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**Degree and structures of women's labor market  
integration: the case of Terrassa, Spain**

FLAWS: Impact of local welfare systems on female labour  
force participation and social cohesion

FLOWS Working Paper

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## **About the FLOWS project:**

The FLOWS project has been funded under the EU FP7 program, grant Agreement no: 266806. The project started January 1 2011 and ended April 30 2014.

The FLOWS project analyses the causes and effects of women's labour market integration, which is an issue that represents a major challenge for the European Union and its member states, and is supposedly also a precondition for the sustainability of the European social model. The overall aim is to analyse (1) how local welfare systems support women's labour market participation, as well as (2) the extent to which (and under which conditions) female labour market integration has contributed to the strengthening social cohesion. The project focuses on how public and private welfare services such as care and lifelong learning intended to support women's labour market integration have been designed; on how women of different classes, qualifications, ethnicities, and geographical locations have grasped and made use of such policies, and on how the increase in women's labour market integration has affected structures of inequality and social cohesion.

The study is based on in-depth analysis of eleven cities, i.e. one city in eleven different countries. The cities/countries are: Brno/Czech Republic, Aalborg/Denmark, Tartu/Estonia, Jyväskylä/Finland, Nantes/France, Hamburg/Germany, Székesfehérvár/Hungary, Dublin/Ireland, Bologna/Italy, Terrassa/Spain, and Leeds/UK.

The FLOWS project is composed by 6 academic work packages:

WP 1: Degree and structures of women's labour market integration

WP 2: Local production systems

WP 3: The local welfare system

WP 4: Local policy formation/local political actors

WP 5: Survey questionnaire

WP 6: Women's decision making

WP 7: Social structures: cohesion or cleavages and segregation

This working paper series reports work conducted in the seven work packages.



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## **1. The selection of the city**

Three are the main reasons underlying the selection for study of the city of Terrassa: demographic adequacy, high female employment rates and long-standing tradition of progressive governments. Because of its demographic features, the dimensions and the location of Terrassa make possible an in-depth research. Terrassa is a major city in Catalonia, a region in the northeast of Spain. It is part of the greater Barcelona area, the capital of the region and second most populous city in Spain after Madrid. Terrassa has 213,000 inhabitants (January 1, 2010) and is the 24th most populated city in Spain. In recent years the population growth has been steady and high. With an increase of 24 percent in the last decade it has gained 41,000 people during the period.

The second reason for selection is a substantial women's labour force participation in the city and high female employment rates for long. This is because of a considerable female participation in the industrial sector since the end of the 19th century and for a large part of the 20th century, and nowadays by the tertiarisation of the city in the last two decades, which has boosted female employment.

Textile industry in Terrassa has employed for decades an important share of women from Terrassa and from other neighbouring towns. This was an occupational sector traditionally employing a high share of women not only in Terrassa but also in many other Catalan towns and cities as the industrialisation process involved an increasing demand for female labour. Even if the development of the textile industry facilitated the entry of women into the formal paid work, not all women were formally employed as, especially during the Francoist period, part of them were working at home under the putting-out system. During the rise of this sector (at the beginning of 20th century) the female employment share could attain between 60% and 80% because of specific stages in the production process were exclusively undertaken by women. Nevertheless, in the last decades textile industry has gone through several crises up to the present situation when it has come to occupy a marginal position in the economic structure of the city. Three quarters of this sector were destroyed during the 1980s and the rest came to disappear during the early 1990s.

Nowadays, the tertiarisation of the production system in Terrassa is contributing to maintain the high female employment rates. Terrassa started the tertiarisation of its economy during the 1970s. Terrassa has currently an economy defined by three main elements: the growth of knowledge transfers between university and private companies especially in sectors with high added value such as optics, photonics and the aeronautical industry; the development of certain segments of health care and consulting (also with growth of knowledge transfers between university and private and public companies); and the increasing employment in local shops in both the city centre and large stores and supermarkets on its outskirts.

The third reason underlying the selection of Terrassa is that it displays a longstanding tradition in progressive governments. From the first democratic election in 1979 the city has been ruled by left-wing coalitions under socialist leadership. From the 1990s Terrassa has been one of the leading Catalan cities to implement policies for gender equality. With an emphasis on time use and gender mainstreaming, a number of strategic goals have been defined: the promotion of equal opportunity

between men and women; the struggle against the feminisation of poverty; and social inclusion for women. In this sense, one of the last developments has been the recent adoption of a plan for gender equality. The purpose of the plan is the transformation of gender culture in the city council, with a special emphasis on language use and gender mainstreaming.

## **2. Labour force participation**

Spain is the EU country with the highest growth in female activity rates between 1998 and 2009 of women aged 25 to 54 years (17 percentage points versus 7 for the EU average). During the period 1980-2010 female activity rate has contributed to increase the overall activity rates. While female activity rates widened from 28% to 67%, the growth of male activity rate has been rather low (only about 8 percentage points). On the other hand, it is important to emphasise that the increase in labour force participation did not simply result from the growth in the number of people potentially active, but from a real trend in the integration of women into the labour market. While in the last thirty years the number of women in working age grew by only 10.4%, female labour force participation did increase by 165% (Table 1).

Activity rates are higher in Terrassa than in any other Spanish NUTS areas in which Terrassa is located. Although this trend holds for both male and female activity rates, in particular the contrast is much more marked for female data so that there is a difference of up to nearly 6 percentage points between the country and city rates: Terrassa, 72.6%; Spain: 66.8% (Data for 2010, Table 1). Gender gaps are closer in Terrassa than in other part of the country. While the male activity rate for Terrassa is 85.4%, the female activity rate is 72.6% (2010, Table 1). A surprising finding is that during the economic recession female activity rates have not diminished as it has happened at the nadir of other business cycles. The maintenance or even increase in certain sectors of a high activity rates for women is likely to be due to an overindebtedness of Spanish households (Montero, 2011). In connection with the prevalence of very high home ownership rates in Spain, in a scenario of heavy unemployment many families cannot afford having inactive members in order to cope with the pressure of mortgage repayments.

In 2010 women aged 25-38 had the highest activity rates in Terrassa (85.6%, Table 1). The rate steadily decreases down to nearly a half when women are close to retirement. Men exhibit higher rates than women at all age categories. Only in the case of young workers (from 15 to 24 years), women's rates are closer to men's (51.9% to 55.2%, respectively, see Table 1).

### 3. Employment

The rapid transformation of Terrassa into a service society in the last two decades has to a great extent expanded opportunities for female employment. In 2001 (the last available census data) nearly a fourth of women were employed in the industrial sector (mostly manufacturing) and about a fifth in retail trade. Other important subsectors for women's employment were health care and social assistance (11.2%), real estate, rented accommodation and business services (9.8%), education (8.6%), hotels and restaurants (4.8%) and domestic services (4.1%).

Current employment rates for Terrassa are not available. In order to fill this gap, a special exploitation of Labour Force Survey data of Catalonia NUTS2 for the 4th quarter of 2010 has been undertaken. From now on, unless otherwise stated in the text, all 2010 data for the city of Terrasa will be drawn from this statistical analysis. For Catalonia female employment rates have steadily increased from 27% (1980) up to 60% (2010) so that the gender gap has been considerably reduced to only 8 percentage points (Table 1). Although the evolution of female employment in both Catalonia and Spain shows fairly similar trends, Catalonia has been pioneering in this field as it is one of the Spanish regions with historically higher levels of women's integration into the labour market (Annex Table 6 and 8).

While the economic crisis has heavily affected both women and men in Spain as a whole, the latter have been more severely hit in terms of employment shedding. The sectors of construction and industries, typically male-dominated, have been the most severely affected by the economic downturn. In the period 1995 to 2010 female employment rates have experience a dramatic increase of more than 20 percentage points despite the recent reduction of nearly 3 points as a result of the crisis owing to unemployment. However, since 2007 the drop in the male employment rates has been of up 12 points. One of the effects of these developments has been a reduction in the gender gap between employment rates, which has been nearly halved from 2006 to 2010 in both Catalonia and Spain (Annex Table 6 and 8).

In the age group 15-25 female employment rates are higher than male ones despite having lower activity rates (Table 1 and 5). This is possibly explained, especially after the crisis, because female early school leavers are more employable than males. Educational attainment is one of the main factors underlying the variations between female and male employment rates. While women and men with high educational attainment show quite similar employment rates, large gender disparities appear among females and males at the bottom of the educational ladder (Table 6).

Considerable variations in female and male employment patterns are also observed by ethnic origin (Table 8). Four main groups are distinguished: Spanish, European, South American and African. Gender differences relating to the employment rates of various groups are striking. South American women exhibit the highest employment rates (69%) in contrast to the African ones (mainly from Maghreb countries) with very low rates (20%). In the middle lie the Spanish and European women with 61% and 55%, respectively.



Most Latin American women resident in Terrassa come from Ecuador and have jobs in the domestic service. For many years Latin American women have been occupying this vacant niche in the labour market as a growing number of middle-class Spanish women became formally employed and could not deal with housework, childcare or eldercare. It is hard for women from other world regions to work in this sector. Although there is a fierce competition for jobs in the domestic service between Latin American and North African women, it is the former who are getting the upper hand possibly because of cultural proximity and because they are said to be more trustworthy. Their high employment rates may be explained in connection with their good educational attainment and independent migration projects.

On the other hand, the very low employment rates of African women, mainly from Morocco, are mainly due to their low education and to their traditional culture based on a strict segregation of gender roles. Only with the economic crisis Moroccan women have been forced into leaving their household confinement in order to earn a livelihood for themselves and their families as most of their husbands and sons are currently unemployed because of the crisis in the construction sector where they used to work.

Male employment patterns are quite different. While the Spaniards and men from other European countries have both high rates (around 70%), Latin American (60%) and African men (43%) exhibit lesser rates because they are more severely affected by unemployment. These Catalan findings are also typical of Terrassa (Table 8).

### ***3.1. Employment working time patterns***

Part-time employment has little tradition in Spain and accordingly the share of part-time jobs is much lower than in other European countries. However, the trend towards part-time work has been steadily growing for both men and women in the last decade. Part-time employment tends to be unstable and mainly consists of low-qualified and poorly paid positions, which also explains why the rate of voluntary part-timers is so low in Spain. More than half of part-time work is temporary or informal, and job turnover is very high. In general, Spanish women do not wish to have part-time jobs and this kind of employment is not meant as a strategy for the reconciliation of work and family (Flaquer and Escobedo, 2009). In Catalonia female part-time employment as a percentage of total employment was 21.2% in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2010 (Table 2). This is a somewhat lower rate than the Spanish average (23.3%). Men's part-time shares in both Catalonia and Spain were quite low (4.5% and 5.5%, respectively).

The analysis of female working time patterns by the stage of life cycle, the age of youngest child, educational level attainment and ethnic origin shows interesting variations. According to data from the Labour Force Survey of the 4th quarter of 2010, the highest share of part-time among Catalan employed women is found in the age group 16-25 (37.3%). More than anything else this probably reflects the presence of casual work in this early stage of working life, when they tend to combine study and work, as men also do, but with much lower shares. After the age of 25 only one in five

Catalan employed women works part-time. The share of part-timers among men of 25 and over is nearly irrelevant (Table 5).

Unfortunately we do not have data on female employment in Catalonia and Terrassa by the age of youngest child. However, Eurostat data (2009) for Spain as a whole suggest that maternity has not a major impact on employment. We have already emphasised that the highest employment rates are found in the ages groups 25-55, the period when women have children. However, it appears that the share of part-time work among employed women is indeed higher when the youngest child is under 3 (one third) than at later ages of child (child aged 10-16: one fourth) (Table 4).

Catalan women's working time employment patterns are influenced by their educational attainment. While shares of part-time work among women are as much as double in the lower than in the higher levels, among men there is virtually no difference (Table 6). Variations are probably due to the presence of more widespread unstable and junk work among the low-educated women and to the more frequent use of paid domestic work as a strategy for reconciliation among the highly educated ones.

Data on female part-time employment according to ethnic origin in Catalonia show lower shares for the Spanish and Latin American women in contrast with higher shares for the African and European ones (Table 8). African women, mainly from Morocco, are low-educated and this is the main reason for having to accept (non-voluntary) part-time work. On the other hand, the higher prevalence of part-time work among the European women is surely explained by the influence of different cultural family models.

#### **4. Unemployment**

Unemployment rates are not available for the city of Terrassa. While official figures of unemployment rates in both Catalonia and Spain are currently very high (about one in five people in the active population is unemployed), one of the consequences of the economic recession has been the closing and virtual disappearance of the gender gap, which had been very substantial for decades (women's rates used to be as much as double as men's). Since the democratic transition unemployment and in particular female unemployment have been the Achilles' heel of the Spanish economy. With the exception of very short periods labour demand has been much lower than labour supply and this has created enormous difficulties to get jobs for all entrants into the labour market, especially young people and women. One important consequence of this pattern has been the development of fixed-term contracts so that since the late 1980s a third of workforce has been employed under this arrangement, whether they work on the public or in the private sector. One of the outcomes of the economic crisis has been the reduction in the share of temporary employment, but it is not clear whether this new pattern is here to stay.

The series in Annex Table 15 and 16 (Data on unemployment for Spain and Catalonia 1995-2010, calculated as a share of the population of 16 and over) show interesting findings. In the first place,

despite soaring current unemployment rates, female unemployment as a share of female population has not so far reached the levels of 1995. While in 1995 women's unemployment shares were 14.8% and 13.8% in Spain and Catalonia, in 2010 were 11.7% and 10.3%, respectively. Secondly, a historical trend reversal has taken place during the period. Even if women's unemployment shares were higher than men's until 2009 (in Catalonia the reversal happened a year earlier), at the end of the period the sign of the gender gap was reversed (Catalonia: 10.3% versus 14.3%; Spain: 11.7% versus 14.3%) (Annex Table 15 and 16). The relative position of women has neatly been improved after the recession because the sectors most severely hit as a result of the crisis such as the construction and industry are typically male-dominated. It remains to be seen the extent to which this development will be a short-lived situation or become a permanent structural feature.

The social profile of the currently unemployed workers is men, youth, immigrants and low-educated people. Under these concepts can be summed up a substantial part of the causes and consequences of the crisis. High unemployment rates are found among young men under 25 (25%, table 5), men with low educational attainment (32%, table 6) and male immigrants, specifically Africans (46%, table 8). These patterns of unemployment are probably corresponding to the situation in Terrassa.

## **5. Housework and childcare. Maternity and parental leave**

While many of Spanish women brought up under Franco tended to remain inactive after marriage, especially after having the first child, it is less and less common for young women, with the exception of low-educated ones, to follow this trend. In the last decade the number of vocational housewives has been greatly reduced as a result of the very swift transformation of cultural attitudes towards female employment. All studies carried out in relation to preferred family models agree in highlighting that Spanish people (and more especially women) tend to favour egalitarian families where both couple members are employed and their gender roles are equalled (Moreno, 2010). One of the factors that is pushing forward in the transformation of family models is the heavy financial toll taken by the repayment of mortgages. As most families with small children possess owner-occupied dwellings, this is a great incentive to a dual-earning family model. However, data show that these ideals are not matched by real practices. The distribution of time between men and women reveals great disparities, as in the last decades the participation of men in household responsibilities has not gone hand in hand with the progress of women's employment. Among the middle-classes, this has mainly been possible thanks to the development of domestic service by female immigrants.

Some of these patterns can be observed in Table 5. While three-fifths of women at the end of their working lives are not employed, in the group of women aged 25-55 only three out of ten are in the same situation. The analysis of non-employed women by educational attainment shows that while only one in five with the highest levels is non-employed (a very similar share as men), more than four out of five with the lowest levels is a homemaker, whether this is a voluntary option or not

(Table 6). Again, by ethnic group, we find the largest proportion of homemakers among the African women, as three out of five are not employed (Table 8).

The main feature of maternal /care leaves in Spain is that (1) family day-care, which constitutes one part of the public supply of childcare for the under-3s in most EU countries, is virtually non-existent in Spain and (2) formal leave-of-absence schemes for family care purposes (parental leave or adult-care leave schemes) have still not been developed as a real option, as they are mostly unpaid and therefore rarely used (Flaquer and Escobedo, 2009).

Maternity leave is paid by the Social Security for sixteen weeks at 100% of previous earnings. Contributory requirements for eligibility are to be currently paying social security contributions and to have contributed at least the equivalent of 180 full-time days in the last seven years. A flat-rate benefit (€532.51 per month or €17.75 per day) is paid for 42 days to all employed women who do not meet eligibility requirements. Employed mothers are entitled to transfer the last ten weeks of the maternity leave to the father once they have already taken the first six weeks after birth on the condition that their partner meets contributory requirements. Employees in the public sector in Catalonia can choose between extending the maternity leave after 16 weeks or reducing working time by a third until the child is 17 months old, either options being paid. Maternity leave benefit covered 68% of births in 2009 (estimates using Ministry of Labour and Immigration data). Fathers shared parts of maternity leave in around one-quarter of adoption cases, but less than 2 % of births.

From March 2007, the two previously provided days of paternity leave paid by the employer have been supplemented with 13 additional days paid by the Social Security. The paternity leave can be used during or after the end of maternity leave. Most fathers are eligible for paternity leave, but the coverage in relation to births is about 58% (2010 estimates using Ministry of Labour and Immigration data). While a significant proportion of employed fathers is still reluctant to take up this benefit, data show an ascending trend.

An unpaid parental leave scheme that can be taken until the child is three is also available. The person on leave is considered inactive and excluded from the part of the social protection schemes related to employment contributions. However, during the first year, the same job position and workplace are maintained, and the period counts towards social security rights. After the first year, the job protection applies to a job of the same category. In 2009 in Spain, 33,942 people (96% of them women) started some period of parental leave (10 % less than in 2008). This corresponds to 6.9% of the births in that year, a slight decrease of 0.4 percentage points, after a continuous growth since 1995. In Catalonia, 4,550 people (also 96% of them women) used parental leave during 2009. The take-up has remained stable for men, but not for women as their rate fell 12 percentage points. The 4,373 women who started parental leave represented 5% of total births of the year. This means a smaller women's take-up in Catalonia than in Spain as a whole (Ministry of Labour and Immigration) (Escobedo, forthcoming; Flaquer and Escobedo, 2009; Wall and Escobedo, 2009).

## 6. Other situations of inactivity: people in education and retired

### 6.1. *Inactive people who are studying*

No data are available for Terrassa. Figures showed that in Catalonia by the end of 2010 there were more women studying than inactive men, although in relative terms there was virtually no difference using as a reference the population 16 to 64 years: 5%. In contrast, in Spain as a whole the percentage for both women and men was much higher (women: 7.9%; men: 6.8%) (Table 3).

As expected, most of male and female students outside the labour market belong to the age group 15-25 (about four out of ten) with medium-high educational attainment (Table 5 and 6). By ethnic origin there were no marked differences in relative terms (Table 8). One consequence of the economic recession in Spain has been the return to school of many early school leavers. The collapse of the construction sector, where a considerable number of low-qualified young men used to be employed, has driven back to vocational training a number of former workers.

### 6.2. *Early retirement*

In Spain the legal age of retirement is fixed at 65. In 2009 the average age for retirement was about 63 years.

In Spain various types of early retirement exist. A distinction is often made between *prejubilación y jubilación anticipada*. 'Prejubilación' is not officially regulated and it derives from an arrangement made between a worker under 60 and his/her employer as a result of a process of staff adjustment or employment lay-off. In principle, this should have no cost for the Social Security, but if the worker gets an unemployment benefit for some period it may not be so. On the other hand, *jubilación anticipada* is official and it is only possible after 60 when workers meet certain eligibility requirements. This is possible from 60 or 61 (depending on whether or not the worker has paid social contributions before 1967) to 64, and it is subject, with some exceptions, to penalties depending on age. One special scheme is partial retirement. This combines the possibility of retirement (75% or 85% reduction) and part-time work (25% reduction). When reaching the normal age of retirement, the worker is entitled to a 100% of full pension. Partial retirement must be negotiated with the employer and the partially retired worker must be formally replaced by hiring a new employee. Finally, other former workers under 65 are inactive because of disability.

This previous information serves to place into context data from Catalonia and Spain. Only a small percentage of former workers are retired on account of disability. While the percentage of disabled former workers is about 2% in Catalonia, in Spain is about 3% (relative to the male and female population 15-64). Men are the majority among the overall early retired in both Catalonia and Spain, but the contrast is very stark in Catalonia where the early retired men account for as much as

double as women (Table 3). This may be explained because Catalonia is an older industrial region than the rest of Spain.

## 7. Hourly, monthly and annual gross earnings

In Spain, the average gross earnings in 2006 was 9.96€ per hour worked, 1,528€ per month and 19,680.9€ per year (data from Spanish Survey the Structure of Earnings, National Statistics Institute). These averages may vary depending on working time patterns. The earnings of part-timers were much lower: 8.5€ per hour, 756.4€ per month and 9,417.4€ per year.

The gender pay gap showed important differences following types of working time patterns and units of payment (Annex table 17). Differences between gross female and male earnings were broader in annual than in hourly units. If we consider working time patterns, women's wages were lower than men's, especially in part-time jobs paid in hours. This may be considered as a double discrimination, since there are much more women than men working part-time.

One of the unexpected effects of the economic recession has been a reduction in the gender gap. According to a report from *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT)<sup>1</sup> the gap between male and female earnings appears to have shrunken from 2006 to 2008. If in 2006 women earned 73.7% of male wages, the gap had shifted to 78.1% in 2008. Once again changes in wages by different working time patterns differ. Thus, while the gender gap in part-time jobs has widened (from 87.4% to 84.8%), in the case of full time jobs has decreased (from 83.2% to 86.3%). Although the situation in Catalonia in terms of gender gap was worse off than in the Spanish average, the trend was similar. The Catalan gender gap shifted from 70.7% in 2006 to 75.6% in 2008.

The reduction in differences regarding male and female salary levels is not so much the result of an increase in women's earnings but of a decrease in men's. As women are increasing their presence in an activity branch, in general differences in wage levels tend to be reduced. While lower gaps are found in education (92.1% in 2006 and 95.8% in 2008), higher ones appear in real estate agencies and business services (64.8% in 2006 and 67.7% in 2008). The lower salaries for women are found in restaurants and hotels and the higher ones in banking and financial services (*Unión General de Trabajadores*, 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> A major Spanish Trade Union.

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