

Welfare state in Italy. The University reform.

Italian Welfare State makes part of the Conservative Corporatist model (Esping-Andersen), but due to a number of its particular features some researchers put it in the Latin model (Siaroff), or Southern model (Ferrera). Combining Italian welfare's common and special **features** we see the following picture:

1. **Traditional family and the principle of subsidiarity.** Its role as a care-giving unit is very high. State almost not interfere in day care, care for disabled and old people, which are considered as a house work of women. Father in a traditional family is seen as a breadwinner and the state provides women with benefits first of all as mothers and wives, rather than workers. Subsidiarity is the idea that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level, that is state helps families only when they are in need.
2. Importance of **work.** In Italian constitution is written that it is a republic based on labour. Thus, full citizenship can be acquired only through participation in work. Welfare provided to irregular workers is basic and very weak.
3. **Universalistic Education and Health care.** It's a feature of Scandinavian model. Education is compulsory and free, Universities are inexpensive, health care is provided as a citizenship right.
4. **Clientilism.** The term refers to a form of social organization common in many developing regions characterized by "patron-client" relationships. In such places, relatively powerful and rich "patrons" promise to provide relatively powerless and poor "clients" with jobs, protection, infrastructure, and other benefits in exchange for votes and other forms of loyalty including labor.
5. **Unbalanced distribution of protection across the standard risks.** The old age is very highly protected, while with family works the principle of subsidiarity, public housing doesn't satisfy the demand.
6. **Uneven distribution of tax burdens.** Because of extensive black market there is high tax evasion. Fight against fraud works mostly in the North, that's why northern Italians tend to pay more taxes and therefore can express dissatisfaction and the desire to separate from the poor South.
7. **Local differences in social provision.** There are rather big differences between North and South because of different territorial distribution of state resources and local governments' use of money.

The **budget deficit** (5,3% of GDP) and a **huge public debt**, the biggest in Europe (115% of GDP) are making the economic position of Italy unstable and preoccupy the European Union, taking to account the recent financial problems of Greece and Ireland. Reasons for the deficit are high tax evasion on the black market, aging and low fertility rate and high unemployment (8%). The country has no money for welfare and tries to economise on it. Budget cuts should reduce the budget deficit, especially the cuts in social spheres (education, culture). This approach of Italian government is very risky because budget cuts on welfare inevitably lead to dissatisfaction of population and instability. The situation is aggravated with the political crisis.

The **political crisis** in Italy started with sexual scandals concerning Berlusconi, which led to fixing of a confidence vote on December 14. Then in October 2010 happened the split of the ruling party the People of Freedom of Silvio Berlusconi (its coalition 46% in Parliament) and formation by the former ally of Berlusconi, Gianfranco Fini, of a new right-wing opposition Future and Freedom (was part of the People of Freedom), 5% in the Chamber of Deputies. Despite of its smallness, it is very significant, because Berlusconi's party the People of

Freedom lost majority in the Chamber of Deputies. This means unstable future for the austerity budget reform and therefore for the Italian economy as a whole.

Discussion: University reform

The University reform is a part of austerity budget reform of Berlusconi's government.

Its aim, according to the **arguments of the Minister of Education**, is to:

- increase meritocracy,
- transparency because part of University's administration will be in the hands of professional managers coming from outside,
- less wasteful spending by reducing the number of universities, faculties and degrees,
- less corruption and by prohibiting relatives to work at the same a University,
- social equality by giving scholarships not only to the poor students,
- accessibility of academic career by introducing a limit of researcher contract to 8 years
- less dependency on local level by choosing the new professors from the national, not local level.

But the **critics of the reform** say that it will lead to more bureaucracy, social inequality and violation of human rights, precarious research work and «privatisation» of Universities.

The **actors** who are **for** the reform are, obviously, its author, the Government of Silvio Berlusconi and its ruling party the People of Freedom and allied parties. What is interesting, is that the new right-wing opposition Future and Freedom is also for the reform, what means the majority of the parliament is willing to adopt it.

Against are parties of left-wing opposition, 37% in Parliament (Democratic party, Italy of Values), students who organize spontaneously in many small groups and the trade unions, CGIL (General Italian Confederation of Work) and CISL (Italian Confederation of Organized Labour), which represent 43% of Italian workers.

We see a very precarious social situation. The political crisis and economic instability lead Italy into social unrests, which probably might repeat the events of the 1968. The American organization European Institute predicts: "If the Italian government falls and the austerity budget fails or is postponed it will be another domino in an already dire series of fiscal crises affecting the eurozone."

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