

*Welfare Conditionality: Principles, Practices and Perspectives”
University of York, 27 june 2018*

Conditionality without services: the paradox of the Italian welfare

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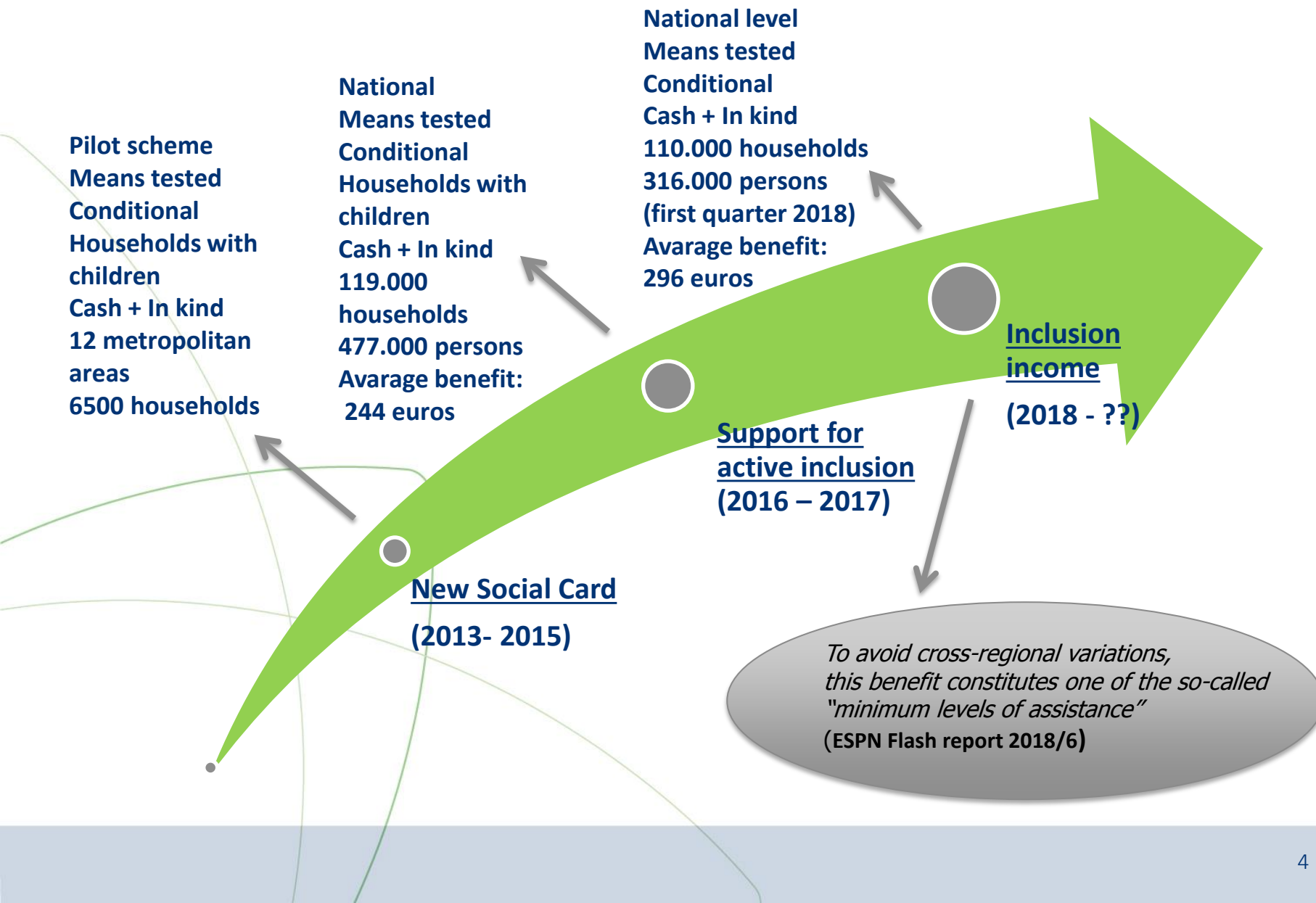
Overview

- **Policies to fight poverty in Italy**
- **Policy evaluation: methodology and field work**
- **Main evidences: what professionals/social workers think of the intervention (focus on conditionality)**
- **Lessons learned**
- **Conclusions**

Fighting poverty in Italy

- Absolute poverty nearly doubled from its pre-crisis level. In 2016: households poverty rate 6,3% (individual 7,9%); child poverty rate 12,5%; households with children poverty rate 26,8%)
- The economic crisis and the lack of a national measure to fight poverty opened a policy window on poverty (poverty as a prominent subject on the policy agenda)
- Introduction of a national anti-poverty programme in order to deal with highly fragmented and poorly coordinated programmes at regional and local level (with the resulting level of services varying greatly among cities)
- Need to strengthen social services and public employment services in terms of staff and greater financial resources available to provide adequate services
- The nation-wide benchmark envisaged by the Constitution to ensure homogeneous minimum levels of social services across the country – Livelli Essenziali nelle Prestazioni – has never been set (OECD, 2017)

Fighting poverty in Italy... a long reform process



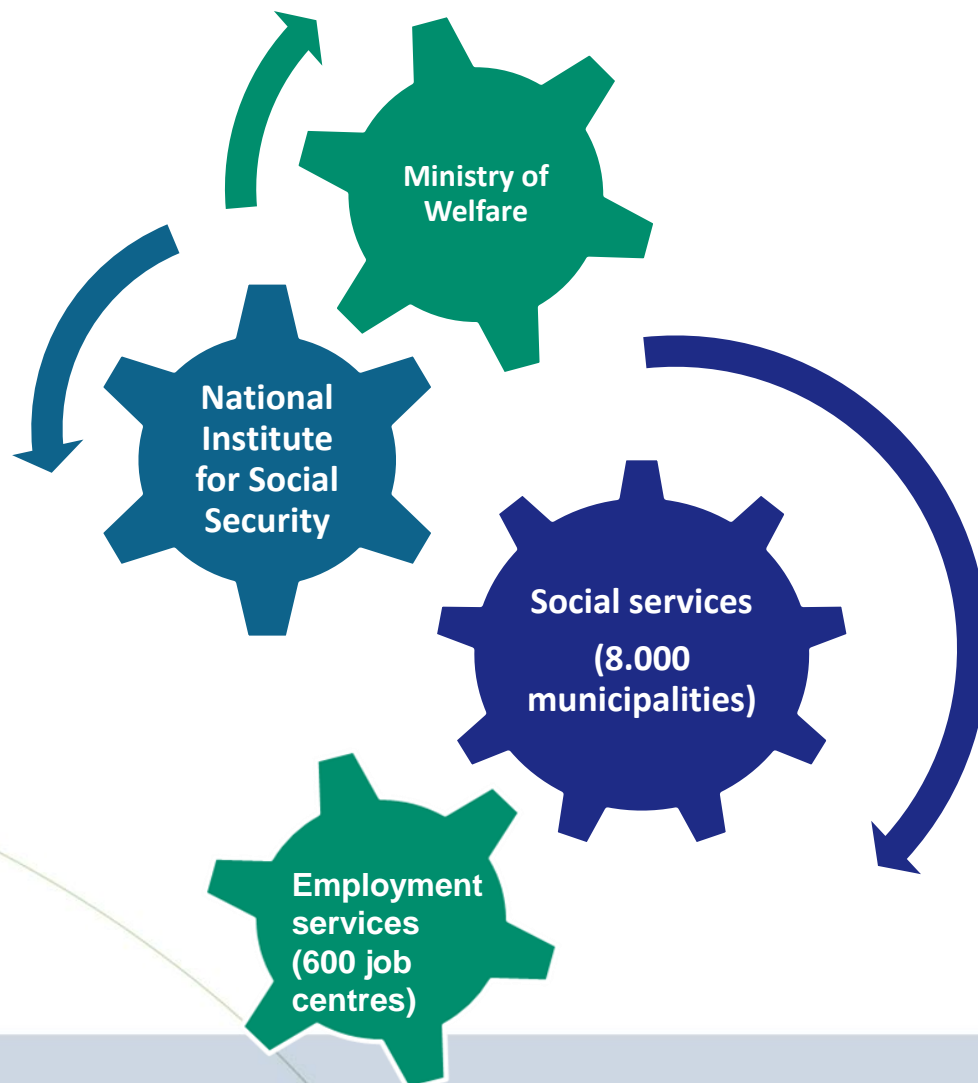
Fighting poverty in Italy...

Developing Conditionality and Sanctions

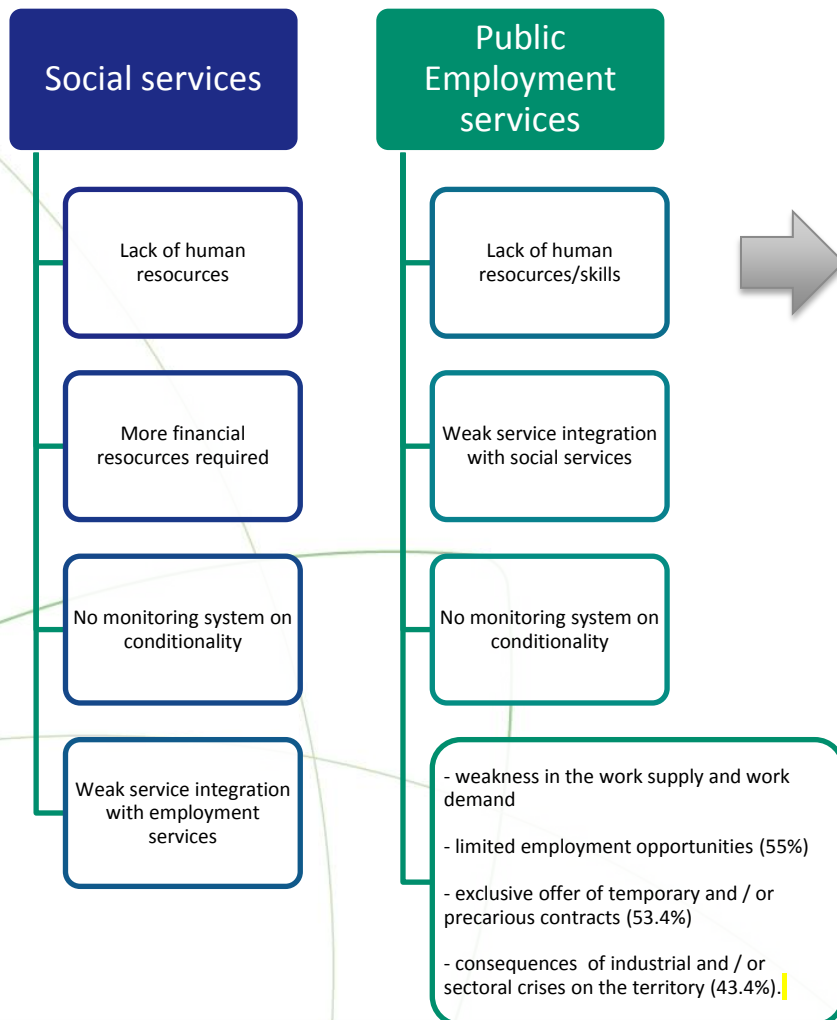
- Measures are conditional on signing a “social contract”/agreement/pact aimed at promoting active inclusion through individualised plans and service provision
- The institutional design is based on an integrated services provision system (social services + employment services + education system + health services...)
- The more the measure broads its scope in terms of coverage of disadvantaged households/individuals, the more the attention on conditionality and sanctions

Does the policy design fit with more conditionality and sanctions?

Governance of the programmes



Are public services involved in the implementation ready?



Activity	Lack of	
	Lack of skills	H.R.
Creating a profesional development plan	20,70%	82,80%
Guidance counseling	27,70%	78,30%
Laboral insertion accompaniment	18,40%	85,50%
Needs assessment	18,10%	75,50%
Information on working opportunities and training	19%	81%
Needs assessment for disadvantaged people	9,50%	34,90%

Source: Public employment services annual report. ANPAL 2017

INAPP research: methodology and field work

New Social Card evaluation process (2015)

Cities involved:

Milano, Bologna,
Firenze, Bari,
Palermo, Venezia,
Verona, Napoli,
Catania, Torino,
Genova

Semi-structured interviews

- **1 Interview with the policy-maker (Ministry of Welfare)**
- **1 Interview with the Italian Social Security Institute (INPS)**
- **11 Interviews with the measure's local officials and their staff**

Focus groups

- **11 Focus groups set up**
- **87 Social workers involved**
- **20 Hours of recorded and transcribed discussions**
- **Use of Atlas.ti specialised software with theoretical reference to *Grounded Theory* and the *Hermeneutic Process***

Research on *Support for Active Inclusion* – SIA (2017)

Semi-structured interviews

- **3 Interviews with the measure's regional officials and their staff**

Focus groups

- **3 Focus groups**
- **20 professionals involved**

Focus on Conditionality (1)

Conditionality understood as:

- (i) imposition,**
- (ii) control,**
- (iii) extortion or incrimination,**
- (iv) user's stigmatisation,**
- (v) as a tool that does not actually enhance the user's motivation,**
- (vi) an inapplicable tool in the absence of a suitable provision of public services**

Focus on Conditionality (2)

Conditionality was applied ...

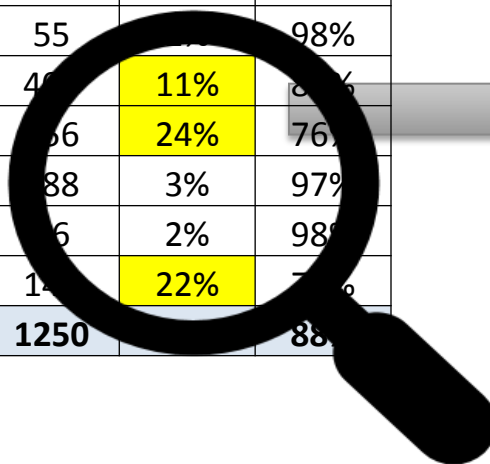
- **bureaucratic manner:** complying with the indications of the regulatory act establishing the measure. The obligation linked to conditionality was limited to the mere signing of the contract with the users. Therefore, conditionality was limited to the fulfilment of bureaucratic and administrative formalities.
- **soft application:** Conditionality as a tool for user engagement by setting up the relationship on the basis of dialogue and negotiation and allowing the sanction to be residual and flexible.

Soft approach to conditionality had proved to be more effective with the most vulnerable families who could not fulfil some of the commitments made, avoiding the imposition of prescriptive models

Focus on Conditionality (3)

Data from the monitoring system: households projects respect of conditionality (absolute and %)

Metropolitan Areas	NRC	RC	NRC %	RC %
A	9	108	8%	92%
B	1	55	2%	98%
C	51	40	11%	89%
D	49	36	24%	76%
E	10	88	3%	97%
F	2	6	2%	98%
G	42	14	22%	78%
Total	164	1250	8%	92%



Most of the times.. no respect of conditionality due to lack of users cooperation and motivation

In how many cases have sanctions been applied?

2%

Focus on Conditionality (4)

City n.1

*«**Few have been blocked** by the non respect of these pacts that as usual are shared and co-defined with the families. **Only a couple of cases of revocation** for groups that once received the card are no longer revealed to social services. The pact is never however seen as a sort of blackmail but often as an opportunity and, in any case, the Social Worker always agrees with the objectives to be achieved in the long run».*

City n.2

«Concerning conditionality, the beneficiaries more accustomed to assistance logics have experienced it negatively, in some cases leading to renunciation of the benefit. On the contrary, another part of the users perceived it in a positive way because they felt being held in consideration».

City n.3

The possibility of monitoring personalized projects (respect of conditionality and verifying results) was strongly conditioned by the workload that social workers had to perform to complete the agreements.

The operators underline how the verification of the conditionality relative to active job search and training suffered from:

- **Low level of cooperation** with the **employment services** and the lack of vocational training offer.*
- Although all users have gone to the employment services at least once, operators highlight how difficult it is to put forward cross-compliance mechanisms if there is no shared responsibility on the part of the services based on their effective capacity to take charge.*
- Conditionality has never been experienced and implemented according to a sanctioning approach. In fact, the suspension of the measure for non-compliance with conditionalities was carried out only in few cases.*

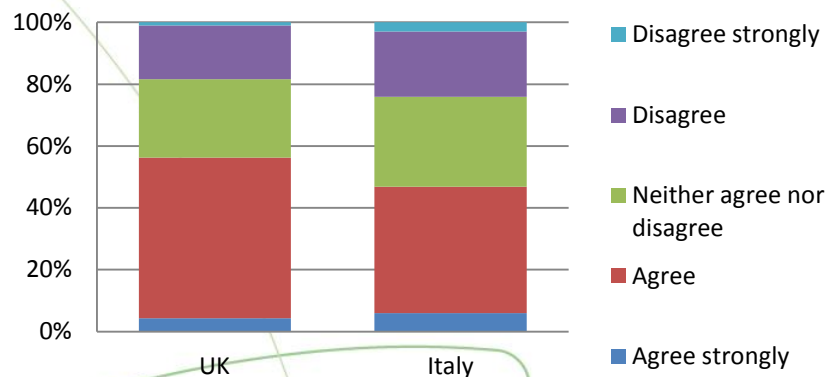
Methodological limits: soft application of conditionality vs bureaucratic approach

Barriers to an appropriate conditionality system: Inadequate services system, lack of employment opportunities, complex sanctioning system, missing data.

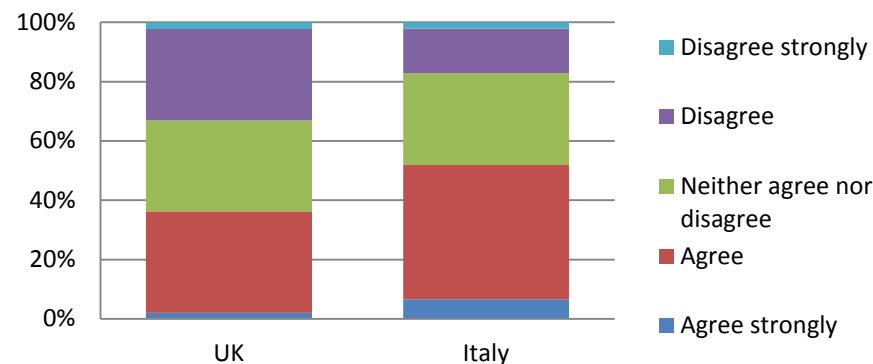
*“THE **SANCTIONING SYSTEM**... APPEARS TO BE **COMPLEX**” “IN PARTICULAR, THE SYSTEM OF SANCTIONS RELATING TO FALSE DECLARATIONS... INVOLVES THE **RISK OF PUNISHING EVEN MERE MATERIAL ERRORS**... IT SHOULD BE NOTED, ONCE AGAIN, THAT THE PLURALITY OF THE PARTIES INVOLVED WILL HEAVILY INFLUENCE THE **SANCTIONING PROCESS**, REASONABLY TRANSLATING INTO A SERIES OF LATE COMMUNICATIONS THAT WILL ENTAIL DIFFICULTIES IN RECOVERING THE SUMS OWED TO THE INSTITUTE. **THE SANCTIONS ARE SUCCESSFUL AS A DETERRENT TO OPPORTUNISTIC BEHAVIOR ONLY IF THOSE WHO PROVIDE THEM ARE CREDIBLE, AS A SUBJECT ABLE TO INTERVENE PROMPTLY TO PENALIZE ABUSE**” (T. BOERI, PRESIDENT OF INPS, JULY 2017)*

welfare conditionality: do welfare attitudes matter? Insights from the European Social Survey 2016

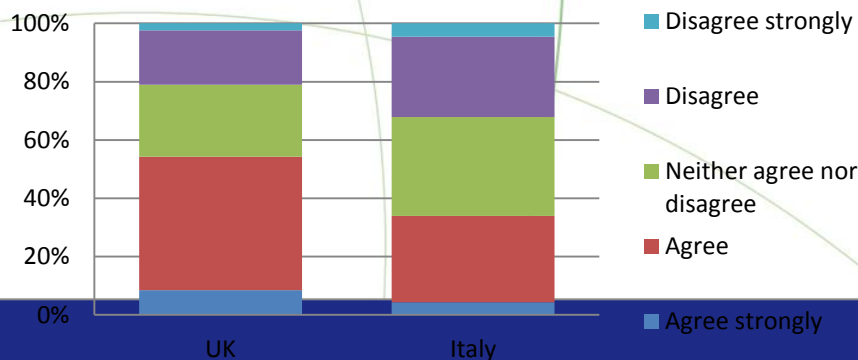
**Social benefits/services prevent
widespread poverty**



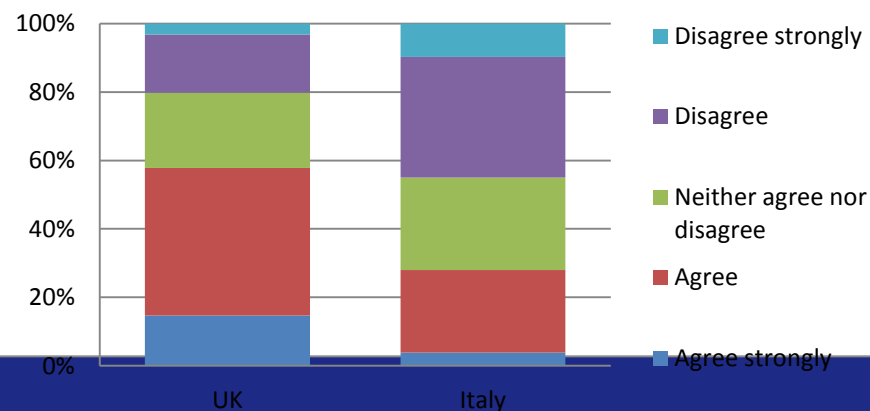
**Social benefits/services lead to a more equal
society**



**Social benefits/services place too great
strain on economy**



Social benefits/services make people lazy



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