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**Trade Union Feminismacross borders: a comparativeperspective of 1970s Italianand French experiences, European University InstituteDepartment of HistoryandCivilization**

I would like to propose a paper dealing with my PhD research (conducted at the EUI underthe supervision of professor Laura Lee Downs) which aims at establishing a fruitful comparisonbetween the development of so-called ‘trade union feminism’ in Italy and in France during thecrucial turn of ‘the long 1970s’.

In both countries a strong tradition of working-class commitment for women’s rightsempowerment was, indeed, carried out by the major workers’ organizations; however theinternational spring of second-wave women’s movement questioned the value of this traditionalapproach and encouraged new critical reflections on the complex relationship between women andwork (both paid and unpaid) and on the falsely neutral but on the contrary deeply gendered natureof trade unions’ structures and policies. In this period women unionists in both countries, althoughthrough different paths and with different tools (both conceptual and organizational), began toelaborate critically on all this and to develop alternative practices.They highlighted the need of being granted equal opportunities in terms of vocationalcourses and career development, they unveiled that trade union attention to the crucial theme of

health on the workplace was most of the time focused just on men’s needs and it didn’t take intosufficient account issues of reproductive health and contraception. They deconstructed the artificialboundary between public and private sphere, showing how much personal life was relevant forwomen’s access to the public sphere and to the work market in particular. They strongly emphasizedthe connection between the work-place and the surrounding territory, stressing the importance ofefficient public social services. They engaged with the issues of factory night work for women andthey greatly debated about the introduction of part-time jobs.

My approach is basically a trans-local one, in fact I focus on some cities in particular: theso-called ‘industrial triangle’ in Italy (Turin, Milan, Genoa), Paris and Lyon in France. By lookingat the major union organizations - CGIL and CISL in Italy, CGT and CFDT in France - I try todescribe the birth and growth of the peculiar experience of ‘trade union feminism’ that, despitebeing at the intersection of major international phenomena such as the working-class movement andthe second-wave feminist movement, has been largely overlooked by historiography.It proves to be, indeed, a sort of borderline object of study and to address it in the mosteffective way, I decided to interweave various sources: archival ones (union documents and presscollection) and oral ones (through the making of original interviews with men and women unionists

who were active at the time).