



Migration and the Labour Market: Ukrainian Women in the Italian Care Sector

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Abstract

As Europe experiences significant demographic transformation and cultural change, the rate of care migration is growing sharply. This phenomenon has been encouraged by the structural deficit of the labour market in response to the shortage of workers available for formal and informal welfare systems. This research describes the main features and implications of the Italian care worker labour force, using the story of the Ukrainian women who work there as a case study. The analyses are based on data from the Italian ‘Rilevazione continua sulle forze lavoro’ or RCFL (Labour Force Survey) covering the last 10 years (2007–2016). The RCFL data shows that the population of care workers in Italy is a quickly growing sector, responsible for 19% of employed women in care sector over that period. RCFL data also reveals that these positions have been filled almost exclusively by Ukrainian women who have immigrated. However, despite recording high employment rates for this group, they are highly segregated, both vertically and horizontally, and they experience difficulty integrating and job-education mismatching. In conclusion, this article explores relevant issues for new migration and integration policies.

Keywords Ukraine · Women · Care migration · Italy · Labour market · Integration

Introduction

Within the context of a rapidly ageing population, cultural change and increased participation by women in the labour market, the presence of international workers employed in the care sector is growing in developed countries. A large part of Europe is

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experiencing an inadequate response by national welfare systems that in some cases have underestimated the implications of a growing elderly population's care needs.

Where governments fail, the responsibility for care is transferred to families that are very different today as compared to the past, when they held the role of the main provider of healthcare and assistance to the 'weak' family members such as children and the elderly. This unmet need of European families has driven care migration flows, especially for non-EU workers, to Europe (Sciortino 2004; Bettio et al. 2006; Bonifazi and Rinesi 2010; Mudrak 2011) as a response to the shortage of workers in formal and informal welfare systems, increasing dependency on migrant workers in this sector (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; UN INSTRAW 2007; Cangiano 2014). However, the magnitude of these flows is also indirectly associated with ongoing cultural change in European societies.

The idea of having familial and personal assistance for elderly people is in fact progressively replacing that of institutionalisation. Rich countries are oriented to a 'domestic' care model and/or integrated home care programme, preferring the live-in presence of a care assistant and allowing the elderly person to stay in a familiar place and record better health outcomes (Landi et al. 2001; Degiuli 2007). Moreover, increased participation in the labour market by women from developed countries has exacerbated the care shortage and favoured a sort of 'passing the baton' between women. Especially in Southern Europe, immigrant women have replaced autochthonous women in managing family care duties. Women replace other women, but family care remains a woman's work (Bettio et al. 2006; Näre 2013; Ambrosini 2014; Di Bartolomeo and Marchetti 2016).

Within the European framework, Italy's case is a good representative of how care migration flows have massively supplied a specific demand of the local labour market. This is the result of a complex process that has been favoured by the structural deficit of the local labour market, and more importantly by its national welfare system. The latter opened new employment opportunities for immigrants in the informal care system that reflected the unmet demand of care and assistance, particularly for the elderly, that has gradually assumed the features of a transnational model of care (Piperno 2007, 2010; Mudrak 2011; Paterno et al. 2016).

Out of all the different groups of immigrants present in Italy, Ukrainians represent an interesting case study among migrant care workers. This group is constituted of mostly mature women who have found a privileged and almost exclusive channel for domestic and care work recruitment (see, among others, Catanzaro and Colombo 2009; Tognetti Bordogna 2012; Conti et al. 2014; Marchetti and Venturini 2014; Ambrosini 2014; Vianello 2016; Strozza and De Santis 2017). This has served to bring public opinion to assimilate the term 'Ukrainian' as equivalent to that of 'badante' (caregiver), in the same way as some decades ago in Italy, it was common to use the word 'Filippino' as synonymous with 'domestic worker'.

Ukrainian immigration to Italy has been encouraged by international agreements (Davydovych 2013) and by a series of regularisations with which the Italian government legalised irregular immigration (Strozza and Zucchetti 2006; Bonifazi et al. 2009; Carfagna et al. 2010; IOM 2013; Ambrosini 2014, 2015). Ukrainian immigration has rapidly developed thanks to family chains and networks and to the propensity of Ukrainian workers for circular migration (see, among others, Catanzaro and Colombo 2009; Vianello 2009; UCSR 2009; Tognetti Bordogna 2012; ILO 2013).

The aim of this work is to examine the implications of Ukrainian migration on the local labour market, specifically focussing on Ukrainian women employed in the care sector. This study will examine the quality of their employment, their level of integration and the possible detection of occupational segregation, wage penalties and job-education mismatching.

The article first discusses the main theoretical frameworks of the impact of migration on the labour market and subsequently looks at the evolution of Ukrainian emigration flows. The goal is to understand how its presence in Europe and specifically in Italy has changed across time to provide useful insight on the reasons behind its characteristics and mechanisms of today.

The occupational profile of Ukrainian women workers in Italy, especially those employed in social and care sector, is outlined here thanks to the information gathered from the Italian 'Rilevazione Continua sulle forze lavoro' or RCFL (Labour Force Survey), which examines time changes experienced during the decade between 2007 and 2016.

Finally, the article discusses the possible drawbacks and consequences of the Ukrainian presence in the Italian labour market in an attempt to identify valuable indicators for planning future migration and integration policies that could represent a desirable compromise for all involved parties.

Migration and the Labour Market

In most European countries, the increasing number of immigrants has stimulated a lively debate about the value and consequences of labour migration. One issue of great interest is the impact that immigration might have on a host country's labour market: does immigration affect employment levels? Do immigrants record higher employment rates as compared to natives? Does the presence of immigrants reduce overall wages?

Another relevant topic is related to the allocation of immigrant workers, their level of integration and the quality of employment. What is immigrants' role in terms of substitution, complementarity or competition with native workers? Do immigrants take jobs away from natives? Are immigrants mostly concentrated in specific economic sectors? Do immigrants find jobs that are commensurate with their skills and education?

The impact of immigration on a host country's labour market has been investigated by examining its influence on wages, employment and unemployment rates, task specialisation, productivity and innovation (for an extensive review, see among others Okkerse 2008; Venturini and Villosio 2006; Orefice 2010; Bördös et al. 2016; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine 2017). The existence of a multitude of empirical studies, based on economic theoretical models and conducted according to different approaches, reflects the complexity of the phenomenon. Most of these studies measure the impact of immigrants' entry in the labour market for specific workers' categories, comparing natives versus immigrants, low-skilled versus high-skilled workers and new immigrants versus second generation migrants, for example (Somerville and Sumption 2009; Eurostat 2011; Glitz 2014).

According to the basic labour market model, immigration is expected to produce an increase in the supply of labour, which implies a decline in wage levels. Many studies

point out that immigration negatively affects the wages of less-skilled workers and earlier immigrants, but that the impact disappears in the long run. In Italy, Gavosto et al. (1999) reports that the presence of migrant workers favoured wage increases for unskilled national workers as a benefit of workers' union bargaining and of the high demand for unskilled workers, especially in the country's northern regions. Researchers also detected distributional effects and increased task specialisation because immigrants and autochthonous are imperfectly substitutable (Glitz 2014). A positive effect of migrants' presence on the displacement risk of native workers was observed in Italy, but no significant effect was seen for their job-search effectiveness, highlighting the complementarity of the immigrants' presence in the Italian labour market (Venturini and Villosio 2006).

New migrants compete with earlier immigrants for jobs not requiring language fluency, cultural knowledge or local experience (Okkerse 2008; Somerville and Sumption 2009; Bördös et al. 2016). The presence of new migrants encourages natives to move into language-intensive jobs, acting on task specialisation. The impact of new immigrants differs according to the European receiving country's labour market. Central and northern countries record high unemployment, but those who are employed have a coherent job. In Southern European countries, the gap in unemployment rates is narrow, but it is often accompanied by a high proportion of over-skilled workers among the immigrant population (Reyneri and Fullin 2008).

As mentioned earlier, numerous research studies have also focused their attention on the allocation of immigrants in the host country's labour market, addressing their level of integration and social inclusion, the existence of ethnic penalties and the magnitude and effects of irregular permanence.

Numerous studies investigating these issues have been driven by the theoretical assimilation and segmented assimilation theories. Assimilation theory stresses that upon arrival, immigrants are disadvantaged, but that this effect weakens over time. Longer stays in a host country allow upward mobility in labour, acquisition of language skills and access to better jobs (following the work of Park and Burgess 1925, see among others, Borjas 1994; Friedberg 2000; Alba and Nee 2003). In segmented assimilation theory, the duration of stay is irrelevant because the market is segmented and immigrants are often trapped in the secondary labour market and cannot adapt or acquire the human capital necessary to move to higher professional positions (see, among others, Portes and Zhou 1993; Kalter and Kogan 2006; Blossfeld et al. 2006; Reyneri and Fullin 2008; Kogan 2011).

Differences between generations of immigrants were also analysed. Despite the wide heterogeneity of the examined variables and the studied groups in Europe, for example, it was clear that new immigrants are penalised compared to earlier ones, indicating that the general trend is of a progressive assimilation process (Reyneri and Fullin 2010; Eurostat 2011; Pichler 2011). Nevertheless, the growing presence of immigrants in Europe has developed mainly to fill in the gaps for countries' labour markets, which certainly reflects historical and linguistic links as well as country-specific migration policies. The latter is highly segmented and immigration flows were influenced by the evolution of rules and practices regarding access (Cicagna and Sulis 2013).

In general, immigrants prove to be highly penalised, and this aspect has led scholars to discuss occupational segregation, ethnic penalties and discrimination (Zegers de Beijl 2000; Heath 2007; Fullin and Reyneri 2011; Paterno et al. 2016; Fellini 2017).

Within this context, immigrant women experience a so-called ‘double disadvantage’ as they are discriminated against in the labour market for being immigrants and for being female (Rubin et al. 2009).

International Ukrainian Emigration in Europe

During the last decades, Ukraine faced an intensification of emigration flows within the context of growing political instability and economic crisis. Several factors powered and pushed these flows: institutions, migration and labour legislation, demographic and cultural changes and labour market features all played an important role within the framework of growing circularisation and feminisation of international Ukrainian migration (Bara et al. 2013; MPC 2013; Romaniuk and Gladun 2015; Fedyuk and Kindler 2016).

Mobility between the Ukraine and Europe (EU) was favoured by the Agreement with the European Community on the Facilitation of the Issuances of Visas and by bilateral agreements with the Ukraine’s closest European neighbours, which allow Ukrainians to travel more frequently to EU Member States (Davydovych 2013; IOM 2016). Agreements signed with Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania allow Ukrainian residents in border zones to travel without visas (IOM 2011; 2016). Meanwhile, in Southern European countries such as Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal, emigration flows were encouraged by a series of regularisation decrees by which host countries’ governments legalised irregular immigration and consolidated a tolerant attitude towards illegal migration (Libanova and Malynovska 2012; Ambrosini 2014).

According to EUROSTAT data (2016a, b), in the last decades, the presence of Ukrainians has sharply increased in the EU, despite the number of new arrivals decreasing in more recent years (EUROSTAT 2017). The number varies according to the criteria used for identification, citizenship or country of birth, but we can roughly estimate that there were approximately 200,000 Ukrainian citizens in 2002, and that number increased to a bit less than 700,000 in 2016 (Fig. 1), two-thirds of whom are female.

The anomalies observed in the curve by country of birth can be attributed to missing data for some hosting EU countries in those years (major problems are detected in 2002 and 2009). The decrease in citizenship in the curve observed in 2011 corresponds with a drastic reduction in Ukrainian emigration flows due to the global economic crisis and resulting reduced demand for Ukrainian workers in the EU and in Russia. During the same period, migration strategies for Ukrainian citizens also changed to indicate a preference for temporary and circular migration instead of long stays (IOM 2016).

Official figures fail to capture short-term and circular emigration, which occurs frequently; the same is true for irregular migration (Kontos 2009). Therefore, the true number of Ukrainian emigrates to the EU must be underestimated. Future emigration flows are expected to increase due to a 2017 approval of a free visa regime for Ukrainian citizens by the European Commission. This free visa will allow Ukrainians to travel to most EU countries for tourism, family visits, business reasons and for short stays without a visa. Although this permit

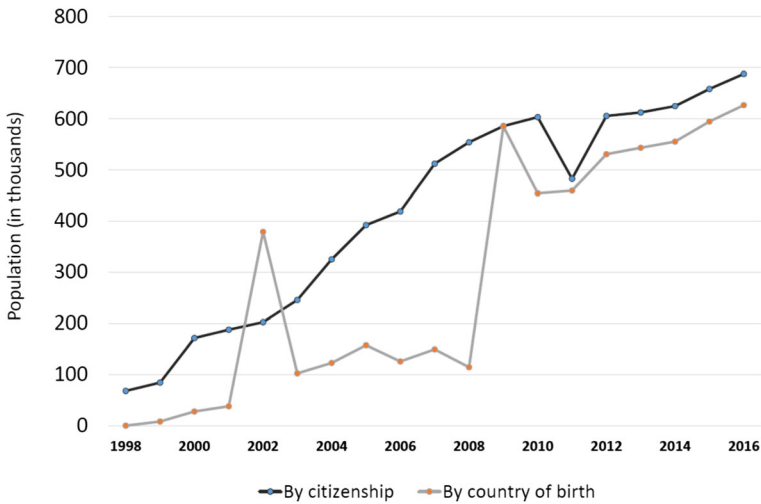


Fig. 1 Ukrainians in Europe, 1998–2016

does not grant Ukrainians the right to work in Europe, it certainly represents an important step towards the reinforcement of relations between the EU and Ukraine. The significant presence of Ukrainian women in EU countries reflects gender differences in destination countries and the typical occupational profile of Ukrainian workers. Ukrainian men prefer to migrate to the Russian Federation, are mostly occupied in industry and construction and tend to participate in short-term migratory projects, while women prefer to migrate to the EU, are mostly involved in working in domestic services and have long-stay migration experiences (Fedyuk and Kindler 2016).

In 2016 (EUROSTAT 2016b), the main recipient countries of Ukrainian citizens in Europe were Southern and Eastern countries: Italy (230,000), Spain (90,000), Portugal (35,000), Germany (122,000) and neighbouring country Czech Republic (112,000). Regarding labour migration (Kizilov et al. 2006; Poznyak 2012), destinations change according to the economic sector activity and gender, while the duration of stay by Ukrainian workers in the EU varies according to the recipient countries. Migrants generally make short trips of 3–5 months to neighbouring countries, like Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The main actors in this migration pattern are men who work primarily in construction, trade and industrial production and the transportation sector. Women are typically allocated in trade and, particularly in Poland, in agriculture.

The migratory projects to Southern European countries are usually longer; the average duration varies between 14.2 months in Italy and 16.3 months in Portugal. Italy is the first destination, particularly for the female component that finds employment primarily in the domestic and care sectors. Domestic service is also a major occupation in Spain, where high shares of Ukrainian agricultural workers are also employed. A construction boom occurred in Portugal between the end of the 90s and the early 2000s, attracting Ukrainian men to emigrate (Susak 2002), while Ukrainian women mainly continued to work as domestic servants (Poznyak 2012).

Ukrainians in Italy

In the last decades, the presence of Ukrainian migrants has grown exponentially in Italy. In 2002, according to ISTAT data on resident population, approximately 12,000 Ukrainians were residents of Italy (ISTAT 2002). This number more than tripled in the following 2 years thanks to a series of amnesties and decrees of regularisation (so-called *sanatorie*) by which the Italian government legalised irregular immigration, allowing the immersion of many Ukrainian workers (Strozza and Zucchetti 2006; Bonifazi et al. 2009; Carfagna et al. 2010; IOM 2013). According to ISTAT, the number of Ukrainians in Italy is now 19 times higher than it was in 2002. The official number of Ukrainian residents in Italy today is 237,000. And of this number, nearly 80% are women (ISTAT 2017).

Ukrainians represent the fifth largest immigrant community in Italy, after Romanians, Moroccans, Albanians and Chinese (ISTAT 2017). Of course, these figures refer only to their regular presence, as official statistics fail to capture the number of undocumented immigrants, which is estimated to be about 14% (Blangiardo 2009). Irregular Ukrainian immigrants usually arrive in Italy on tourist visas and continue to stay and work in irregular markets even after the visas expire (Reyneri and Fullin 2008).

Empirical research focussing on Ukrainian workers in Italy shows that despite women recording generally high employment rates, they are still barely integrated in the local labour market. They experience poor and often precarious occupational conditions, a high proportion of irregular work, low occupational upward mobility and difficulty moving to independent living conditions (see, among others, Montefusco 2008; Caponio 2009; Donadio et al. 2014; Barbiano di Belgiojoso and Ortesi 2014; Fondazione Leone Moressa 2014, 2015). Moreover, it was observed that Ukrainian workers are mostly segregated in the domestic and care sectors, have low wages and are over-skilled (Bonifazi and Marini 2011; Fullin and Reyneri 2011; DGIPI 2015; Paterno et al. 2016).

Data and Methods

Data and Studied Population

The data used derives from the Italian ‘Rilevazione continua sulle forze lavoro’ or RCFL (Labour Force Survey, LFS) for the years 2007, 2010, 2013 and 2016. RCFL is a wide cross-sectional household sample survey conducted by the Italian National Statistical Office (ISTAT 2018). On a quarterly basis, it polls approximately 165,000 people by means of a questionnaire. In Italy, RCFL represents the main data source for the domain of labour force and employment. The survey is conducted according to European Union Labour Force Survey (EU LFS) contents, concepts, definitions, classifications and coding schemes (EUROSTAT 2015).

RCFL focuses on the number of immigrants regularly recorded in Italian population registers, which are the stable component of the local labour market, both in terms of residence and regular employment. As such, it lacks information on irregular and illegal immigrants, as well as on regular immigrants that are not formal residents (Blangiardo 2008; Strozza et al. 2009).

Results of the data analysis are estimated based on the weighted averages from four trimesters' databases. The studied population is made up of women of working age (25–54 years) at the time of interview. This excludes the effect of migration for non-economic reasons from the processing, while reducing possible differences in the age structure between autochthonous residents and the foreign population (EUROSTAT 2011). Ukrainians interviewed in RCFL are identified by their country of birth.

Methods

We first analysed the impact of resident Ukrainian women in Italy on the local labour market, particularly on social and care service sectors. For the analysis, we considered their access to the labour market, their occupational level and for employed women, their wages. Our focus was to examine differences found in occupational performance between Ukrainians as compared to Italian natives.

The analysis of RCFL data was subsequently developed by examining the labour market dynamics in an attempt to measure the level of integration of Ukrainian women, the quality of their employment and the differences between newly arrived workers and long-stay workers.

In the present study, integration was investigated using the index of dissimilarity (ID), which provides an aggregate measure of horizontal occupational segregation (Emerek et al. 2003). ID value expresses the proportion of subjects that would need to change sector/occupation in order to achieve fair distribution of studied groups in the labour market. ID is calculated here by comparing the distribution of Ukrainian women to Italian women by economic sector, providing an aggregate measure of the degree of possible horizontal segregation for Ukrainian women in specific economic sectors of the Italian labour market.

Employment segregation is not only based on economic sector, but also on whether workers' contribution to the labour market is commensurate with their educational and professional experience. We therefore investigate the quality of employment using the over-skilled employment index (MISNOI), which, according to ISTAT's definition and operationalisation, detects possible mismatches between an individual's education and professional level (2005). It derives data from the cross-referenced information of individual professional levels according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (Isco-88) and individual education levels according to the International Standard Classification of Education (Isced-97). Mismatches found between educational level and professional status identify situations of over-skilled employment.

Ukrainian Women in the Italian Labour Market

Women at Work: Access to the Labour Market, Employability and Wages

Before estimating occupational levels, we took a step back in our analysis and focused on the channels of access to the Italian labour market for Ukrainian women. How do they enter the local labour market? Which channels favour employment?

RCFL data show that the role of personal networks, such as relatives and friends, is crucial in supporting the dynamics of the Italian labour market. Personal networks

represent the first access channel for both natives and immigrants, and its relevance does not change over time.

Three-quarters of Ukrainian workers declared that they found their employment through family and friends, confirming the importance of migration chains. The remainder reports that they were directly contacted by the employer. The dynamics are similar for Italian women: personal contacts make up the prevalent channel of finding employment, with its use totalling slightly less than one-third of them. Italians show greater initiative, as they have more frequent direct contact with employers or can start up their own activities in the field of social and care services.

Over the period from 2007 to 2016, a decline in employment rates for the 25–54-year-old female population for all nationalities was observed in the Italian labour market (Table 1). For Italian female workers, the variation was limited and employment rate was 60.0% in 2007. Despite decreases in 2010 and in 2013, the result was similar number in 2016, at 59.8%. Over this period, the movement of Italian workers among employment sectors was observed. While their presence in language-intensive occupations and sectors related to services (i.e. communication, insurance, finance, real estate, public administration and education) remained stable, increased proportions of employed Italian women were recorded in trade at the expense of the hotel and restaurant sectors, where the immigrant presence is growing.

Reductions more heavily affected the non-EU foreign component of the female labour force. The employment rate dropped from 49.7% in 2007 to 42.3% in 2016 (–7.4). For Ukrainians, although they recorded high employment rates, a significant decrease was observed; that is, their employment rate fell 13.6 percentage points from 2007 to 2016.

RFCL data indicate that the care sector represents a growing sector in the Italian labour market, where the total number of employed women has increased 19% between 2007 and 2016. However, it is not an easy task to discern how much of this increase is real and connected to the growing demand for care of the ageing population, and how much is a distortion produced by the emergence of irregular workers who had the recent opportunity to transfer to regular working positions based on the new regularisation rules for domestic workers in Italy. For example, the latter could certainly provide a plausible explanation for the observed increase of Romanian workers in the care sector in 2010.

The share of employed Italians that found jobs in the care sector did not change across time, and from 2007 to 2016, it stands at an average value of approximately 7% (Table 1). The weight of non-EU foreign workers has instead grown since 2007 and reached nearly 40% in 2016. This represents a value close to that of workers coming from Central-East Europe that, in recent years, defines the group that has grown the most. For Ukrainians, the care sector represents a dominant employment sector. In fact, approximately two-thirds of employed Ukrainians work in this sector and, despite an important increase recorded in 2013, this amount has stayed constant across time. The remaining numbers of Ukrainians are distributed among the trade, hotel and catering and real estate sectors.

What did happen inside the care sector in the last decade? Which nationalities are mostly employed in this sector? The comparison of RCFL data over the period 2007–2016 indicates that, on average, some nationalities have maintained their share within

Table 1 Employment rates for employed women 25–54 years of age in the care sector in Italy, by nationality (2007–2016)

<i>Employment rates (%)</i>				
Nationality	2007	2010	2013	2016
Italian	60.0	59.4	58.7	59.8
Non-EU Foreigner	49.7	45.3	44.8	42.3
Central-East EU	53.0	55.3	54.6	54.5
Ukrainian	79.1	74.2	64.8	65.5
<i>Employed in care sector (%)</i>				
Nationality	2007	2010	2013	2016
Italian	7.6	7.1	7.6	7.3
Non-EU Foreigner	35.8	36.6	39.8	39.6
Central-East EU	29.9	43.3	41.6	39.7
Ukrainian	66.0	69.4	77.2	67.1

Data source: Istat RCFL 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016

the care market, such as Filipino, Ukrainian and Peruvian (Table 2). Significantly, the number of Moldovan women employed in the care sector increased from 1.6% in 2007 to 4.3% in 2016, so that in 2010, they represented one of the top five nationalities employed in this domain, overtaking Ecuadorians and Peruvians, who were historically counted among the most numerous nationalities employed by Italy's care sector.

Meanwhile, the share of Italians employed in the care sector varied from 67.2% in 2007 to 49.9% in 2016. The observed reduction (−17.3%) is not attributed to the progressive substitution of Italian women by immigrants, as the number of Italians stays constant, but rather, it is possible to hypothesise that the new opportunities that opened in the care sector (+19%) were almost exclusively filled by foreign workers.

The analysis of RCFL data on wages declared by respondents in euro (EUR) of all employed women, in all economic sectors and of those employed in the care sector shows that from 2010 to 2016, there was an approximately 6% increase in the average wage level for all sectors (Table 3). Italians earn more than foreigners. Wage differences are more pronounced when all sectors are considered (on average +350 EUR). An explanation could be made based on the fact that Italians perform language-intensive works and/or they are highly present in the public sector. The wage gap in the care sector is reduced and stands at an average difference of approximately 130 EUR. Such wage differences between natives and immigrants are not exclusively determined by discrimination, but they are the result of more complex dynamics where education, experience and level of employment might affect wage levels, exacerbating differences between groups of workers.

From the available data, it is difficult to infer the possible impact of the growing presence of foreign workers on wage levels in the Italian labour market. However, figures reported in Table 3 show that for Italians, working in the care sector is not profitable; rather, it is more convenient to be employed in other sectors, where they receive an average of 40% higher wages. Even for non-EU and Central-East EU workers, though the advantage is not as great as it is for the Italians, moving to other 'no care' sectors implies receiving an average of 20% higher wages. For Ukrainians, average wages are close, as the estimates of

Table 2 Percentage of employed women aged 25–54 years in the Italian care sector, by nationality (2007–2016)

Nationality	2007	2010	2013	2016
Italian	67,2	55,8	47,9	49,9
Romanian	4,4	12,7	15,0	14,9
Ukrainian	4,6	5,5	6,4	5,4
Moldavian	1,6	2,9	4,6	4,3
Philippine	5,0	5,0	5,8	4,3
Peruvian	2,5	2,3	3,2	2,7
Ecuadorian	2,0	2,0	2,4	1,9

Data source: Istat RCFL 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016

all sectors are influenced by the fact that significant shares of women are employed in the care sector. When average wages are estimated excluding the care sector, wages are in fact higher for Ukrainians (+ 30%) as well. Why then do Ukrainians choose to stay in the care sector, earning lower wages? As it has frequently emerged in the literature, working in care sector could represent the safest route for women because, despite low salaries, they have high employability. Low wages are the price to pay for having a job. However, the fact is that for Ukrainian women, it is not a pure and simple rational choice, but instead, it reflects the necessity of adapting themselves to the rigidities of the Italian labour market, which offers them limited opportunities under penalising conditions.

Women's Work: Integration and Quality of Employment

Our analysis of wages provided a first indication on the level of integration of Ukrainian women into the Italian labour market. Estimates on average wages

Table 3 Average wages per month in EUR in all economic sectors and in the Italian care sector for women 25–54 years of age, by nationality (2007–2016)

<i>All economic sectors (in EUR):</i>			
Nationality	2010	2013	2016
Italian	1.133	1.148	1.202
Non-EU Foreigner	822	831	881
Central-East EU	797	807	859
Ukrainian	756	749	822
<i>In care sector (in EUR):</i>			
Nationality	2010	2013	2016
Italian	856	810	842
Non-EU Foreigner	687	706	722
Central-East EU	659	659	701
Ukrainian	732	723	743

Data source: Istat RCFL 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016

highlighted the existence of vertical occupational segregation; that is to say, Ukrainians with the same employment are paid on average less than natives.

Unfortunately, segregation also develops horizontally, and the index of dissimilarity (ID) provides a measure of the level of integration because this indicator summarises the proportion of workers that should change in the occupational sector in order to achieve a fair distribution of all employed women into the labour market.

From the comparison between the distribution of Italians and foreign workers, it emerges that the level of horizontal occupational segregation of foreign workers has increased over time (+ 3.7) and equalled 36.6% in 2016 (Table 4). The care sector is certainly the one that most influences the value of ID, as it represents the modal sector in which foreign women find employment, followed by the hotel and restaurant sector, services to businesses, social and health services and industry.

A closer look at the differences among foreign workers reveals that about half of the Central-East EU workers are segregated. For Ukrainians, this condition is even more penalised, as ID was estimated at 62.6% in 2016, highlighting the heavy concentration of Ukrainians in a single occupational sector, that is, the care sector. Ukrainians who do not work in the care sector are distributed among the trade, hotel and restaurant and real estate sectors.

However, Ukrainians are not alone in being so highly segregated. In order to give an idea of the rigidity of the Italian labour market with respect to some nationalities, as seen in Table 4, the ID estimates for the Philippines are reported to be between 68.1% and 81.6%. This result corroborates the idea that in the Italian labour market, there are groups of workers who have predetermined and defined roles.

The interpretation of these results poses some critical issues as it was argued that the dissimilarity index tends to overestimate segregation in small groups. Because it is an aggregated measure, it cannot capture the confounding effect of individual variables as well as time and spatial effects (Tedesco and Salaris 2016).

In terms of job-education coherence, measured here by means of the MISNOI index (ISTAT 2005), which expresses the proportion of workers whose education level is higher than required for the occupation or position in which they are employed, it emerges that 52.5% of the female population 25–54 years of age employed in the Italian labour market is in fact over-skilled. In other words, on average, half of the female workforce in Italy has a higher level of education than is required for the professional position in which they work (Fig. 2). If we consider only the care sector, this indicator is estimated at 46.7%. In the attempt to interpret this result, it is plausible to hypothesise that workers who are

Table 4 Index of dissimilarity (ID) based on the distribution by economic sector of Italian and foreign women aged 25–54 years, from selected nationalities (2007–2016)

Nationality	2007	2010	2013	2016
Non-EU Foreigner	32,9	34,8	36,7	36,6
Central-East EU	37,4	45,9	46,8	44,6
Ukrainian	59,2	65,0	71,8	62,6
Philippine	71,5	74,3	81,6	68,1

Data source: Istat RCFL 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016

qualified health practitioners find employment in the public and private formal healthcare system, while the social and care sector (an informal care system) might have highly employed domestic workers, caregivers and babysitters who have less defined skills and qualifications and/or poor language knowledge. According to this finding, in Italy, social and care positions could be considered a sector of ‘compromise’, where convergence workers who have higher education levels compared to their occupational profiles must devalue their qualifications to obtain jobs.

As shown in Fig. 2, the comparison between nationalities highlights that non-EU worker fit more cohesively into the Italian labour market. Meanwhile, workers from the former Soviet bloc, including Ukrainians, on average have higher levels of education and experience, but more frequently experience mismatches between their education level and the job position they occupy.

Within the framework outlined here, what changes do newly arrived Ukrainian workers experience in the Italian labour market compared to those who have been in Italy longer? RCFL data from 2016 reveals that employment rates are higher for workers who claim to have been in Italy for more than 5 years. This result allows us to hypothesise that longer stays improve the probability of finding employment. Newly arrived workers record lower rates and unfortunately also earn lower wages. Their remuneration is estimated at an average of approximately 700 EUR per month, and they receive on average less than 150 EUR compared to their longer staying peers. Their inexperience with the Italian labour market dynamics and their limited language skills expose them to exploitative situations. A look at the distribution of workers by economic sector reveals that newly arrived Ukrainians are almost exclusively employed in the care sector. Only later do they record improvements in their wage levels as some of them move to other occupational sectors.

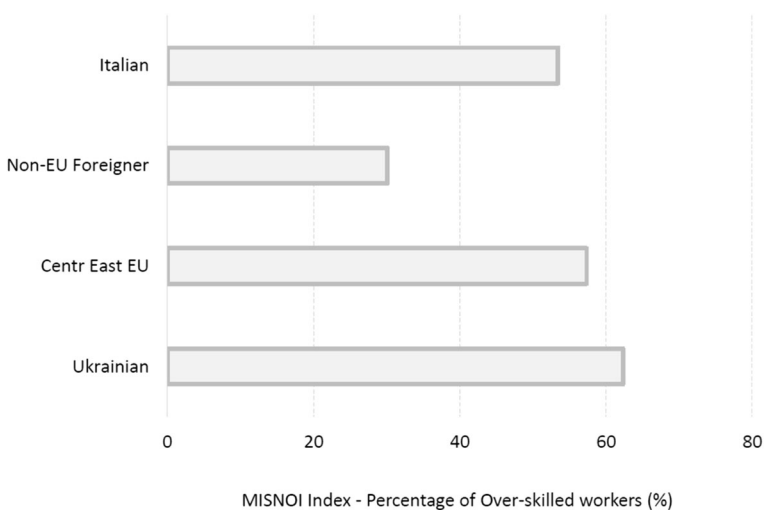


Fig. 2 Percentage of over-skilled among employed women aged 25–54 years in Italy (MISNOI index), by nationality (2016)

Discussion

Care migration has become a significant phenomenon in Europe, which is not free from consequences in both the short and the long run, and in different domains of European societies. This case study examined Ukrainian women in the Italian labour market. It aims to contribute to the ongoing debate about the impact the growing number of immigrants in this sector has on local labour markets.

Ukrainians' presence in Italy seems a convenient solution for all subjects involved. Ukrainian women need to work and specific sectors of the labour market need to hire workers. It is simple and in line with labour market demand-supply rules. However, the picture is more complex.

Ukrainian women who immigrate to Italy can more or less easily find the opportunity work in the care sector, which enables them to guarantee economic support for their family members left behind and to affirm their economic independence. The possibility of approaching the decision of emigrating, often with explorative and short-term migratory projects, ensures that they can make the move with a higher probability of finding occupation. They often find live-in solutions that guarantee them a place to stay and reduce living expenses, consequently allowing them to save more money to send back home. However, RCFL data pointed out that despite the progressive process of assimilation Ukrainian women have undergone to fit into the Italian labour market, and despite their high level of employment, they are simultaneously trapped in the care sector segment.

In Italy, the care sector is growing, as we see from the 19% increase in the total number of employed women between 2007 and 2016. This increase has been almost exclusively absorbed by immigrants, suggesting that the presence of immigrant women in this sector fills a gap, especially within the informal welfare system. Women do not replace other women, but rather they work alongside other women, and family care remains women's work (Ambrosini 2014).

The number of Ukrainians employed in the care sector is high and they are almost exclusively concentrated in this sector. This has strengthened the idea that being Ukrainian makes a woman a good candidate for qualified caregiver or nanny. Ukrainians are favoured over other nationalities of immigrants in obtaining employment in the care sector, where demand and the employment level stay high. But this prejudice has strengthened their horizontal occupational segregation, such that Ukrainian women willing to move from care-jobs have difficulties accessing work within other occupations.

It is also clear that only being Ukrainian (or another Eastern European nationality) cannot represent an entire valid requisite for being a good caregiver. This is particularly important as most workers involved in care service deal with old people, who suffer from severe pathologies, comorbidity and who require qualified personnel to manage their health profiles and other needs.

Thanks to RCFL data, it is possible to observe that the segregation of Ukrainian women in the Italian labour market is also vertical. Ukrainian women record lower wages compared to their Italian peers. Hiring an immigrant caregiver usually costs less than recruiting a local worker. Moreover, this often allows a living-in model of care to be affordable for lower-middle class families (Degiuli 2007; Näre 2013). Undocumented women face a strong asymmetry in the relationship between employer and employee

and are at risk of exploitation. Recruitment is usually done through social networks with limited information about workers' backgrounds and skills.

Despite being penalised, the average wage of Ukrainian women employed in Italy is higher than that they would have earned in Ukraine, and this aspect proves to be one of the main pull factors for their migration (Pozniak 2012; IOM 2016).

Ukrainians in Italy often experience a mismatch between occupation and education level (Paterno et al. 2016). They must accept low wages and devalued qualifications to obtain jobs. This aspect is of some importance. In fact, job-education mismatches represent a failure and a waste of human capital by the Italian labour market that is unable to allocate available human resources into occupations commensurate with educational level. Highly skilled and educated workers are employed in low-skilled occupations. This result highlights a critical aspect of the Italian labour market, which can easily be biased based on difficulties in the mutual recognition of educational level between countries and by the existing differences between education systems, such as between Italian and Soviet education systems.

From the analysis of RCFL data, another critical issue for the Italian labour market might be to identify the growing number of immigrant workers over that of natives in the care sector. This calls for a reflection on a possible situation of dependence on specific categories of workers and on the vulnerability and sustainability of Italy's welfare system in the long run.

Both circular and long-term continuous emigration flows lead to relevant implications on the Ukrainian labour market and welfare system as well. In fact, in Ukraine, emigration by many specialised workers (i.e. health workers, teachers, construction workers, electricians, welders and drivers) is triggering a shortage in the national labour market of certain professional profiles. This shortage is expected to increase and has a greater impact in the future (Bogdan 2011; Kupets 2016). Accordingly, massive emigration is seemingly accompanied by *brain drain* (loss of high educated workers) and *waste* (over education) of Ukrainian human capital (Solari 2010; Boccagni 2010). However, it is interesting to stress that *brain waste* among Ukrainian workers is not exclusively determined by emigration flows, but it is also related to the structure of its national labour market, where technological changes and restructuring of Ukrainian economy (driven by deindustrialisation, expansion of subsistence farming and rapid growth of retail trade) has led to a marked job polarisation. Education-job mismatch levels are high, and it was estimated that in 2013, an average 39.7% of all employed people aged 15–70 are overeducated (Kupets 2015). Older workers who hold Soviet-type college *uchilische* diplomas are particularly penalised, as they were enabled to retrain and align their skills with respect to labour market requests. It is clear that 'dissatisfaction' experienced by certain groups of workers increases the propensity towards migration.

Despite its awareness of the need to control migration flows, and despite issuing a series of regulatory measures, only in recent years has the Ukrainian government developed concrete policies to protect and guarantee the rights of migrant workers, including supporting their return to their home country and the welfare of those left behind (ILO 2013; Hnatkivskyi 2015). Since 2009, together with other Eastern European countries, Ukraine has joined the Eastern Partnership (Eap) with the aim of increasing political, economic and cultural links with the EU (Yanovich 2015).

In Italy, except for amnesties to regularise the immigrant presence, the government did not take incisive action to regulate the current situation. The Italian government preferred to delegate most care services to families. In this manner, it faces lower costs than if it directly managed them through a formal system. Allowances and pensions used by families to pay caregivers partially go back to the state as social security and pension contributions paid by employers, but only if workers are recruited through a regular method. By delegating families, the government has no direct control on welfare expenditures.

From the picture outlined here, there are several interesting and valuable indications for planning future migration and integration policies. First, it is clear that migration policies need clear rules to protect workers (reducing the likelihood of blackmail and exploitation) and families (reducing shadow economies and illegal labour migration). The idea of a common shared tolerance towards irregular immigration should be eradicated to reduce the presence of irregular workers.

Findings from RCFL data show that the greatest effort should be made in the direction of integration to promote labour market efficiency and to intervene in the recognition of qualifications, professional and language training and recruitment rules to favour worker-family interactions and improve job-education matching.

Integration policies should also be implemented in Ukraine to favour return migration, for example, by what is called the ‘portability’ of pension rights. Namely, this provides for Ukraine’s recognition of pension contributions and taxes paid during working periods in hosting countries.

Both Italian and Ukrainian governments should jointly adopt a long-term perspective in order to be most effective and improve the well-being of all parties involved from the perspective of development and cooperation, and acting on both micro and macro levels. In fact, the risk is that the continuation of the existing situation and the absence of clear rules will lead to the collapse and failure of the welfare, social and economic systems of both countries. Future actions become more urgent, particularly in light of the current chaotic political situation in Ukraine, which makes it even more difficult to plan effective policies.

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