



European Committee
of the Regions



CITTÀ
METROPOLITANA
DI BOLOGNA

Social responsibility from a gender perspective



#EUlocal

Event type

Digital local dialogue

Dates

26 March 2021

Initialising member

Mayor Virginio Merola (IT/PES)

Audience

Citizens, students, women networks and associations, private companies, trade unions, NGOs.

Organisers

Bologna Metropolitan city

Partner

Emilia Romagna Region, Capo D Network

Themes

Gender Equality, social responsibility, pay transparency, pay gap, EU Next Generation Fund, public-private partnership, an inclusive and sustainable Europe.



Speakers

- **Virginio Merola** (IT/PES)
CoR Member and Mayor of the Bologna metropolitan city
- **David Sassoli**
President of the European Parliament
- **Helena Dalli**
European Commissioner for Equality
- **Elena Bonetti**
Minister for Equal Opportunities and Equality
- **Elly Schlein**
Vice President of the Emilia Romagna Region
- **Linda Laura Sabbadini**
ISTAT Director and President of "Women 20"
- **Simona Robotti**
President of the "CAPO D" Network
- **Maria Latella**
Event moderator and journalist
- **Vera Gheno**
Sociolinguist, University of Firenze
- **Professor Giovanna Cosenza**
University of Bologna
- **Roberto Poli**
Unesco Chair, Trento University
- **Stephan Winkelmann**
CEO of Lamborghini (video message)



Key messages

The European Union's support for the promotion of gender equal policies is crucial. Forward looking cities and regions need to put the EU's directives into practice, and stimulate and support changes in all sectors of society.

Next Generation EU is a crucial tool for a modern and sustainable recovery, which should also include a more equal Europe. Gender equality has to be mainstreamed across the recovery plan.

Networks and partnerships between the private and public sectors are crucial for building an innovative, competitive, more equal and socially integrated Europe: [RETE CAPO D](#) represents a successful example.

Bologna metropolitan city and Emilia Romagna region have policies to attract investments and promote social inclusiveness. The city administration together with third sector organisations are at the centre of the social, equal and economic development of the area.

Creating an evaluation framework is a successful tool to measure the adoption of gender equal policies in private and public organisations.



Press/Social media coverage

Media coverage

[COR Event Page](#)

Website

[Future of Europe](#)

[Bologna Municipality](#)

Social Media

[#EU_CoR](#)

[FB Bologna Municipality](#)



Background

The online local dialogue ***Europa sostantivo femminile (Europe, substantially female)*** was organised by the **Metropolitan City of Bologna** in cooperation with the **Capo D Network**, and with the support of the **European Committee of the Regions** and the **Emilia-Romagna Region**.

Virginio Merola (IT/PES), mayor of Bologna and member of the Committee of the Regions, kicked off the event, which included speeches from the **President of the European Parliament David Sassoli**, the European Commissioner for Equality **Helena Dalli**, the Italian Minister for Equal Opportunities and Family **Elena Bonetti**, and the vice-president of the Emilia-Romagna Region **Elly Schlein**.

Some 2000 people registered in advance for the event, including 600 pupils and students from local secondary schools and universities. The event was broadcast from a temporary studio within Bologna's City Council Hall, with nearly 1,000 participants following the live broadcast via the European Broadcast Service (EBS) and a bespoke streaming platform for the event, and 76 people actively participating on the Facebook page of the Metropolitan City of Bologna.

Ensuring gender equality in pay and employment

The purpose of the event was to discuss practical, positive action to foster equal opportunities between women and men, and exchange good practices. Journalist **Maria Latella** hosted the proceedings, which focused on the measures in place to overcome the crisis, and on the objectives set by the different levels of government for overcoming the gender pay and employment gap. The online audience also posed numerous questions to the guests on this topic.

The input by **Linda Laura Sabbadini**, Director of ISTAT and chair of Women 20, sparked a debate on the Recovery Fund, generating proposals for the G20 empowering women agenda. A session entitled "Etymology, changing words" focused on the importance of words, and saw contributions from professors **Vera Gheno** and **Giovanna Cosenza** and a debate mainly involving teachers and students.

Experts from the academic and institutional world provided an overview of the actions and measures that are being adopted at European and national levels to address the developments and changes currently affecting the world of work which the COVID-19 crisis has made even more fragile and vulnerable – especially for women (in the workplace).

The Mayor of Bologna, **Virginio Merola**, said: *"The Recovery Fund, in dealing with Europe's socio-economic recovery, must target gender inequality as one of its 'key issues'. As cities and local communities, we need to make our voice heard more effectively to avoid finding ourselves in a situation again in which young people and working women pay the price, as they are in this crisis. We therefore need to build together a European space for citizenship rights and the right to work for all, which gives due consideration to the role of women, who more than others are paying the price of the pandemic."*



"A *step change is needed*," pointed out Italian Minister for Equal Opportunities and Family **Elena Bonetti**, "to enable the female experience to play its full social and economic role, not only in terms of justice and combating inequalities, but also because it is advantageous. The Next Generation plan must enable women to unleash their energies, as this is the only way that our country can make the necessary step change."

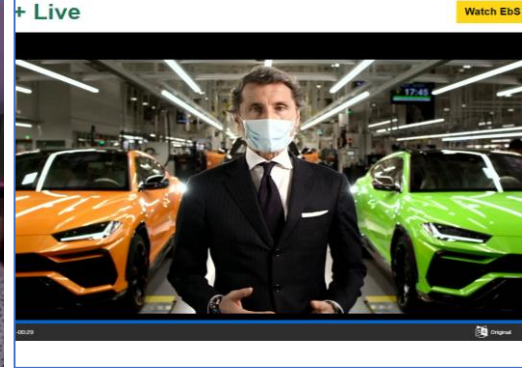
Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality, said: "We need to reaffirm and promote the gender dimension in social responsibility in the workplace starting from the application of the principle of equality and pay transparency in both the public and private sectors. The pursuit of equality requires a collective commitment and this approach is important both at EU level and in each of the national and regional contexts. [...] Local and regional governments, social authorities, private companies are fundamental actors to improve the European social equality dimension."

The President of the European Parliament **David Sassoli** said that: "This crisis gives us a great opportunity to support people's dignity, achieve justice for women, and build a European space that will be a benchmark in a world where equality does not find citizenship. And as we have already seen in the response to the [COVID-19] crisis, this Europe has the values and resources to do this. The Italian recovery plan will be crucial for Europe because there can be no European recovery without an Italian recovery".

He went on to highlight the European Commission's steps towards a more equal Europe, such as salary transparency rules, as well as the need for making "gender violence a crime prosecutable at European level." Furthermore, "The Conference on the Future of Europe, the Porto Conference in May on the social European dimension, [and] the Commission measures to ensure equal pay for equal work are important steps towards a more equal Europe. Nothing is taboo - not even the renegotiation of treaties." He invited the audience to fully engage in the Conference on the Future of Europe and ensure that gender equality remains at the forefront of the discussions.

Elly Schlein, vice-president of the Emilia-Romagna region, said: "The COVID-19 pandemic erupted as a health crisis, but immediately became economic and social. On the employment front, we can see from ISTAT's figures that it is women who, together with young people, are paying the highest price because they already had the most precarious employment conditions.

"Swift and effective action must therefore be taken to reduce the gender employment and pay gaps, by deploying a wide range of measures to support the training of women in all fields, tackling stereotypes, and supporting female employment and entrepreneurship. This also means strengthening work-life balance policies and facilitating a more equal distribution of caring responsibilities in families, which disproportionately fall on women's shoulders. This is why it is crucial to adopt a cross-cutting gender perspective when preparing the plan for investing the incoming Next Generation EU resources, and ensure that they help to reduce gender inequalities. By investing significant resources also in social infrastructure, as we are already doing in Emilia-Romagna, we can turn unpaid care work into skilled and paid work in the services sector."



The data presented by **Linda Laura Sabbadini** on the post-COVID-19 economic and employment crisis painted a picture *"of a country where women have been and continue to be a bulwark against the virus, because as workers they are on the front line in schools and hospitals, and in the home, which even before COVID-19 accounted for 67% of the burden of care. To understand the seriousness of the situation, I would point out that young Italian women have the lowest employment rate in Europe, lower than in Greece. In particular, young women aged 25-29 are six points below Greece: we are talking about women that are more educated than men, but that our country is unable to employ. The point is that for as long as women are under-utilised as compared to their potential, Italy will not grow.*

"There is a need for investment and clear, quantifiable and measurable objectives. As early as 1957, the Treaty of Rome considered gender equality a core value, fundamental right and European pillar of social rights. Gender equality strategies are the real key to the development of this country and what is needed, primarily, is not self-proclamation, but to understand what has blocked this development, what are the strategic assets ".

In terms of best practices, the **Capo D Network** is a group of companies in the Bologna metropolitan area promoting gender equality and scalable initiatives. Presentations were given by several companies in the network, including **Marconi Airport of Bologna**, **Lamborghini**, **Banca Emil** and **Tper**, the regional transport authority. Good practices these companies put forward included gender blind job applications, covering baby-sitting costs, coaching for young parents, allowing flexible working hours and part-time working, applying a strong ethical code, a mentoring programme called "breaking the glass ceiling", and developing a culture of self-care and care for others.

The event was concluded by **Professor Roberto Poli**, UNESCO Chair in Anticipatory Systems and professor at the University of Trento, who drew attention to the significance of President Von der Leyen's creation of a Vice Presidency for strategic foresight, dedicated to preparing the EU for the coming decades. Although societal change has always occurred, Prof. Poli stressed that what distinguishes our current epoch from previous ones is the acceleration of change. *"A sustainable welfare system is what is needed, that can be maintained over time, not in order to reduce it but to adapt it to the 21st century. The classic three-pillar model (stable households, single provider of income, ex-post interventions) is now outdated. The new welfare model sees the fundamental role of working women and services to the family adapted to 'fluid families'."*

It is also necessary to anticipate crises rather than run after them, continued Professor Poli, and focus on the difficulties that *"are concentrated in the periods of transition: from education to work, when the first child is born, when changing job or when unemployed, when moving from work to retirement."* Professor Poli stressed the importance of life-long education to help people to address these changes. Finally, he made a plea to invest in kindergartens, as this is where people can best prepare for living with the uncertainties they will increasingly encounter throughout their lives.