

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The recent global crisis appeared in Greece from 2009 onwards. By 2016 its important repercussions in both the Greek economy and society became obvious. The Greek population in the midst of the current crisis is faced by a highest risk of poverty compared to the EU average, coupled with an also high risk of material deprivation.¹ This situation has forced women in Greece to an even more vulnerable position as the interplay between gender and other social characteristics, such as age, employment, income, nationality and citizenship, produce multiple and new vulnerabilities. In this context work-life balance for the Greek employed women has also been affected. Current conditions at the Greek labour market such as wage freezes or wage cuts in the public and private sector, personnel cuts in all sectors of the economy, cuts and restrictions in care related benefits, allowances and facilities, reduction of housing benefits or family benefits, do not favor the accomplishment of work-life balance.² As evidenced by the 2010 European Social Survey certain cases of infringement of the rights of pregnant women and mothers of young children to maternity leave and benefits have been documented.³ Moreover according to EIGE's gender equality index⁴ Greek women compared to men are disproportionally involved in caring activities, with extremely wide gender gaps between the time

1. EGSI, 2011, *The impact of the economic crisis on the situation of women and men and on Gender Equality Policies*, Synthesis report, prepared by Francesca Bettio, et al. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/genderequality/files/documents/130410_crisis_report_en.pdf. Also, EU SILC 2008, 2011.

2. EGSI, 2011.

3. ESS, 2010, Greece.

4. EIGE, *Gender Equality Index, Measuring gender equality in the European Union 2005-2012*: Report, ISBN 978-92-9218-814-6, DOI 10.2839/763764.

spent on caring and educating children and grandchildren per day, and disproportionately responsible for cooking and housework.⁵

In Greece the issue of work-life balance has not been adequately addressed by means of empirical research investigations. The few research attempts devoted to this issue focus mainly to the distribution of parental duties, care and housekeeping as well the use of time between spouses within the nuclear family. Further, most of these attempts have been conducted before the advent of the current economic crisis.⁶ There is a limited number of relative research undertakings carried out in the midst the present crisis. These are also oriented to the study of the distribution of family roles, competences and use of time between spouses.⁷ To this respect the research project on «Work-life balance in the context of changing families and labour market in Greece»,⁸ carried out in the year 2016, attempts to cover the existing gap in the relative Greek literature and research. It tries to assess the needs and aspirations of women, and to determine how work and family life was reconciled in Greece, in times of crisis. It had three specific goals. A descriptive goal has been to highlight the changes that have occurred in the lives of women from the recent economic crisis, to describe the changes in family structure and the factors having affected employment and

5. On an average of men's involvement in cooking and housework every day for an hour or more in the EU in 2010, of 45.5 out of 100, Greece scored only 20.0 while Denmark scored 80.4.

6. We are referring to literature reviews on the issue of the work-life balance such as in Thanopoulou M. et al. (1999). «The relationship between professional and family life. The investigation of the Greek literature», *Synchrone Themata*, 71-72, pp. 171-189 (in Greek) and the review conducted during the implementation of the present project.

7. The relevant information comes from the literature review conducted during the implementation of the present project.

8. The project has been part of the European Area's Financial Mechanism WORK-LBAL, with code EEA GR07/3939 and has been co-financed by the Programme Research within priority sectors "Diversity, inequalities and social inclusion" of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014. The project has been administrated by the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (GSRT) and implemented by Family and Childcare Centre (KMOP), as the project's co-ordinator and partners the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE), the Greek League for Women's Rights, and the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Iceland.

family life, as well as to provide evidence for the effectiveness of European policy, in the domain of work and family life harmonisation. A substantial goal has been to provide empirical evidence about the needs and expectations of specific professional groups of women, namely, women entrepreneurs, women scientists, self-employed, salaried women and unemployed women scientists, but also to provide greater insight into the personal experiences of women, in other words, to portray the needs and strategies of personal and professional survival, amidst the current financial crisis. A practical and policy oriented goal has been to map the nature of the economic development policy in Greece, in relation to the promotion of child care services, the provision of parental leave and the introduction of liberal or reduced working hours, for each European country.

The implementation of the project included a quantitative and a qualitative research. A qualitative research, a refined approach without numbers, was necessary in order to respond to the need to investigate in depth some more and new dimensions of the work-life balance not yet considered. We had as a starting point the idea that the current crisis, as a product of objective terms and conditions, is reflected on and perceived differently by various categories of women according to their position into the labour market and the social hierarchy. We have also assumed that personal feelings and experiences of women reflect objective conditions and factors that directly affect their life trajectories. Aiming to trace the interconnections between objective conditions and subjective perceptions of the present crisis we have chosen specific professional categories of women. We aimed at verifying the hypothesis whether high education credentials and employment protect women from poverisation and status degradation. Having these in mind we have chosen to study professional categories of women considered - before the advent of the current crisis - the non or the least vulnerable from a gender perspective among Greek women. These are mainly women possessing high educational credentials leading to scientific professions highly classified in the professional hierarchy, but also women active in the entrepreneurial field. Further, in relation to

previous research attempts our undertaking examines not only the accomplishment of family obligations, but also the working conditions of professional women in the midst of the current crisis. In other terms in our qualitative research the work – life balance is simultaneously considered in both the domains of work and that of the family.

The purpose of the qualitative investigations undertaken and carried out was a thorough study of the professional, family and personal life's balance in certain professional categories of women in the present conditions of the current economic crisis in Greece. The qualitative research of the targeted population aimed at an in-depth qualitative analysis of interconnections between work and family life, of working and unemployed professional women in Greece today, their prospects and their expectations. It aimed at investigating the living experiences of the targeted population of professional women. So, three broad categories of case studies were originally planned. These included the following: a) Women entrepreneurs, b) women scientists either self-employed or employed and c) unemployed women scientists. These broad categories of women professionals were further specialized in order to include specific professional categories of women so that the investigation of the balance of professional and personal life to be facilitated. This need was dictated by a pre-screening process of the field and a pilot study which showed that the above three general categories required further specialization, so as to draw specific conclusions, per occupational category of professional women. For this reason, it was considered necessary to enrich the range of occupational categories of women documented so as to help a better understanding of the state of affairs in Greece under crisis.

The selection of the professional categories was based on the criteria of high liability professions, high educational capital, self-employment, as well as, professions that are state-protected. Thus some broad professional categories were identified to be included in to the investigation process such as: a) Women employees and liberal professionals. b) Women working in the public and private

sector. c) Women in professions of high responsibility. d) Women scientists that are underemployed, unemployed, or active in other domains than the ones already specified within. e) Women whose occupations or employment have been affected by the economic crisis, and new vulnerable professional categories of women coming from the middle social strata. So the qualitative research included eleven case studies of women active in a variety of professions as well as unemployed professional women. These case studies were conducted at the population of professional women as follows: Women historians within academia, women civil servants, women judges, women lawyers, women notaries, women doctors, women pharmacists, women entrepreneurs-beauticians, women architects, self-employed women, as well as unemployed or underemployed women architects, civil engineers and women sociologists.

Given that the purpose of the project was to analyse and portray the work and family relationship, as shaped and experienced by employed and unemployed professional women in modern Greece, the research steered to the investigation of this relationship from the standpoint of maternity and work balance. Therefore, the women selected were aged 25-50 years and were mothers of minors, that is children in need of care as dependents. To collect the necessary qualitative data, an interview guide was designed, based on the concept of the 'life cycle', corresponding to the articulation of different 'worlds', such as the world of the family and the world of work. The research focused on the current situation faced and experienced by women who were selected. However, it was considered necessary to collect information related also to their past, namely the relationship of their studies –area of expertise– and their subsequent profession to the family of origin and their own nuclear family. This was expected to highlight the complex and multiple facets interwoven within the world of work and the world of family. Also, one of the dimensions of the study was to detect future family balancing capabilities and work. In this context, it was considered appropriate to investigate the views of women respondents on relevant prospects. Thus, the interview guide was structured in four

sections: a) The social - demographic characteristics of respondents, b) biographical notes, c) their current status and d) their prospects. These modules included sections for inquiry that helped to a more appropriate and thorough approach of the basic goals of the research. The guide was designed in a semi-structured form in order to ensure simultaneously both, the collection of the necessary information about some key issues and some kind of flexibility on the part of the respondent facilitating at the same time the narration. The interview guide was also designed in a way to permit adaptations to each professional category of women. It is to be noted that there were various difficulties in approaching the respondents of the qualitative research. The snowball technique adopted for the approach of the specific professional categories of the research population did not automatically secure the required number of respondents per case. There were denials, excuses and postponements in time schedules due to work overload. Also certain difficulties emerged in identifying new respondents within the criteria of the study. The total number of respondents of the qualitative research, amounted finally to hundred and ten professional women, allocated equally within the eleven case studies. The material collected was extensive and its range was beyond thousand pages of transcripts.

The present volume titled «Gender in Science without Numbers. From academia to work-life balance» refers to the qualitative research undertaken by the National Centre for Social Research and includes short reviews of the main results of each case study focusing on the work-life balance. Our qualitative research showed that the relationship between work and family life has been significantly influenced by the new conditions imposed by the recent economic crisis. Seven years after the advent of the crisis, the Greek society has undergone a variety of changes which are reflected in income, employment, state care services, benefits and allowances affecting those working in both, the public and the private sector. Within these conditions, the relationship between work and family life, as shown by the project's case studies, has suffered by the successive shocks of social transformations taking place during the crisis. This is especially

true for women professionals. In addition, key dimensions of gender inequality existing even before the recent economic crisis have been prevalent as well.

The present volume contains twelve texts concisely referring to the qualitative research results on work-life balance. The text titled «The bonds of a liberal profession. Architects in motherhood», a collective contribution to the memory of Fray Kamoutsi, illustrates the work-life balance for self-employed women architects. The narrations of female self-employed architects, mothers of infants, highlight points of friction arisen during the exercise of the profession under crisis and their attempt to balance the work and the family. The study depicted the practices that these women adopt in order to respond to the multiple requirements of their professional and family life. Subsequently, what has been prevalent is that within the current crisis, self-employed architect mothers are basically experiencing the “restraints” of an in name only “freelance” profession.

In her text on women historians titled «The daughters of Clio between home and history. Women historians in academia», *Ioanna Papathanasiou* argues that the “equality” of gender relations within academia, although provided in the present system by a strong institutional framework, has been hampered in practice, even in occupational groups classified as a social or intellectual “elite”. As far as the work-life balance in the lives of women historians is concerned the research has shown that it is not stable. This was evidenced by the different and readjusted family strategies allowing them to manage their roles flexibly, the roles they maintain as women, mothers, daughters and wives and as professionals within a male-dominated working environment.

The study concerning women judges portrays the diverging and asymptotic relationship between work and family life. As shown by *Emmy Fronimou* in her text titled «Professional work and family life of women judges. An incompatible relationship», women judges’ duties conflict with their feelings and requirements of their role as mothers. The investigation has shown that women judges operate under pressure due to a multitude of psychological and social factors

related not only to the specific nature of their demanding profession, but also to the exceptional difficulty of reconciling the conflicting demands of the world of work and the world of the family.

The investigation of the work-life balance of self-employed women lawyers by *Amalia Frangiskou* revealed the divergent aspects of the relationship between work and family life. In her text titled «Female lawyers. The equilibrium of two worlds – on the bench», she underlines that the work-life balance is experienced by women lawyers as a compilation of a “world of remorse” and a “self-nourishing conflict”. She stresses that, despite the mitigative action that these women are or were prepared to take, their losses are exhibited and vary accordingly. They include the moments lost from the mother-child relationship, their marriage breakdown, inefficiencies in the workplace, and the deterioration of their personal health. The crisis facing the country has started to affect more and more aspects of their daily life, and has considerably worsened the situation and prospects of their profession in general.

In the case study referring to the work-family relationship of women notaries, *Maria Thanopoulou and Joanna Tsiganou* show that this relationship has been determined by the new conditions set by the economic crisis. In their text titled «Family and work of notary women. From safety to insecurity», they argue that in the new unstable professional environment women notaries try to balance work and family under very unfavourable terms. They strive continuously for a balance between exercising a freelance profession constantly charged with more responsibilities of the state and responding to the traditional role of a mother and a housewife. The upheavals caused by the current crisis are experienced by women notaries with daily stress and anguish. They do not foresee a promising future for the survival of their profession, but also for the prospects of ensuring a fair standard of living for themselves and their children.

In her text titled «Female doctors with under-age children in time of crisis. An endless role conflict», *Aliki Mouriki* emphasizes the constant conflict between professional and familial roles of women doctors having children that are minors. She argues that the

successful and balanced reconciliation of professional and family life seems excessively difficult for most women doctors with young children. The prolonged economic crisis compounds the objective and subjective difficulties that face the successful practice of their profession. These affect the family, but also the personal balance of these women. As these conditions worsen the exercise of the medical profession is threatened. Women doctors face with stoicism and personal sacrifices the significant difficulties of combining their complex roles; these include small reductions in the time they devote to their children and much more, in their career and personal development.

In her study titled «Work-life balance for women pharmacists and critical changes in a profession 'suitable' for women», *Hara Stratoudaki* highlights the critical upheavals that are taking place in the profession of the pharmacist, for women, during the crisis. Until recently, many women chose the profession of pharmacist, considering that among the health professions, is the most suiting towards their gender, as it may provide the appropriate time and working conditions allowing for a smooth balance of work and family. Therefore, in recent decades, most pharmacists in Greece –and elsewhere– are female. With the onset of the economic crisis and the diversification of the way pharmacies operate, the work-life balance has been threatened. Women pharmacists feel they are failing in many of their roles within the profession and the family and feel pessimistic about the future, as the entrepreneurial facet of their profession becomes more and more demanding.

The fragile balance between the aspirations and desires of women beauticians-entrepreneurs who are mothers of children minors, particularly within the context of a crisis, is documented in the text titled «Profession beautician. Fragile balance between their ambitions and wishes». As *Dimitra Kondyli* argues the exercise of the profession of the beautician requires a woman to possess distinct professional and business skills as well as physical strength, especially since the growth or even retention of the clientele in times of crisis, becomes elusive. The crisis has contributed to the increase in working

hours, to the reduction of the cost of services provided, and helped to create a fragile coupling between work and family; the dilemmas regarding the prioritization and needs between the professional and family sphere, are at the forefront.

In her text titled «Women architects and civil engineers facing underemployment, unemployment and the pursuit of work-life balance», *Natalia Spyropoulou* shows that the family and professional lives of women architects and civil engineers, dependent employees, are shifting and tormented by the economic crisis. As the working conditions of these professions have been deteriorated there are effects which spill over to the ways in which these women used to effectively combine their professional and family life. The research highlighted the problems these women face today because of the crisis, but also the different strategies they follow to fulfil the multiple roles undertaken in the context of their work and family life.

Andromachi Hadjiyanni has conducted a case study on women sociologists, a vulnerable professional category even before the advent of the present crisis. In her text titled «Women Sociologists. Family, employment, underemployment and unemployment in times of crisis» she shows that for unemployed or underemployed women sociologists, the reconciliation of work and family life is dictated by conditions other than those concerning their colleagues who might enjoy permanent employment. The research population consists of women sociologists who are employed part-time or hold minimum hours, a situation which has deteriorated during the years of crisis in Greece. It seems to be difficult for those women sociologists to combine the roles of working woman and mother, as they often depend on the ability of childcare and the help of their family.

Though the qualitative research placed emphasis on the work-life balance of certain categories of women professionals some case studies include also relevant policy issues. In her text on women civil servants, titled «Female public sector employees and a difficult reconciliation of family and work life», *Christina Varouxu* highlights the difficult reconciliation of family and professional life for women civil servants arguing that during the last six years they are experiencing

adverse conditions with respect to employment. The text emphasises the policy measures proposed by the women interviewed as necessary to support both their career aspirations and their ability to harmonize the latter with the responsibilities of the family.

Moreover we included, as *postscript* of this volume, a qualitative research conducted with key-informants on the existing relative policies in Greece under crisis. *Manina Kakepaki* in her text titled «Evaluation and assessment of public policies and practices on work-life balance in Greece», refers to the policy-making process and to the policies on work-life balance in Greece. To fulfill the purpose of the study semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts and government officials on the issue of policies regarding reconciliation of family and professional life. As evidenced, there is a severe lack of resources for social policy due to extensive cuts in state welfare structures. On the other hand working relationships are becoming more flexible, and other –atypical– labor relations are imposed, which are unprotected and not subject to the existing legislative framework. At the level of values, claims related to gender issues have declined since they are considered a “luxury” in harsh times.

By evaluating the results of the qualitative research in their totality, it seems that the common denominator of all studies, is that, today, in Greece under crisis, the relationship between work and family life deviates more and more from any perspective of reconciliation. Regardless of the profession in which these women are active - historian working in academia, judge, doctor, lawyer, notary, pharmacist, architect, civil-engineer, entrepreneur beautician, civil servant, sociologist – work-life balance appears as a painful “duty”, due to the long list of professional and familial responsibilities they have to cope with. In the absence of supportive structures from the state, and amidst income shrinkage, the provision of external auxiliary services, both at work and in the family, becomes extremely difficult. Instead, the memorandum policies adopted by the state, worsen the conditions of exercising their professions, and variously affect the women included within this qualitative research project. Existing policies are practically against the prospect of the reconciliation of

work and family. In some cases, these lead women in seeking outlets of early exit strategies from the profession. In Greece under crisis, the balance between professional and family life of the women studied has begun to tilt towards the return to the traditional role of the woman as mother and housewife, that goes against the emancipation won by women in the post-war era, particularly in recent decades.

All qualitative investigations undertaken in the context of the overall project are complementary to the simultaneously conducted quantitative research and the reviewing of existing policies on work-life balance. They constitute small-scale investigations that lead to circumstantial evidence which must not be generalized in its entity. The case studies try to provide an analytical approach with respect to the balance of work and personal life of professional women in Greece, at the time of an in-depth crisis and exhibit new areas for further research. These might be further investigation of the new conditions affecting not only gender relationships in both the work and the family but also social mobility and social reproduction. We expect that our preliminary qualitative approach might be of help in future explorations of these fields as it implies that the current overpowering economic crisis ‘shelters’ multifaced other crises.

Maria Thanopoulou and Joanna Tsiganou
Athens, December 2016