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## Women Can Make It, In Italy Too!

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Despite the current economic crisis, the protests and the recent tragedy of the cruise ship, some good news is also coming from Italy. Once more brought about by women who believe that education, culture, innovation and hard work are the best keys to rebuild a healthy society and help to give a better future to the young of this country. Women such as Maria Amata Garito, who leads the Italian International Telematic University, **UniNettuno**, created in 2005 on the ashes of Consortium Nettuno (founded in 1992 as a partnership between the Italian public television Rai and 43 public Italian universities). The goal of UniNettuno, where students can obtain bachelor and master degrees online

learning in English, Arabic, Italian, French, Greek and Polish, is to spread knowledge and culture, above all using technology. This is occurring particularly in Mediterranean countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Syria and Jordan where, since 2005, Professor Garito has signed agreements with governments and local universities and has created 11 technological poles. In this way students of these Mediterranean countries can study at home and obtain university degrees that are recognized both in their native countries and in Europe. But Professor Garito, for many years a Professor of Psychology of Technologies at La Sapienza University in Rome, did much more: in 2009 she launched a program called "Let's learn Arabic" in Morocco, a country where 44% of the population, especially women, are illiterate. Thanks to Morocco's national TV (first and fourth channels) and Rai Nettuno Sat 1 and Rai 2, the program is broadcast twice daily and has already contributed to lowering illiteracy by 10 percent. UniNettuno is also co-founder of the European Med Net'U (Mediterranean Network of Universities), a project in which 31 partners (universities, technological companies and ministries) belonging to 11 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean area jointly created a network of people able to connect and mutually link their knowledge. Since 2010 UniNettuno is working also in Iraq in partnership with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)'s in a project called "Enterprise Development through Information and Communication Technology for Iraq" (EDICT). The goal is to help to reduce poverty and create employment opportunities for Iraqi people. Through the use of ITC, beneficiaries, both from Iraqi institutions and the private sector, will be provided with capacity-building input such as training, tutoring, advisory and counseling services using the UniNettuno e-Learning model. "The struggle against illiteracy is the great challenge of globalization" says Professor Garito. "According to Unesco surveys, 774 million people, one adult out of five, are illiterate and among these two third are women. More than 72 million children are excluded from the school system. It is our duty to create the possibility to spread knowledge using the benefits of technology. And hopefully in the near future more and more partners, both from the public and private sectors, will join us."

Education and technology for a better society are also the key words for Lucia Castellano, a lawyer from Naples who since the age of 27 has worked in the Italian penitentiary system. Since 2002 she has been the director of Bollate prison, in Milano Province. The condition of penitentiaries in Italy is a huge black hole in an already unedifying national panorama, where at the end of 2011 the prison population reached 67,000, with only 45,000 beds. This slim but strong lady has been able to make a considerable revolution in Bollate. The requests to be transferred to this penitentiary are very high. Inside the prison there are schools from elementary up to university level, a media office where two magazines are printed, a gym, music hall, riding stables, and the internet. She has also made an agreement with Cisco Systems so that for the last few years Bollate has been part of the Cisco Networking Academy. "Here we work to respond to the Italians' request for security" says Dr. Castellano. "We select people who are not dangerous and have served most of their sentences. What they aim for is not to repeat their mistakes and have the opportunity to rebuilt their lives once they become free". No doors are closed in the prison (except for the exit) and the method seems to work as data record a drop in recidivism from 19 percent to 12 percent.

Also Barbara Ensoli, Director of the National Center Anti Aids at the Istituto Superiore di Sanità in Rome, is struggling to push the Italian government to invest more in research. She is a scientist who worked for 12 years on the team of Robert Gallo in Maryland, and back in Italy, in 2009 started to experiment with the vaccine called TAT to fight HIV. She thinks the only way to prise Italy out of the mud and leave the young a future is to invest in research and innovation. "The economy of our country does not give much hope at the moment but I'm positive and I think that every government has the duty to invest and guarantee health to its citizens. This is the path to follow."