

Thirty Successful Experiences of Redistribution, Reduction,
Recognition, Remuneration and Representation in Care Work

R.O.S.A. (Employment and Care Services Network), Italy



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Country and/or location of implementation: Puglia, Southern Italy

Instances and/or legal framework responsible for its implementation: Regional Government of Puglia, in coordination with the Italian Government

Specific issue covered and beneficiaries of the action or policy

In a context of shortage in social services for the elderly and family-based welfare systems, over the last 15 years Italian families have relied heavily on immigrant caregivers to respond to the growing demand for care in an aging society. This has led to an influx of more than 700,000 immigrants who work as domestic helpers and live-in caregivers in Italian homes. More than 50% of them work without a legal status. R.O.S.A, the acronym for “Network for Employment and Care Services” aims to improve the situation of families and immigrant helpers by including the latter in local networks of home care services and ensuring adequate professional solutions. Its objectives are to:

- Support families in the search for qualified Italian and immigrant caregivers.
- Protect the supply and demand of home care services with regular and qualified employment contracts.
- Provide private care workers (Italian and immigrant) with continuous training to ensure the quality of care.
- Better understand undeclared work in home care in order to combat it.
- Create a system that allows working women to reconcile work and family life.

The project is aimed at families with vulnerable people (elderly and/or disabled) in need of home care, and at qualified Italian and immigrant caregivers who provide home care services. The Puglia region has formally defined and recognized, through a specific regulation, the private assistance provided by immigrant caregivers as a profession. Workers who have completed a special training course and whose skills have been certified by the Public Employment Service are entered in the official register of home caregivers. Workers who do not meet the competencies required for certification of

14 Information about this good practice was taken from (Leichsenring, 2015).

their professional qualifications are placed on a special list and participate in training activities provided by the R.O.S.A. project. After completing their training as domestic assistants (300 hours), they are placed on the official register of home caregivers. Families who want to employ a qualified home caregiver can go to the Public Employment Service and search the listings for the Italian/immigrant caregiver who meets their needs. The Public Employment Service offers advice on recruitment. To encourage the regulation of labor contracts for immigrant caregivers, the Puglia region offers a voucher benefit of €2,500 per family (lump sum). This benefit is a one-time payment linked to resource assessment.

Results expected from and obtained with the action or policy

R.O.S.A. is an experimental project that started in 2008 and is co-funded by the Puglia region and the Italian government. They have implemented various methods to improve the care received by the elderly in their homes, and to promote an integrated system of home care services for those in need of long-term care. Their actions include:

- A provincial registry of Italian and immigrant caregivers providing private home care services.
- The design of economic incentives to favor the hiring of immigrant caregivers by families through regular contracts.
- The establishment of information and query points regarding employment in each local social district.
- Information campaigns with the participation of trade unions providing low-cost or free administrative assistance in relation to employment contracts.

A noteworthy positive result is the growth in employment in the care sector. As a result of the R.O.S.A. project, by March 2010 approximately 2,000 people had been enrolled in the registry of home caregivers. 800 were able to work and had received certification to perform home care work, while 1,200 were on the list to participate in the training programs provided by the Puglia regional chapter.

Obstacles and challenges in the implementation of these policies and actions

This project benefits families with regard to personalized care and immediate access to services, but must deal with a number of issues related to long-term sustainability in terms of supply and demand for care work. In a context of progressive regulation, some families will find it increasingly difficult to afford family care. In most cases, families do not enter into a regular contract to avoid tax and social security contributions. The economic incentive vouchers offered by the government should serve to partially cover the costs of taxes and social security contributions linked to regular employment contracts. However, as of March 2011, only 82 families had applied for the voucher. This seems to be an insufficient incentive in addition to the considerable reluctance of families to establish legal labor contracts as these entail having to comply with certain legal conditions, like minimum wages and rest periods. On the other hand, it should not be assumed that the availability and flow of immigrant caregivers will remain stable over time.

Justification of compliance with the inclusion criteria

Adequate management of the supply and demand of care services in a community with high long-term care needs becomes crucial to ensure its well-being. The articulated work of the R.O.S.A. network is a good example of collaborative work that contributes both to supporting families in need of care services and the people who provide them. In addition, the particular context of irregular immigration has presented an interesting opportunity to overcome the precariousness and informality of work in this sector. It recognizes and reduces the care work that families do. It also aims to advance in providing fair remuneration to the people who offer their care services.

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