

Body, Appearance and social Presentation in the Workplace. Advantages and Discriminations

***A comparative study in higher education, social services and marketing in
9 countries***

Ecuador, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Sweden

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Fondazione Palazzo Bondoni Pastorio - Freie Universität Berlin

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Fondazione Palazzo Bondoni Pastorio

28 scholars:

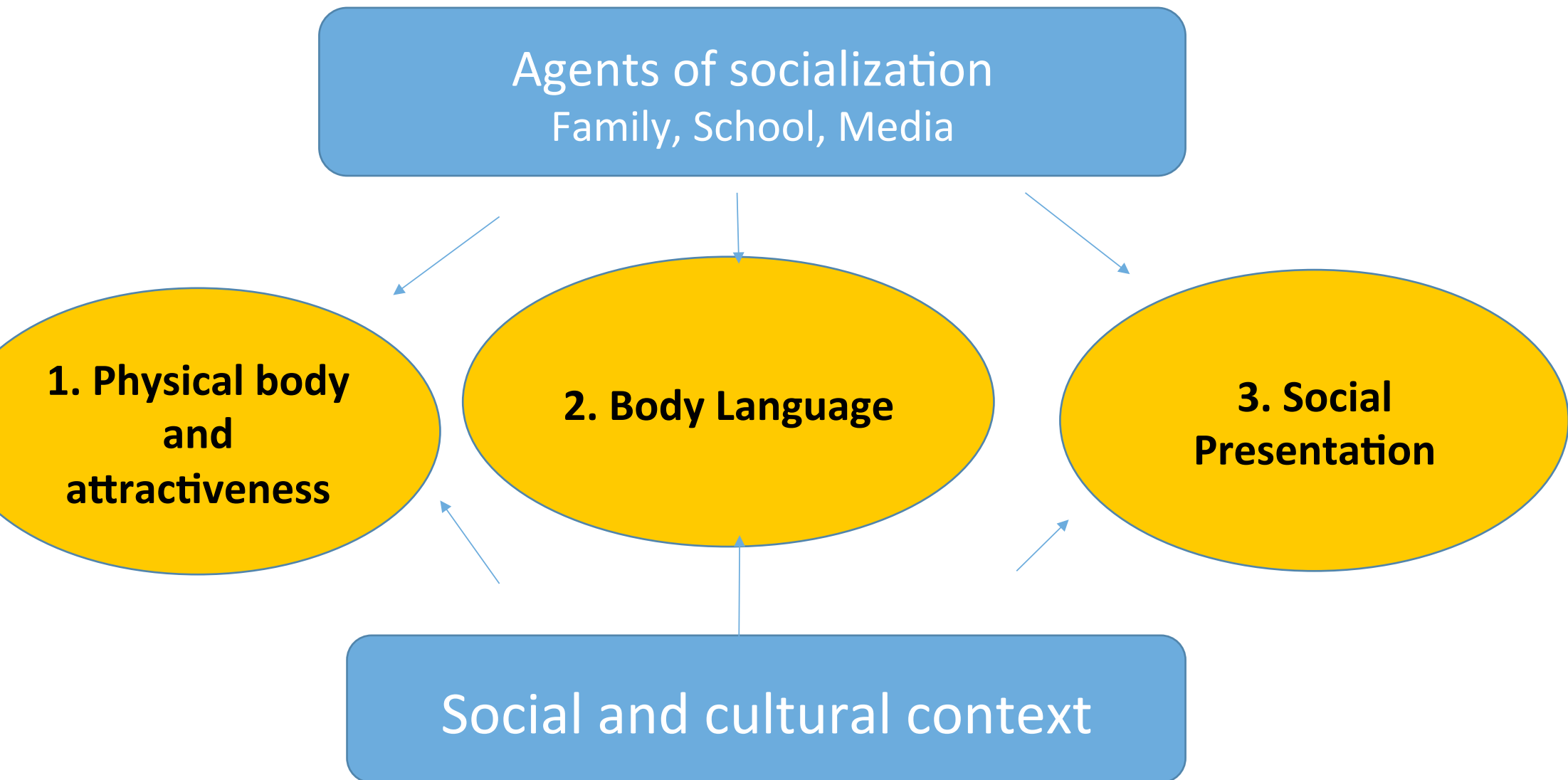
- Ana María Chávez, Ana Martínez Pérez, Diana Santos, Leonor Jurado, Thais Oliveira of the **Universidad de las América** from **Ecuador**
- Sigrid Michel, Florian Saddo **Fachhochschule Dortmund**, University of Applied Science and Arts from **Germany**
- Vasiliki Gountsidou **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki** from **Greece**
- Márta Fülöp and Zsófia Szabó of **Hungarian Academy of Sciences** from **Hungary**
- Dorit Olenik Shemesh and Tali Heiman of **The Open University of Israel** from **Israel**

- Silvana Greco (also Freie Universität Berlin), Giulio Busi (also Freie Universität Berlin), Giulia Tomasi, Giulia Artioli, Enrica Remelli from **Fondazione Palazzo Bondoni Pastorio** from **Italy**
- Davide Dettore, Paolo Antonelli, Rossano Bisceglia, Monica Spigarelli from the **University of Florence**
- Marceline Naudi, Anne-Marie Callus, Brenda Murphy, Joanne Cassar and Katya de Giovanni of **University of Malta** from **Malta**
- Ann-Christin Sollerhed and Åsa Bringsén of the **University of Kristianstad** from **Sweden**

Theoretical framework

- Embodied workers (Wolkowitz 2006)
- Body Capital Theory and «body capital» of Pierre Bourdieu (1979) in *„Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste”*
- Erotic Capital: i) beauty; ii) sexual attractiveness; iii) erotic capital; iv) liveliness; v) social presentation; vi) sexuality (Hakim 2010)

“Body, Appearance and Social Presentation” (S. Greco)



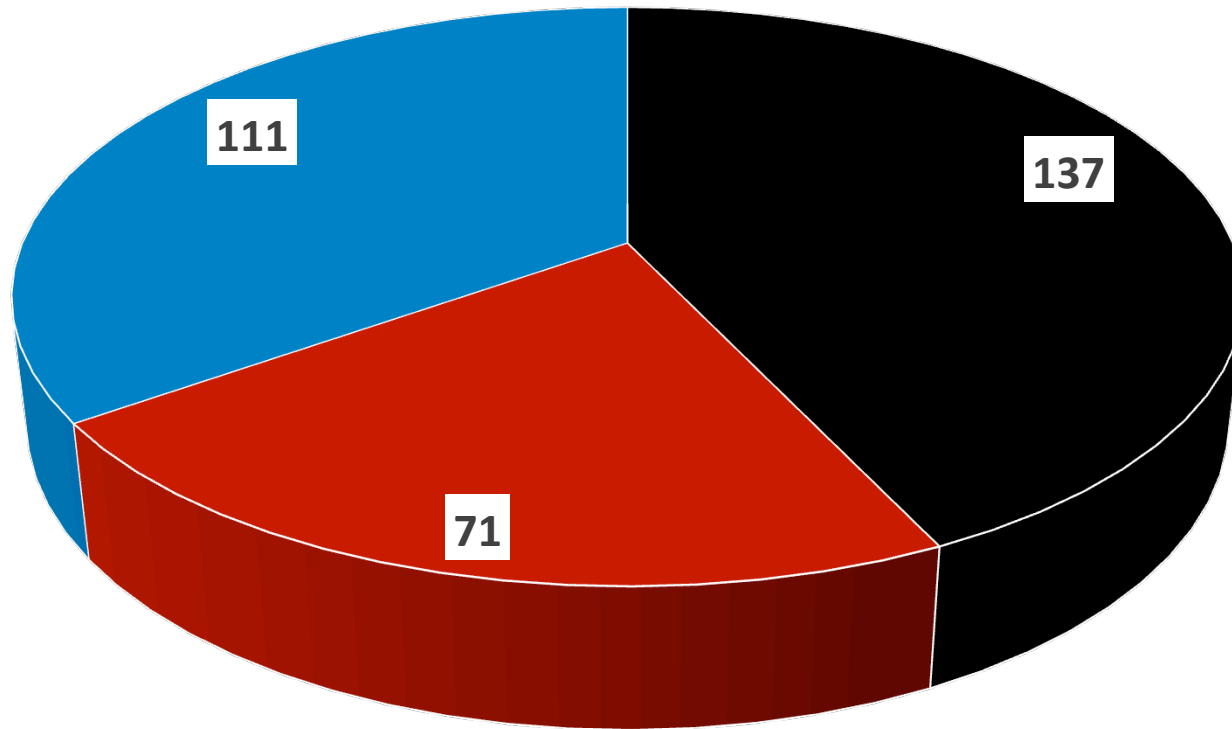
Research questions

- Does body, appearance and social presentation in these 3 sectors (higher education, social services, marketing) have a positive or a negative impact on workers' career trajectories?
- What is the impact in entering the labour market?
- What is the impact during the working life?

- **Methodology:** Narrative in-depth interviews
- **Selection criteria for choosing our informants**
- **Employment sector:** Higher education, social services, marketing/ advertising
- **Gender:** Men (50%) and Women (50%)
- **Generations:** age group 18-34, 35-54; 55-65
- **Visibal difference:** in terms of disabilities, weight, height etc.

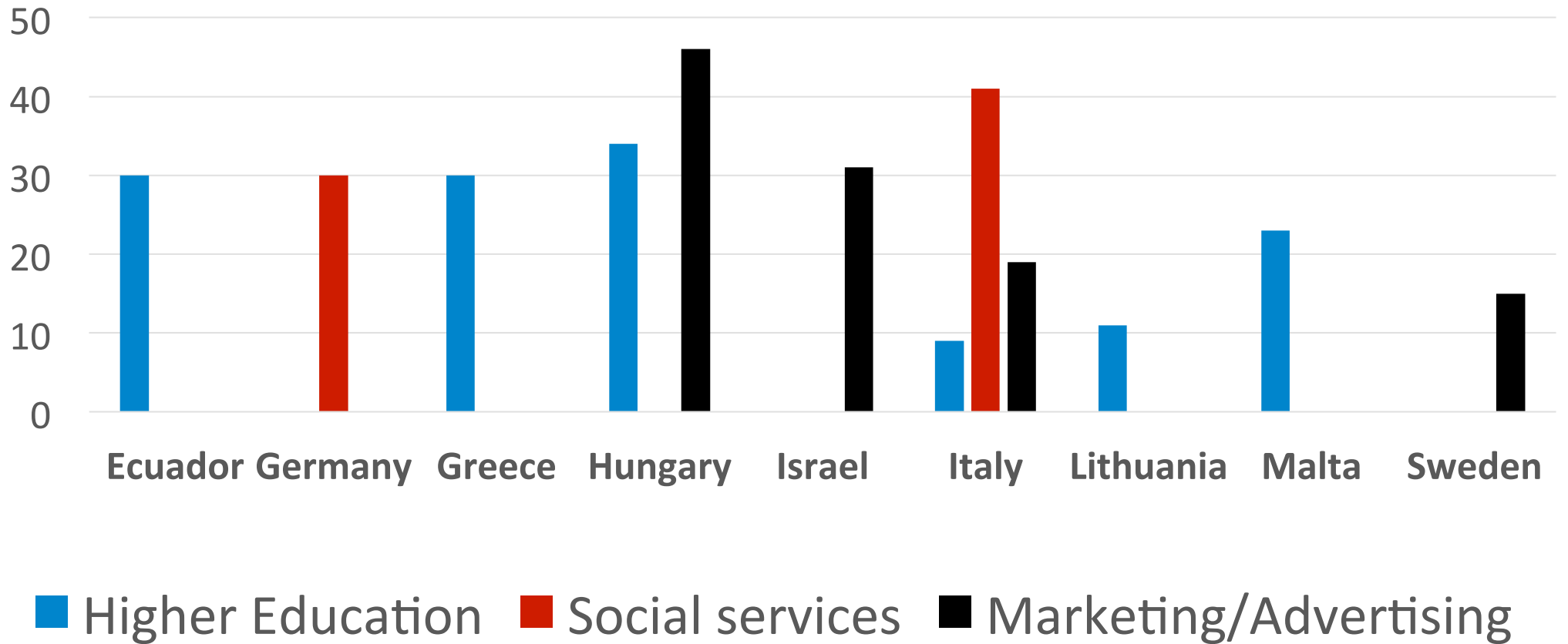
Analysis: with MaxQDA

Distribution of the 319 narrative interviews by sector



- Higher Education: Ecuador, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Sweden
- Social services: Germany, Italy
- Marketing/Advertising: Italy, Hungary, Israel

Distribution of the 319 narrative interviews by sector and by country



Preliminary results

- I. For each profession in each sector, which we have analyzed, – i.e. higher education, social services and marketing/advertising - there is a *different* implicit “body, appearance and social presentation model”, which is appropriate for each specific profession.

Higher Education

“Cogito ergo sum, or the unfashionable (male) not embodied philosopher model”



Social service

„The caring and loving peer model”



Marketing:

„The back stage model: creative and informal”



Marketing:

„The front stage model: seductive and fashion chic”



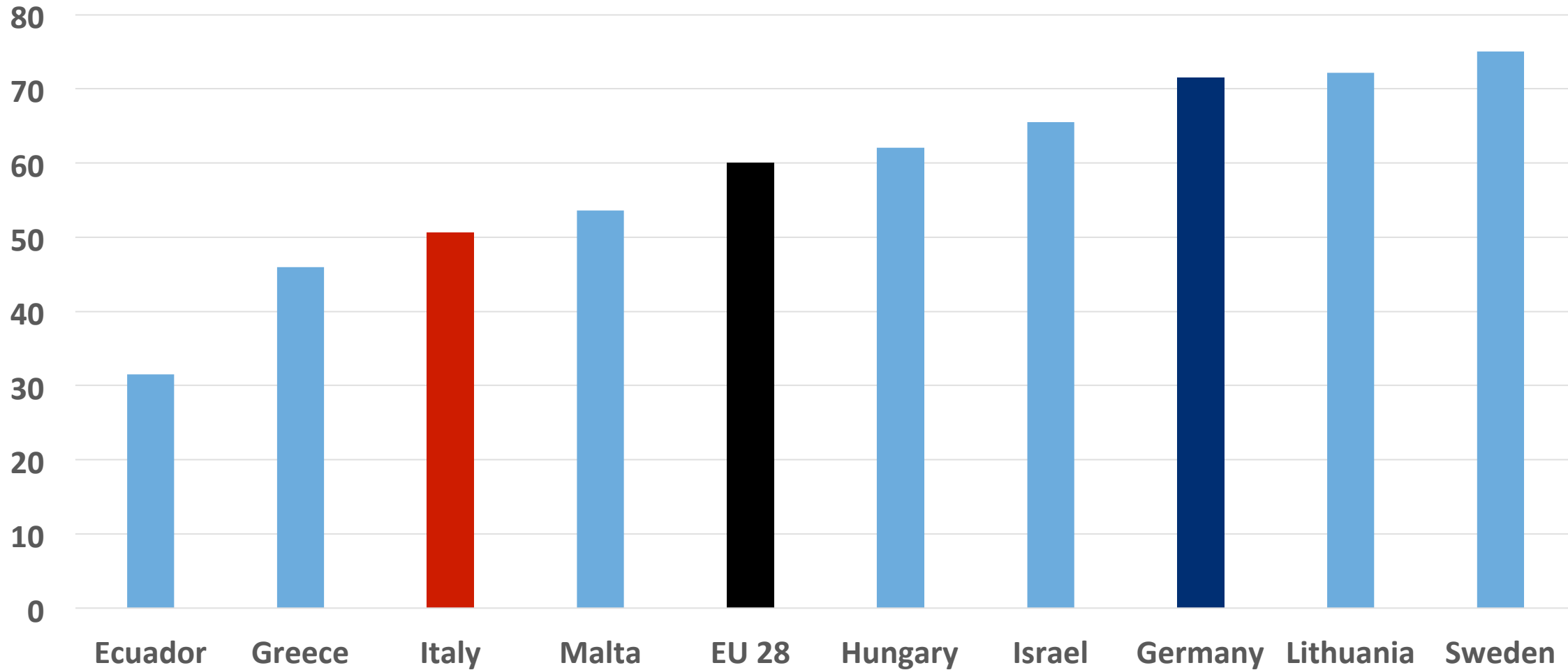
- **II: The conformity to the model can support the workers' career of in specific moments (entrance or promotion) but the non-conformity to the proposed model by the workers can lead to different kinds of discomfort and discrimination: from very light sanctions to stronger discrimination in the workplace.**

- **III. Double standard in „body, appearance and social presentation“ for women and men (similar findings, Rhode 2010).**

Informant from Hungary

- Why do they accept me with this appearance? Because their first impression is something very negative and when you disconfirm that then it becomes more positive than it would have been if the first very negative impression is not there. My behaviour does not confirm the „pussy cat style” so there is a huge dissonance between my outlook and my competence. I also know that due to the way I look like and dress I have to work five times more than others in this academic context and prove my competence. During my university years I always prepared to exams with the awareness that I will get the most difficult question just to manage to fail me quickly. So I had to prepare five times more. But I did not mind, I told myself that OK I will prepare five times more. I also love to provoke, I am a provokateur, so I loved it. (50 years-old female associate professor, major university in Budapest, looks like a Playboy Magazine front page....very provocative, sexy body and dressing)

Employment rate for women 2015/2016



- **IV: There is strong evidence for differences with the concern and awareness of “body, and appearance and social presentation” by generations**
- **Younger generation are more sensitive than older workers «body and social presentation» due to a stronger influence coming from family members, social media and media exposure.**

Thank you very much for your attention!

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