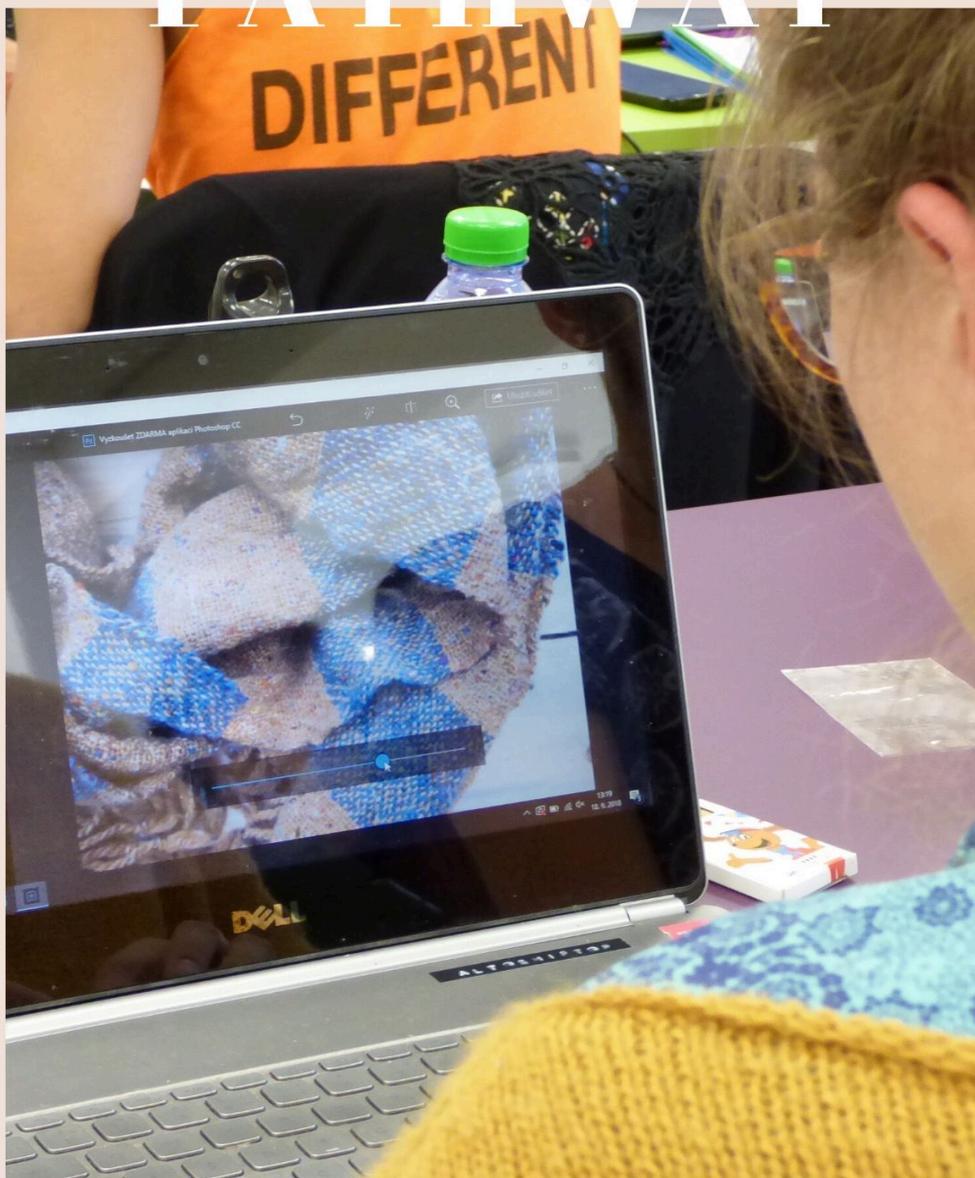


FLORA' HANDMADE WOMEN  
ACROSS EUROPE

# CAREER PATHWAY



**Erasmus+**



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**FLORA'**

**HANDMADE WOMEN ACROSS EUROPE**

**CAREER PATHWAY - ITALY**

*CREATIVI108*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the early 2000s recession all Eurozone Countries are experiencing improvements both in economic growth and employment. This same trend was recorded in Italy too. According to the most recent ISTAT data (2016) Italian economic growth (+ 0.4% in GDP and + 1.5% on annual basis) was also proved by the increasing job offer as well: not only employees outgrew self-employed workers but in 2017 second quarter the overall employment rate increased.<sup>1</sup> Concurrently, also job demand and business activities raised. In particular, the increase in employee job positions went hand in hand with the one in working hours and with the resorting to the unemployment insurance by companies.<sup>2</sup>

As much important is the gender issues topic. A general growth – in terms of employment – was recorded for both genders but with a higher intensity for women and a decrease in the inactivity rate (- 0.1%), especially in the south. Despite this latest improvement in the female employment situation the gap between women and men on the total workforce is still large<sup>3</sup> – a gap that the project FLORA' wants to fill as much as possible.

It must be said that in comparison with the 2000s, the percentage value of hired women increased by + 4.7 percentage points, but in some occasions equal opportunities policies still seem to be necessary. One major example is the work-family reconciliation: women still have to choose between the two. Therefore, it is in this context that FLORA' develops. It aims at strengthening female self-entrepreneurship in an entrepreneurial sector – the manufacturing one – which has many peculiarities but at the same time offers many possibilities, particularly in the handmade sector in which working women are few. Generally speaking only 26.5% out of the total number of workers are women in the manufacturing industry.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to the self-employment rate, Italy has one of highest values in Europe: 15.8% in 2015 and 15.2% in 2017.<sup>5</sup>

The project FLORA' is designed to address this complex context in which handmade work alone cannot make the difference. Indeed, we live in a highly technological world hence the need to back up the manufacturing sector with the ICT one that is increasingly being used by industries to keep up with consumers interests<sup>6</sup>. In this specific case, the recent proliferation of blogs, social networks such as Facebook or Twitter and websites allows a greater extension of the handmade work phenomenon. Handmade markets events – which are popular in Italy – are a very good example: on one hand there is an increase both in work from home and in handmade production but on the other being able to use social platforms to raise awareness is of course essential if a profitable activity is to be pursued.

In general, it is absolutely necessary not to underestimate the contribution that homemade production can bring to both the family and local economy.

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<sup>1</sup>ISTAT (October 2017, 12). *Il mercato del lavoro*. Roma, ITA: Centro Diffusione Dati

<sup>2</sup>ISTAT (October 2017, 12). *Il mercato del lavoro*. Roma, ITA: Centro Diffusione Dati

<sup>3</sup>ISTAT (October 2017, 25). *Indagine conoscitiva sulle politiche in materia di parità tra donne e uomini. Allegato 1 - Fig. 4 - Tavola 3*. Roma, ITA: Giorgio Alleva

<sup>4</sup>ISTAT (October 2017, 25). *Indagine conoscitiva sulle politiche in materia di parità tra donne e uomini. Allegato 1 - Fig. 4 - Tavola 4*. Roma, ITA: Giorgio Alleva

<sup>5</sup>EUROSTAT (November 16, 2017). *Self-employment by sex, age and educational attainment level*.

<sup>6</sup>EUROSTAT (2008). *ICT usage by enterprises 2008*. Authors: Storm H., Smihily M.

## 2. FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS IN ITALY

The project FLORA' focuses on female self-entrepreneurship: women's ability to be self-entrepreneurs by developing growing sectors such as that of handmade work and e-commerce.

What will be discussed in the following chapter are the work-family reconciliation difficulties that are often emphasized by that women's choice to have no children in order to get a higher work position; the potential of handmade production, that is the opportunities offered by the sector; and finally, the role of those women who choose to have a family and economically support the family by selling handmade items.

### 2.1. Work-family reconciliation

ISTAT data show an improvement over the last 40 years in female occupational condition – despite short interruptions dictated by moments of crisis. According to the most recent data Italian female employment rate is 49.1%.<sup>7</sup> Factors that help explaining this constant growth in the labor market are different: from better levels of education to a tertiarization process of the economy.

Therefore, it is very interesting to focus on female entrepreneurship. Indeed, out of the total number of entrepreneurs the share of women accounts today for 26% and two-thirds are self-employed workers in sectors such as catering, trade, accommodation and *market services with a high knowledge content*.<sup>8</sup>

Although contributions brought by new female entrepreneurs particularly depend on their level of education (the employment rate of women with a high educational qualification is higher than 70% regardless the role in the family and in all divisions<sup>9</sup>), not less important are work-family reconciliation difficulties. Indeed, many employed women (54.1%) dedicate over 60 hours a week to paid and/or family work.<sup>10</sup> Their participation to the labor market is strongly connected to family burdens too: the employment rates comparison of women who live alone (81.1%), in couples without children (70.8%) and mothers (56.4%)<sup>11</sup> shows that the most underprivileged are the last ones, which underlines the increasing effort for women to reconcile work and family. That is why mothers are the ideal target of the project FLORA'.

However, a big step forward has been made with the 2014 Memorandum of Understanding (*Protocollo di Intesa*) which has brought positive changes in the line of work – especially on issues such as maternity, equal opportunities, etc.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>ISTAT (October 2017, 25). *Indagine conoscitiva sulle politiche in materia di parità tra donne e uomini. Punto 3 – il mondo del lavoro*. Roma, ITA: Giorgio Alleva

<sup>8</sup>ISTAT (October 2017, 25). *Indagine conoscitiva sulle politiche in materia di parità tra donne e uomini. Punto 3.1 – l'imprenditoria femminile*. Roma, ITA: Giorgio Alleva

<sup>9</sup>ISTAT (October 2017, 25). *Indagine conoscitiva sulle politiche in materia di parità tra donne e uomini. Punto 3.2 – la conciliazione dei tempi di vita*. Roma, ITA: Giorgio Alleva

<sup>10</sup>See footnote no. 9

<sup>11</sup>See footnote no. 8

<sup>12</sup>Dipartimento Pari Opportunità (2014). *Protocollo di Intesa per lo Sviluppo e la Crescita delle Imprese a prevalente Partecipazione Femminile e delle Lavoratrici Autonome*. Roma, ITA

## 2.2. Women and small handmade businesses in Italy

Despite the employment rate of women with children is one of the worst in Europe, good results in female entrepreneurship were recorded – being in first place: indeed, in Italy women who carry out independent activities are 1.661.000, more than in Germany and United Kingdom. 181.482 are owners of individual craft businesses with a 2.5% increase in the last 10 years<sup>13</sup>.

However small craft businesses face a welfare system that does not allow to reconcile work and family in an optimized way. According to Confartigianato – the Italian representation of craftsmanship, micro and small businesses – the quality of services available to families is still very low: several Italian municipalities are unable to offer childcare and/or supplementary services for children. Despite this, some women have been able to turn themselves into entrepreneurs and create a new business. Some examples are shown below.

Giorgia Rinaldi and her *Happy Mama*<sup>14</sup> are the first ones. She managed to create a small culinary laboratory and her jams, made of sweet and savory sauces, have even landed overseas<sup>15</sup>.

The Sampietro sisters, keen on the production of vintage objects, entered the market by first opening a shop on Etsy and then two websites, *Monpassage.it*<sup>16</sup> and *Monpassamagazine.com*<sup>17</sup>, both dedicated to vintage production in the fashion field.

Finally, it is worth mentioning Francesca Baldassarri. Thanks to her blog<sup>18</sup> she was able to get a foothold in the market dedicating herself to writing books on how to make handicraft a real profession and then to coordinating *Party Crafter*, a place for all artisans to exchange suggestions, ideas on new creations and small workshops.

These are just few examples, but there are several women who succeeded in creating their own space by exploiting the worldwide growing handmade market.

## 2.3. Employment opportunities in the sector

Employment opportunities in the handmade sector are varied. The most important ones are: the handmade market, the traditional shop, the temporary shop and the online store (an e-commerce example).

The traditional shop needs an actual property where to sell. It implies greater tax compliance and of course maintenance costs but allows to have a permanent and easily reachable location.

An alternative is the handmade market which enables to move across the territory but that – in order to guarantee the occasional status of the sale – sets a limited number of participations.

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<sup>13</sup>See Confartigianato (2017), Roma, ITA.

<https://www.confartigianato.it/2017/11/donne-impresa-italia-al-top-in-ue-per-imprenditrici-ma-welfare-non-aiuta-mamme-lavoratrici/>

<sup>14</sup>See <http://www.happymama.it/index.php?lang=it>

<sup>15</sup>See <https://www.vanityfair.it/mybusiness/news-mybusiness/2017/04/24/lavorare-da-casa>

<sup>16</sup>See <http://www.monpassage.it/eshop/it/>

<sup>17</sup>See <http://www.monpassagemagazine.com/>

<sup>18</sup>See <http://francescabaldassarri.blogspot.it/>

The temporary shop is one of the most recent innovations. It is now getting popular particularly in major Italian cities. It consists in using properties for short-term activities, encouraging the consumers to look for them. Consequently, advertising plays an essential role: for the success of the activity it is necessary that the greatest number of people are aware of it and that particular attention is paid to the duration of the activity itself. The costs for opening a temporary shop are obviously the typical ones with two main differences: a great expense for promotion and advertising – the advertising campaign must precede the opening of the store and must be aimed at conveying the *concept* of the product, the opening time of the store itself and any discount obtainable; a marginal expense for interior design and shop windows. For what concerns leases, it is possible to opt for transitional contracts. Nowadays, however, this kind of shop can be found only in some cities (including Milan, Turin, Florence, Naples and Rome), but it could soon spread all over Italy.

Finally, e-commerce – which will be better explained in the next paragraph – is one of the most frequently chosen option as it implies some advantages: a wider audience (just take into account the number of internet users and that of those buying online), the possibility to work from home and to ship everywhere.

### **2.3.1. E-commerce in Italy**

E-commerce can be described as that new frontier of trade which took shape thanks to internet. It has enabled many people to open an online business and sell their own handmade products. Generally speaking, according to the research carried out by the School of Management in Milan and NETCOMM<sup>19</sup>, the growth of e-commerce in Italy is not going to stop as an increasing number of companies are now making it available with even some benefits, such as the goods return: 12% of companies that sell online adopt the return policy in case of dissatisfaction. Data gathered by the eCommerce B2c Observatory of the Polytechnic University of Milan show that the textile and clothing industries are growing (together with the electronics one) which will result in +17% in sales compared to the previous year.<sup>20</sup>

In Italy, however there are 22 million web shoppers (+10% compared to 2016), with 200 million orders. All these aspects set challenges that anyone – in this case hobbyists and artisans – willing to open an online business has to face, but as it is a growing sector, e-commerce could act as promoter for the implementation of the project FLORA’.

Tax specifics for the sale of handmade items in Italy will be better discussed in Chapter 3, here it must suffice to underline that opening an online business implies a complex bureaucratic process and above all a VAT number and costs of platform maintenance. That is the reason why many hobbyists and artisans decide to rely on pre-existing platforms that work as intermediaries for the advertising and sale of the aforementioned products (withholding a percentage of each sale).

Among the most popular e-marketplace portals in Italy some must be remembered: *Blooming*, an Italian platform dedicated to the so-called social shopping; *DaWanda*, for do-it-yourself designers and artists; *A*

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<sup>19</sup>See <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/impresa-e-territori/2017-10-06/1-e-commerce-entra-nell-era-maturita-095255.shtml?uuid=AEyfsFgC>

<sup>20</sup>See <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/impresa-e-territori/2017-10-06/1-e-commerce-entra-nell-era-maturita-095255.shtml?uuid=AEyfsFgC>

*Little Market*, a Parisian portal for buying and selling handmade products; *Babirussa*, an Italian platform dedicated to both handmade and vintage items; *Miss Hobby*, another Italian platform for handmade jewelry; *Etsy*. Of course, as much important are platforms like eBay and Amazon, the latter with the special section *Amazon Handmade*<sup>21</sup>.

*Etsy* is surely the one that deserves more attention as it brings together hobbyists and artisans from all over the world by connecting them on a single platform. It has been on the e-commerce market since 2005, with more than 40 million members and over 1 million stores. It allows to join communities that enable hobbyists and artisans to help each other in solving problems and exchange information on events.<sup>22</sup> Finally, it created the so-called regional managers whose role is to spread the word about the portal by organizing events (e.g. *Craft Parties* – meetings between people bound by their passion for handmade production that in this way are able to exchange ideas, attend workshops, etc.).

### 3. NATIONAL POLICIES

The following chapter describes how national policies on female entrepreneurship have tried to boost a field that could greatly contribute to the Italian economy. The financial support in terms of laws and measures and the tax specifics for selling handmade products will be also analyzed.

#### 3.1. National and regional policies

Policies aimed at boosting female entrepreneurship are constantly encouraged by both the European Union and the Presidency of the Italian Council of Ministers through the Department for Equal Opportunities. The latter actually promoted a Protocol of Understanding together with the Ministry of Economic Development, the Italian Banking Association (ABI), the Alliance of Italian Cooperatives (ACI), Confindustria<sup>23</sup>, Confapi<sup>24</sup> and Rete Imprese Italia<sup>25</sup>. The main goal of the aforementioned Protocol is to promote female access to the job market by providing administrative support for the promotion and coordination of Government actions aimed at ensuring the full implementation of self-employment and work.<sup>26</sup>

As the Protocol shows, women-led companies are quite widespread in Italy and accounted for 23.6% at the end of 2013, according to the business register of the Italian Chambers of Commerce.<sup>27</sup> When taking into consideration the handmade production sector, it must be said that in addition to women with independent and regularly registered activities, there are many who work illegally (that is black market labor), data that official statistics cannot detect but that is essential to acknowledge.

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<sup>21</sup>See [https://www.amazon.it/Prodotti-Handmade-Italia/s?ie=UTF8&page=1&rh=n%3A9699425031%2Cp\\_n\\_location\\_browse-bin%3A11266430031](https://www.amazon.it/Prodotti-Handmade-Italia/s?ie=UTF8&page=1&rh=n%3A9699425031%2Cp_n_location_browse-bin%3A11266430031)

<sup>22</sup>See <http://simonemoriconi.com/vendere-su-etsy/>

<sup>23</sup>General Confederation of Italian Industry

<sup>24</sup>Italian Confederation of small and medium industry

<sup>25</sup>Italian Enterprise Network

<sup>26</sup>Dipartimento Pari Opportunità (2014). *Protocollo di Intesa per lo Sviluppo e la Crescita delle Imprese a prevalente Partecipazione Femminile e delle Lavoratrici Autonome*. Roma, ITA

<sup>27</sup>See footnote no. 26

The Protocol of Understanding is as well important because it was signed - as already mentioned - by ABI, cooperatives (such as AGCI, Confcooperative, LegaCoop), Confindustria, Confartigianato<sup>28</sup>, Confcommercio<sup>29</sup>, Casartigiani<sup>30</sup> and Confapi in order to establish a partnership that could enable female-dominated companies to access to credit.

It is very exemplifying that among the beneficiaries there are both small and medium-sized enterprises and self-employed female workers operating in whatever sector. Or that the Plafond of section 2 on investments by banks and financial intermediaries is articulated in three lines of intervention: *Investiamo nelle Donne* - investing in women; *Donne in Start-Up* - women in startups; *Donne in Ripresa* - women in recovery<sup>31</sup>.

In this context the most interesting one is the first one which consists of loans aimed at making new tangible or intangible investments (e.g. self-employment). They can also benefit from a guarantee provided by the Special Section "Presidency of the Council of Ministers - Department for Equal Opportunities" which is an agreement between the Presidency of the Council of Ministers - Department for Equal Opportunities, the Ministry of Economic Development and that of the Economy and Finance approved by decree of April 15, 2013.<sup>32</sup>

### **3.2. Laws on handmade craft trade**

The approving decree (March 2015, 27) of the Additional Act to the Convention signed by the Department for Equal Opportunities, the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry of Economy and Finance extended the possibility of accessing to the Special Section interventions also to those women registered as professionals or adhering to the orders or professional associations included in the list of the Ministry of Economic Development as provided for by Law no. 4/2013.

Moreover, Italy has different legislations according to the regions taken into account. Those here analyzed in terms of female entrepreneurship laws are Friuli Venezia-Giulia, Emilia Romagna and Campania.

In Friuli Venezia-Giulia the regional Law no. 11/2011, article 2, paragraph 85 states that in order to back up the creation of new women-led businesses at the regional level in sectors such as crafts, industry, commerce, tourism and services, the regional administration - also through delegation to the Regional Union of the Chambers of Commerce of Friuli Venezia-Giulia (*Unioncamere FVG*) - is entitled to grant capital in support of female entrepreneurship projects so as to partially cover investment expenses and management costs.<sup>33</sup> In December 2011 a regulation was drafted to set criteria, methods and financing. In chapters I and II, it better defines the purpose of the funding (which was mentioned above), the concepts of women-led enterprise, new business, SMEs and female entrepreneurship project.<sup>34</sup> Everything was

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<sup>28</sup>General Federation of Italian Artisans and Craftsmen

<sup>29</sup>General Federation of Italian Commerce and Tourism

<sup>30</sup>Representative category association of traditional and family craftsmanship and micro-enterprises

<sup>31</sup>See foothold no. 26

<sup>32</sup>See Sezione Speciale Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri - Dipartimento per le Pari Opportunità [http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/media/2666/decreto\\_imprenditoriafemminile\\_2013.pdf](http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/media/2666/decreto_imprenditoriafemminile_2013.pdf)

<sup>33</sup>L.R. 11 agosto 2011, n. 11, art. 2 comma 85, in materia di "Assestamento del bilancio 2011 e del bilancio pluriennale per gli anni 2011-2013 ai sensi dell'articolo 34 della legge regionale 21/2007."

<sup>34</sup>L.R. 23 dicembre 2011, art. 2, commi 85 e 86, in materia di "Regolamento concernente criteri e modalità per la concessione di contributi ai sensi dell'articolo 2, commi 85 e 86 della legge regionale 11 agosto 2011, n. 11 a sostegno di progetti di imprenditoria femminile."

again proposed in the regional Law no. 6/2017 on urgent rules for the delegation of contributory functions to the Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture of Friuli Venezia-Giulia.

With regard to the other two regions, Emilia Romagna and Campania comply with the Law 215/1992 which defines all aspects of funding and support for female entrepreneurship activities.<sup>35</sup> It aims at fostering the creation and development of female entrepreneurship, even in a cooperative way; at promoting trainings on entrepreneurship and at certifying professionalism of female entrepreneurs; at facilitating access to credit for women-led companies and their presence in the most innovative sectors; and at encouraging the female management of family businesses.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, the Legislative Decree no. 185/2000 paid attention to subsidies in favor of both self-employment and self-entrepreneurship aiming at encouraging the expansion of the productive and employment base and the development of a new entrepreneurship in economically disadvantaged areas of the Country. Promotion, organization and finalization of entrepreneurial energies were pursued to foster substantial equality and equal opportunities between men and women both in economic and entrepreneurial activity; and to support the creation and development the social enterprise and the agricultural one.<sup>37</sup>

Generally speaking funds provided to support female artisans and hobbyists are various. They can be public, regional or private and include calls for proposals.

In this regard it is necessary to recall the above-mentioned Protocol of Understanding which was signed in 2014 and then extended in 2015 until December 2017, 31<sup>38</sup>. As already outlined it includes a Special Section as a guarantee fund aimed at providing 30 million euros<sup>39</sup> to back up both female self-employed workers and self-entrepreneurs.

As much worth-mentioning is the financing program proposed by Invitalia – the National Agency for inward investment and economic development – owned by the Italian Ministry of Economy, which since 2015 has proposed many funding programs, such as “SMART&START ITALIA” that finances innovative startups all over Italy for projects between 100.000€ and 1.500.000€ covering investment expenses and management costs<sup>40</sup>; “AUTOIMPIEGO” (*self-employment*) and “NUOVE IMPRESE A TASSO ZERO” (*new zero rate companies*).<sup>41</sup>

*Autoimpiego* implies two forms of facilitation: the so-called *Lavoro Autonomo (self-employment)*<sup>42</sup> in which investments cannot exceed 25.823€ VAT excluded; and *Microimpresa (micro-enterprise)*<sup>43</sup> in which they cannot exceed 129.114€ VAT excluded. Both are intended for specific regions, such as Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Molise, Puglia, Sardinia and Sicily.

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<sup>35</sup>L. 25 febbraio 1992, n.215, in materia di “Azioni positive per l'imprenditoria femminile”.

<sup>36</sup>See foothold no. 35

<sup>37</sup>D'Lgs. 21 aprile 2000, n. 185, in materia di “Incentivi all'autoimprenditorialita' e all'autoimpiego, in attuazione dell'articolo 45, comma 1, della legge 17 maggio 1999, n. 144”

<sup>38</sup>See [http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/media/2672/proroga-protocollo\\_dintesa\\_pcm\\_mise\\_abi.pdf](http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/media/2672/proroga-protocollo_dintesa_pcm_mise_abi.pdf)

<sup>39</sup>See

<http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/sezione-speciale-presidenza-del-consiglio-dei-ministri-dipartimento-per-le-pari-opportunit%C3%A0-del-fondo-di-garanzia-per-le-pmi/>

<sup>40</sup>See <http://www.invitalia.it/site/new/home/cosa-facciamo/creiamo-nuove-aziende/smartstart-italia.html>

<sup>41</sup>See <http://www.invitalia.it/site/new/home/a-chi-ci-rivolgiamo/donne.html>

<sup>42</sup>See <http://www.invitalia.it/site/new/home/cosa-facciamo/creiamo-nuove-aziende/autoimpiego/lavoro-autonomo.html>

<sup>43</sup>See <http://www.invitalia.it/site/new/home/cosa-facciamo/creiamo-nuove-aziende/autoimpiego/microimpresa.html>

Instead *Nuove Imprese a Tasso Zero* is thought for young people and women who want to be entrepreneurs. In this case, funds are available for any eligible zero-rate business project throughout Italy with expenses up to 1.5 million euros (75% of total eligible expenses)<sup>44</sup>.

Finally, women looking for fundings to start a business can also resort to calls for proposals that regions and foundations provide. For example, the Emilia-Romagna region offers multiple channels for the consolidation of entrepreneurial activities – funds and support mainly aimed at women<sup>45</sup>. Also, the Marcegaglia Foundation aims at supporting women not only in terms of reducing gender disparities, but of development of female entrepreneurship through the creation of micro-enterprises and job placement<sup>46</sup> as well.

### **3.3. Handmade items sale and fiscal constraints in Italy**

Turning a hobby into a source of income requires time and training as well as compliance with some fiscal constraints.

As already mentioned before there are some specific funds, therefore it can be beneficial to tackle the fiscal challenge and the sales possibilities.

Firstly, to start this brief analysis it is essential to define and understand who the hobbyist is: having regard to article 28, Legislative Decree 144/98, hobbyists are non-professional operators who sell or propose or expose or barter, in a sporadic and occasional way, products of modest value, mostly as results of their talent and creativity.<sup>47</sup> As far as the sale, barter or exchange, the value threshold of the product is usually set at a maximum of 250€ while in some areas at 100€ (for example, in Bologna<sup>48</sup>). The activity must be carried out in an occasional and non-professional way, without constraints in terms of subordination and means. Finally, earnings must be certified by a non-fiscal receipt.

If taking into consideration the traditional shop and the online one, the steps to take are simple: you need to join the category of craftsmen and get a VAT number; then enroll at INPS and Chamber of Commerce as a business. Once you notified the start of the activity to the municipality concerned<sup>49</sup>, you may make a request for taking part to craft markets and fairs.

As regards to e-commerce, this is nowadays the most chosen alternative. You can create your own website or opt for a pre-existing social platform. The bureaucratic procedures are reduced but being a non-occasional sale, the VAT number and enrollment at INPS are required as well.

Handmade creations sale does not imply heavy compliances. Firstly, you do not need to issue a till receipt but when the sale amount is higher than 77.47€ – in such case a two-euro tax stamp must be placed (it can be charged both to the seller or the buyer). When there is no other source of income and sales are up to 4.800€ filing the Income Tax Return is not compulsory. Otherwise everything earned from the

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<sup>44</sup>See <http://www.invitalia.it/site/new/home/cosa-facciamo/creiamo-nuove-aziende/nuove-impres-a-tasso-zero.html>

<sup>45</sup>See <http://www.emiliaromagnastartup.it/bandi>

<sup>46</sup>See <https://www.fondazionemarcegaglia.org/fondazione/>

<sup>47</sup>D.lgs. 31 marzo 1998, n. 114, in materia di “*La riforma del Commercio*”

<sup>48</sup>See [http://www.comune.bologna.it/impresa/servizio\\_singolo/59551](http://www.comune.bologna.it/impresa/servizio_singolo/59551)

<sup>49</sup>See [https://www.informagiovani-italia.com/aprire\\_negozio\\_oggetti\\_artigianali.htm](https://www.informagiovani-italia.com/aprire_negozio_oggetti_artigianali.htm)

homemade items sale shall be stated within the various incomes framework provided for by article 67, paragraph 1, letter i) of the Presidential Decree no. 917/86<sup>50</sup>.

Taking part to craft markets implies providing a broader documentation: a substitute statement in lieu of a notoriety act that certifies the qualification to exhibit and sell handmade products which must be presented to the Municipality where the above-mentioned craft market takes place; the hobbyist membership card; and finally, some other papers, such as the payment of the public land occupation fee. It is very important to bear in mind that to keep the occasional status of the sale, number of participations to craft market is limited.

On the other hand, those who face more demanding obligations are professional sellers who pay taxes on the activity income. That is what happens for online sellers as well since the sale is not occasional. Anyway, when opting for an online store the main steps to follow are three: getting a VAT number by filling in the so-called Com 6 bis form in the municipality where the legal head office is located; stating the sale website that can be later changed with an additional Com 6 bis form by filling in the website variation section.

Last but not least is the temporary shop, which opens for less than 30 days a year. It enables to advertise and sell items with reduced costs and more slender bureaucracy, along with the right mix of location, innovation and clientele. As for any commercial activity, also in this case it is necessary to get a VAT number. With regard to administrative and tax compliance, there is still no actual legislation. Generally speaking if the temporary store opens for less than 30 days a year no particular fiscal or administrative fulfillment is required as the activity is considered to be occasional. Finally, a last missing piece is the Certified Communication of Started Activity (*SCIA - Segnalazione Certificata di Inizio Attività*) to be presented to SUAP offices of the municipality concerned as provided for by article 7 of Legislative Decree no. 114/98, article 19 of Law no. 214/90 and by the Chamber of Commerce.

## **4. HANDMADE**

The following paragraphs will sketch the handmade workers profile by paying attention to their production sectors, to their job opportunities and to the consumer behaviors by focusing on necessary marketing tools.

### **4.1. Handmade women profile**

First of all, handmade manufacturing implies those work activities in which mass production and the use of machinery are absent. Therefore, what stands out is the uniqueness of each product.

Italian handmade production – despite its historical and economic importance – was almost supplanted by a growing mass production of a much stronger technological sector and its subsequent revival did not bring about a deep change, mainly due to the low profits that prevented the transition from a hobby or a

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<sup>50</sup>DPR. 22 dicembre 1986, n. 917, in materia di “*Approvazione del testo unico delle imposte sui redditi*”

passion to a real business activity. The breakthrough came with e-commerce that allows not only to have a wider and more varied audience, but also to export products abroad – platforms such as Amazon Handmade and Etsy are a further confirmation of this.<sup>51</sup>

Handmade women are usually girls driven by a strong passion or adult women without a job trying to take advantage of their skills. What they all have in common are a creative mind and good manual skills that lead them to design unique products. What differentiates them from each other is instead their ICT level. Indeed, ICT skills can be an asset when taking a step to make handmade work a source of income. Nowadays it is essential to understand how the web works and how online platforms, or social networks can be useful. That is where FLORA' was planned to intervene.

#### 4.2. Handmade production sectors

Handmade production is diverse both in terms of materials and final items ranging from textile products to bracelets, necklaces and earrings made using wax. Production implying the recycling of materials is today getting popular – bicycles inner tubes are employed for the creation of jewelry, while broken umbrellas are reused. This kind of approach leads to two important advantages: it enhances on one hand the handmade creativity, on the other the ecological sense of production.

Crochet and knitting are again making inroads too. Indeed, in this regard there are numerous blogs. Below an attempt to partially list them:

Blog name	Type	Website / Blog
<b>Made By Kate</b>	crochet	<a href="#">blog</a>
<b>Café Creativo</b>	knitting	<a href="#">Website</a>
<b>Airali Design</b>	crochet/knitting	<a href="#">Website</a>
<b>Shabby Chic Interiors</b>	homemade for interiors	<a href="#">Website</a>
<b>Faccio e Disfo</b>	various handmade production	<a href="#">Website</a>

Below some examples of materials and their applications in the handmade production:

materials	applications
wax	candles
glass	earrings, vase holders

<sup>51</sup>See <http://adrianaralucablog.com/cos-e-il-handmade/>

wool	knitting, jumpers, bags, scarves, hats, socks, pillows, blankets
recycled inner tubes (bicycles)	necklaces, bracelets, rings
wood	rings, pieces of furniture, frames, clocks, jewel boxes, phone/tablet cases
recycled umbrellas	bags, raincoats, kites and frisbees, lamps
crochet	jumpers, shoes, bags, hats, socks
steel	bigiotteria (orecchini, anelli, collane, braccialetti)
recycled materials such as clothes, plastic, vases etc.	clothes, rings, earrings, bracelets, necklaces, home decorations
paper	christmas and interiors decorations
cardboard	boxes/containers for presents
leather	belts, bracelets, clocks
recycled broken vinyls	clocks

#### 4.3. Employment opportunities in the sector

As mentioned before, there are different employment opportunities in the sector: handmade markets, handmade shops, temporary shops and e-commerce. Each one of them has pros and cons: a traditional handmade shop is certainly the least desirable option to choose because of the costs of maintenance and the bureaucratic procedure. The temporary shop partly obviates the problem since it reduces expenses and bureaucracy but at the same time it requires greater economic and time-consuming efforts in advertising. It is handmade markets and e-commerce that offer the greatest advantages.

Handmade markets are chosen by those women who consider handmade activities mainly as a hobby and want to deal neither with bureaucratic procedures nor VAT numbers. The occasional participation to these seems to be a great alternative because it allows you to sell your products in respect of very few provisions, such as price displays, the payment of a membership card and so on. Although handmade markets are mostly arranged in some Italian regions – especially in the north – the opportunities they offer are definitely desirable.

E-commerce is instead the better way for those who wish to turn their passion into a business since it allows to have much lower costs and to both concentrate and capitalize on their own passion without the burden of conciliating two jobs and a family (paragraph 2.1). Experiencing difficulties in selling products on websites such as Etsy, eBay or Amazon is ordinary administration – especially at the beginning – but it

is fundamental not to give up and try to gain popularity: sellers are as many as consumers and a strong competition in the market is inevitable.<sup>52</sup> Many blogs and websites provide some suggestions for a successful sale of handmade products, such as creating a personal network or a Facebook or Twitter page – a good marketing strategy is anyhow essential.

#### **4.3.1. Necessary marketing channels and tools**

When we speak of marketing tools that are necessary for the management of our business we refer to social networks, websites or blogs, advertising and the aesthetics of our handmade products.

Advertising and aesthetics (which when talking about e-commerce mainly concerns pictures) are crucial: it is clear that on platforms like Etsy or Amazon the product-offer is extremely varied. That is the reason why it is very important to think and take care of details when choosing promotional pictures, especially in online sales where the consumer is not able *to touch with his hands* the products and therefore highly relies on what he sees on the screen. As much important is advertising – making others know about you and what you do.

Nowadays the best way to do advertising seems to be through blogs, websites and social networks. The latter enables to quickly update news and to constantly inform consumers about new products and projects. But if Facebook also allows the creation of events, less complete are Twitter and Instagram.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

What emerges from this report is the potential of the handmade market which is due as well to the existence of numerous institutional channels that allow women to be self-employers and start their own business. As much important are the ICT capabilities, especially for the e-commerce sector. Therefore, specific trainings will be fundamental to help women use these online channels to interact with consumers.

Handmade activities allow to overcome what has been recorded to be one of the major obstacles to female employment: work-family reconciliation. This kind of work enables many women (especially unemployed mothers) to start their own businesses and contribute to improve their family economic condition.

That is the direction the project FLORA' wants to follow by implementing an existing situation and by providing the tools women need to embark on this new market frontier that is the handmade sector.

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<sup>52</sup>See <http://www.handmadeinitaly.it/2013/09/introduzione-ai-marketplaces-dellartigianato/>