors that are defined not as competing with, but as complementary to it (www.comune.parma.it).

The Emilia-Romagna region has been in the forefront of the developments of the day care system *Asilo Nido*, for under 3 years old children. It has established an innovative system of infant and toddler care under the auspices of the public education system. Given the shortage of places, and the conviction that a group experience is important even for the very young, this region has developed part-day and part-week programs serving all caregivers of very young children, both at-home parents, grandparents, and "nannies". (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/17/33915831.pdf>)

The plan of action for social politics in Emilia-Romagna for the 21st century is concentrating much on ageing since it is a big challenge for the region. The main concentrations written in the report of 2001 (*Le Politiche sociali in Emilia-Romagna, Primo rapporto, 2001*) are:

- A) Recognition of the active role of the elderly and promotion of active policies for senior citizens and of a positive attitude towards ageing.
- B) Sustain senior citizen's freedom of choice
- C) Favouring and supporting self-sufficiency.
- D) Favouring the reorganisation of the course of life on a collective and individual level
- E) Supporting those who choose to care for their family or acquaintances.
- F) Ensuring responses to the needs of elderly women through the development of appropriate gender-specific policies and assessment of their impact on the population and on social and healthcare and workers.
- G) Expanding the contribution and use of new technologies in order to increase the margin of freedom and self-sufficiency for all people (including the elderly) and directing research and the use of technology to the needs of senior citizens and to promoting individual acceptance of new technologies.
- H) Promoting well-being and health in the elderly

The main aim of this Plan of Action is to contribute to creating a society for all ages. It is important to recognise the different needs and abilities of all its members, no longer programmed by referring to healthy adult males, but by taking into account the needs of children, the young and the elderly, in order to overcome age discrimination, listening to the opinion, experience and needs of the elderly in defining policies that affect them by

means of active, organised involvement of senior citizens in the debating of policies and measures that affect quality of life. (Ascoli et al. *Le Politiche sociali in Emilia-Romagna, Primo rapporto*, 2001)

In the chapter we have read about the different sides of Italian welfare state. What comes out clearly from this chapter is that Italian welfare model does not give economical security for the families. A family must save money to secure the time after retirement and children's future. Italian family has to take care of duties that for example in Scandinavia the state is taking care of. It can also be understood that since the Italian state is not as wide institution as for example in the Scandinavian states, lots of voluntary and charity organisation has been born to support the state services and the families as care givers.

It can be understood that Italy has a specific arrangement between the family, the labour market and the welfare state, where family plays the most crucial role. Because of the crucial role played by the family, there are no reasons for the welfare model to support and protect lone mothers. Family is the primary system of social protection. In Ital there is no special policy of lone parent's protection. They can of course receive services like child-care places like the other children.

7. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

7.1. General background of informants

The findings of the interviews are presented and analysed in this chapter. I did five interviews, three of them in the voluntary organisation and two in the public social offices of Parma municipality. All of the respondents are women. The respondents' names are changed and it is not possible to recognise them in the analysis of the data. The names used in the analysis of the data are: Julia, Maria, Vera, Laura and Anna.

Two of the interviewees are employed social workers by a voluntary organisation that helps single mothers. These social workers are called Julia and Maria in this study. One of the interviewees is a voluntary worker and the president of this voluntary organisation. She is called Vera in this study. Two of the interviewees working in the public social offices are called Laura and Anna. The respondents have been working different duration of time in the organisations. Most of the interviewees have a long working experience. Laura has the shortest working experience, which is 7 years. Maria has worked 11 years; Julia 16 years, Anna 29 years and Vera 30 years. Most of them have had lone mothers as clients during their whole working history.

7.2 Lone mothers asking for support

The region Emilia-Romagna had the highest amount of lone mothers in Italy in 1997 according to Barbagli et al. (2005) All of the interviewees participating in this study had the idea that the amount of lone mother clients has increased during the time they have been working in the social services. All of them answered that most of the lone mother clients are alone because the child has been born outside of wedlock or because of divorce. The women do not have a good relationship with the father or the father does not want to take responsibility or does not even know about the child. In the year 1997 there were 136, 3 separations and 78, 2 divorces per 100 000 inhabitants in the region of Emilia-Romagna, which is the highest amount among the regions in Italy. The amount of divorces in Emilia-Romagna is still low compared to European average, which is 180 per 100 000 people. (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/>) The reason for the increase of these types of lone mothers varies according to the interviewees. Most of them said anyway that the role of women has changed.

“Women are more individual and autonomic and do not respect the strong male role anymore. The society is less trustable and the families are having more crises, because the family is not as strong anymore” (Julia).

Scott (2006) states in her study that general pattern of change in household and family structures in Western European families has seen marriage rates fall, divorce and cohabitation on the increase and a marked drop in overall fertility, despite the increased

numbers of children born out of wedlock. She also states that trends are used as evidence that the importance of family life is declining, with dire consequences for social integration. She states that there is a second revolution in the demographic transition in western countries. Changing role of women, both in terms of individual autonomy and in terms of female emancipation has been a core part of the conceptualisation of what some demographers call the 'second demographic revolution. These demographic changes are intertwined with changing ideologies concerning the importance of marriage and motherhood. There have also been important socio-legal changes in the family domain that reflect and encourage new moral stances regarding family related issues and behaviours. (Scott, 2006) Italy has not been the leader of this change even though change can be recognised. Italy remains one of the European countries with least divorces and children born outside of wedlock.

Four out of the five interviewees also answered that immigration is a reason for the increase of lone mothers. All of them have many immigrant clients. Anna said that 70 per cent of the lone mothers coming to ask support from the public social offices are immigrants. One of them answered that prostitution is one of the reasons for the increase of lone motherhood.

“Women come to Italy to try their luck without knowing what is ahead of them. Some of them end up in to prostitution and bad and short relationships. Some of them might think that having a baby might help them to get more support and to get a permanent resident permit”. (Maria)

Immigration to Italy has increased markedly during last 10 years. At the beginning of 2006, foreigners comprised 4.56% of the population or 2,670,514 people, an increase of 268,357 or 10 percent from the previous year. In many northern Italian cities immigrants make up a significant portion of the population. The most recent wave of migration has been from Eastern Europe, replacing North Africans as a major source of migrants. As of 2006, some 1,025,874 Eastern Europeans live in Italy, 40% of the total population of migrants in Italy. The five largest foreign nationalities in Italy are: Albanian (348,813), Moroccan (319,537), Romanian (297,570), Chinese (127,822), and Ukrainian (107,188). (Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org)

Some of the interviewees also answered that the personal problems are the main reasons for the increase of lone mothers, such as violation, personal fragility, individualism and difficulties in taking responsibilities of ones one life and future. There were no real differences in the answers of the interviewees working in the public sector and the voluntary organisation.

The reason why lone mothers come to ask for the support from these interviewees do not differ much if compared between public and voluntary service. Three out of five answered that the main reasons are economical. The lone mothers come to ask for economical or material support. Other three out of all the five also mentioned that these women are lonely and they do not have family that could support them. So these women

are not only in need of economical support but a social network and emotional support. The lack of social network is also connected to working life. A social worker in the voluntary organisation described the situation like this:

“The ones who do not have a family that can help them have difficulties in starting a job, because they do not know where to put the children. They come to ask for help in babysitting. Sometimes the employer does not want to make a working contract if the applicant has small children and then comes the need for an economical support, because working is not possible”. (Julia)

As we have read in chapter 4 about the situation in the labour market and the policies related to that, it is quite obvious that the aim of the Italian welfare state is to keep women at home without recognising that all women do not have a husband. Women are supposed to take responsibility of childcare, care for the elderly, the disabled and the chronically ill. (D’Apice & Fadda, 2003). According to Daly and Rake the Italian women are least likely to be at work or to seek work in Western Europe. The state is not showing much interest in this, because its’ ideology is that family is an important unit in producing welfare and giving social services. (Daly & Rake, 2003) This can be seen in the answers that the social workers gave in the interviews. The public services are not sufficient to support women who do not have social networks. That leads to a situation where lone mothers have huge difficulties to enter labour market if they do not have family that can take care of their children or money to pay for the day care. They are in a never-ending vicious circle.

All of the interviewees felt that they are able to help lone mothers that are coming to ask for support. But when I asked what kind of situations the lone mothers have to have in order to get help, some limitations came out in the possibilities to help. The workers of the voluntary organisation can only help mothers who are either pregnant or have children under six years old. One of their goals is to help mothers to make it easier to give birth and also to not make an abortion. They can give economical support for 16 months for those who have difficulties in deciding whether or not to make an abortion. The voluntary organisation offers the support for 16 months, 160 euros per month to make it easier to have the baby, which is an amount that does not make much difference in the living conditions in Italy. In 1999 it was counted that persons having less than 500€ per a month are living under poverty line (<http://www.wsws.org/articles/1999/jul1999/ital-j30.shtml>).

The reason why these lone mothers have to come to ask for the economical support from a voluntary organisation is that the states that have corporatist regime are found about professionalism and social status, which means that social benefits are usually meant only for people in the labour force. People outside of labour force have to seek for alternative support. (Esping-Andersen, 1990)

A lone mother, who already has small children less than six years of age, can only get help from food and clothing distribution. The interviewees from the public social

services answered that in order to get support the lone mothers have to have at least one of the following problems: economical problems, to miss a family network, be homeless or suffer from family violence. All of them answered that the reason for lone motherhood does not make any differences in the possibilities and rights to help them.

All of the interviewees of the voluntary organisation answered that the main way to help the lone mothers is to listen, to have conversation and to help the client understand their own situation. All of the interviewees answered that the most important help they can give is the decision about a placement into a shelter. The voluntary organisation has five houses which work as shelters for women in difficulties. The public social offices can buy the shelter service from the voluntary organisation since they do not have enough shelters themselves.

The legal rights to give certain kind of help to lone mothers were not very clear in the voluntary organisation. One of the interviewees in the voluntary organisation said that she has to respect the child protection law and the law of privacy but the two others did not want to answer to the question or they told me to check it from somewhere. It seemed that the laws were not very clear for them and they felt shame because of that and wanted to skip the question. I checked that there is an agreement between Parma municipality and the voluntary organisation according to the Law 328/2000 that describes the cooperation between a state, public services and voluntary organisations on the third sector. In practise the municipality of Parma is buying the shelter services from the voluntary organisation.

The interviewees in the public sector said that they have to respect the law of child protection and the regulations that the municipality is giving about the economical benefits given by the social workers and the information about minimum income level each year. The minimum income level is counted each year locally in every province. There is no national minimum income level. They also said that sometimes they also give help in the municipality of Parma, which is not legally right. One of the social workers in the public social office said:

“Sometimes when an immigrant loses his or her resident permit the social worker can still continue to help even though we are supposed to help only the citizens. It can also happen that when a couple is getting a divorce the social worker do not always check if the ex husband could help the mother and children economically and they just give economical support without evaluating the capacity of the ex husband”. (Anna)

7.3 Are there sufficient services to fulfil the needs of lone mothers in Parma from social workers point of view?

In Italy it is very typical that social services are also organised by voluntary organisations and other third sector organisations. Charity has a long history in the country also because it is a tradition of the Catholic Church. Family is also an important care taker in the society. The public services are functioning different ways in different

regions of the country. Emilia-Romagna is famous of its' relatively good social services in Italy.

It seems that social workers working with lone mothers have the feeling that more services for lone mothers are needed. Only one of the interviewees from the voluntary organisation, in this study said that the public social services are sufficient in Parma municipality. She said:

"They offer enough support and they also work together with the voluntary organisations". (Julia)

When analysing this phrase, it can be understood that the fact that the municipality is buying services from the third sector does not make people think that the public services are not sufficient. It is a tradition and something normal and obvious to most of the people. Maybe also because the third sector existed first and some people might think that the public sector was created to help the third sector which could not anymore take care of all the excluded in the society. A social worker from the public sector said about the "buying of the services":

"The third sector has to substitute us. We buy services, like shelter places from the third sector, because we do not have enough of them and we have agreements according to the law 328/2000 with different private or voluntary organisations". (Anna)

Four interviewees out of five had the idea that the public social services are not sufficient in Parma municipality. One of the public sector's social workers answered:

The services are sufficient what comes to very complex cases. But there are no preventive social services. All the normal economical support is means tested. Many times the situation has gone already too far. The help should had been started earlier in many cases. (Laura)

A worker from the voluntary organisations said about the public social services like this:
"They offer support but not enough. The social worker has too many lone mothers as clients in the same time. There are only little qualified personnel. Lots of money has been put into the services but they can not handle the challenges that poverty and immigrations is bringing". (Vera)

This answers shows that social workers are not seen as the main support givers for lone mothers. The lone mothers are expected to have their own social network were to ask help for and the public funds are meant only for those who do not have any other choice. Even then it is means tested so everybody is not able to get help. The support that social workers are offering are very marginal and people see it that way. The ideas in people's mind seems to be that one has to be very poor and lonely if she or he has to ask support from social services in a society like Italy.

These answers fir well together with what Espin-Anderssen and Korpi (1987) states about the residual model that Italian welfare state has. In the residual model the markets

have the power, which means that the state is not the crucial institution in distributing welfare. It is normal that there are several voluntary organisations and private social services in the residual model. All the citizens do not have equal opportunities and rights as well as a chance to receive a certain level of living standard. Social politics are not wide because they do not reach all the citizens. (Esping-Anderssen and Korpi, 1987) This leads to the problem of exclusion. In Italy, citizens like lone mothers who do not have capacity to great a safety net are facing a big risk of exclusion and poverty.

7.4 What services are lone mothers using and why?

All of the social workers said that lone mothers are not only using the public services when they are in need of support. There are several third sector services where lone mothers can go to ask for different kind of help. Most of the social workers have the idea that voluntary organisations are more flexible and free to help the clients. These third sector organisations are churches, the Caritas and different non governmental organisations that have different ideologies or goals like work against family violence. An organisation called “Centro di Aiuta alla Vita” is giving social assistance to lone mothers and pregnant women. They also have clothe and food distribution for lone mothers.

The reason why lone mothers are using these third sector services varies according to the social workers. Julia from the voluntary organisation said as following:

“Public services are sometimes delegating services for us because they do not always have possibilities to help their clients. The reason for that is usually the lack of economical resources.”

Laura, who is one of the public services’ social workers, said that the third sector’s services are just something extra for the clients. Vera from the voluntary organisation said that the third sector can often respond faster to the clients needs than the public social offices. That is because the third sector organisations are less bureaucratic. It is easier for a voluntary organisation to work with flexible hours and ask help from other voluntary organisations when needed.

All of the social workers felt that they can guide their clients to other services if they can not help them themselves. The social workers in the public social offices said that it happens often with the illegal immigrants. They guide them to the Caritas were the illegal immigrants can get a temporary place to sleep and to get something to eat. The workers in the voluntary organisations said that they often guide their clients to the public social services, especially when they ask for economical support and they have not yet asked help from public social office. The workers in the voluntary organisations can also guide their clients to other voluntary organisation depending on the needs that the client is having. There is also a public organisation in Parma that is helping illegal immigrants with matters concerning health issues.

It seems that it is not so clear for the clients where to ask for help. Many clients come first to voluntary organisation when in need of economical support. It seems that people do not have a clear picture of the services network of social services and they are not aware of the public social services that they have right to ask for. When analysing the whole interviewing process of the five social workers, it comes out clearly that social services, both public and third sector are means tested and they are meant for people who do not have a family that can give support. As discussed in the chapter four, in the Italian residual model the private market and family are playing the most important roles. If family or private market can not respond to the basic needs of an individual, one has to ask for support from the social political actions that the society is having. In a residual society these supports are supposed to be only temporary and means tested. In the collective social politics state is having a marginal role and the interference is minimal. This means that the state does not insure its' citizens basic safety net and income security. (Titmuss, 1974)

Since lone mothers are not having a strong nuclear family, it can be difficult to live in a society with a residual welfare model. A lone mother can feel quite excluded and abnormal. State is not supporting enough the lone mother's labour participation. Now the lone mothers, poor mothers, and handicapped children have the priority to get a day care place for their children. It is still very hard to get children to enter the day care and the ones who attend are from middle and upper class families. That is because there are not enough places and families often feel that the service is too expensive, so it is worth to stay home with children and not work. (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/17/33915831.pdf>)

8. CONCLUSION

In this study I have looked at Italian welfare state and lone mothers living in it. I have used the welfare model descriptions of Titmuss (1974) and Esping-Andersen (1986; 1990; 1992). According to Titmuss, Italy is practising the residual social policy. The dominant institutions are private markets and family while states role is marginal in social services in the residual model. Esping-Andersen's analyses show that Italy belongs to the corporatist welfare model. Social security is income related and that is why church and family is playing a vital role in social services. The public allowances are rare in Italy and that is why Italians are more dependent on their families and private organisations economically than for example in social-democratic states. It has a negative effect among sensitive groups like lone mothers, who are in risk of poverty and exclusion in Italy.

According to the data used for this study, it is clear that Italian family is stronger in its traditional form based on marriage and solidarity in the family than in most European countries. It is most normal to live in marriage, divorces are rare and births out of marriage are few. On the other hand Italy has low fertility rate and children are usually living long together with their parents, so it shows that it is not easy to start a family. It shows that there are problems in gender division of labour and too little family policies to support families, women and especially lone mothers. Many women have expectations about life that are not accepted by Italian welfare model. Women do not anymore only think that their career is to take care of the family. They have found another meaning in life, but the social policies are making it difficult to carry out the plans of ones own life. The conservative/corporatist welfare state is not supporting Italian women. Family is the main support giver for married women as well as for lone mothers also in the municipality of Parma.

I think that the form of Italian family policies and benefits show that the welfare states aim is to keep the family as strong unit. In most of the policies the state is not seeing the family members as individuals. The state does not interfere in to the problem, because it sees that family is responsible to take care of its' members. That can be a huge challenge for example for lone mothers that do not have participating family or relatives close by. From the point of view of the welfare model, lone mother families really seem to be so called incomplete families in Italy. That is due to their limited resources to face the principal role assigned to the Italian family in the provision of care for children and the elderly.

Italian welfare state is in front of new kinds of challenges. The standard of living and quality of life has improved, which has leaded to a situation that the older generation has become bigger and younger generation smaller. These kinds of demographic changes have also influenced in institutions like family and church. The family is no more so strongly the centre of social life and the fountain of economical security, even though the state wants to see it that way. In Italy, important family policies do not exist. They are

still compensated by a strong family solidarity, which is not so reliable anymore. The results of this study indicate that lone mothers are facing difficulties because of this kind of features in Italian social policies. In the same time public social services are comfortless in front of lone mothers. They are giving means tested support as much as they are allowed to but they have to fall back on voluntary organisations support networks, reducing this way also the public responsibility. Women and their agonies are too invisible in Italian society, even though they are important and irreplaceable partners of Italian social policies.

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APPENDIX 1.

Salve! Questo questionario è parte di una ricerca sulle madri single in Italia, fatto per la Facoltà di Scienze Sociali dell'Università di Gothenburg 2007, in Svezia. Tutte le risposte sono anonime. Grazie mille per la Sua partecipazione!

1. Qual'è la Sua professione/istruzione e da quanto lavora nei servizi sociali?
2. Per quale organizzazione lavora?E' un'organizzazione non governativa, un servizio pubblico, una chiesa o qualcos'altro?
3. Da quanto tempo ha madri single come clienti?
4. Qual'è la ragione principale dell'essere madri single delle sue clienti: vedovanza, divorzio o non sono mai state sposate, qualcos'altro?

11. Quali sono le più importanti leggi/regole che Lei deve considerare quando aiuta le madri single?

12. Quale tipo di aiuto dà che non tiene in considerazione le leggi/regole?

13. I servizi sociali pubblici offrono abbastanza supporto per le madri single? Spieghi perché/perché no?

14. Quali servizi utilizzano le madri single oltre ai servizi pubblici? Perché?

15. Se Lei non può aiutarle, le indirizza ad altri servizi? A quale altro servizio e perché?

16. Posso ricontattar La se dovessi avere ulteriori domande?

La prego di contattare me o il mio supervisore in caso Lei abbia delle domande o voglia aggiungere qualcosa!

Grazie mille!

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APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire's English translation:

1. What is your profession/education and for how long have you worked in social services?
2. What is the organisation you are working for and is it a non governmental organization, a public service, a church or something else?
3. For how long have you had lone mothers as your clients?
4. What is the main reason for lone motherhood among your clients: widowhood, divorce or have they never been married, something else?
5. Have there been an increase /decrease in the number of lone mother clients during the time you have been working? Which type of lone motherhood has increased/decreased (widowhood, divorce, never married, some others type)?
6. What are the main reasons for the possible increase/decrease?
7. What are the main reasons why lone mothers ask for your support?
8. What are your legal rights to help lone mothers, does it differ between widows, divorced or mothers that have never been married?
9. What kind of life situation must a lone mother have in order to get support from your organisation? Why?
10. What are the tools you use in your work to support lone mothers: economical or other kind of support?
11. What are the most important laws/regulations you have to take into account when helping lone mothers?
12. What kind of support do you give that is not given according to the laws/regulations?
13. Are the public social services offering enough support for lone mothers? Explain why/why not?
14. What services are the lone mothers using other than public services? Why?

15. If you cannot support them, do you guide them to some other service? To what service and why?
16. Can I come back to you if I have any further questions?