

ITALIAN REPUBLIC

**Report on the implementation of the European Child  
Guarantee, within the meaning of Paragraph 11(f) of  
Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004**

**Italy**

**MARCH 2024**

## Summary

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## BACKGROUND

This report is a response to paragraph 11(f) of Council Recommendation (EU) [2021/1004](#) establishing a European Child Guarantee ('ECG' or 'Child Guarantee'), which recommends that Member States report every two years to the Commission on progress in implementing the Recommendation, in line with the national action plan submitted by Italy in March 2022, as requested in paragraph 11(c).

The document was drawn up according to the guidance provided (October 2023) by the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

It was produced under the guidance of the National Coordination Office for the Child Guarantee, which was established, as provided for in the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Child Guarantee ('PANGI' or 'Action Plan'), by the Ministerial Decree of October 2023 signed by the Minister for Labour and Social Policies, in conjunction with the Minister for the Family, Birth Rate and Equal Opportunities<sup>1</sup>. The National Coordination Office is the body responsible for coordinating implementation of the Child Guarantee in Italy. It is headed by the National Coordinator and made up of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Department for Family Policies of the Prime Minister's Office (Department for Family Policies), the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the State-Regions Conference and the ANCI (the National Association of Italian Municipalities), with technical, organisational and scientific support from the *Istituto degli Innocenti* and ISTAT.

## 1. THE CONTEXT

### 1.1. Italy's overall approach to tackling child poverty and social exclusion

Italy's implementation of Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 establishing a European Child Guarantee is taking place in a national context characterised by demographic and social processes, in which the Government is heavily engaged, in line with the objectives of the Recommendation.

Italy today is facing the impact of progressive ageing and low birthrates, as well as recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and recent international conflicts with socio-economic repercussions that have aggravated situations of vulnerability and social fragility. Italy's population is one of the oldest in the world, with one of the lowest birth rates in Europe. Current demographic dynamics are continuing the trend towards there being fewer young people, leading to an imbalance in favour of the older generations. This phenomenon is also reflected in the poverty situation, as, in recent years, households with children under the age of 18 have seen the greatest risk of impoverishment.

The European Pillar of Social Rights, adopted by the EU in 2017, enshrines 20 fundamental principles and rights, which can be broken down into three categories: 1) equal opportunities and access to the labour market, 2) fair working conditions, 3) social protection and inclusion. The outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020 had severe socio-economic consequences. The European institutions adopted various initiatives, including the European instrument for temporary support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE), which, established by Regulation (EU) 2020/672, made loans of up to EUR 100 billion available to Member States. Financial support of EUR 27.4 billion was approved for Italy, the largest

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 2. Interministerial Decree establishing the National Coordination Office, October 2023, admitted for registration by the Court of Auditors on 21 November 2023, No 2854.

package provided for, already fully disbursed. The Action Plan for the implementation of the Pillar presented by the European Commission in March 2021 proposed three key targets on employment, skills and social protection to be achieved by the EU by 2030. All the Member States submitted proposals for their national targets to the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council on 16 June 2022. As you know, Italy's are the following:

- at least 73% (EU27 - 78%) of the population aged 20-64 should be in employment;
- at least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year.
- compared to 2019, the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be reduced by at least 3.2 million.

The PANGI and the measures on the ground are running in parallel with respect to the objectives set.

The Italian welfare system has hitherto been characterised by models of intervention in which monetary transfers have played a primary role in supporting families with children, with some recent novelties such as the Single Universal Child Allowance (AUU) and the economic measure to combat poverty and for income support (previously the Citizens' Income – 'RdC', now the Inclusion Allowance – 'ADI'), associated with individualised reintegration into work or social inclusion. These are two instruments which, although not sufficient to prevent the growth of the number of households in poverty in the face of the severe economic and social crisis caused by the pandemic, have certainly helped to mitigate its effects. The Italian welfare system has a decentralised structure, with social assistance responsibilities shared between central government, the regions, provinces and municipalities. This has given rise to certain imbalances in the implementation of the measures provided for in the Action Plan. The Italian welfare system is a patchwork of services and benefits to provide support and social protection to all citizens. However, like many welfare systems, it faces significant challenges relating to financial sustainability and the ability to respond effectively to the needs of a population undergoing constant change. The overall aim, including in relation to the young generations, is to move beyond an approach that seeks to help passively to looking at individuals, especially children and teenagers, as an active part of and resource for their communities. Italy's actions are moving in this direction, including with a view to developing new national medium- to long-term programmes, which are currently being defined. These must be able to recognise and respond effectively to the social needs of young people and anticipate future ones. Examples include the National Plan of Social Interventions and Social Services (*Piano nazionale degli interventi e dei servizi sociali*) 2024-2026 and the new National Action and Intervention Plan for the Protection of the Rights and Development of Young People (*Piano nazionale di azione e di interventi per la tutela dei diritti e lo sviluppo dei soggetti in età evolutiva*), both of which are currently being defined and are aimed at supporting the development of services capable of providing new responses to the needs of children and young people. All of this is undertaken from a multidisciplinary perspective, with responsibilities shared between institutions and stakeholders in a virtuous circle of key players in the public, private and non-profit sectors, as well as cooperation between the various levels of governance of the policies inherent in the targets set out in the Recommendation.

As part of the implementation of the European Child Guarantee, Italy, in addition to implementing specific measures targeting children, has chosen to focus on the fundamental role of families in combating child poverty in order to ensure that all children and young people have access to basic services enabling them to overcome their initial vulnerability and realise their potential. In the context of the Italian Child Guarantee pilot, it has chosen to reduce the gaps between Italian regions in the provision of services to support families, especially more vulnerable families. This geographical gap has led to the marginalisation of thousands of children and young people, fuelling economic and social hardship, not least because of the

increase in educational poverty in our country. Supporting families means investing in the future, a fairer future for all our children, especially those who start at a disadvantage. Another lesson we learned during the implementation of the pilot phase is that solidarity between families is a crucial element in the fight against poverty. On this point, one of the pilot projects conducted in Italy focused on developing, testing and systematising a family support model for vulnerable families, focusing on families of children with disabilities. Through the Family Centres, a methodology has been developed for support between households, based on reciprocity, in a spirit of support and sharing of resources and opportunities, making the Family Centres models of primary prevention services which can be replicated elsewhere.

## 1.2. Ongoing or planned budgetary or legislative reforms to combat child poverty and social exclusion and to support children in need, and ongoing planning.

Some of the main reform measures intended to have an impact on the living conditions of children and their families are set out below. Some are linked to the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) and are indicated here because they are school-based, a strategic sector for reducing educational poverty and social vulnerability.

### 1.2.1. *Single Universal Child Allowance (AUU)*

Since the submission of the National Plan for the Implementation of the European Recommendation, Italian families have been able to benefit from a new benefit, namely the Single Universal Child Allowance (AUU), established by Legislative Decree No 230 of 29 December 2021, establishing the Single Universal Allowance for dependent children, in implementation of the delegation conferred on the Government under Law No 46 of 1 April 2021, in order to reorganise, simplify and strengthen measures to support dependent children. It is described as 'single' because the aims are to streamline benefits to support parenthood and the birth rate, and 'universal' as a minimum amount is guaranteed for all families with dependent children, regardless of income. The AUU is an economic benefit for all families with dependent children.

The National Social Security Institute ('INPS') pays the allowance. It is provided on the basis of the value of the Equivalent Economic Situation Indicator ('ISEE'), a tool for measuring the economic situation of families taking into account the income, wealth and characteristics of the household. In the absence of the ISEE, the INPS only pays the minimum amount, irrespective of income. The amount ranges from a minimum of EUR 54.05 to a maximum of EUR 189.20 a month for each dependent child under 18 years old. For dependent children aged between 18 and 21, the amounts vary from a minimum of EUR 27.00 to a maximum of EUR 91.90 per month. However, a large number of supplements are foreseen, for example for large families, for children in the first year of life, children with disabilities, for mothers under the age of 21 years, or other factors linked to the income situation of two working parents.

The measure is monitored by the National Observatory for the Single Universal Child Allowance at the Prime Minister's Office – Department for Family Policies, whilst the statistical observatory is the competent body within the INPS. Regarding analysis of the main factors affecting the take-up rate, i.e., applications for the Single Universal Allowance, demand is higher from households with small children, households with low to average household incomes and those living in the south of Italy. The data on payments disbursed by the INPS up to 31 October 2023 show that the total expenditure since the introduction of the AUU has been EUR 26 814 983 106.38. On a monthly basis, the average number of applicants receiving the allowance is around 5 million with an average monthly amount per applicant of just over EUR 250, on average over the period. This corresponds to an average monthly amount per child of around EUR 160. Recent simulations carried out using the household microsimulation model

(‘FaMiMod’), developed by ISTAT with regard to the redistributive impact of the AUU together with the other measures for households adopted in 2022 show greater equality in terms of the distribution of disposable incomes. Inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, has been reduced by almost one percentage point, from 30.4 % to 29.6 %; the risk of poverty has decreased by two percentage points, from 18.6 % to 16.6 %, and the poverty gap by almost one point, from 5.2 to 4.4. The reduction in the risk of poverty benefits all age groups.

Following the introduction of the legislation on the Single Universal Allowance for dependent children, a number of amendments were introduced, involving an increase for widowed parents (Article 22 of Decree-Law No 48 of 4 May 2023) and a remodulation of support for families of children with disabilities (Article 38 of Legislative Decree No 73/2023). Finally, as part of the administrative management of the measure, the INPS launched some initiatives to personalise, simplify language and facilitate access to services by improving communication through institutional channels and web pages in order to ensure that information is kept up to date. The most recent Budget Law (Law No 213 of 30 December 2023) strengthened the framework of measures to support the birth rate, which included the AUU. By means of the Budget Law, the Government focused on tax reliefs for working mothers from the second child onwards, crèches, a further increase in parental leave, and easier access mortgage deposits for first-time buyers with large families. Recently, the Parliamentary Budget Office confirmed that, in 2024, households received net government benefits of 16 billion.

### *1.2.2. Introduction of the Inclusion Allowance (Assegno di Inclusione - ADI) in place of the Citizenship Income (Reddito di cittadinanza)*

The ADI, introduced by Decree-Law No 48 of 2023, converted, with amendments, by Law No 85 of 3 July 2023, Ministerial Decree of 13 December 2023, was adopted as a ‘national measure to combat poverty, fragility and social exclusion in vulnerable groups’. Specifically, it is a measure to provide economic support and social and occupational inclusion. It is conditional on: 1. compliance with certain nationality, stay and residence requirements; 2. an assessment of financial circumstances; and 3. signing up to an individualised activation and social and labour inclusion pathway. The ADI is explicitly intended for households with certain characteristics: minor children, people with disabilities, older people over the age of 60, persons with physical or mental illnesses or those with family care responsibilities. The criteria for selection and for calculating the income subsidies favour large families and those most vulnerable to absolute poverty; in addition, the residence requirement for foreign families is halved. EU citizens or holders of residence permits who have resided in Italy for at least 5 years, of which 2 years continuously, can access the ADI. They must have no final convictions against their name in the past 10 years or be subject to precautionary measures. The new social and labour inclusion measures affirm the centrality of work as a tool for the effective participation of individuals in the national community. They also draw the state’s attention to fragile situations and to households, creating the conditions for citizens to integrate into the world of work regardless of age, gender or origin, while those in objective need are supported through a personalised social inclusion project.

### *1.2.3. Essential Levels of Social Benefits*

A mosaic of national, regional and municipal interventions, taking the form of economic benefits and/or services, has been put in place to respond to the needs of children living in socially vulnerable conditions. In the health sector, the Essential Levels of Assistance (‘LEAs’) indicate in detail the benefits to be provided through the National Health Service. Social interventions are provided by a variety of sources of funding, from three levels of government (the state, the regions and the municipalities). Legislative Decree No 147 of 15 September 2017 defined the first Essential Levels of Service (‘LEPS’), not only as regards the economic benefit

associated with social benefits to combat poverty, but also with respect to the components of the service. Point 170 of the Budget Law 2022 (Law No 234 of 30 December 2021) specifies the LEPSs considered as priorities in the National Plan for Social Interventions and Social Services 2021-2023: emergency social interventions; supervision of social service staff; social services for patients discharged from hospital; preventing removal from the family home; residence services for those of no fixed address; 'Dopo di noi' and independent living projects, financed from national resources already earmarked for the same purpose in the National Plan of Social Interventions and Services 2021-2023 (currently being updated), together with resources from EU funds and the NRRP allocated to the sector. The basic levels of social services to be ensured under the Child Guarantee include establishing, within the framework of the Network of Social Protection and Social Inclusion, of minimum organisational operating standards for the local social authorities (ATSSs) for the multidisciplinary team, as well as coordination with health services and schools. In other words, the aim is ultimately to establish a functional level of the LEPSs, which would ensure that the multidisciplinary teams are fully effective. In this context, significant progress has been made, such as the proposal for *Guidelines for defining uniform organisational models for local social authorities for the implementation of essential levels of social services*, to be implemented by means of an appropriate agreement at the Joint Conference<sup>2</sup>, which is covered by the provisions of the 2022 Budget Law (Law No 234 of 2021, paragraphs 160-161). The main objective is to encourage the launch of an organic process of strengthening the managerial and technical/operational capabilities of local social authorities, in order to ensure: 1. optimum use of the financial resources allocated to the implementation of essential social services; 2. a high level of monitoring; and 3. ongoing updating of the reporting processes, thus allowing more uniform monitoring of integrated responses for citizens in difficulty throughout the country. The local social authorities constitute the basic *organisational level* at which interventions, services and activities for achieving the LEPS at local level are planned, coordinated, implemented and managed. In other words, the main levels at which interventions, social services and other integrated services active at local level are planned, agreed and coordinated are therefore regional and local. The procedure for approving the guidelines in question, providing for the agreement of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance and the subsequent agreement of the Joint Conference, is currently being finalised. Equally important is the direction set out in Law No 33 of 23 March 2023 on '*Government delegations on policies for the elderly*', Article 4(1) of which, while providing for the delegation of powers to the Government in the field of social assistance, health and social care for dependent elderly people, also relaunches the homogeneous development of the local social authorities to carry out the tasks for which local authorities are responsible and to fully implement the LEPS, as well as to promote functional integration between the healthcare districts and the local social authorities, in order to ensure the effective operational integration of processes and services. Finally, in the period under review, the National Programme for Preventing the Institutionalisation of Children (PIPPI) provided for in the NRRP was further implemented, and the instrument for supervising social services was further developed, a systemic action that certainly helps interventions in favour of vulnerable children and young people to be managed more effectively.

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<sup>2</sup> Referred to in Article 1(161) of Law No 234 of 30 December 2021, at the initiative of the Minister for Labour and Social Policies, in agreement with the Minister for Health and the Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance.

#### *1.2.4. 2024 Budget Law.*

Law No 213 of 30 December 2023, ‘*Estimated State budget for the financial year 2024 and multiannual budget for the three-year period 2024-2026*’, includes measures targeting minors, vulnerable persons and families. Paragraphs 378-379 provide for an upscaling of the services offered by the Department of Juvenile and Community Justice, ensuring that they are fully operational and the full implementation of specific tasks (relating to non-custodial sentences, community sentences and alternative sentences; performance of the tasks assigned by law to the Ministry of Justice in the field of restorative justice; administrative management of staff and related assets). As regards unaccompanied foreign minors, the Law provides for the refinancing of the Fund for the years 2024, 2025 and 2026 established by Article 21(1) of Decree-Law No 145 of 18 October 2023, converted, with amendments, by Law No 191 of 15 December 2023, with a budget of EUR 46.859 million for 2023, for the financing of urgent measures relating to the reception of migrants and for unaccompanied minors. Measures in favour of large families are set out in the so-called Family Package 2024. Provision is made for the possibility of excluding up to EUR 50 000 in government bonds from the assessment of household income (ISEE) (paragraph 183). Large households are included among the categories granted priority for access to credit (paragraph 9). The Budget Law also provided for an increase in the bonus for early childcare costs, which is already in force, only for families with at least two children and for home support for children under three years of age suffering from severe chronic conditions. The early childcare bonus is increased to EUR 3 600 per year for children born after 1 January 2024 of families with a household income of up to EUR 40 000 and another child under the age of 10 years.

The 2024 Budget Law also confirmed the payment, with effect from 1 January, of the disabled child allowance, as detailed in INPS note No 1024 of 11 March 2024. This financial aid is provided in the form of a reimbursement of costs, with a minimum amount of EUR 1 500 per year, for parents of children under the age of three suffering from severe chronic conditions. The allowance is awarded without any restrictions on household income to families whose children, due to proven serious health conditions, are unable to attend a crèche and require care at home. The amount of the bonus can be up to around EUR 3 000 for families with the lowest household income. Unlike the early childcare bonus, which can also be claimed on a monthly basis, the disability allowance must be claimed in a single payment at the end of the year. With regard to support for workers with children, paragraph 179 provides for an increase in the allowance paid for the second month of parental leave to 60% of salaries (compared to 30% previously) up to the child's six years of age. For 2024 alone, on the other hand, it has been decided that the allowance for the second month will also be granted at the rate of 80% of salaries (as currently provided for only for the first month). For the period 2024-2026, for women employed on a permanent basis with three or more children, a reduction of 100% in the accident and old-age contributions for dependent employees until the youngest child reaches the age of 18 (up to an annual limit of EUR 3 000 calculated on a monthly basis) has been established. For 2024, it has been extended, on a pilot basis, to working mothers of two children until the younger child reaches the age of 10 years. The Single Fund for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities has been established, with previous funds established for similar purposes being scrapped (e.g., the Fund for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities; the Fund to assist the autonomy and communication of pupils with disabilities; the Fund to support the care and care role of family caregivers; the Fund for the inclusion of the deaf and hard of hearing). The resources of all these funds are channelled into the Single Fund. The Fund for Policies for Persons with Disabilities (provided for in Article 1(278) of the Budget Law for 2022) is maintained. Its funding is reduced by the Budget Law (paragraph 216) for 2024, but it will see an increase of 85 million in available resources from 2026 onwards, and is earmarked for implementing the framework law on disability (Law No 227/2021). Finally, we would like to

highlight certain specific measures to combat socio-economic vulnerability. Article 1(2) of the 2024 Budget Law allocates EUR 600 million to the Fund established in the estimate of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, intended for the charter entitled ‘Dedicata a Te’ (Dedicated to You). The provision adds to the Fund for the purchase of basic foodstuffs to the tune of EUR 600 million for the year 2024 for families whose household income does not exceed EUR 15 000. Article 2 of Decree-Law No 131 of 29 September 2023 extended the scope of that fund to the purchase of motor fuel or, as an alternative, subscriptions for local public transport. Another important development is the establishment of the Fund to combat housing deprivation (paragraph 284) at the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, with a budget of EUR 100 million, of which EUR 50 million for 2027 and EUR 50 million for 2028, and the Special fund for service level equity (paragraph 496) in the Ministry of the Interior’s budget estimate, with a budget of EUR 858 923 000 for 2025, EUR 1 069 923 000 for 2026, EUR 1 808 923 000 for 2027, EUR 1 876 923 000 for 2028, EUR 725 923 000 for 2029 and EUR 763 923 000 for 2030. The Budget Law also allocates EUR 274 million for 2024 to the Fund for the temporary protection of people fleeing war (paragraph 389) and extends the state of emergency to provide relief and assistance to the Ukrainian people until 31 December 2024 (paragraph 390).

*1.2.5. Decree-Law No 123 of 15 September 2023, subsequently converted into Law No 159 of 13 November 2023 on ‘Urgent measures to combat youth disaffection, educational poverty and juvenile crime, and to protect children in the digital environment’, known as the Caivano Decree, which will also be analysed in the following paragraphs, provides for a series of measures that affect school and children’s education, with a view to combating educational poverty and disaffection among young people. The Decree stems from dramatic incidents of violence against minors in the municipality of Caivano, in the province of Naples, and the aim is to address situations of deprivation, social vulnerability and youth hardship in the municipality. An extraordinary plan of infrastructure and rehabilitation measures for the territory of that municipality was adopted by means of a decree-law adopted by the Prime Minister. Decree-Law No 123/2023 aims to crack down on violent youth gangs and early school leaving by toughening up the penalties for drug dealing and arrest *in flagrante delicto*. Further amendments concern sentences of five years or less, in the context of which the Public Prosecutor’s Office may opt for a rehabilitation pathway or a non-custodial community service period of one to six months. Among other provisions, the Decree also addresses the adaptation of educational facilities and materials to meet the specific needs of children with special educational needs and children with disabilities. This involves the use of inclusive teaching and learning methods and the availability of qualified staff, such as specialised teachers, psychologists, speech therapists, rehabilitation specialists, and social workers. The Decree aims to strengthen the obligation to provide children with an education and introduces sanctions for those responsible who fail to comply with this obligation. The role of mayors and school leaders in monitoring and enforcing sanctions is emphasised. In addition, the Decree provides that, in the event of unjustified absences from school serious enough to constitute a breach of the compulsory schooling requirement, the person responsible could be liable to a term of imprisonment of up to one year. Furthermore, children’s families cannot receive the inclusion allowance unless the fulfilment of the compulsory education obligation is documented. The Decree also touches on digital safety, stipulating that providers of electronic communications services must ensure that parental controls are available. These measures aim to ensure a safe digital environment for children and prevent exposure to inappropriate content.*

Among the other measures provided for in Articles 13, 13-bis and 14 of the Decree-Law, the role of the Family Centres in supporting digital literacy and the information campaign by the

Department of Family Policy and the Ministry of Education on children's online safety is relevant here.

In addition, Decree No 176 of the Minister for Education of 30 August 2023 adopted an 'Agenda South' plan involving more than 2 000 schools in the south of the country, which will have resources available to carry out training activities to combat educational poverty and early school leaving, including outside regular school hours, keeping schools open to local people as well.

The plan pays particular attention to 245 schools directly identified by the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System (INVALSI) on the basis of relevant data from national surveys, for which the following additional measures are envisaged:

- additional teachers for lower and upper secondary schools;
- ongoing support from the Ministry through INDIR (Istituto nazionale di documentazione, innovazione e ricerca educativa - National Documentation, Innovation and Education Research Institute) and INVALSI (Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema educativo di istruzione e di formazione - National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System);
- specific teacher training;
- involvement of families;
- innovative and laboratory-based teaching
- extending school time;
- enhancing sport activities.

Under the 'Agenda South' plan, EUR 15 million is also earmarked for pilot projects in the most vulnerable areas, identified also with the collaboration of INVALSI, including many remote areas.

In these projects, schools intended as educational poles and hubs for the development of the local area, sometimes in networks with other schools, bodies, institutions and third-sector associations, will have the possibility to launch socio-educational and psychological support measures, personalised training courses, guidance and support, including on gender issues.

*1.2.6. Reform of the ITS system*, including the implementation of the NRRP linked to education (Law No 99 of 15 July 2022 establishing the tertiary system of higher technology education) The aim of this reform is to strengthen the tertiary vocational training system by reinforcing the organisational and educational model (integration of training, introducing incentives and expanding pathways for the development of enabling technological skills – Impresa 4.0) and by simplifying governance in order to increase the number of institutions and sign-ups. Integrating ITS courses with the university system for vocational degrees is also planned. The reform is expected to improve the mismatch between labour demand and supply. It invests in human capital in a targeted approach tailored to the geographical, economic and social conditions of each local area. According to the latest Excelsior report by *Unioncamere*, 49% of the skills required by Italian industry are difficult to find, with a peak of 64.5% for skilled workers. The intention of the reform is, therefore, to improve the system for guiding pupils' and families' choices, in order to match labour supply and demand as far as possible and make the link between school and local areas.

The reform is accompanied by a EUR 1.5 billion NRRP investment to support the ITS system for both laboratory infrastructure and reinforce training, guidance and internationalisation.

#### *1.2.7. Reform of the school system*

This reform is one of those provided for by the NRRP and provides for a reduction in the number of pupils per class by means of the 2022 Budget Law (Article 1(344) to (347) of Law

No 234 of 2021). To this end, Ministerial Decree No 220 of 8 August 2022 and Ministerial Decree No 272 of 17 October 2022 were adopted. A second part of the reform, concerning the design of the school network, was adopted by the 2023 Budget Law (Article 1(557) to (559) of Law No 197 of 2022). The goal of the reform is to adapt the number of pupils per class – in particular, the number of teachers will be set at the same level as the 2020/2021 academic year, in the face of demographic decline – and revise the rules on the size of schools. The regional school population, rather than the population of the individual institution (as provided for in the current legislation), was adopted as the ‘effective parameter’ for identifying school buildings annexed to other institutions.

#### *1.2.8. Guidelines for Careers Guidance*

On 27 December 2022, the Minister for Education signed the Decree approving the Guidelines for Careers Guidance, a reform provided for in the NRRP. The aims are to: 1. strengthen the link between the first and second stages of education and training, in order to enable students to make a balanced and informed choice that best uses their talents and potential; 2. combat early school leaving; and 3. facilitate access to tertiary education. The new guidance must ensure ongoing learning and training as part of a lifelong learning project. The reform was approved within the NRRP deadline of 31 December 2022. The main points of the guidelines are: 1. careers guidance modules in secondary school, 2. e-portfolios, 3. instructor tutors, 4. instructor training; 5. training campuses; 6. single digital platform for careers guidance; and 7. job placement. There will also be dedicated monitoring of the implementation of the guidelines as well as an impact assessment. They can then be updated to make them more effective.

#### *1.2.9. The National Inclusion and Combating Poverty Programme 2021-2027.*

The Commission Implementing Decision of 1 December 2022 approved the ‘National Inclusion and Combating Poverty Programme 2021-2027’ (NP Inclusion 21-27), to be supported jointly from the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund Plus under the Investment for jobs and growth goal for Italy.

The NP Inclusion 21-27 is structured around four main priorities, each of which is divided into one or more specific objectives:

1. support for social inclusion and combating poverty;
2. the Child Guarantee;
3. combating material deprivation;
4. infrastructure measures for socio-economic inclusion.

The financial envelope amounts to EUR 4 079 865 834, including EUR 1 816 933 000 under the European Social Fund (ESF+), EUR 326 680 000 under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and EUR 1 936 252 834 from the national budget.

The main objectives of priority 2 are:

*Access to services for young people under the age of majority*, which includes measures to promote access to and participation in school and training settings for young people in vulnerable situations as a way towards social and occupational integration; as a continuation of the 2014-2020 programming period, measures to combat the social exclusion of minors and their families in a vulnerable situation (PIPPI programme) and measures aimed at adolescents at risk of poverty or social exclusion, to be implemented in schools and local youth centres (Get-Up project), as well as pilot measures such as the creation of youth centres and spaces for socialisation.

*The social integration of poor and disadvantaged children*, which includes social and educational measures aimed at people experiencing economic hardship, such as families with complex needs and children in the first thousand days of life, as well as measures to prevent

and combat social exclusion by ensuring that children in need have access to a range of basic services.

The financial envelope under the NP Inclusion for the Child Guarantee is EUR 733 999 999, of which EUR 432 298 003 for the less developed regions, EUR 34 063 862 for regions in transition and EUR 267 638 134 for the more developed regions.

#### *1.2.10. The National Programme for Education 2021-2027, known as the NP for Schools and Skills 2021-2027 (PN Scuola e Competenze 2021-2027)*

European Commission Implementing Decision C (2022)9045 of 1 December 2022 approved the National Programme for Education 2021-2027, entitled NP for Schools and Skills (PN Scuola e Competenze) 2021-2027, funded from the ESF+ and the ERDF.

The programme contributes to the achievement of Cohesion Policy Objective 4, ‘A more social Europe’, by aiming to improve the quality, inclusiveness, effectiveness and labour market relevance of education and training systems, promoting equal access to and completion of high quality, inclusive education, including through the development of infrastructure, and enhancing lifelong learning.

To achieve these objectives, the programme budget is approximately EUR 3.8 billion, broken down as follows:

- EUR 2 821 264 701 from the ESF+ for enhancing the training of students, school staff and adults, combating early school leaving and educational poverty, and promoting inclusion;
- EUR 959 723 333 from the ERDF for laboratories, innovative digital equipment and infrastructure (e.g., gyms and canteens).

The NP 21-27 is aimed at nursery schools, primary and secondary schools and provincial adult education structures (CPIAs) throughout the country. It is structured around four priorities:

‘Priority 1 – Schools and Skills (ESF+)’ aims to improve the inclusiveness and effectiveness of education and training systems, promote equal access and lifelong learning.

‘Priority 2 – School and Skills Facilities (ERDF)’ aims to improve equal access to high quality and inclusive services in education, training and lifelong learning through the development of accessible infrastructure, including by promoting the resilience of online and distance education and training.

‘Priority 3 – Technical Assistance (ESF+)’ is a fundamental part of the support and management of the programme, ensuring the presence of tools and methods for its effective and coherent implementation.

‘Priority 4 – Technical Assistance (ERDF)’, to support the management of the programme.

Interventions linked to the Child Guarantee<sup>3</sup> are anchored in Specific Objective: ESO4.6. Promoting equal access to and completion of quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all and accessibility for persons with disabilities (ESF+), in particular the following objectives:

- Strengthening basic skills, including key citizenship skills and skills at community and regional levels, educational initiatives outside school hours and during the summer holidays and other school holidays, study pathways, with the support of tutors and mentors (Contribution to the Child Guarantee – European Child Guarantee to combat child poverty, in conjunction with the Inclusion NOP – Ministry of Labour and Social Policies);

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<sup>3</sup> Presentation to the Monitoring Committee, Rome, 22 March 2023.

- Inclusion and combating early school leaving by extending school time, learning initiatives outside school hours and during the summer and other school holidays, including study motivation pathways, with a particular focus on southern Italy and areas with the greatest difficulties (Contribution to the Child Guarantee – European Child Guarantee to combat child poverty, in conjunction with the Inclusion NOP – Ministry of Labour and Social Policies);
- Preschool education (0-6 years) to combat educational poverty, including raising the awareness of families, in particular parents of children aged 0-3, mainly in southern Italy and in deprived areas of more developed regions; extension of the results of the pilot project on the ‘spring sections’ *[Translator’s note: class for 3-year-olds, intended as a transition between crèche and play school]* (Contribution to the Child Guarantee to combat child poverty, in conjunction with the Inclusion NOP – Ministry of Labour and Social Policies).

The specific objective: ESO4.6, which includes actions most directly relevant to the Child Guarantee, is allocated EUR 1 202 023 516.

### 1.3. The governance context in the implementation of the Recommendation in Italy.

#### 1.3.1. The National Coordinator

Following the resignation of the former national coordinator, Anna Maria Serafini, on 6 May 2023, the Minister for Labour and Social Policies, Marina Elvira Calderone and the Minister for Family, Birth Rate and Equal Opportunities, Eugenia Maria Roccella, appointed on 16 June 2023, by joint letter ref. 10250, the new national coordinator, Maria Burani Procaccini<sup>4</sup>. She is a teacher, journalist and writer, and a prominent figure who has been involved in these issues since the late 1990s as a member of the first Special Committee on Children, the work of which resulted in a number of very important laws that still support national policies, including Law No 451 of 23 December 1997, for which she was the co-rapporteur, and which started the process of full and practical implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which our country had ratified in 1991. Law No 451 of 1997 led to the establishment of the Bicameral Commission for Children and Young People, a steering, investigative and advisory body, of which Burani Procaccini was first a member and subsequently the chair from 2001 to 2006; and to the establishment of the National Observatory on Children and Young People and the National Documentation Centre for Children and Young People whose functions are now the responsibility of the Department for Family Policies.

#### 1.3.2. Coordination and participation structures for the Child Guarantee

The action developed so far to give concrete expression to the objectives of the Recommendation has paid particular attention to the coordination mechanisms needed to frame institutional action, strengthening the necessary forms of coordination.

**The first reference structure was the ‘Social Policies and Measures for Children in Implementation of the Child Guarantee’ group** appointed by Ministerial Decree No 28 of 29 October 2021<sup>5</sup> and supplemented and updated by Ministerial Decree No 161 of 21 September 2022 of the Minister for Labour and Social Policies (by which it was extended until 31 December 2023), which contributed to the drafting of the National Child Guarantee Action

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<sup>4</sup>The appointment was communicated to the European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights by the Diplomatic Adviser of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies by a joint note from the Minister for Family, Birth Rate and Equal Opportunities and the Minister for Labour and Social Policies of 16 June 2023, ref. 0010250.

<sup>5</sup> See Annex 1. Ministerial Decree No 28 of 2021 and Annex 1a to Ministerial Decree No 161 of 2022.

Plan. The working group, chaired by the national coordinator, saw input from the Department for Family Policies, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, national institutions, regions and municipalities, national experts, representatives of the Authority for Children and Young People and the third sector.

#### ***The national steering committee for the implementation of the national plan of action***

By joint decree of the Minister for Labour and Social Policies in agreement with the Minister for the Family, Birth Rate and Equal Opportunities, the national steering committee was set up on 23 September 2022, bringing together the interinstitutional levels involved, including local and regional levels. Following the resignation of the national coordinator and the appointment of the new coordinator, a new national steering committee was set up, the inter-ministerial decree for which was signed in October 2023 and approved for registration by the Court of Auditors on 21 November 2023, No 2854.

The inter-ministerial decree, signed by the Minister for Labour and Social Policies, in agreement with the Minister for the Family, Birth Rate and Equal Opportunities, has therefore renewed and activated this body, which is chaired by the national coordinator, Maria Burani Procaccini, and has the following members:

- Assunta Morresi, Vice Chair of the Cabinet of the Ministry of the Family, Birth Rate and Equal Opportunities, and Gianfranco Costanzo, Head of the Department for Family Policies of the Prime Minister's Office;
- Paolo Onelli, Director of the Directorate-General for Combating Poverty and Social Planning of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, and Rita Salvini representing the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies;
- Carla Antonucci, representing the managing authority of the NP Inclusion and Combating Poverty 21-27;
- Mauro Antonelli, Head of the Minister's Technical Secretariat, representing the Ministry of Education and the managing authority of the NP School and Skills 21-27;
- Francesco Vaia, Director-General for Health Prevention, representing the Ministry of Health;
- Giovanni Deiana (Sardinia Region) as an effective member and Clara Sabatini (Lombardy Region) as an alternate member representing the Conference of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces;
- Luca Vecchi, Mayor of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia and ANCI Welfare Delegate representing the ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities);
- Grazia Iannarelli, legal advisor to the national coordinator.

The national steering committee may involve additional bodies and institutions if deemed necessary in relation to specific policy or more detailed needs. The national steering committee and its chair are assisted in their task by the technical and scientific assistance of the *Istituto degli Innocenti* and ISTAT and the organisational support of the *Istituto degli Innocenti*. The organisational secretariat of the national steering committee is attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.

The main functions of the steering committee are: supporting the national coordinator, who will have to maintain relations with the relevant European and national framework; sharing in the planning and design tasks of each of the four strategic ministries to respond to the needs that are at the heart of the European Guarantee scheme; ensuring link-up with the Youth Advisory Board (YAB), which will accompany the implementation and monitoring of the PANGI; drawing up the monitoring and evaluation plan; monitoring the implementation of the PANGI and its components (education, health, etc.); drafting regular reports/contributions to the

collection of the qualitative and quantitative information needed to bridge the information gap; regularly reviewing the plan, including with a view to identifying and defining new essential levels of social services for children and young people, regular meetings with delegates from the individual regions.

### ***Social Protection and Inclusion Network***

Following the presentation of the National Action Plan within the **Social Protection and Inclusion Network**<sup>6</sup> on 12 October 2022, by Decree No 41/16 of the Director of the Directorate-General for Combating Poverty and Social Planning of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies of 23 January 2023, as amended by Legislative Decree No 41/30 of 6 February 2023<sup>7</sup>, the technical committee subgroup dedicated to supporting the implementation of the National Action Plan for the Child Guarantee, composed of representatives of the regions and municipalities, was also set up.

This subgroup would appear to be consistent with the guidance given by the European Commission to the Member States, urging them to organise coordination structures at sub-national level to promote the objectives of the European measure at local level too. In addition, in view of the tasks assigned to the network, the creation of an ad hoc committee will also facilitate the link with the national programmes (the National Social Plan and National Plan for Social Measures and Services to Combat Poverty) and the development of information systems (a tool needed to check the quantitative impact of the measures adopted and to assist the creation of useful knowledge of interventions on the ground.) [The creation of this sub-group is consistent and implements the provisions of these actions: ACTION 2 – Regional programming consistent with the objectives of the Child Guarantee and Action 3 – Local programming consistent with the objectives of the Child Guarantee in local governance and system infrastructure]

### ***National Observatory on Childhood and Adolescence (Osservatorio nazionale per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza - ONIA)***

As indicated in the National Plan, during the drafting phase, a dedicated working group was set up within the National Observatory on Childhood and Adolescence (ONIA), operating within the Department of Family Policy, which worked with the team set up at the Ministry to draft the document.

The general objectives of the National Action Plan linked to the Child Guarantee make use of existing plans, and in particular the provisions of the fifth National Action and Intervention Plan to Protect the Rights and Development of Children and Young People (*Piano nazionale di azione e di interventi per la tutela dei diritti e lo sviluppo dei soggetti in età evolutiva*), 2022-2023 (NAIP), approved by Decree of the President of the Republic of 25 January 2022 (hereinafter referred to as the fifth NAIP). A number of strategic axes (education, participation) and many instruments and actions have been adopted from it, including the definition of new essential levels of civil and social rights to ensure full enjoyment of rights by all children.

On 22 May 2023, by decree of the Minister for the Family, Birth Rate and Equal Opportunities, the composition of the National Observatory on Childhood and Adolescence was updated,

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<sup>6</sup> The Social Protection and Inclusion Network (Article 21 of Legislative Decree No 147 of 15 September 2017) set up within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, which ensures broad involvement of institutional and non-institutional actors. It is a standing coordination body for the social intervention and social services system, responsible for establishing programming instruments for the use of the National Fund for Social Policies, the Poverty Fund and the Non-Self-Sufficiency Fund, bringing together representatives of central, regional and local governance, associations, employers, the social partners and the charitable sector;

<sup>7</sup> See Annex 3. Decree No 41/16 of 23 January 2023 and Annex 3a: Decree No 41/30 of 6 February 2023.

following which it took office on 4 July 2023. At the second plenary meeting held on 13 December 2023, in addition to launching the activities aimed at drafting the new National Action and Intervention Plan for Children and Young People (NAIP) for the two-year period 2024-25, thanks to the contribution of four thematic working groups<sup>8</sup>, the pathway for the fifth NAIP monitoring process was shared on the basis of specific monitoring schedules for the administrations concerned. In this regard, we would point out that monitoring of the fifth NAIP is also relevant in relation to the implementation of the National Child Guarantee Plan in the light of the various measures that are running largely unchanged.

Therefore, the results of the monitoring of the NAIP may also be useful to reinforce certain actions linked to the objectives of the European Recommendation or to take any corrective action that may prove necessary. Lastly, we would point out that the body approved the biennial report for 2020/21 on childhood and adolescence in Italy, drawn up by the previous Observatory, a useful tool for learning about the situation of minors in Italy in relation to the trends which marked the reference period and still ongoing.

#### 1.4. Consultation with stakeholders

The Social Protection and Inclusion Network and the newly constituted ONIA are two bodies which are always actively sharing and making plans together in order to ensure that the Child Guarantee is implemented more appropriately and effectively in Italy. They are therefore ongoing examples of multi-actor, cross-sectoral and multi-level governance, which, for years now, have been supporting plans that directly or indirectly affect the living conditions of children: The National Plan for Social Interventions and Services with regard to the Network, the Action and Intervention Plan to Protect the Rights and Development of Children with regard to the National Observatory.

In this report, we would like to highlight the contributions of two important bodies: the **YAB** (Youth Advisory Board), which, as described below, has been accompanying the implementation of the Child Guarantee in Italy since the pilot phase, and the **National Youth Conference** – also described in more detail below – an organisation for participation, discussion and co-evaluation which has been supporting the implementation of the national pilot to support the autonomy of care leavers for more than five years now.

##### Recommendations of the YAB

Since its inception, the YAB and its sub-groups have been helping to encourage and enrich the implementation of the Child Guarantee through surveys, documents and requests for discussion with institutional contacts such as the National Coordinator or the working groups organised over these two years. Their recommendations, provided when the National Plan was drawn up, were incorporated in the final document. Their activities have shone the light on various topics such as: mental health, open schools, *out-of-school community and study-support centres*, and communication.

The young people carried out surveys, and created podcasts and content related to the main themes of the Child Guarantee. These were disseminated on the Instagram page created and managed by YAB members in a participatory manner. They wrote letters and recommendations to the reference institutions to remind them of what is really important for children and young people, both boys and girls, especially those at greater risk of poverty or social exclusion

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<sup>8</sup> Working Group 1 ‘Support and assistance for minors through an integrated system of services for families’; Working Group 2 ‘Protecting the mental health of minors inside and outside the home, including with regard to addictions and the impact of online pornography’; Working Group 3 ‘Promoting foster care’; Working Group 4 ‘Data collection and information system on the state of childhood and adolescence’.

because they belong to an ethnic minority, have a migrant background, grew up outside their family of origin or have some kind of disability.

The mental health and psychosocial well-being of adolescents are considered a priority. As stated in the recommendations set out in the 'Letter from the Adults of the Future': 'Psychosocial support services must be free of charge or affordable for all. More psychologists are needed: general psychologists and educational psychologists, but also more inclusive artistic, sporting and socialisation activities to tackle disadvantage and isolation'. On the basis of these elements, the YAB asked not only to focus on adolescent malaise, but also to highlight the positive elements of growing up and to strengthen the promotion of psychosocial well-being and all activities that can support this. In this context, the emphasis on the right to study and to a quality education should be stressed. The ideas proposed by the YAB focus on:

- the right to develop one's talents and potential to the full, building on different abilities, inclinations and expectations;
- educational pathways that enable everyone, especially those most in difficulty, to develop in their own way and unlock their own potential, including through personalised educational pathways that take account of special educational needs;
- the proposal for an innovative and inclusive educational approach must ensure fairness, with the goal of facilitating the social and labour inclusion of all students, with a particular focus on those in disadvantaged socio-economic or cultural circumstances;
- the request for educational pathways, providing useful tools not only for the acquisition of knowledge but also for the development of cross-cutting skills geared to the needs of the 21st century, enabling students to make an effective transition from school to work;
- the need to pay attention to the development of social and emotional skills.

Finally, a further area of interest highlighted by the YAB concerns investment in youth centres, places where young people can meet together and exchange experiences, accompanied by adults who are capable of listening. The YAB calls for these spaces to respond to the needs of young people who feel vulnerable and uncomfortable in their own family and social background. It is important for such young people to have meeting places where skills can be developed, the issue of early school leaving can be tackled, and emotional and interpersonal skills can be learnt. This aspect was highlighted in a recent planning measure linked to the focus on the Child Guarantee in the National Programme for Inclusion and Combating Poverty 2021-2027.

#### Contribution from the National Youth Conference for Care Leavers

At the fifth National Youth Conference (held in Florence from 8 to 10 February 2024), the national group of 30 young people from almost all the regions of Italy organised a workshop dedicated to the Child Guarantee to provide useful insights for monitoring. This workshop came up with the following conclusions, summarised below. The group sought to focus on the needs of teenagers, with an initial discussion on the greatest difficulties facing them. One prominent theme that emerged was the inability of adult figures in these young people's lives to really listen to what they had to say, without judging or putting them down. The group felt that schools, social services and psychology services often trivialised the suffering of young people. They therefore called for psychological support in schools to be promoted and, where it already exists, strengthened, with help points offering individual counselling and group activities. Training of practitioners is also needed so that, instead of providing just a standardised response, they can offer responses tailored as far as possible to the individual: 'Every situation is different, as is every young person, and everyone will need a different response'.

Another important issue for the attention of the institutions implementing the Child Guarantee is that of the right to play: 'There are many situations in Italy where children do not have the opportunity to play on their own or with others, whether for family reasons or because of social

exclusion. But playing is an opportunity not only to get to know others, make friends, meet up, learn about sharing and respect for others and about playing by the rules, as well as a way of finding out about yourself'. The group stressed the importance of creating spaces for free play or organised games because playing develops a sense of belonging within a group, which is also reflected in family dynamics. Outdoor playgrounds, gyms and parks are all important places that must be accessible to everyone, including children and young people with disabilities, and accessible to all by public transport.

The Youth Conference also highlighted the right to study, in particular the need for study spaces with the presence of a supporting adult, even for older young people. In the words of the young people, study can be a means of social liberation, a lifesaver, a way of exiting loneliness and suffering. Finally, the group also called for attention to be paid to the economic and financial education of young people, 'it is often the case that the most vulnerable young people have to find out for themselves and learn at their own expense, often making errors, and end up in adulthood having to look after themselves without having anyone else to count on'.

Finally, the Youth Conference called for the following services to be reinforced, as also provided for by the PANGI:

- *Social services*. These are already active and are already supporting many children throughout the country, but they certainly need to be strengthened by training, so that the decisions taken are not rushed but balanced and well thought through, focusing on the well-being of the child.
- *Family counsellors*, as established by Law No 405 of 29 July 1975, are a unique example of a multidisciplinary community-based service focusing on women's health, childhood and adolescence and relationships (both between couples and with other family members). They are strongly geared towards health prevention and promotion activities. However, they need to be strengthened, especially in southern Italy.
- *Out-of-school community and study-support centres*, providing safe spaces for young people to socialise and also help with school work, including support activities.
- *Psychosocial contact points* in schools.
- *Creating a peer-to-peer online platform* to provide mutual support among young people (in both relationships and school work). A service created *by* young people, *for* young people.

## 1.5. Possible changes to the National Action Plan for the implementation of the European Recommendation

The current monitoring activity will be used by the national steering committee overseeing the implementation of the Child Guarantee in Italy to assess any changes and additions to the Plan submitted to the committee. The national planning framework has evolved since the initial drafting phase, meaning that now the National Coordinator must provide the Commission with an update on any possible changes, and more detailed information will be needed.

For example, after taking office in June 2023, the National Coordinator put forward several proposals for fine-tuning and implementing the National Action Plan. These included the idea of setting up a permanent psycho-social and health team within each school, not only in the large metropolitan areas but also in the provinces and in smaller and more isolated communities. These multidisciplinary groups should include a psychologist and a sociologist, together with a health service for supporting not only students but also their families.

## 1.6. Progress in the implementation of cross-cutting measures

### 1.6.1. Technical and participatory groups

The Action Plan establishes an integrated system of governance for youth policies that promotes synergies between the many actors and brings together ministries, regions and municipalities with the aim of fostering greater cooperation between the various institutional levels and between the areas of social, health and educational intervention. This system of governance is based on the promotion of young people's active participation, inter-sectoral and multidisciplinary approaches and the use of public and private stakeholders.

Other ways that the Child Guarantee is coordinated and included at national level are:

#### ***The Working Group on social inclusion services, educational support and empowerment of young people***

In order to implement the priorities of the PANGI, the **Working Group on social inclusion services, educational support and empowerment of young people** was established by Decree of the Director-General No 282 of 24 October 2022.

This group, chaired by the Director-General for Combating Poverty and for Social Planning of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, comprised a representative of the above-mentioned Directorate-General, in addition to the chair; the National Coordinator for the European Child Guarantee; a representative of the PANGI Working Group in the ONIA for the Department of Family Policies; a representative of the *Istituto degli Innocenti*, as the support body for the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies; two technical representatives of the Social Protection and Inclusion Network; two representatives of the National Association of Italian Municipalities; one representative of the Ministry of Education; one representative of the Ministry of Health; experts appointed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies; experts appointed by the National Coordinator for the European Child Guarantee.

The main task of the working group was to provide input for the development of project guidelines to implement the inclusion actions of the Inclusion NP for children and young people. The work was completed with the approval of guidelines which:

- provide methodological guidance for the planning, strengthening and enhancement of services and interventions to tackle early school leaving, withdrawal from social life and the distress felt by many children and young people;
- point towards a new form of integrated service model known as *Hub adolescenti* (teen hubs) for reducing the fragmentation of interventions;
- promote models of service organisation and governance that enhance the participation and role of children and young people in the social environments and communities that affect them.

[The project lines drawn up give effect to the provisions of ACTION 7 – Guidelines for the promotion of social well-being and social inclusion in the various life contexts of children and young people and the spread of collective and community spaces for young people between 10 and 17].

#### ***The YAB***

The YAB dates from December 2021, from the Child Guarantee's pilot phase, with the support of UNICEF, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Department for Family Policies and the *Istituto degli Innocenti*. It is a body designed as a mechanism for the participation of children and young people in the pilot phase of the Child Guarantee and in the entire process of preparing the National Action Plan.

One of the main functions of the YAB is therefore to be a body for the participation of children and young people in decision-making and monitoring of actions.

This fits fully within the context of the participatory processes promoted over recent years by central government in favour of inclusion for children and young people in vulnerable groups (for example the PIPPI programme or the national pilot for care leavers), as well as the guidelines of the ONIA.

The YAB is made up of a diverse group of around 20 teenagers and young people and is responsible for collecting the opinions of young people living in Italy and, at the same time, participating in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of actions under the Child Guarantee, with the assistance of UNICEF.

The participants have taken part in training sessions and several institutional and informal meetings and have organised themselves to meet at least once a month online (so that meetings do not become too difficult to organise), while once every six months a face-to-face meeting is planned.

The young people of the YAB met in person for the first time in Florence on 11-12 December 2021, then in Rome on 11-12 June 2022 and in Milan from 16 to 18 December 2022. The fourth meeting was held in Naples from 15 to 17 September 2023.

The YAB has carried out in-depth surveys confirming the importance of teenage mental healthcare, and worked with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies to develop an important note on ESF+ funds, aimed at achieving some of the objectives of the national plan. In this regard, it should be noted that the YAB (like the participation body of the care leavers involved in a major national pilot) participates, with its own representative, in the monitoring committee for the Inclusion NP 2021-2027. The YAB will accompany the entire implementation of the Child Guarantee with the launch of participation pilots in individual regions, which will ensure greater participation by young people and local opportunities for listening and discussion.

### ***The Youth Conferences of Care Leavers***

The Youth Conferences are held in the context of the national pilot in favour of young people who, when they reach the age of majority, live outside their family of origin on the basis of a court order, pursuant to paragraph 250 of Law No 205 of 2017. Under the Fund for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, this pilot enjoyed funding of EUR 5 million for each of the years 2018-2020, subsequently renewed for a further three-year period (ongoing). The pilot supports measures aimed at preventing poverty and social exclusion and supports the transition to adulthood of those who were removed from their families to protect them and now live in foster care or residential homes. One part of the pilot is the local, regional and national Youth Conferences. These are collective bodies<sup>9</sup> that foster participation as a right and as a useful process to support individual autonomy, while promoting collective monitoring and evaluation of the pilot by the beneficiaries themselves. The project is promoted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and is implemented with the technical and scientific assistance of the *Istituto degli Innocenti*. The members of the National Youth Conference offer proposals and ideas when the Action Plan is being drawn up and act as counterparts for monitoring those actions which support them as vulnerable persons. It should be pointed out that a representative of the National Youth Conference takes part in the monitoring committee of the Inclusion NP 2021-27. Furthermore, the Child Guarantee was also discussed at their national meetings (26-28 May 2022, for the first time physically at the *Istituto degli Innocenti* in Florence after the pandemic; and on 14-15 April 2023, also at the *Istituto degli Innocenti* in Florence). The recent National

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<sup>9</sup> During 2022, with new areas joining the pilot, 117 Youth Conferences were held, of which 83 at area level and 34 at regional level; a total of 160 Youth Conferences were held in 2023, of which 119 at local level and 41 at regional level.

Youth Conference (8 to 10 February 2024), during which outcomes summarised here were collected, was also useful.

#### *1.6.2. Data collection and development of information systems*

The National Plan looks at the extent to which data are available on the targets set out in the Recommendation and identifies various strategies to fill the knowledge gaps. Certain actions relate to strengthening or developing data collection and information systems in order to overcome the fragmentation of data, reinforcing and better structuring the information basis and capitalising on the implementation of existing systems.

**Activities of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies** The Plan recognises the Single Information System for Social Services (SIUSS), established by Article 24 of Legislative Decree No 147 of 15 September 2017 on *Measures for the introduction of a national measure to combat poverty*. It breaks down into the SIOSS (System of Information on Social Services) and the SINBA (System of Information on the Protection of Children and their Families) as strategic knowledge infrastructure for the planning, monitoring and assessment of the social services system, also in line with action No 30 of the fifth National Action Plan for Children and Young People. In view of its uneven implementation throughout Italy, the Action Plan provided for a series of measures aimed at speeding up the development of the SIUSS and reinforcing its take-up. To that end, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, with the technical assistance of the *Istituto degli Innocenti*, in line with ACTION 7 – Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system for governance and system infrastructure for the period March 2023–2022, launched a project to:

- consolidate the information collection carried out by the SIOSS with reference to a thorough review of the data collected in modules 5 and 6 concerning foster care and residential facilities for minors (Annexes 5 and 6 of Ministerial Decree No 103 of 22 August 2019).
- update the SINBA in order to identify a set of variables to be shared at national level on minors in the care of local social services.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies has also committed to promoting *ad hoc* surveys in parallel with the gradual strengthening of information systems in order to keep an eye on certain indicators of particular relevance for monitoring the Action Plan. With the surveys, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies sought in particular to explore the issue of children, young people and families with children who are dependent on social services who have been removed from their family of origin, their socio-demographic characteristics, the issues and reasons that led to their being taken into local authority care, the type of measures taken in conjunction with the judicial authorities, and the duration and outcome of their removal from their family of origin. A national survey was launched based on two lines of research:

- census survey of all 0–17-year-olds and 18–21-year-olds in the care of social services as at 31 December 2022 (to define a baseline for monitoring the implementation of the Child Guarantee);
- an in-depth sample survey of minors removed from their family of origin and placed in foster care or residential care;
- collection of information on the organisation of the social service performing the function of social assistant for children and their families.

The survey is ongoing. Four information and support webinars have been organised, as well as some remote training sessions accredited by the National Order of Social Assistants. A support team has been set up for local and regional operators, with the technical assistance of the *Istituto degli Innocenti*.

**Activities of the Ministry of Health** The provisions of the Decree of 7 August 2023 on the activation of the Information System for Monitoring the Activities of Family Counsellors (SICOF) – NRRP M6C2 Investment 1.3.2 – can also be regarded as a cross-cutting action with the potential to strengthen the monitoring objectives of the Child Guarantee. Sub-investment 1.3.2.2.1. The Decree applies to the benefits provided by family counsellors, established by Law No 405 of 1975, and relating to local and regional social and health care provided to children, women, couples and families, resident or non-resident in Italy, at district, home and local/regional level. The SICOF was therefore established as part of the New Health Information System (NSIS). The Ministry of Health's Directorate-General for Digitalisation and the National Health Information System, as identified by the ministerial organisation decree, was made responsible for implementing and managing the SICOF, the aim of which is to collect information on the services provided by family counsellors to enable the monitoring of the services provided and essential and uniform levels of care in accordance with the principles of human dignity, health needs, fairness in access to care, quality of care and its appropriateness to specific needs, and cost-effectiveness. The activities provided for under the SICOF can be broken down into the following macro-areas: A. Sexual health, B. Reproductive health, C. Health prevention and promotion, D. Psychological support, E. Adoption – fostering, and F. Relations with the institutions.

#### *1.6.3. Essential Levels of Social Assistance (LEPS)*

Below is an update on the status of implementation of the essential levels of social assistance, or LEPS.

The **LEPS associated with the PIPPI programme The Programme of Intervention for the Prevention of Institutionalisation (Programma di Intervento per la Prevenzione dell'Istituzionalizzazione or PIPPI)** was approved on 28 July 2021 as part of the National Plan of Social Interventions and Services 2021-2023. Its aim is to innovate and standardise intervention practices for families in vulnerable situations, in order to prevent the risk of ill-treatment and the consequent removal of children from the family unit. The arrangements for achieving the objectives of the programme are included in the National Guidelines on intervening with children and families in vulnerable situations, approved by the State-Regions Joint Conference on 17 December 2017. On 26 November 2018, the Decree on the **National Social Policy Fund (FNPS)** registered at the Court of Auditors on 14 December 2018 with No 3492, established and provided funding for the **Programme of Intervention for (Per) the Prevention of Institutionalisation (PIPPI)** in policies concerning children and young people for the coming years.

Additional funding for 400 local social authorities for the period 2022-2026 has come from funds earmarked from the **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)**: by Decree No 5 of 15 February 2022 of the Director-General for Combating Poverty and for Social Policy, [Public notice No 1/2022](#) was adopted for the presentation of proposals for intervention by local social authorities for funding under the NRRP financed by the EU – Next generation EU.

The LEPS is therefore financed in full from total funding of EUR 96 412 500, of which EUR 11 812 500 from the National Social Policy Fund for the three-year period 2021-2023 (specifically EUR 3 937 500 for each year within the three-year period) and EUR 84 600 000 under the NRRP, M5C2, sub-investment line 1.1.1 – Support for parental capacity and prevention of vulnerability in families and children.

During the reporting period, there were 400 local social authorities involved in the implementation of the LEPS under the NRRP, in addition to 63 for each year of FNPS funding. Thus, during the reporting period, 526 local social authorities were financed.

To date, the pathways launched thanks to the above resources have involved 7 988 target households.

In addition, 505 operators have been trained/supported as local contact persons, 1 102 as coaches and 7 774 as operators in multidisciplinary teams.

Given the regional set-up of the Italian welfare system, the implementation phase of the LEPS in the local social authorities is supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, in order to facilitate ongoing monitoring in each of the local social authorities receiving NRRP funding and those financed by the FNPS. A Regional/Autonomous Province Committee for Technical Coordination (CTC) was therefore set up by Directorial Decree No 32 of 13 February 2023, responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation work of the LEPS throughout Italy.

The CTC, as a key governance body, is chaired by the Director-General for Combating Poverty and for Social Policy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and comprises: a representative of the Directorate-General for Combating Poverty and for Social Policy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in addition to the chair; a representative of the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Psychology of the University of Padua, as the support body for the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies for the implementation of the programme, a representative of the mission unit for the implementation of the NRRP, and a representative of the Regions/Local Self-Government.

**The LEPS ‘Supervision of Social Services Staff’** is part of the national framework for strengthening the overall system for responding to social needs and is an essential cross-cutting level provided for in and defined by the National Social Plan, in order to identify the best responses to needs and to prevent and combat burn-out.

In order to achieve this objective, a dedicated project line has been activated in the NRRP, supplemented by additional resources from the National Social Fund and the new planning at European level: Mission 5 ‘Inclusion and Cohesion’, Component 2 ‘Social infrastructures, families, communities and third sector’, sub-component ‘Social services, disability and social marginalization’ of the NRRP, Investment 1.1 – Supporting vulnerable people and preventing the institutionalisation of dependent elderly people, Sub Investment 1.1.4 Interventions to strengthen social services through the introduction of sharing and supervisory mechanisms for social workers on the NRRP with funding of EUR 42 000 000.

In order to coordinate and accompany the implementation of the essential level of social provision ‘Supervision of Social Services Staff’, a national steering committee was established by Executive Decree No 232 of 26 September 2022 as a key governance body, chaired by the Ministry’s Director-General for Combating Poverty and for Social Policy and comprising: a representative of the Directorate-General for Combating Poverty and for Social Policy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in addition to the chair; a representative of the *Istituto degli Innocenti*, as the support body for the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies; a representative of the Regions/Local Authorities; a representative of the National Association of Italian Municipalities; a representative of the National Council of Social Workers; a representative of the National Foundation for Social Workers; a representative of the National Council of Psychologists; one representative of the National Federation of TSRM (health technicians in medical radiology) and PSRTP (technical health professionals in rehabilitation and prevention). The steering committee has produced a document to guide and accompany the localities and regions, to make it possible to monitor and strengthen the implementation of the LEPS on the ground (**Support Instrument for LEPS Supervision**). The approach is characterised by a link with the knowledge and practices that have developed in the context of supervision over the past few years, starting from the LEPS document ‘Supervision of Social Services Staff’ in the National Social Plan 2021-2023, detailing and clarifying some of the main points contained therein. Given the regional set-up of the Italian welfare system, the implementation phase of the LEPS in the local social authorities provided for the establishment of a Committee for Technical Coordination (CTC) at the level of the Regions and Autonomous

Provinces, with responsibility for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the LEPS throughout Italy, by Executive Decree No 46 of 27 February 2023. The CTC has the strategic role of maintaining open, fluid communication between all levels and actors involved at regional and provincial level, supporting the implementation of the LEPS.

Summary data: the total funding under the NRRP is EUR 42 000 000, with 216 projects eligible for funding, with a total of 472 local social authorities financed by the NRRP. The beneficiaries are 23 162 social workers engaged in local assistance services, including child protection.

Implementation is also supported from the National Social Policy Fund, with a total of EUR 30 000 000 over the three-year period 2021/2023.

#### *1.6.4. Guidelines for the most vulnerable: foster care and housing in residential homes*

In the light of the most recent legislative measures, including the amendments introduced by Law No 206 of 26 November 2021, which fundamentally reformed the procedure provided for in the Code for Minors and Families, as well as acts adopted at international and European level, there is a need to update the national guidelines on foster care, issued in 2012, and the national guidelines for children's residential homes, drawn up in 2017.

To that end, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, also as a contribution to the pilot phase of the Child Guarantee, has launched the process of revising the two documents, setting up, by Executive Decree No 394 of 5 November 2021, a joint round table on the national guidelines on fostering and the national guidelines for children's residential homes.

The priority of the joint round table was to respond to numerous calls to update the rules on fostering and the guidelines, also in the light of new developments arising from the implementation of Child Guarantee in Italy and the outcome of the parliamentary committees, which, during the parliamentary term, dealt with subjects relating to the guidelines.

The mandate of the joint round table was to amend and integrate these documents, which left the basic structure unchanged and made it possible to make the necessary changes while maintaining their structure and main content, in order to bring the framework set out in the guidelines into line with the reality of the conditions taken into account there. The revision of the guidelines was also linked to the process of defining the LEPS, providing the local social authorities with updated guidelines as a tool to support the implementation of the LEPS, helping to structure local services that meet quality and efficiency criteria and levels in line with the legislation in force.

The joint round table met in plenary session in its now updated composition on 13 July 2023. On that occasion, a digression was made to look at the revision work previously carried out, and proposals for updating the two guidelines were presented.

The requests and further additions received from the various members of the round table in the margins of the meeting contributed to the preparation of the two final documents, approved at the Joint Conference on 8 February 2024.

## 2. THE SITUATION OF THE TARGET GROUPS

The measures put in place during the initial implementation of the European Child Guarantee in Italy have enabled all the target groups provided for in the Recommendation to be reached. The main problem is to have a clear picture of the number of people actually reached<sup>10</sup>. The

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<sup>10</sup> The main sources considered are:

– European Commission (2022) Employment and social developments in Europe 2022, Young Europeans: employment and social challenges ahead, Luxembourg, Publications office of the European Union.

latest available update of the data requested by the Social Protection Committee is given in the Annex. The data presented here show more directly the context of some of the important activities described in this report.

## 2.1. Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion

Monitoring the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) means keeping data on persons who are: at risk of poverty or severe deprivation (materially or socially) or living in households with very low work intensity. Persons are counted only once even if they are present in several sub-categories. Persons with an equivalised disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income (after social transfers)<sup>11</sup> are considered at risk of poverty.

In Italy, the latest available data (2022) shows that 28.5% of all children under 18 years are at risk of poverty and social exclusion. In this respect, it is useful to note some relevant data: 1. the equivalent value for the EU is significantly lower, at 24.7%; 2. in recent years, the figure for children in Italy has actually fallen – in 2015 it was 34.1%; 3. compared to the figure for the Italian population as a whole, i.e., 24.4% in 2022, it is clear that this is a condition that particularly affects children and young people.

Interesting indications can be found by analysing the three components of the AROPE indicator:

- Risk of poverty as at 2022, 25.4% of all children under 18 were at risk of poverty. In this regard, it should be noted that: the equivalent value for the EU is significantly lower, at 19.3%; in recent years, the figure for children in Italy has actually fallen – in 2015 it was 26.8%; the indicator for the Italian population as a whole was 20.1% in 2022.
- Severe material and social deprivation: In 2022, 4.7% of all children under 18 were at risk of severe material and social deprivation. In this regard, it should be noted that: the equivalent value for the EU is significantly higher, at 8.4%; in recent years, the figure for children in Italy has actually fallen – in 2015 it was 15.8%; the indicator for the Italian population as a whole was 4.5% in 2022.
- Low work intensity: In 2022, 6.2% of all children under 18 lived in households with a low work intensity. In this regard, it should be noted that: the equivalent value for the EU is 7.6%; in recent years, the figure in Italy with respect to children has actually fallen

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- Eurostat, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data>
- ISTAT (2023) Statistiche focus, Le condizioni di vita dei minori (Statistical focus - the living conditions of children and young people)
- ISTAT (2021) Spesa dei Comuni per i servizi sociali (Expenditure by local authorities on social services)
- Pavolini, E., Natili, M., Jessuola, M., Raitano, M. (2023) *Access for children in need to the key services covered by the European Child Guarantee – Italy*. European Social Policy Analysis Network, Brussels: European Commission.
- UNICEF (2022) *Basis for a European Child Guarantee Action Plan in Italy*.

<sup>11</sup> Severely deprived persons (materially or socially) suffer living conditions severely constrained by a lack of resources and experience at least 7 of the following 13 factors of deprivation, meaning that they cannot afford to: (i) pay rent or bills; (ii) keep their house adequately warm; (iii) meet unexpected expenses; (iv) eat meat, fish or a protein equivalent at least once every two days; (v) take one week's holiday away from home; (vi) have a car/van available for personal use; (vii) replace worn out furniture; (viii) replace worn clothing with new clothing; (ix) have two pairs of shoes of the appropriate size; (x) spend a small amount of money on themselves every week ('pocket money'); (xi) take part in regular leisure activities; (xii) meet friends/family for a drink/meal at least once a month; and (xiii) have an internet connection. People living in households with a very low work intensity are those aged 0-64 living in households where adults (aged 18-64) worked 20% or less of their total work potential in the past year. The indicator is based on EU-SILC (EU Statistics on income, social inclusion and living conditions).

– in 2015 it was 8.5%; the indicator for the Italian population as a whole was 9.8% in 2022.

Finally, it should be noted that, within the population of children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, no tools are currently available to quantify the more specific targets relating to: homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation, children with disabilities, children with mental health issues, children with a migrant or minority ethnic background, particularly Roma, children in alternative, especially institutional, care, and children in precarious family situations.

## 2.2. Minors not living with their family of origin

Pending full implementation of the monitoring system provided for in Legislative Decree No 147 of 15 September 2017, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, on an annual basis, promotes the coordinated collection of data from the Regions and Autonomous Provinces on children in foster care and in residential homes, making it possible to estimate the number of children placed outside the family of origin at national and regional level. This picture is enriched by the data collected in 2010<sup>12</sup> and 2016<sup>13</sup> by two sample surveys of minors living outside their family of origin, carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. As mentioned above, a survey is currently being carried out, promoted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies to collect information on children in the care of all regional and local social services in all 586 local social authorities. The available data, referring to 31 December 2023, from these surveys indicate that in Italy:

1) The number of minors in foster care for at least five nights a week, excluding unaccompanied child migrants, can be estimated at 13 248 (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies – *Istituto degli Innocenti* – Coordinated survey, in cooperation with the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, 2021). Foster care saw a vertiginous rise following the entry into force of Law 149/01 – which made it the priority tool for taking care of children and young people temporarily removed from their own household – which came to an end towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century. However, the relatively stable level of cases over the past decade – at around 14 000 – has now gone into reverse. Over the past two years, there has been a fall bringing the number of cases to under 13 000 a year, at least in part as a result of the difficulties linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic and social crisis that began in 2020. The age distribution of those in foster care confirms the prevalence of pre-teens and teenagers. The most represented age groups are 11-14 (30% of the total) and 15-17 (28 %), which underlines the need for appropriate support for independent living, to be provided in good time before these young people reach the age of 18. Around one in five children or young people in foster care is a foreign national. With regard to the type of foster care, there is a slight prevalence of fostering in a different family (56%) compared to fostering within the extended family (44%). As per the end of 2021, more than half of fostered children had been fostered for more than 2 years (61%) – almost 23% for between 2 and 4 years, and almost 38% for more than 4 years. The most frequent outcome of foster care was return to the family (in 33% of

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<sup>12</sup> Centro nazionale di documentazione e analisi per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza (National Documentation and Analysis Centre for Children and Young People), *Quaderno 55 – bambini e bambini temporaneamente fuori dalla famiglia di origine (Children temporarily living outside their family of origin)*, 20 March 2014, <https://www.minori.gov.it/it/minori/quaderno-55-bambini-e-bambini-temporaneamente-fuori-dalla-famiglia-di-origine>

<sup>13</sup> Centro nazionale di documentazione e analisi per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza, *Quaderno 66 – Bambini e ragazzi fuori famiglia (Children and young people living outside their family)*, 29 October 2019, <https://www.minori.gov.it/it/minori/bambini-e-ragazzi-fuori-famiglia-quaderno-66>

cases). The remaining outcomes are less common, but certainly still significant. These include a move to a residential home (17%) or to a new foster family (7%) – presumably young people with a series of placements one after another over the years. This may be a deliberate decision on the part of the local social authority in order to implement the pathway set out for them, or the result of failed placements leading to upheavals in their care pathways. Finally, the outcome in 12% of cases was the start of an adoption process, while 3% graduated to independent living.

2) The number of minors in residential children's homes, excluding unaccompanied child migrants, is estimated to be 14 081 (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies – *Istituto degli Innocenti* – Coordinated survey, in cooperation with the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, 2021). This figure represents a slight rise and is in line with the data recorded over the past few years, confirming a relative stabilisation of the numbers in residential care following a time marked by a sharp decrease in children in residential care between 1998 and 2010 and a time of fluctuations at around 11 to 12 thousand cases. The age when young people are most likely to end up in a residential children's home is late adolescence. The frequency distribution is increasingly dominated by the highest age group (15-17 years old), which accounts for almost half of those present at year-end (48 %) – the equivalent figures were 31% in 1998, 40% ten years later in 2008, and 51% in 2014. This is followed by the age group 11-14 (20%) and 6-10 (15%), while the numbers in the 0-2 years (7%) and 3-5-year age groups (9%) are low. The age distribution is strongly influenced by the growing presence of unaccompanied foreign minors, who are housed almost exclusively in residential children's homes. More generally, the high rate of foreign nationals in this group has an impact on the features of the care. Just under 40% of the children are foreign nationals, twice as high as in 1998 (18%). The duration of care is strongly influenced by the fact that so many of these children are of foreign origin, both because unaccompanied foreign minors tend to be older and because of their move from initial reception centres before being placed in residential facilities. Around 48% of those in residential care stay for less than a year, a percentage which rises to 74% of cases if we consider stays of less than two years. The percentages of young people with stays of between 2 and 4 years (15%) and over 4 years (8%) are low. Focusing on young people who have moved on from residential care, a move towards a new type of accommodation, in particular a new community, is the most common (28%) followed by return to their family (24%) and, much more rarely, to a foster family (8%).

### 2.3. Early school leaving

Absenteeism from school is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, which can generally be defined as total, partial or irregular absence from school by young people of school age. It can occur at various stages of education and may consist of dropping out of school, leaving the education system early, absenteeism, passive attendance or the accumulation of gaps that may affect their prospects for knowledge development and their subsequent opportunities on the jobs market. According to the most recent data from the Ministry of Education<sup>14</sup>, the total drop-out rate over the entire period has been quantified in a longitudinal analysis, starting with the individual components of absenteeism, representing the drop-out rate each year and between one academic year and the next year in the period 2012/2013 to 2021/2022, for the cohort of pupils who started the first year of secondary school in September 2012. Of the 583 644 pupils who started their first year in September 2012, 96 177 pupils, or 16.5% of the initial population, left the school system without obtaining a qualification (either at the regular time or late) between 2012/2013 and 2021/2022. Looking at individual academic years in detail, it is clear

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<sup>14</sup>MIUR, longitudinal analysis on early school leaving for the academic years 2012/2013 - 2021/2022.

that the early school leaving rate gradually increased over the period in question. By nationality, there is a significantly higher rate of drop-out for foreign pupils than for Italian pupils: 40.3% versus 13.7%. Among non-Italian pupils, a drop-out rate of 34.3% is to be found for those born in Italy and close to 44.1% for foreign nationals born abroad. All told, a longitudinal drop-out rate of 14.7% at national level can be calculated. In the northern and central regions of the country, the rate tended to be lower than the national average (13.6% and 12.6% respectively); on the other hand, for the south, the overall rate of early school leaving was 16.2% on average, while for the island regions it stood at 18.5%. Among the individual regions, Sardinia stands out at 19.1%, Campania at 18.6% and Sicily at 18.4%. As far as the sex of the pupils is concerned, the longitudinal drop-out recorded by male pupils, close to 17.2%, appears to be higher than for their female classmates (12%). By nationality, there is a significantly higher rate of drop-out from the school system among foreign pupils than among Italians: 32.9% versus 12.9%.

## 2.4. Children with disabilities and special needs

Law No 92 of 5 February 1992 establishes the right to education and instruction from birth. Looking at the data (ISTAT, Ministry of Education and Merit, 2022) it can be seen that, in the 2021/2022 academic year, 316 000 pupils with disabilities were attending schools in Italy (+ 5% compared to the previous academic year). Many schools (76%) have IT workstations adapted to the needs of pupils with disabilities, but support technologies are still insufficient at one school in five.

Over 207 000 special needs support teachers were employed in Italian schools in the 2021/2022 academic year: almost 200 000 in state schools (source Ministry of Education) and more than 7 000 in non-state schools (source ISTAT), an increase of more than 16 000 people compared to the previous academic year (+ 8%, almost exclusively in state schools). At national level, the pupil/teacher ratio of 1.5 pupils per support teacher is more favourable than that provided for in Law No 244/2007, which recommends a value of 2. Although the shortage of specialists is still a problem, there are some positive signs: the share of specialised support teachers has increased significantly over the past three years, from 63% in the 2019/2020 academic year to 68% in the 2021/2022 academic year. It should also be noted that Ministerial Decree No 188 of 21 June 2021 introduced a training system for teaching staff not specialised in disability support but engaged in classes containing pupils with disabilities, with the aim of ensuring basic knowledge of inclusiveness issues. In the 2021-2022 academic year there were still many schools with physical obstacles to people with disabilities: just one school in three was accessible to pupils with motor disabilities. The situation is better in the north of the country, where the figures are above the national average (39.5% of legally recognised schools), but worse, with the lowest rates, in southern Italy (31.8%).

With respect to attendance, in the academic year 2021/22, pupils with disabilities accounted for around 4% of total pupils. The rate was 2.5% in nursery school, 4.8% in primary school, 4.7% in lower secondary school, and 3.1% in upper secondary school. More detailed information follows about the youngest children.

The data collected by means of a sample survey on education services shows that 13.5% of establishments in Italy received children with certified disabilities in the reference year, an average figure, which, as is often the case in our analyses, summarises very different realities. In the 2021/2022 academic year, for example, the rate of public establishments welcoming children with disabilities was double the overall average, and four times the average welcomed by private establishments. The number of children with disabilities under the age of 3 enrolled in nursery schools and 'spring' sections was seven per thousand, which is lower than the figure collected by the Ministry of Education with regard to children aged 3 or younger enrolled in

kindergarten (11.4 per thousand). However, the same data on nursery schools indicate that disability certification increases as the age of children rises. Of children aged four, the share of children with disabilities per 1 000 enrolled rises to 21.4 and at the age of five to 31.6. The sample survey suggests that, in the 2021/2022 academic year, there were 2 198 disabled children enrolled in the nursery schools and 'spring' sections, of which 1 563 in public establishments (71.1 %) and 635 in private establishments (28.9 %). The average share of children with disabilities in public establishments is 10.7 per thousand children enrolled. In the private sector, it is less than half of this (3.8 per thousand). Similarly, children with disabilities aged three or under enrolled in the 2020/2021 academic year represented 13.4 per thousand of total enrolment in state establishments, and 6.15 per thousand in the private sector.

Academic disadvantage is a very broad topic relating not only to pupils with disabilities. 'Miscellaneous' pupils with a special educational need exceed 8% of all enrolled pupils. More than half of these are pupils with specific learning disorders (51.8%); the second largest share is accounted for by pupils with a socio-economic, linguistic or cultural disadvantage (35.4%). Compared to the 2017/2018 academic year, the number of pupils in these categories rose by 23% (+ around 113 000): the increase was greater in central Italy (+ 25%) than in the north (+ 22%). In recent years, the collection of data about these types of needs has improved thanks to greater capacity on the part of professionals and as a result of the introduction of specific legislation. The most significant increase over the past four years has been seen in upper secondary schools, of around 85 000. The distribution of these pupils in schools of all types and levels in the 2021/22 academic year was as follows: in nursery schools 1.3%; in primary 6.7%; in lower secondary 12.3%; in upper secondary 10.2%.

## 2.5. Children with non-Italian nationality

In 2021/2022, there was a renewed increase in the total number of non-Italian children and young people attending schools in Italy. The total number was 872 360, an increase of almost 7 000 (+ 0.8%). Of the total, 67.5% were born in Italy. The educational attendance rate of non-Italian children, except in the 3-5 age group, is close to that of Italians. In particular, in the 6-13 age group, corresponding to the first cycle, the rate is 100%; in the 14-16 age group, corresponding to the first three-year period of upper secondary school, it reaches almost 90%; in the 17-18 age group (last two years of secondary school), the school attendance rate of non-Italian students falls to 78.0%, compared with 82.9% for Italian students. The rate of school attendance in the 3-5-year age range for non-Italian children living in Italy is 77.9 %, while for Italian children it reaches 95.1%. Whilst, at national level, non-Italian pupils account for 10.6% of the total school population, their territorial distribution is far from homogeneous. 2021/2022 data confirm a higher concentration in the northern regions (65.5%) followed by Central Italy (21.9%) and finally Southern Italy (12.6%).

With regard to the presence of foreign children in early-childhood education services, the available data indicate that the percentage of non-Italians was around 6.7% in the 2021/2022 academic year, with the highest presence in public establishments in the north (14%). At nursery schools, the share of foreign pupils is significantly higher, at 11.5% at national level, with a higher share yet again in the north. Data from the Ministry of Education for the 2020/2021 academic year shows that the share of pupils of foreign origin in public nursery schools in the north was 22.1%, which is higher than the share of foreigners in the total resident population in that age group (19.3%). The propensity to use these services is significantly higher in the population of Italian origin. There are now barriers for foreign families wishing to access early-childhood education services such as these.

In primary schools, the rate of children with non-Italian nationality is around 12.4%, in lower secondary school it is 11.2%, in upper secondary school 8%. A total of 85.2% of those

graduating from lower secondary school continue to upper secondary school, while 8.6% choose regional training.

### 3. AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN INTERVENTIONS

#### 3.1. Conclusion of the Child Guarantee pilot phase

During the period under review, the Child Guarantee pilot, in which Italy had been involved by the European Commission, was completed, also benefiting from support from UNICEF. In December 2020, Decree No 41 of 3 December 2020 established the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for the implementation of the Child Guarantee pilot in Italy, comprising representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Department for Family Policies and UNICEF, with the technical and scientific assistance of the *Istituto degli Innocenti*. At the regular meetings of the Working Group, the terms of involvement of the participants in the Steering Committee were defined and agreed, and the research, analysis and documentation activities were planned and coordinated. The initial phase provided for a cross-cutting analysis of all policy areas and vulnerable groups identified by the Child Guarantee Recommendation proposal, as well as national or decentralised rules, policies, programmes and monitoring and data collection systems that directly or indirectly contribute to combating child poverty and social exclusion. This process fed into the Deep Dive Analysis, a document drawn up by the Cattaneo Institute in the light of discussions with the main stakeholders, which helped to provide information on the drafting of the action plan. In addition to the research and analysis process, a number of specific actions, agreed in the Steering Committee, were developed in areas under the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies or the Department for Family Policies.

The pilot phase, in which operational models of intervention to support minors in a particularly vulnerable and socially excluded situation were tested in Italy, was concluded in April 2023. The results of this pilot were also shared with the other countries involved in the pilot at the closing conference of the pilot phase of the European Child Guarantee, held in Sofia on 20 April 2023.

A) The actions carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies were:

*3.1.1. Analysis of fostering experiences in specific forms or with respect to particular vulnerable targets*<sup>15</sup>. The general aim of the analysis was to contribute to the development and reinforcement, both quantitative and qualitative, of fostering culture and good practices in Italy, understood as emerging foster care practices, with a view to overcoming regional disparities. This objective is pursued by generating scientific evidence on the basis of analysis and documentation of emerging local fostering practices, highlighting replicable and scalable aspects in the following four categories of fostering: children from 0 to 6 years of age; children with disabilities; ‘light’ forms of fostering (e.g., day-only, solidarity-based proximity); foster care concluded with the return of the child to the family of origin. The total duration of the research project was 15 months, from September 2021 to December 2022. The technique used

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<sup>15</sup> Salvò A., Bello A., Petrella A., Maci F., Chiaro F., Rizzo F., Zenarolla A., Serbati S., Milani P. (2023), *Rafforzare il sistema dell'affidamento familiare in Italia nell'ambito della Child Guarantee* (Reinforcing the foster system in Italy in the context of the Child Guarantee). Case studies on fostering in Italy. *Executive Summary, Laboratorio di Ricerca e Intervento in Educazione Familiare, Università degli Studi di Padova* (Research and Intervention Centre for Family Education, University of Padua).

was that of case studies, understood as a way of understanding complex phenomena in their context, generating dense, in-depth and detailed descriptions. In each of the four categories of fostering identified, the involvement of all those engaged in the process was encouraged, both the services involved – recognising the multiprofessional nature of the intervention – and families, in line with the aims of the participation. In this sense, the following parties were interviewed for each case study: the children involved in the fostering process; their parents, or adults with the parental role; members of the foster families; the professionals managing the fostering procedure; the reference person responsible for the procedure; any other person directly involved in the specific foster case. A total of 56 semi-structured, individual or group interviews were conducted, of which around 64% in person (36) and the rest by Zoom video call. A total of 85 respondents were interviewed. The case studies analysed concerned situations where children returned to live with their family of origin. The following recommendations were drawn:

- Develop a model of intervention specifically geared to family reunification in fostering procedures, starting with the introduction into the project of objectives, expected results and actions aimed at achieving this outcome.
- Invest in personalised support for the family of origin, through intensive training, to promote the development of the parenting skills needed to achieve the various levels of family reunification and a successful return of the child to the family.
- Involve the child fully in the process, through age-adapted listening tools and narratives, in order to prepare the child for family reunification to support them in this step.
- Develop a comprehensive and integrated set of social, educational and psychological support measures to support the various stages of family reunification and the eventual return to home, in order to build solid and concrete foundations for sustainability over time.
- Accompany foster parents in the process, encouraging them to think beyond their role as primary carers to one in which they accompany and support the family of origin in their process of family reunification.
- Rethink how the spaces/services set aside for visiting rights are organised, making available everything needed to ensure the necessary conditions for the child and the parents to maintain and nurture the parent-child link.
- Devote time before and following meetings between children and parents to talk to the child, the foster parents and also the parents, to prepare for the meeting and deal with the emotions that flow from these visits.
- Integrate activities that encourage family reunion in visits to enable all actors involved (children, parents and foster carers) to make the best of the relationship between the children and the family.

[Activities carried out in implementation of the objectives of ACTION 4 – Provision of appropriate services to support the social inclusion of minors in families in poverty in the area Combating Poverty and the Right to Housing]

*3.1.2. Using foster care experience in Italy to support foreign minors and unaccompanied minors*, conducting support activities in the local networks between competent institutions and stakeholders, reinforcing training and support for social services staff and raising awareness in order to encourage families and single persons to volunteer to be potential foster carers, and their training. The pilot was carried out in Sicily, Lombardy, Veneto and Lazio, in partnership with the CNCA (National Association of Care Communities) and the *Borgo Ragazzi Don Bosco* with the aim of upgrading capacity at local level with regard to the finding foster families for non-Italian children and young people. The model has been documented and analysed for potential replicability and upscaling.

[Activities implementing the objectives of ACTION 4 – Promoting inclusive practices at school age and promoting socio-occupational integration opportunities for children and young people with a migrant background in the transition to

adulthood, from the area Early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities, canteens]

3.1.3. *In the context of the National Care Leavers pilot, social living component*, to help and support the participating municipalities – and therefore the care leavers involved – in achieving autonomous living. The results of the analysis carried out provide an insight into the main accessible housing solutions, with particular reference to social living and the Housing First methodology, as well as information tools for local public authorities to enable better identification of responses to housing needs. Specifically, the study (accompanied by limited trials in the municipalities of Asti; the Piana di Lucca region (municipalities of Lucca and Capannori) and in Atripalda and neighbouring municipalities) offered a number of operating assumptions regarding: the housing needs of care leavers; the introduction of the main accessible housing solutions, with particular reference to social housing as a whole and the Housing First methodology, as the main approaches to supporting the demand for housing care leavers; guiding local public authorities in the various responses to housing needs that can be implemented, in order to better identify the most appropriate ones. [Activities implementing the objectives of ACTION 4 – Promoting inclusive practices at school age and promoting socio-occupational integration opportunities for children and young people with a migrant background in the transition to adulthood, from the area Early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities, canteens]

#### *3.1.4. Mapping of fostering experiences outside the family of origin.*

The mapping presents an overview of promising/emerging/good fostering practices for minors outside their family of origin at local level in certain regions of Italy. The report is aimed primarily at local multi-sectoral actors involved in planning and implementing fostering, with the aim of scaling up the positive results of the pilot. Documentary analyses, consultation of national stakeholders and interviews with local and regional actors involved in fostering have led to common observations on the compliance of the Italian, national and regional regulatory system with the main international and European standards and regulations on the fostering of minors outside their family of origin. The analysis of around 80 different types of reception, from foster care and residential services across Italy, has demonstrated the success of a fostering system based on the principles of necessity and appropriateness, in a national context in which the process of de-institutionalisation is considered to have been concluded since 2006. In-depth interviews with over 200 operators, stakeholders and individuals, children and adults involved in out-of-family reception pathways have made it possible to codify and test a set of criteria for defining good practice in the fostering of minors outside their family of origin and for identifying good practices which can be replicated.

B) The focus of the Department for Family Policies, in the areas for which it is responsible, has been on:

#### *3.1.5. Valorisation of projects to combat educational poverty.*

In 2020, the Department for Family Policies published three public notices entitled ‘EduCare’, ‘EduCare in comune’ (EduCare in common) and ‘EduCare insieme’ (EduCare together). The aim of these notices was to finance pilot innovative projects for non-formal and informal education aimed at combating the educational poverty of children and young people and supporting their cultural, training and educational opportunities. The measures and actions promoted are in line with the objectives of the Child Guarantee and paid particular attention to the need to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on children and young people, taking into account the aspects of gender, age and cultural background, as well as different levels of

ability. The notices make explicit reference to the fact that ‘Italy is called upon to take action on several fronts to combat poverty and educational poverty by implementing the objectives of the Child Guarantee Programme, which aims to ensure that every child in Europe at risk of poverty or social exclusion has access to free healthcare, education, early childhood education and care, decent housing and adequate nutrition, in line with the general principles laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child’. The notices, published at different times, are still at different stages of implementation today: as regards ‘EduCare’ (funding of EUR 35 million, for which around 1 930 project proposals were submitted, of which 328 were admitted for funding from the allocated resources), the project proposals provided for a duration of six months (subject to possible extensions). All the planned activities have now been completed and most of the balance of the funding has now been paid out.

For the second notice, ‘EduCare in common’, initial funding of EUR 15 million was provided, with 69 projects eligible for funding, which was subsequently supplemented in 2023 by a further EUR 10.5 million. The procedure for identifying additional beneficiaries on the basis of ranking lists is therefore under way, while the activities of the 69 original projects are at the launch stage.

With regard to the third Notice, ‘EduCare together’, in December 2022 the evaluation committee concluded its examination of the project proposals, taking into account additional resources of EUR 50 million compared to the initial funding of EUR 15 million, allowing a further 368 projects to be funded. During the pilot phase, in general, the aim was to capitalise on the results of ongoing projects by monitoring them in order to provide a picture of their social impact. This made it possible to identify good practices to be proposed as replicable throughout Italy and Europe. One specific focus was to provide the Department for Family Policy with validated evidence on the projects selected to assess their potential for scaling up and to make proposals with regard to lessons learned during their implementation. A desk review of available documents and reports was conducted for the most promising projects, followed by interviews and focus groups with the main stakeholders, including children and young people participating in the project activities and their parents or legal representatives.

*3.1.6. Pilot on family support* in the context of the activities proposed by Family Centres in order to develop a model to be tested in selected Family Centres. The ‘Pilot project for the development of a family support model for vulnerable families, focusing on families of children with disabilities’ highlighted the role of the family and parenting skills, promoting peer mentoring, in which the families themselves support, inform and guide each other in dedicated spaces and at dedicated times. The project provides for more experienced ‘resource’ families to accompany more vulnerable families in their daily activities, essential for the well-being and growth of their children. Implementing the model facilitates the pursuit of a primary prevention objective, promoting the well-being of children and young people and the dissemination of a culture of social solidarity.

The selected Family Centres were offered assistance through training and support. The model developed as part of the Italian Child Guarantee pilot is based on an analysis of good practices already existing at local level, and the pilot involved families living in the north, centre and south of the country, each with vulnerability linked to specific territorial, economic and social conditions, with a particular focus on families with children with disabilities. The main, interlinked activities related to this Italian pilot action line were:

- initial mapping of the existing offer of peer support services in Family Centres for families in vulnerable situations and families of children and young people with disabilities;

- the development of a model of reciprocal support between families using the peer support methodology, with the creation of a tool kit for training Family Centre staff, with a view to launching field trials;
- testing the model in six selected Family Centres, which included a training course for staff on family coaching, on the tool kit and peer-to-peer support methodology, followed by the launch and implementation of the model at Family Centres, with the possibility of creating peer support initiatives;
- monitoring and systematising the peer support model by reviewing the tool kit, with a view to its validation and potential replicability in other Family Centres and its scalability at national level.

The way the family support line was developed and implemented highlighted interesting aspects of the replicability of the model which could also benefit the governments of other EU Member States. The Italian Government is therefore willing to share more detailed information on good family support practices with any governments interested in further developing these practices.

### *3.1.7. Development of 21st century skills*

During the pilot phase up until December 2022, an action aimed at developing 21st century skills by means of the testing of the UPSHIFT model was promoted, in collaboration with UNICEF. The model responds to the need to strengthen education system interventions to combat early school leaving and facilitate school-to-work transition in Italy through an integrated model for the development of 21st century skills, empowerment and social inclusion of children in situations of disadvantage. More than 2 500 secondary school students in Sicily, Lazio and Lombardy participated in UPSHIFT. They were selected on the basis of indirect indicators of disadvantage (including their early school leaving rate, the percentage of students with a migrant background and their average INVALSI results). [Activities implementing the objectives of ACTION 4 – Promoting inclusive practices at school age and promoting socio-occupational integration opportunities for children and young people with a migrant background in the transition to adulthood, from the area Early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities, canteens]

In Italy, the pilot phase of the European Child Guarantee involved a total of more than 4 000 target children and adolescents, as well as 600 caregivers and more than 500 other operators. In total, three models to combat child poverty and social exclusion were tested and documented. These included fostering for minors with a migrant background, mentoring and support for vulnerable families through the Family Centres, and the development of 21st century skills to combat early school leaving.

## **3.2. Early Childhood Education and Care Education and Training**

While the vast majority of children living in low-income households do attend nursery school (around 84%), there is still a marked difference compared to children not living in low-income households (96.3) (European Commission, 2022). As regards ECEC services for children under 3, the share of low-income children accessing them is only slightly lower (23.4%) than for other children (27.2%). This is not an overwhelming difference, but should be seen in a national context of medium to low coverage (European Commission, 2022).

The available data presented below are from the ISTAT periodical surveys and the Sample Survey of Educational Services for Early-Childhood Education, academic year 2021/2022, which was carried out by ISTAT, Ca' Foscari University, at the request of the Prime Minister's Office – Department for Family Policies (2023).

In the 2021/2022 academic year, 13 518 nurseries and supplementary services for early childhood were operating, and more than 350 000 places were authorised (48.8% of which in public establishments). Most of the 13 542 early childhood education services surveyed were nursery schools (8 913, of which include 191 were corporate in-house nurseries). There were 2 653 'spring' sections (for children from 24 to 36 months) and 1 976 additional services for the youngest children, of which 52% were in-home services, 38.1% play spaces and 9.9% children's and parents' centres. Due to the fall in births (i.e., potential users of the services), the gap between the number of children and the number of nursery school places is gradually narrowing, with attendance close to the European target set for 2010 (33%) but still far from the target for 2030 (45%) according to ISTAT data (November 2023).

Across the country, there are still large gaps in educational provision that could be mitigated by investments under the NRRP and recent growth and equalisation policies. On average, the centre and the north-east have coverage more than exceeding 33% of children resident there (the figures are 36.7 % and 36.2 % respectively), the north-west is close to the target (31.5 %), but the south, including Sicily and Sardinia, although improving, is still far from the target (16.0 % and 16.6 % respectively).

A significant proportion of the funding allocated to the operation of nursery schools and other socio-educational services for early childhood are managed at local level by the municipalities and associations of neighbouring municipalities. The municipalities own 34% of the establishments, accounting for 48.8% of the total number of places available. The remaining 66% of facilities and 51.2% of places are private, in some cases under contract with the municipalities. The spending committed by the municipalities in 2021 on early childcare services amounted to EUR 569 million (+ 16.9% compared to 2020), of which 16.7% was reimbursed by parental fees (EUR 263 million).

An appropriate level of analysis to compare levels of provision, which makes it possible to highlight important differences, even within regions, is that of the local social authorities. Local social authority data on places in public and private education services compared to the number of children resident show that, in some areas of southern Italy, also thanks to recent improvements, the levels of provision are comparable to those in many parts of the centre and north of the country.

The new European Commission Recommendation of 7 September 2022 sets a new target for the 3-5 age group to be achieved by 2030. By that date, at least 96% of children between 3 and the start of compulsory education should participate in early childhood education and care. In Italy, the latest figures show participation of around 90% among children of that age. Most of the children enrolled in nursery school attend publicly owned establishments (72.9%, versus 27.1% enrolled in private establishments).

### *3.2.1. Multiannual Action Plan 2021-2025 of the Ministry of Education for the implementation of the Integrated Education and Instruction System*

The **Multiannual Action Plan 2021-2025 of the Ministry of Education for the implementation of the integrated education and instruction system** for children from birth up until six years of age makes financial resources available every year (the National fund for the integrated education and instruction system from birth up until six years) which the Regions, through their programming, allocate to local authorities for:

- a) new buildings, renovation, construction, security, energy savings in public buildings accommodating schools and childcare services;
- b) financing of the running costs of schools and childcare services in order to lower their costs for families and improve their provision;
- c) continuous in-service training of educators and teaching staff and promotion of local pedagogical coordination.

A steering group has been set up at the Ministry to support, monitor and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of measures under the Plan. Article 11 of the Multiannual Plan provides that, by decree of the Director-General of the Regional Education Office, a joint round table is to be set up, comprising representatives of the region, the Regional Education Office and the regional office of the National Association of Italian Municipalities. This round table coordinates and monitors the implementation of the plan in the area concerned and undertakes advisory and proactive tasks in relation to the regional policies relating to the integrated 0-6-years system. Representatives of local authorities and/or other relevant institutions may also be involved in the work of the round table.

The Regions and Autonomous Provinces adopt the generally multiannual programme of measures provided for in the Multiannual Action Plan, after consulting the regional office of the National Association of Italian Municipalities, within the limits of the resources referred to in the Decree on the allocation of funding and the agreement, in accordance with the regional co-financing package.

During the reporting period, we had the following initiatives:

- Agreement at the Joint Conference on the distribution of the national funding for the integrated 0-6-years system for the financial years 2024 and 2025: EUR 295 600 000 for financial year 2024 and EUR 288 800 000 for financial year 2025.
- Ministerial decree No 82 of 9 May 2023. Decree on the allocation of resources from the National Fund for the Integrated 0-6-years System for financial year 2023. allocation from the National Fund for the Integrated Education and Instruction System, amounting to EUR 304 206 386.27
- Ministerial Decree No 89 of 7 April 2022 on the allocation of resources from the National Fund for the Integrated 0-6-years System, financial year 2022. allocation from the Fund for 2022 amounted to EUR 309 000 000.
- Ministerial decree No 88 of 7 April 2022. Decree on the second allocation of resources from the National Fund for the Integrated 0-6-years System, financial year 2021. allocation from the Fund for 2021 amounted to EUR 309 000 000.

NOP funds for schools have also financed measures in 571 state nursery schools to create innovative environments (EUR 267 million).

In this context, significant funding from the NRRP interacts positively with the Child Guarantee. With Notice No 48047 of 2 December 2021 of the Ministry of Education (Mission 4 – Education and Research – Component 1 – Enhancing the provision of education services: from nursery school to university - Investment 1.1 ‘Plan for nursery schools and education services for the youngest children’, financed by Next Generation EU), EUR 3 billion was earmarked, of which EUR 2.4 billion for infrastructure for the age group 0-2 years, and EUR 600 million for infrastructure for the age group 3-5 years.

To this can be added, also from the NRRP, funding for enhancing the safety and security of, renovating, re-equipping or constructing buildings owned by municipalities to be used as nurseries and kindergartens, pursuant to Article 1(59) of Law No 160 of 27 December 2019 and in implementation of the Prime Ministerial Decree of 30 December 2020, with a total allocation of EUR 700 million over the five-year period 2021-2025.

The ultimate target is the activation of 150 480 new posts, as adjusted during the revision of the NRRP by decision of 8 December 2023. This adjustment was necessary because of the increase in raw material prices and costs. Despite the lowering of the target, Article 11 of Decree-Law No 123/2023 allocates additional resources for continuing investment in infrastructure to increase the number of places in nurseries, with the aim of ensuring, in line with the relevant LEP, that 33% of children under the age of three years are covered by education and care

services by 2026, to be raised to 45% by 2030, as provided for in the European Council Recommendation.

[These measures are consistent with and implement ACTION 1 – Education services for children up to the age of six years from the area Early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities, canteens]

### *3.2.2. Children and young people in the education and training system*

Mission 4 of the NRRP ‘Strengthening the provision of education services: from nurseries to universities’ provides for a total allocation of EUR 19.44 billion, with structural investments and upgrading of human capital covering the entire education sector at all levels. One of the planned investments aims to reduce territorial differences in the first and second cycles of secondary school and to combat early school leaving, with an allocation of EUR 1.5 billion. In particular, Investment 1.4 – Extraordinary intervention aimed at reducing territorial disparities in lower and upper secondary schools and combating early school leaving, funded by the European Union (Next Generation EU) aims to:

- measure and monitor territorial disparities, including through consolidation and generalisation of PISA/INVALSI tests;
- reduce regional and local disparities in Italy as regards levels of basic skills (in Italian, Mathematics and English), in particular in Southern Italy;
- develop a strategy to tackle early school leaving in a structured way.

While NRRP resources are used to combat early school leaving in lower and upper secondary schools, the resources of the National Education Programme 2021-2027 for measures aimed at reducing territorial disparities and early school leaving are concentrated as a priority in primary/lower secondary schools, precisely in order to avoid overlaps and to make investments more effective and coordinated.

The target and milestone of the NRRP investment is 820 000 schoolchildren or young people involved in education/training, of which 470 000 in the 12-18 age group and 350 000 in the 18-24 age group by 31 December 2024, and reducing early school leaving to an average of 10.2 % in 2026.

Implementation was governed by Decree of the Minister for Education No 170 of 24 June 2022, which identified 3 198 schools receiving funding for the implementation of ‘Actions to prevent and combat early school leaving’ for a total budget of EUR 500 million. These actions consist of the design and implementation of mentoring and guidance pathways, pathways to enhance basic skills, motivation and support, guidance for families, co-curricular training and workshops, and the organisation of teams to prevent early school leaving, all targeting schoolchildren at risk of dropping out. The measures for schoolchildren aged between 12 and 18 years old are individual mentoring (3 hours) and remedial tutoring (17 hours). Those aimed at young people aged between 18 and 24 are 10 hours of careers guidance with the aim of steering the young person in question back into education or training. The main objectives of the measures implemented by schools are to enhance basic skills as of the first cycle, with a particular focus on pupils who are vulnerable in terms of learning, following a preventive approach to school failure; combating early school leaving, by means of a comprehensive and integrated approach that enhances the motivation and talents of every learner inside and outside school – in conjunction with local resources; improving the inclusive approach to curricular and extracurricular teaching offered by schools, in the context of personalised learning pathways. The project, which started as a pilot in 2021, is now taking more concrete form, with a number of steps due to bring it to a conclusion by 2026. Training and mentoring for at least half of teachers and support for school leaders are also planned from the end of 2024 onwards.

Funding has been allocated on a regional basis according to the following criteria and weightings, calculated on the basis of the latest ISTAT data available at regional level: a) early leaving rate from education and training in the age range 18-24 (Early Leavers from Education and Training Index (ELET)): 65%; b) number of lower and upper secondary school pupils in the region of reference: 20%; c) foreign residents rate: 5%; d) proportion of the population without a school leaving qualification in the age range 25-64: 5%; e) percentage of households with five or more members: 5%. Funds are then allocated between the state first and second level secondary schools in each region and autonomous province on the basis of the following criteria and weightings: a) learning vulnerability index, i.e. ‘implicit early school leaving’ (the percentage of pupils with very low marks in both Italian and Mathematics), as calculated by INVALSI: 70 %; b) number of pupils enrolled at the school: 30%. The investment is accompanied by investment line 1.6 ‘Active orientation in school-university transition’ in Mission 4 ‘Education and Research’ – Component 1 ‘Enhancing the provision of education services: from nursery school to university’ - of the ongoing NRRP, to an amount of around EUR 1.5 billion, known as ‘Reform of the Guidance System’, which introduces careers guidance into the fourth and fifth classes of upper secondary school, and is intended to support students in their choice of a course of study or further vocational training of around 30 hours a year in preparation for entering the labour market. Particular attention is paid to low-performing schools. The use of a platform for online mentoring and training activities as well as the launch of post-secondary courses are planned. The platform was defined in terms of its activation and implementation in the Ministerial Decree of 29 December 2021. The aim of the platform is to create a channel for simple, direct and personalised interaction between mentors and pupils, conveying teaching and guidance content, promoting communication and ongoing monitoring of learning and teaching processes, sharing agendas, times and objectives, and providing pupils on an ongoing basis with responses and motivational reinforcement throughout the activities.

Another important investment from the NRRP Mission 4 Component 1 on the provision of education to children concerns primary schools, with the aim of reducing regional and local disparities in terms of full-time presence at school and thus learning and socialisation opportunities. Disparities can be found both between the north and south of Italy and between small and large municipalities. The ‘School Day Extension and Canteen Upgrading Plan’, to which EUR 960 million has been earmarked, is also intended for the construction and renovation of school canteens. In addition, the ‘School Sports Infrastructure Plan’, the aim of which is to increase the range of sports activities from primary school onwards, involved 445 projects to a total of EUR 349 million, to which additional national funding of EUR 255 million was added for upper secondary school gyms.

Many school infrastructure investments have been launched, with the construction of new schools (EUR 1.2 billion), and the renovation of existing school buildings to make them more safe and secure (EUR 5.1 billion). The new schools will gradually replace some of the school building stock in order to create architecturally and structurally innovative institutions, in design terms, that are also highly sustainable and energy efficient. The objective is to achieve at least 20% lower primary energy consumption than in the Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) requirement by 30 June 2026.

[These measures are consistent with and implement the provisions of ACTION 2 – Canteens and extending the school day, and ACTION 3 – Education and school activities: combating early school leaving in the area of Early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities, canteens]

### *3.2.3. Dissemination of the use of digital technologies and access to school materials*

At national level, the digitalisation of Italian schools is a process that started several years ago and significantly accelerated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It developed in several stages. Even before the pandemic, before 2020, several initiatives had already been launched in Italy to bring about the digitalisation of schools. These included the introduction of Multimedia Interactive Whiteboards, the training of teaching staff on the use of IT in teaching, and programmes such as ‘Scuola Digital’ that aimed to integrate digital technologies into teaching. More than EUR 1.4 billion was invested in this area between 2014 and 2021.

With the funding from the NRRP and the European Structural Funds of the 2021-2027 programming period (including those of the REACT-EU initiative currently being implemented), this process is now being concluded. In addition, Mission 4 – Education and Research, Component 1 – ‘Strengthening the provision of education services: from nurseries to universities’ of the NRRP, includes lines of intervention that will have a direct and indirect impact on school digitalisation processes.

- Investment 2.1 ‘Integrated digital didactics and training for school staff on the digital transition’ allocates EUR 800 million for the implementation of a multi-dimensional and strategic system of training teachers and school staff on digitalisation and innovative teaching methodologies with a training offer of over 20 000 courses, to reach a target group of 650 000 school leaders, teachers, school staff, technicians and administrative staff.
- Investment 3.1 ‘New skills and new languages’ (EUR 1.1 billion) focuses on developing the IT skills needed by the school system to play an active role in the transition to the jobs of the future, and teaching and guidance in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects, also with the aim of overcoming gender gaps.
- Investment 3.2 ‘School 4.0 – Innovative schools, new classrooms and laboratories’ provides EUR 2.1 million for the transformation of at least 100 000 classrooms into innovative learning environments and the creation of laboratories for the digital professions of the future, in synergy with the EUR 900 million of REACT EU Structural Funds, currently being implemented, for the rewiring of school buildings and the digitalisation of teaching and administration in schools.
- Investment 1.4 ‘Development of the tertiary vocational training system (ITS)’, with funding of EUR 1.5 billion, is intended to promote the specialist training chain linked to Enterprise 4.0, Energy 4.0 and the Environment 4.0 and to upgrade laboratories with digital technologies.

The School Plan 4.0 was adopted by Decree No 161 of the Minister for Education of 14 June 2022. The Plan is provided for in the context of the NRRP as a tool for summarising and accompanying the implementation of the relevant investments and is intended to provide support for the actions to be carried out by schools in accordance with their own teaching, management and organisational autonomy. It has four sections:

- the first, ‘Background’, sets out the context of the intervention, briefly describing the main stages of the digitalisation of teaching in Italian schools and the European reference scenarios;
- the second and third sections, ‘Framework’, present the reference framework and main guidelines for the design of innovative learning environments (‘Next Generation Classrooms’) and laboratories for the digital professions (‘Next Generation Labs’);
- the fourth section, ‘Roadmap’, describes and summarises the implementation steps of ‘School 4.0’.

By Decree No 218 of the Minister for Education of 8 August 2022, resources were distributed between schools in implementation of the ‘School 4.0’ plan referred to in the ‘Mission for innovative schools, cabling, new learning environments and labs’ of the National Recovery and

Resilience Plan, funded by the European Union – Next Generation EU. The overall budget is EUR 1 720 800 000, of which EUR 1 296 000 000 for the action ‘Next Generation Classrooms’, for the transformation of at least 100 000 classrooms into innovative learning environments, and EUR 424 800 000 for the implementation of the action ‘Next Generation Labs’ for the creation of laboratories for the digital professions of the future.

The Digital School Observatory, already provided for in Action No 33 of the National Plan for Digital Education, is a necessary information tool to ‘assess the educational, technological and innovation progress of the school system’ and to plan measures to develop the digitalisation of teaching and administration in schools. Following the development of the legislation and taking into account both investments and the new digital innovation needs of schools, a redesign of the Digital School Observatory application was established, with the aim of recording digital transition processes and linking the use of digital technologies with the evolution of teaching, organisational and administrative practices. From 16 October 2023 to 20 December 2023, the Digital School Observatory survey was available on the Ministry of Education’s SIDI platform, with the aim of assessing the educational, technological and innovation progress of the school system and planning the digitalisation of teaching and administration in schools.

Neither has the Ministry of Education stinted when it comes to providing traditional but necessary materials, such as textbooks. The national funding, supplementing local and regional funding, allocated in 2022 for the 2022-23 academic year to cover the costs of school books for students living in low-income households was EUR 133 million (Executive Decree No 1124 of 12 May 2022). Around 560 000 students benefited from this scheme, receiving on average EUR 238 for the entire academic year. The commitment of EUR 133 million was confirmed by Departmental Decree No 425 of 30 March 2023 for 2023-24 as well.

### 3.3. Promoting the well-being and inclusion of children and young people

#### *3.3.1. Support for actions to combat educational poverty and protect the most vulnerable groups of children*

In the context of projects implemented by means of the public notice ‘EduCare insieme’ (funded by the Family Policy Fund under Article 19(1) of Decree-Law No 223 of 4 July 2006), as referred to in the Decree of the Head of the Department for Family Policies of 30 December 2020, actions have been carried out to combat educational poverty and protect the most vulnerable categories of children (see paragraph 3.3.1). As part of European commitments linked to the pilot phase of the Child Guarantee, and also in view of the socio-economic and cultural impacts on younger people of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated the inequalities and gaps underlying educational poverty, the Department for Family Policy promoted a public notice for the funding of projects focusing on the mental and physical well-being, learning and development of children and young people, especially those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable because of poverty, serious disability or difficult family situation. The aim was to support the implementation of projects providing for new and innovative educational and recreational activities to empower children and young people and to combat educational poverty in the following areas: ‘Active citizenship’, ‘Non-discrimination’, ‘Intergenerational dialogue’, and ‘Environment and healthy lifestyles’. Non-profit organisations in the form of charitable entities, within the meaning of Article 4 of Legislative Decree No 117 of 3 July 2017, social enterprises, church bodies and religious bodies with legal personality, operating in the specific reference sector covered by the notice, were allowed to submit project proposals as applicants; state schools, approved non-state private schools and non-state schools of all types and levels, within the meaning of Law No 62 of 10 March 2000, and public and private nursery education services and nursery schools, within the meaning of Legislative

Decree No 65 of 13 April 2017. The funding earmarked to the projects was initially EUR 10 000 000 (ten million euros) from the Family Policy Fund referred to in Article 19(1) of Decree-Law No 223 of 4 July 2006, converted, with amendments, by Law No 248 of 4 August 2006.

By subsequent supplementary decree of the Head of the Department for Family Policies, adopted on 25 April 2021 and registered by the Court of Auditors with No 2014 of 17 May 2021, the financial resources allocated to the notice were supplemented with an additional EUR 5 000 000. The above-mentioned EUR 15 million was used to fund 99 projects (3 beneficiaries have since pulled out).

Subsequently, by Decree of the Head of Department adopted on 12 November 2021 (registered by the Court of Auditors as No 14 of 7 January 2022), the total financial resources allocated to the ‘EduCare Insieme’ public notice were increased by an additional EUR 50 000 000, financing an additional 368 project proposals.

### *3.3.2. Guidelines on new projects for social inclusion, educational support and empowerment of children and young people*

With respect to the activities provided for in the Action Plan, Executive Decree No 41/282 of 24 October 2022 set up a ‘Working Group on services for social inclusion, educational support and the empowerment of children and young people’ in order to implement actions to promote social well-being and social inclusion in the various life settings of children and young people and to create spaces for children aged between 10 and 17 years of age to come together and socialise. This working group, comprising representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Department for Family Policies, the National Coordinator of the Child Guarantee, representatives of the Protection and Inclusion Network, the ANCI, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, the *Istituto degli Innocenti* and experts on the subject, concluded its mandate with the drafting of the guidance document. [The initiative implemented the provisions of ACTION 7 – Guidelines for the promotion of social well-being and social inclusion in the various life contexts of children and young people and the creation of spaces for children aged between 10 and 17 years to come together and socialise, in the area Combating Poverty and the Right to Housing]

### *3.3.3. Social and educational inclusion of vulnerable groups: Roma, Sinti and Caminanti children*

In implementation of the European Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti communities, as well as the European Recommendation for the establishment of a Child Guarantee, a public notice was published in February 2024 under the NP Inclusion 2021-27 for the submission of projects for the inclusion and integration of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti (RSC) children, with a deadline for the submission of project proposals of 29 March 2024. The types of measures envisaged are: integrated projects aimed at strengthening the social inclusion and integration of RSC children and young people and their families, through individualised and group support measures, awareness-raising, guidance and training measures, also to strengthen the skills of the professionals, educators and teachers involved. Implementation is the responsibility of the local social authorities. Total amount of the funding: EUR 40 000 000 from the ESF+ for less developed, transitional and more developed regions.

[The intervention implements the provisions of the area Early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities, canteens, from ACTION 3 – Education and school-based activities: combating early school leaving and the provisions of ACTION 6 – Outreach measures (Reducing obstacles to accessing services) of the Governance and system infrastructure area]

### *3.3.4. Community centres and the creation of multifunctional spaces for integrated services – Avviso DesTEENazione – Desideri in azione (DesTEENation – Wishes in action).*

The key objective of the NP Inclusion 2021-27 is to promote social inclusion and combat poverty through an integrated approach that takes into account the specific needs of each stage of life. The new NP Inclusion 2021-27 has a very strong focus on children and young people and the awareness of their increased fragility as a result of greater social vulnerability and the impact, including over the long term, of the pandemic. The NP Inclusion 2021-27 is also one of the national programming instruments under the ESF+ supporting the implementation of the Recommendation of the European Council of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee. In that context, the new NP Inclusion promotes the publication of a public notice for the creation of multifunctional spaces for teenagers around Italy for the provision of integrated services aimed at promoting empowerment, the capacity to act in their own living environments, participation and social inclusion.

Executive Decree No 69 of 21 March 2024 approved the public notice DesTEENation – Wishes in action, to be financed under Priority 2 ‘Child Guarantee’ – Specific Objective k (ESO4.11) and Priority 4 ‘Infrastructure measures for socio-economic inclusion’ – Specific Objective d.iii (RSO4.3) of the NP Inclusion and Combating Poverty 2021-2027.

This notice took shape thanks also to the contribution of the participation body of the Child Guarantee in Italy, the YAB, and provides for the piloting of multifunctional integrated services for children and young people mainly between the ages of 11 and 18. The idea is to create spaces in which to organise preventive socio-educational activities aimed at developing interpersonal and emotional skills; social and educational support pathways to combat early school leaving; individual and group psychological counselling as support for children and parents; local projects to create positive connections between the community and other institutional and non-institutional educational actors. The innovative aspect and the challenge of this initiative is to bring all these services together in one place in order to provide a coherent and integrated approach to the multiple needs of this age group, welcoming young people in all their many facets. A team of professional educators, psychologists, social workers and social operators will work in a closely integrated manner and in close liaison with the existing education, training and health services at local level, collaborating with local associations and the community, which has always been there to support the development of children and young people. The rationale behind this intervention is that of shared responsibility between generations, professions and institutional and social actors. The funding amounts to EUR 200 000 000 from the ESF + and EUR 25 000 000 from the ERDF. This funding is for operations to be carried out over the period 2024-2026 and is intended to finance local projects by more than 60 local social authorities located throughout Italy. The funding supports both direct measures for beneficiaries and, where necessary, measures to upgrade the spaces dedicated to the activation of the service. The implementation of the pilot will be accompanied by a monitoring and evaluation process so as to detect in time any organisational and administrative problems and offer appropriate solutions. The monitoring will also act as a way of guiding any rescheduling of the activities over the following three years, and will be essential for the institutional cooperation between central government, the regions and the local social authorities. On 20 March, the programme was presented at an event. The opening speech was held by the Deputy Minister for Labour and Social Policies, Maria Teresa Bellucci, and the closing speech by the Minister for Labour and Social Policies, Marina Elvira Calderone and the Minister for the Family, Birth Rate and Equal Opportunities, Eugenia Roccella. The Representation of the European Commission, the National Coordinator of the Child Guarantee, Maria Burani Procaccini, the National Commissioner for Children and Young People, Carla Garlatti, and the Director-General for Combating Poverty and Social Planning of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Paolo Onelli, also spoke at the event. Around 100 young people

participated actively in the event, including representatives of the YAB, who presented their work within the Child Guarantee, and the National Youth Conference of Care leavers, which ran a welcome activity in which ideas, opinions and proposals related to the theme of the day were collected from the participating young people.

[The initiative implemented the provisions of ACTION 7 – Guidelines for the promotion of social well-being and social inclusion in the various life contexts of children and young people and the creation of spaces for children aged between 10 and 17 to come together and socialise, as part of the area Combating Poverty and the Right to Housing and ACTION 8 – GET UP project – Young people's transformative experiences of social value and participation]

### *3.3.5. National care leavers pilot*

The Decree of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in agreement with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, approved at the Joint Conference on 31 October 2018, signed and operational since 6 November 2018, provides for the implementation of pilot measures to promote the path towards independence for care leavers who, when they reach the age of majority, continue to live outside their family of origin on the basis of a court order.

The Decree responds to Article 1(250) of Act No 205 of 27 December 2017 establishing an earmarked amount of EUR 5 million for each of the years 2018, 2019 and 2020 (total of EUR 15 million) for a pilot project for care leavers. The implementation of actions related to this first allocation ended on 31 December 2023.

This reserve of EUR 5 million (known as the Care Leavers Fund) was confirmed for the second three-year period by Article 1(335) of Act No 178 of 30 December 2020 – activities under that allocation will end on 31 December 2026.

The objectives of the national pilot, targeting a vulnerable group identified in the European Recommendation, are to improve the social inclusion of young care leavers, reduce the risk of failure linked to loneliness and the lack of a social network, and strengthen national, regional and local governance to improve the implementation of new approaches and practices in this area. A core element of measures to promote the independence of care leavers is the development of personalised projects for activation and social and occupational inclusion, defined with the active participation of the young person. The development of the project, which requires specific commitments from the beneficiary and support from the local services, requires a multi-dimensional assessment to be carried out in advance to identify the needs of the young person leaving care, taking into account the resources available and their level of vulnerability, as well as environmental and support factors.

Since its launch, the action has been ongoing in 18 Italian regions with a total of 136 areas involved (total of the first three cohorts from the first three-year period and the first two cohorts of the second three-year period), and has involved 1 042 young people and 1 800 staff in supervision and training.

### *3.3.6. The Fund for Socio-Educational Activities for Children.*

On 23 August 2023, the Decree of the Minister for the Family, Birth Rate and Equal Opportunities, in agreement with the Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance, of 24 July 2023 was registered with the Court of Auditors, which, pursuant to Article 42(1) of Decree-Law No 48 of 21 June 2022, allocated the funding for socio-educational activities for minors among the municipalities.

The funding, amounting to EUR 60 million, was intended by the Government to fund initiatives to be implemented over the period 1 June to 31 December 2023, including in cooperation with public and private bodies, with the aim of supporting summer centres, local socio-educational services and centres with an educational and recreational function offering activities for

children. These sums were credited to the municipal accounts by means of payment from the Bank of Italy with effect from 21 September 2023.

### *3.3.7. The role of cities. Law No 285 of 28 August 1997*

The Decree of 9 September 2023 of the Minister for the Family, Birth Rate and Equal Opportunities, in agreement with the Minister for Labour and Social Policies, the Minister for the Interior, the Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance and the Minister for Justice, regulated the allocation of resources from the National Fund for Children and Young People to the fifteen selected cities receiving the share of the fund for 2023, to a total amount of EUR 28 794 000.

The Fund, established by Article 1 of Law No 285/1997, is intended to implement measures at national, regional and local level to promote the rights, quality of life, development, individual realisation and socialisation of children and young people, giving priority to the environment that best suits them, i.e., their family, whether it is their biological or their adoptive or foster family.

With regard to the use of the funding, the Decree provides, *inter alia*, that the municipalities should organise programmes including actions and measures:

- a) providing prenatal and neonatal support for parents of children aged 0-3 years and 3-6 years;
- b) to support large families;
- c) consistent with the objectives, actions and measures set out in the 5th National Action and Intervention Plan for the Protection of the Rights and Development of Young People, adopted by Presidential Decree of 25 January 2022, and, *inter alia*, with the objectives, actions and measures set out in the National Child Guarantee Action Plan.

### *3.3.8. 'BenessereInComune' initiative [ 'Well-being in the municipality']*

Finally, with a view to implementing measures geared towards the well-being of families with children aged between 7 and 14 years, on 30 November 2023 the Department published a notice for municipalities of up to 5 000 inhabitants with at least 100 resident children aged between 7 and 14 years to join the 'BenessereInComune' initiative.

In particular, the notice encouraged the following:

- a) promoting, organising and managing time banks as a tool for exchanging services and skills between households;
- b) setting up, implementing and managing spaces equipped with an internet connection for independent study and artistic and cultural workshops, including extracurricular activities;
- c) setting up and managing safe spaces for children and families to meet together, with a particular focus on the inclusion of children with disabilities;
- d) organising sporting, cultural and artistic events, particularly those making the best possible use of the local area;
- e) designing and creating safe urban mobility spaces and pathways in order to promote children's autonomy.

### *3.3.9. Action on marginal areas for shared responsibility*

As mentioned above, the effective response to the social needs of children and young people in Italy is based on a complex welfare system, with an important contribution also from the private and charitable sectors. One example of this is the Agreement signed on 29 April 2016 pursuant to Article 1(392) and (393) of Law No 208 of 28 December 2015 of the Prime Minister, the Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance, the Minister for Labour and Social Policies and the President of Acri, the association of foundations of banking origin and savings banks. The

purpose of this agreement was to set up a fund to combat educational poverty, to support pilot measures aimed at removing economic, social and cultural obstacles that prevent children and young people from fully benefiting from the education system. Over the three-year period 2016-2018, the foundations contributed around EUR 360 million to the Fund. The 2019 Budget Law confirmed the Fund for the three-year period 2019-2021, making EUR 55 million per year of tax credit available to foundations of banking origin, which can benefit from it at 65% of the amounts paid. A contribution of around EUR 80 million per year from the foundations is expected. By Decree Law No 105 of 23 July 2021, the Government provided for the extension of the Fund for the years 2022 and 2023. Overall, the Fund has a total current value of more than EUR 700 million. The strategic policy choices of the Fund are established by a dedicated Strategic Steering Committee. In 2023, following the approval of the Caivano Decree, the Strategic Steering Committee agreed on an important commitment, which is also consistent with the objectives of the European Recommendation, to the benefit of the most marginal areas of the country. In many areas, it is about building a stable and legal basis for services, supporting the public functions exercised, the capacity to build relationships and to generate processes of change. The problems highlighted call for a strengthening of the local base and coordination between various public and private social stakeholders, professional and institutional sectors; they require local strategies based on the development of services and responses to young people's needs and calls for opportunities. Sometimes, these actions will be innovative to the extent that they are not temporary structures but stable interventions suitable for building models that are accessible and provide good alternatives to those which would otherwise be closer to these young people's lives.

### 3.4. A healthy meal each school day and healthy eating in general

School canteens are an important way of combating material poverty among children and young people.

The aim of the action plan is to introduce into our legal system the right to food, in accordance with three key dimensions – availability; physical and economic accessibility; and appropriateness – with the resulting protection obligation on the State, and the removal of all obstacles to accessing a suitable meal. School meal times are recognised as school time – a time of socialisation and sharing under conditions of equality with a common goal. School canteens set up in areas of severe deprivation can also be an opportunity for job creation, promoting local cooperatives, with a particular focus on women's involvement in the labour market.

Around 30% of school buildings in Italy have canteens and, overall, according to data from the Ministry of Education and Merit, only 52% of primary and lower school students had access to meals in 2021.

In line with the priorities of the Child Guarantee, the Ministry of Education published Public Notice No 48038 on 2 December 2021, to be funded from the Education NRRP, with the aim of increasing the space for canteens, building new canteens or upgrading existing ones, so as to encourage the lengthening of the school day, expand the range of educational services offered by schools and make them increasingly open to the local area, even beyond school hours. This investment makes it possible to increase the provision of full-time education and strengthen the fight against early school leaving, as well as upgrading the horizontal skills of students through an expansion of the training offered. By the deadline set in the notice, 1 088 applications for funding had been received, to a total amount of EUR 581 398 294.06. In order to achieve the objectives and with a view to full budgetisation of the European funding, the 2014-2020 NOP was used to support 268 projects concerning gymnasiums and canteens in southern Italy, with a further investment of EUR 84 817 807.33. On the subject of this funding, the Ministry of Education, with Ministerial Decree No 126 of 30 June 2023, drew up a list of further measures

for the implementation of the NRRP school canteens plan in order to achieve the targets and milestones set, financed by going through the public competition laureate lists in the context of the NOP 2014-2020 (Executive Decree No 111 of 29 December 2022).

The issue of canteens also highlights the need for governance where responsibilities are shared between national and decentralised levels. The fact that a school meal is classified as a service provided on demand also means that the municipalities are free not only to provide for it (and to decide to what extent), but also to determine how much of the total cost to cover themselves and how much to charge on to the consumers of the service.

The cost of school meals depends on the choices of the individual municipalities, as well as the income level of the households in question (which is determined at the discretion of local authorities). The average annual expenditure on canteens in 2021 was EUR 727 per child in pre-school facilities, and EUR 717 in primary schools, with services offered five days a week over nine months (UNICEF, 2022).

The role of school canteens in healthy eating must also be highlighted. Some canteens are already classified as ‘organic’, pursuant to Decree-Law No 50 of 24 April 2017. Interministerial Decree No 14771 of 18 December 2017 listed the criteria and requirements for organic school canteens. These include the minimum percentage of organic products to be used and the technical specifications needed to classify foods as organic. Funds have also been made available to reduce costs for beneficiaries of organic school meals and to promote such initiatives within schools. The theme of organic food in school canteens remains significant due to its educational importance for the youngest children in particular, in addition to its being an important investment in their health. Healthy eating plays a key role in the development of children and young people.

By Interministerial Decree No 294843 of 1 July 2022 and subsequently by Interministerial Decree No 413326 of 8 August 2023 on the distribution of the Organic School Canteens Fund of the Minister for Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry in agreement with the Minister for Education (registered by the Court of Auditors on 12 September 2023 under No 1328), EUR 5 000 000 was allocated for both 2022 and 2023 for the Organic School Canteens Fund, on the basis of the number of beneficiaries of the organic school canteen service in each Region and Autonomous Province. 86% of the funding is intended to reduce the costs to be borne by beneficiaries of the organic school canteen service, and 14% for information and awareness-raising initiatives in schools and supporting the catering service.

### ***Daily nutrition needs***

ISTAT found that, in 2021 in Italy, 4.1% of the population were living in households that had experienced economic difficulties preventing them from purchasing food for their daily needs. For children under the age of 16, this figure rises to 4.9%, with a peak in southern Italy (7.0%) but much lower values in the centre (1.3%). Moreover, in 2021, 2.5% of children under the age of 16 did not consume at least one meal containing protein per day, because their family could not afford it.

The inability of a family to pay for at least one meal containing protein per day or to afford the necessary food points to a situation of food deprivation, which affected 5.9% of children under the age of 16 in 2021.

The situation varies widely in different parts of Italy: the share of children experiencing food deprivation is 6.2% in the North, 2.5% in the Centre and 7.6% in the South. There are differences with respect to family type: the figures for couples with children was 4.7%, while for single-parent families it reached 7.7 %.

Finally, the highest rate of food deprivation (6.3%) is in the 6-11 years age group, while for younger children (up to 5) and for 12–15-year-olds it stands at 5.7 %.

Looking specifically at children under the age of 16 who are materially or socially deprived, just under 20% of households cannot afford fresh fruit and vegetables once a day, and more than 20% cannot afford meat or fish at least once a day.

In 2022, the Banco Alimentare (Food Bank) collected over 110 000 tonnes of food and helped around 1 750 000 people through a network of 7 612 local partner organisations and the support of 2 080 volunteers and employees.<sup>16</sup> However, it also recorded 8% decrease in surpluses provided by industry and large retailers and a 30% fall in monetary donations from businesses and individuals. In addition, operating costs increased by 45%, with logistics, transport and electricity all more expensive.<sup>17</sup>

According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the number of recipients of FEAD (Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived) in the form of basic necessities increased considerably in recent years, from 2.1 million in 2019 to almost 3 million in 2021, with a slight decrease in 2022 to more than 2.8 million people. The most significant increases were seen in Campania (+ 98 thousand), preceded only by Sicily and Lombardy. Among large cities, Naples was in first place in 2022, with over 240 000 beneficiaries, an increase of almost 50 thousand compared to 2019. Campania remains the region in Italy with the greatest number of recipients of FEAD aid, with over 488 000 beneficiaries.

The quality of food also depends on the economic situation of households, but awareness raising is still important. The Ministry of Health has promoted several campaigns and initiatives to raise public awareness of the importance of healthy diets.

### 3.5. Health care: opportunities and services

The National Prevention Plan (NPP) 2020-2025, adopted by the State-Regions Agreement of 6 August 2020, provides the common framework for the objectives of many of the areas relevant to public health: this monitoring focuses in particular on the areas intersecting with the priorities of the National Action Plan for the implementation of the Child Guarantee (PANGI).

In line with the NRRP, the 2020-2025 NPP provides, among other things, that the national health service set new organisational objectives for the system by, in particular, strengthening health authorities in the development of first-level activities (prevention, basic medicine, district activity) based on the needs of the local community and optimising synergies between social and socio-health areas and between local areas and their hospital. The Plan is also intended to support the process of implementing the new Essential Levels of Assistance (LEA) 'Collective Prevention and Public Health', also with a view to making it easier for applicants to receive the corresponding amounts.

The framework defined by the NPP 20-25 includes reform of the organisation of local health care, governed by the Interministerial Decree of 23 May 2022, published in the Italian Official Gazette General Series No 144 of 22 June 2022, redesigning the functions and standards of the District.

In particular, this reform identifies a number of operational structures/professional roles representing an important link to help achieve the objectives of the Child Guarantee (see Area 2 Health – Actions 1, 2, 3, 7, 9 and 10 of the PANGI):

- 1) **Community houses** – Open up to 24/24 and 7/7, funded by the NRRP and spread throughout the country. They are easily identifiable physical facilities to which citizens can turn

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<sup>16</sup> Banco Alimentare, 23 December 2022, <https://www.bancoalimentare.it/news/bilancio-anno-2022-110milatonnellate-di-cibo-distribuite>

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

to access for health and social assistance. They represent an organisational model of community-based care for the population.

With funds from the NRRP, Mission 6 Health, Component C1, Line 1.1 – *Community Houses and Care for Individuals*, the Ministry of Health has earmarked EUR 2 billion for the construction, by 2026, of physical facilities in local areas which can be accessed by the local community in order to liaise with the health, social and social care systems.

Following the review of the NRRP approved by the Council of the EU on 8 December 2023, minimum targets to be achieved by 2026 were laid down. Specifically, at least 1 038 renovated and technologically equipped community houses: the aim is to create a single access point for health services, able to manage a medical database for each patient and an electronic health register to ensure and facilitate fair access to treatment.

The objective is, therefore, to set up and operate these 1 038 *Community Health Houses* through the activation, development and bringing together of primary care services in one place and the establishment of energy efficient care centres providing an integrated response to care needs.

The importance of using multidimensional assessments (also central in the Prime Ministerial Decree of 12 January 2017 on the new LEAs) carried out by the multidimensional assessment units is reiterated in order to ensure that services and measures are provided in as timely a manner as possible: integrated teams comprising a sufficient number of suitably trained staff from the local social authority and the local health authority for the assessment of all needs of a clinical, functional and social nature.

**2) Local Operational Centres** – To perform a coordination function in the area of domestic care and act as the link between the services and professionals involved in the various support settings: local health and social activities, hospital activities and dialogue with the emergency network.

The plan is to activate at least 480 of these centres (one for every 100 000 inhabitants), with a total investment of EUR 280 million by 2026, for the coordination of home-help services with other health services.

**3) Family or community nurses** – Respected professionals providing nursing care, at various levels of complexity, in cooperation with all the other professionals present in the community in which they work. They not only deal with care for patients, but also interact and integrate with the local network and resources in order to respond to existing or emerging needs. In order to reinforce the status of family or community nurses, it is useful to refer to the resources available for staffing<sup>18</sup>: *the reform of local assistance, as referred to in the NRRP, is based on three sources of funding*:

*a) stable resources from the National Health Fund, as increased by Decree-Law No 34 of 19 May 2020. In this regard, it should be recalled that Decree-Law No 34 of 2020 authorised the following funding, to be taken from the financing of the standard national health resources to which the State contributes for the reference year: - EUR 480 000 000 for the recruitment of nurses (Article 1(5)), in particular for family and community nurses (see the guidelines on 'Family/community nurses under Law No 77 of 17 July 2020', realised by the Conference of the Regions); - EUR 766 466 017: of which EUR 733 969 086 for raising the inclusion allowance (ADI) (Article 1(4)) and EUR 32 496 931 for the operation of regional centres (Article 1(8));*

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<sup>18</sup> Chamber of Deputies, 19th Legislature ‘The safeguarding of local assistance in Mission 6 – Health – of the NRRP’, No 23, 20 March 2023

*b) resources from the National Health Fund, which have not been increased, for the purpose of recruiting employees, including by way of derogation from the constraints on staff expenditure in the legislation in force, limited to expenditure exceeding those constraints, and of contract staff, laid down in Article 1(274) of the 2022 Budget Law (Law No 234 of 2021). These resources, accompanying the implementation process (for the years 2022-2026) and operating in support of the standards for territorial assistance, amount to EUR 90.9 million for 2022, EUR 150.1 million for 2023, EUR 328.3 million for 2024, EUR 591.5 million for 2025 and EUR 1 015.3 million from 2026 onwards. The provision provides that this expenditure authorisation shall start to run from the date of entry into force of Decree No 77/2022 on the standards of territorial assistance (22 June 2022) and that, by subsequent Decree of the Ministry of Health/Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, the amounts referred to above are to be allocated between the regions and autonomous provinces on the basis of the criteria laid down in that decree, also taking into account the objectives laid down in the NRRP.*

*c) resources channelled from the NRRP, thanks to savings resulting from the reorganisation of local care and the consequent reduction in the inappropriate use of hospitalisation, access to first aid and pharmaceutical expenditure.*

**4) Services targeting the health of children, women, couples and families** – Family advice services and activities targeting children in the context of directly accessible local and regional assistance guarantee domestic, specialised medical, diagnostic and therapeutic, midwifery, psychological, psychotherapeutic, nursing, rehabilitation and prevention services for women, children, couples and families. The areas of activity of the family advice services are those provided for in the Essential Levels of Assistance. Advice services and the activities targeting children may take place within the Community Houses, giving priority to solutions that protect their confidentiality.

By Ministerial Decree of 7 August 2023, the Information System for the Monitoring of the Activities of Family Advisers (SICOF) was established. This information system ensures the monitoring of the services provided by family advice services and allows for the monitoring of essential and uniform levels of assistance in accordance with Article 24 of the Prime Ministerial Decree of 12 January 2017 defining and updating the essential levels of assistance referred to in Article 1(7) of Legislative Decree No 502 of 30 December 1992.

In line with the above, in relation to area 2, actions 2 and 7 (Youth advice services and strengthening of the information system), mission 6 - Health component C2 (Innovation research and digitalisation of the national health service) provides for the adoption by the Regions by 2025 of four new information flows – as part of the new NSIS health information system – on family advice services, local and regional rehabilitation, primary care services and community hospitals.

On this subject, see the Ministerial Decree of 20 January 2022, which provides that objective M6C2 1.3.2 ‘Technological infrastructure of the Ministry of Health, data analysis, predictive model for LEA supervision – sub-investment – Strengthening the collection, processing and production of data at local level’ be allocated an amount of EUR 30 300 000. All 21 regions are called upon to adopt information flows to monitor the services provided by their local rehabilitation facilities and by the family advice centres (Target ITA Q2 2023) and information flows on community hospitals and primary care services (Target ITA Q2 2025).

Another area considered as a priority in the implementation of the European Recommendation concerns outreach services (in the area of Governance and system infrastructure, ACTION 6 – Outreach measures (reducing obstacles to access and services)), with the aim of reaching all children and young people and their families, starting with those at the highest risk of exclusion or the most vulnerable, with the aim of raising awareness and providing information in

institutional settings and at all levels of governance, among key actors (administrative actors, local social and healthcare actors, schools, third sector operators, etc.) and young people. In this regard, one of the areas of intervention of the new National Equity in Health Programme 2021-2027 is ‘Tackling health poverty’. This area of intervention, fully in line with the logic of the plan for the implementation of the European Recommendation, aims to reduce barriers to health and social services for people who are vulnerable from a socio-economic point of view, through models of local public healthcare, active inclusion, social and health integration and community integration.

The **programme**, approved by European Commission Implementing Decision C (2022) 8051 of 4 November 2022, supported by the ESF+ and the ERDF, meets the strategic objective ‘A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights’ (Regulation (EU) 2021/1060) and takes action to strengthen health services and make access to them fairer, also with a view to developing systemic action and the capacity of regional health systems in the seven least developed regions of the country.

The Programme has two priorities:

- Priority 1, supported by ESF+: Fairer and more inclusive health services, responding to specific objective ESO4.11: enhancing fair and timely access to high quality, sustainable and affordable services, including services that promote access to housing and person-centred care including healthcare; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection, with a particular focus on children and disadvantaged groups; improving the accessibility including for persons with disabilities, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services, also for persons with disabilities
- Priority 2, supported by the ERDF: Quality health services, responding to specific objective RSO4.5: ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care  
in addition to the two priorities dedicated to Technical Assistance, with total funding of EUR 625 million.

The Programme identifies four areas where action is most urgent and a national initiative is needed to support the regional and local organisation of health and social services:

- Mental health
- Increased coverage of cancer screening
- Gender-centred care
- Tackling health poverty.

The organisational structure of the programme provides for eight intermediate bodies:

- The INMP, the Intermediate Body of the Programme with responsibility for managing actions in the area ‘Tackling health poverty’, to which resources of EUR 185 921 025 have been allocated, of which EUR 112 126 100 from the ESF+ and EUR 73 794 925 from the ERDF.
- The regions of Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sardinia and Sicily, intermediate bodies of the Programme with delegations for managing certain actions in the areas ‘Increased coverage of cancer screening’, ‘Gender-centred care’ and ‘Mental health’, to which resources of EUR 405 707 405 have been allocated, of which EUR 242 744 900 from the ESF+ and EUR 162 962 505 from the ERDF, allocated on the basis of the criterion of access to the National Health Fund 2022.

In particular, for the area dedicated to combating health poverty, the Equality NP 21-27 uses an external active provision approach, which involves the provision of health services by dedicated

health and social care staff to be used in outreach activities, operating in mobile clinics and in existing spaces, in cooperation with all the local institutions (including, but not limited to, charitable bodies, parishes and social services structures in the municipalities). The aim is to reach hard-to-reach people and the hidden population, invisible to the health services, in order to meet their care needs using clinical and care pathways and, where necessary, through the provision of medicines and devices for which the costs are normally borne by the patient and through referrals to local health services or hospital facilities.

Joint arrangements with charitable bodies and the involvement, in operational partnerships, of municipal social services in order to facilitate the engagement and cooperation of people in health poverty are useful here.

Charitable bodies will provide support to the local health authorities in the identification and certification of health needs and will facilitate the admission of the recipients of the measures to clinical care pathways. In addition, these bodies will be able to support the local health authorities in effectively reaching recipients by working with the social welfare services active in the area.

For the area 'Gender-centred care', which supports advisory services, structural adjustments and/or technological improvement measures are planned for the advice centres located in the seven regions of southern Italy, the services of which are being reinforced with extra health and social care staff to implement pathways and organisational models also in the area of adolescent/youth health.

The programme's next group of projects mainly includes measures aimed at reinforcing health services for children and young people, particularly in the areas of mental health and gender (advisory services). We could mention by way of example the project to be carried out by the local health authorities of the Puglia Region, upgrading six psychiatric hubs, including child neuropsychiatry and the training of operators. The 'Ti ASPetto a casa' (Waiting for you at home) projects: health visitor and multidisciplinary team for post-partum assistance (the 'fourth quarter'): 'From two to three' and 'Promoting health messages: contraception in adolescence and prevention of STDs (sexually transmitted diseases), unhealthy habits (smoking) and lifestyles' to be run by the local health authorities of the Region of Sicily.

Finally, a Standing Committee on the First 1000 Days of Life was established at the Ministry of Health on 14 September 2022 with the aim of promoting measures to prevent the major risk factors and to strengthen protection for children during their first thousand days, from conception to two years of age, with a focus on gender differences, representing the achievement of an objective included in the National Action Plan.

The Ministry of Health's guidance document for 2023 also sets out preventive measures to protect vulnerable groups, including the implementation of the Plan for the application and dissemination of gender-based medicine as well as the promotion and protection of the health of persons with disabilities, with particular reference to the inclusion of pupils with disabilities in school, as well as participation in the National Observatory on the Status of Persons with Disabilities and its Technical Committee.

Strategies for preventing mental illness and promoting mental health continue to be implemented, above all for children and young people, given that the impact of the pandemic on the mental and physical well-being of the population continues to be an issue, especially for that age group.

On 9 November 2023, the Ministry of Health and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also signed a three-year agreement on prevention, protection and promotion activities relating to the health and well-being of children and young people in Italy, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable.

Among the activities specified in the agreement, the Ministry of Health and UNICEF undertook to reinforce activities to protect the health and psychosocial well-being of young people and their caregivers, as well as educational initiatives on emotional well-being, sexuality and reproductive health, also in line with the objectives Italy has set for itself under the Action Plan. The objectives include the identification and use of existing good practices at local and regional level.

[Both of the above actions are consistent with area 2 Health, Action 1 – First thousand days of life].

### 3.6. Access to adequate housing

Following the transfer of powers by Legislative Decree No 112/1998, the public housing sector has, for some time now, been a matter for the regions. However, central government is still responsible for determining the general principles and objectives, collecting information, promoting, guaranteeing and supporting the economically most vulnerable groups. With the reform of Title V of the Constitution, public housing is not included either in the areas over which the State has exclusive legislative competence (second paragraph of Article 117) or among those in which competence is shared (third paragraph of Article 117). Therefore, pursuant to the fourth paragraph of Article 117 of the Constitution, this matter falls within the exclusive residual competence of the Regions. The regions have considerable scope for action in the public housing sector, where there is already long-standing, consolidated regional legislation. The ‘Piano Casa’ (Housing Plan) dates from 2008 (Article 11 of Decree-Law No 112 of 25 June 2008, subsequently converted, with amendments, by Law No 133 of 6 August 2008). It was a national housing plan to promote the upgrade of existing housing stock without taking up new land. Over time, many multi-year regional housing plans have been issued, with an increasing number of regions converting them into a dedicated law.

According to the available statistics, in 2021, in Italy as a whole, 8% of children under the age of 16 lived in households which could not afford to heat their homes to an adequate extent. Five percent of children could not afford an internet connection that could be used at home, and 23% could not afford to replace damaged or broken furniture. If we look just at deprived children under the age of 16, these percentages increase to 33% for poorly heated homes, 35% lack of internet connections and almost 90% when it comes to replacing broken or damaged furniture. The social housing sector has been increasingly promoted in order to respond adequately to housing deprivation, with the advent of the Housing Plans as primary regulatory instruments for housing policy, in addition to the public housing model (ERP).

The National Innovation Programme for Housing Quality (PINQuA) is being implemented to reduce housing deprivation by increasing the public housing stock, regenerating the socio-economic fabric of urban centres and improving the accessibility, functionality and safety of degraded spaces and places. Integrated Urban Plans (PUIs) have also been launched for the suburbs of the metropolitan cities, which provide for participatory urban planning, with the aim of transforming deprived areas into smart and sustainable cities.

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport’s strategy for the ‘Housing Plan’ was presented in 2024. The priority aspects of the strategy concern both the reorganisation and simplification of sectoral legislation and the definition of pilot models. On these priority themes, with a strong focus on public/private cooperation, the Ministry is in the process of establishing working groups that will focus on:

- 1) Recognising the distinctive features of public and social housing programmes and the associated needs.

- 2) Reorganising and simplifying the procedures for the use and recovery of disused public buildings, so as to identify the simplification measures needed to promote their use for residential and social housing objectives.
- 3) Identifying guidelines and best practices for the reorganisation of the regional authorities operating in the field of public housing.
- 4) Launching a discussion on initiatives within the remit of housing cooperatives and social security bodies, with a view to verifying the conditions for promoting a relaunch of the relevant housing programmes.

These groups will be complemented by the reflection on pilot models to be implemented under the 2024 Budget Law, with dedicated pilot projects.

In addition to public housing, the focus is on social housing, which concerns the many people, both workers and students, who, especially in large cities, are unable to afford to rent or purchase a home.

With regard to a multiannual housing plan to be adopted by 2025, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport has already planned to invest at least EUR 100 million in the coming years to finance certain activities such as: the restoration of existing real estate and the conversion of buildings which previously had other public uses, such as former barracks and hospitals that are no longer operational; the use of unsold private housing units for public social housing.

As mentioned above, by April 2024, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, together with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance and the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Self-Government, in agreement with the Joint Conference, will have to issue guidelines for the piloting of innovative public housing models in order to combat housing deprivation in Italy.

A Government amendment to the draft Budget Law 2024, submitted to the Senate, provides for this. According to the amendment, the guidelines for the piloting of innovative public housing models will have to be consistent with the following lines of activity: 1. combating housing deprivation through actions to renovate existing real estate and to convert buildings originally having another public use, in accordance with the multiannual national programme for the upgrading and disposal of public buildings (referred to in Article 28-quinquies (2) of Decree-Law No 75 of 22 June 2023, converted into Law No 112 of 10 August 2023); 2. the designation of unsold private housing units as public housing units; 3. the conversion of certain public buildings; and 4. implementation of public housing projects through public-private partnerships aimed at renovating or converting existing buildings or constructing new buildings on areas already identified as being for building under the general urban development plans.

For each of these lines of activity, the procedures for the allocation, disbursement and withdrawal of funding must be identified, as well as for the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the corresponding housing works, identified by a single project code (in Italian, CUP) and accompanied by a timetable. Again, the Ministry will have to identify criteria and methods for the submission by local authorities of pilot projects and the criteria for the selection of such projects, which will then be implemented as a priority of the provincial capitals selected so as to represent the largest possible sample of regions. To carry out the building works, the amendment provides for the establishment of a EUR 100 million fund for the two-year period 2027-2028: EUR 50 million for 2027 and EUR 50 million for 2028. A total of 34 stakeholders attended the conference on this matter held in early January: banks, savings banks, local authorities, public agencies, bodies managing public housing, representatives of builders and the building trades, housing cooperatives.

Article 1(7) of the 2024 Budget Law also deals with the rules governing the Guarantee Fund for the purchase of a first home, extending until 31 December 2024 (from 31 December 2023) the possibility of benefiting from the maximum guarantee of 80%, from the Fund, calculated on the capital part of loans for priority categories established based on income and age requirements. Paragraph 8 allocates an additional EUR 282 million to the Guarantee Fund for

2024. Paragraphs 9 to 13, inserted during by the Senate, provide for the inclusion of 'large families' as a priority category. Paragraph 282 sets up a fund to combat housing deprivation, with a budget of EUR 50 million for 2027 and EUR 50 million for 2028.

#### *Inclusion and rental allowance*

Previously, when the Citizens' Income (RdC) was in force, the rent subsidy was paid to the recipient. Law No 213 of 30 December 2023, on the other hand, provides that the INPS is to pay the sum directly to the landlord of the property. This amendment was introduced to make the payment process simpler and more transparent. In order to implement this procedure, the name of the landlord must be specified in the rental contract.

### 3.7. Focus on young Ukrainians

As of 11 January 2024, there were 4 116 unaccompanied minors from Ukraine, making them the second most numerous nationalities in Italy. The flow of these children is characterised by a marked gender balance and an average age of less than 14 years. Almost 85% of unaccompanied minors from Ukraine were being looked after in families, mainly in Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna and Lazio. Over the past year, there has been an increase in the number of children returning to Ukraine under the responsibility and guardianship of the Ukrainian authorities, following measures taken by the competent Italian judicial authorities. Following the outbreak of the conflict, an Extraordinary Commissioner was appointed to coordinate assistance procedures – it is planned that the Commissioner will use the offices of the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of the Interior. On 28 March 2022, a Prime Ministerial Decree was adopted, pursuant to Articles 3 and 4 of Legislative Decree No 85 of 7 April 2003, regulating the procedures for implementing the temporary protection measures laid down in the Council Decision of 4 March 2022.

In Italy, the Ministry of the Interior adopted the Plan for Non-Accompanied Minors from Ukraine in March 2022. The plan (which has since been updated several times) provides guidelines for managing the flow of unaccompanied foreign children arriving or tracked down in Italy as a result of the conflict in Ukraine, in order to ensure the necessary operational link between the various institutions involved. An Addendum to the Plan<sup>19</sup> was published on 13 April 2022. The addendum was necessary in order to regulate the communication flow between institutions, associations and bodies and to ensure that the reception and protection measures for these children and young people were prepared in a timely and coordinated manner, given their overriding importance; it was also intended to establish shared operational procedures.

Host municipalities are granted a contribution of EUR 100 per child per day for children housed in children's homes, and EUR 20 per child per day for children in the care of families. Data on the number of reception days for children and young people for which a contribution is requested are compiled by extrapolating the tables from the IT system on minors. In line with the recommendations in the European Commission's Communication on the Protection of Children in Migration and given that the Italian Constitution recognises the universal right to education and the right to health, children from Ukraine are guaranteed access to the national education system and healthcare on an equal basis with Italian citizens.

The funding allocated to receiving them was significant, used for health care, putting them up in hotels, support for those making their own accommodation arrangements, municipal expenditure on social services, unaccompanied minors, reception at Extraordinary Reception Centres and hosting of these people by various charitable bodies. In particular, Decree-Law No

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<sup>19</sup> [Addendum to the Plan](#).

16 of 2 March 2023<sup>20</sup> referred to above laying down urgent temporary protection provisions for persons from Ukraine, extended until 31 December 2023 all protection, assistance and reception measures for persons displaced from Ukraine, also increasing the relevant budget. In particular, the Decree-Law allocated EUR 40 million in 2023 for the one-off contribution to the social services of municipalities hosting significant numbers seeking temporary protection<sup>21</sup>. In addition, a further EUR 137.9 was allocated in 2023 to ordinary and extraordinary government reception facilities, and EUR 52.3 in 2023 to the National Fund for Asylum Policy and Services, used for second-level reception facilities run by the municipalities (where unaccompanied Ukrainian children and families are hosted). The funding allocated under the relevant chapter (2352) of the Ministry of the Interior's forecast amounted to EUR 692.4 million for 2023. It is worth noting that the above budget was allocated for *all* people displaced from Ukraine and fleeing the conflict, not specifically for children, even though the funded measures also target children (both accompanied and unaccompanied) and their needs.

As regards the school system, in March 2022 the Ministry of Education issued an operational note<sup>22</sup> announcing the allocation of EUR 1 million to support the school integration of displaced Ukrainian children: this first allocation was to support schools that would welcome Ukrainian students. In March 2023, the Ministry of Education allocated over EUR 31 million to support schools which had hosted Ukrainian students during previous academic years prior to 2023. The contribution concerned 3 702 schools: the resources, under the Care Action, were used to finance projects, shared also with local authorities and networks, for language learning, socialisation, integration and school continuity.

We would also point out that, with the approval of the 2024 Budget Law, the state of emergency in Italy was extended until 31 December 2024 and, consequently, the assistance measures already in place for previous years were also extended.

#### *Welfare and health care aspects*

Beneficiaries of temporary protection able to find their own accommodation receive a monthly allowance of EUR 300 per beneficiary for a maximum of 3 months after entering Italy (the date of the application for temporary protection is considered to be the relevant date). An additional allowance of EUR 150 is provided for each dependent child under the age of 18. The allowance does not depend on the claimant's income.<sup>23</sup> The contribution cannot be claimed by beneficiaries of temporary protection living in organised facilities, as specified by the Ministry of the Interior.

Unaccompanied minors from Ukraine who are hosted in the second-level state reception system, which is actually run by charitable entities are entitled to all services under the same conditions as unaccompanied foreign minors and Italian children, primarily education and health care. Children displaced from Ukraine are entitled to healthcare under the national health system under the code for foreigners temporarily present in Italy (*Codice Straniero temporaneamente presente* (STP)). The code is necessary in order to access to all health services (not only emergency and essential services) under the same conditions as Italian citizens, as laid down by the Ministry of Health.

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<sup>20</sup> [Decree-Law No 16 of 2 March 2023](#) – Urgent temporary protection provisions for persons from Ukraine.

<sup>21</sup> 19th Legislative Period (2023), [Urgent temporary protection provisions for persons from Ukraine](#), 8 March 2023.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Education (2022), [Reception of exiled Ukrainian students in schools. First indications and resources](#), 4 March 2022.

<sup>23</sup> Caritas, [Europe's welcome of refugees from Ukraine and lessons learnt](#), June 2023, p. 9.

The charity sector has also been active, everywhere. At national level, UNICEF<sup>24</sup> provided social and psychological support to over 500 Ukrainian children and 600 women with children between 2022 and 2023, supported by specialised local services. Médecins sans Frontières (MSF)<sup>25</sup> has developed a specialist psychological support service in several Italian cities – Milan, Rome, Trieste and Naples. This operated through a team of psychologists, nurses and cultural mediators – to promote healthcare and identification of vulnerabilities.

## 4. INDICATORS, OBJECTIVES AND MONITORING

The challenge faced by the Child Guarantee is to combat poverty and social exclusion among children and young people so as to afford them greater opportunities for accessing and using services, while overcoming the fragmentation of measures, territorial disparities, the lack of data collection and the overlapping implementation of measures. Only a system aiming at the essential assistance levels (LEAs), funds, the collection of data and a coordinated governance can overcome critical challenges over time and offer adequate and sustained investment for the benefit of younger generations.

The purpose of the monitoring is to:

- check the state of effective implementation of the measures taken to achieve the objectives of the Child Guarantee but also linked to different programming acts in relation to the use of resources and time;
- monitor the sustainability of the objectives over time, in particular those for the creation of the LEPS;
- keep track of the impact of the Child Guarantee on the target population of children and young people in terms of improving their living conditions and access to services and opportunities over time;
- supervise the implementation in its organic components, such as governance and the promotion of guidance or consultation bodies.

The monitoring model used so far provides useful information on national and decentralised measures, initiatives, acts and plans contributing to the implementation of the Child Guarantee to the national coordination body and the steering committee.

### a) Governance and coordination

One aspect to be taken into account for monitoring the implementation of the plan is the establishment and related activities of the bodies intended to implement it. The Action Plan promotes an integrated governance model between ministries, regions and municipalities to foster greater cooperation between the various institutional levels and between social, health and educational policy areas, as well as between the public and charitable sectors. The system for coordinating Italy's action provides for a level of vertical connection (through the construction of direct and stable collaboration with the regions and municipalities, starting with actions at national level that are justified by the need to reduce regional inequalities) and a level

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<sup>24</sup> UNICEF (2023), “*In un anno raggiunti oltre 15 mila rifugiati ucraini in Italia con interventi diretti di protezione e inclusione*” (In one year, more than 15 000 Ukrainian refugees in Italy reached with direct protection and inclusion measures), 24 February 2023, <https://www.unicef.it/media/in-un-anno-raggiunti-oltre-15-mila-rifugiati-ucraini-in-italia-con-interventi-diretti-di-protezione-e-inclusione/>

<sup>25</sup> MSF (2022), “*Profughi ucraini in Italia: supporto psicologico e orientamento alle cure*” (Ukrainian refugees in Italy: psychological support and guidance to treatment), 11 April 2022, <https://www.medicisenzafrontiere.it/news-e-storie/news/profughi-ucraina-italia-supporto-psicologico-cure/>

of horizontal coordination and cooperation which includes a number of institutional and non-institutional partners acting as intermediary bodies, implementing bodies or beneficiaries of the interventions. The monitoring of the establishment and functioning of the coordination set-up can be based on a set of process and result indicators.

*b) Steering, programming and project actions*

The monitoring activity also accompanies the implementation as a way of verifying the sustainability of the objectives that Italy's Action Plan aims to achieve over time. The initial plan broke the adoption of the Recommendation in Italy down into a number of systemic actions aimed at promoting progress in three directions:

- stabilisation of interventions,
- reinforcement of existing measures, and
- innovation.

Monitoring of the implementation of steering, programming and project actions will be based on the documentation produced by the technical groups, an analysis of the Structural Funds and monitoring of the activities undertaken by the individual ministries under the Child Guarantee.

*c) Collection of data for monitoring the plan and launch of general statistical monitoring of the Action Plan as recommended by the Social Protection Committee (SPC)*

The lack of useful data for assessing some of the target populations of beneficiaries, and in particular the relationship between them and the services to be provided, calls for data-enhancement strategies, in particular:

- the assessment of existing statistics in order to unleash any untapped potential in the datasets,
- the use of administrative sources,
- speeding up the implementation of planned information systems,
- conducting ad hoc quantitative or qualitative surveys.

In that regard, please find below a summary table illustrating certain key elements for each indicator identified in the paragraph of the Annexes to the PANGI entitled '3. Framework of indicators to be used for general monitoring', given the explicitly declared objective of the PANGI to assess: '... the impact of the Child Guarantee on the target population of children and young people in terms of, over time, improving their living conditions and access to services and opportunities through indicators able to record the expansion of services in geographical areas and localities where children and young people in conditions of social and educational disadvantage targeted by the Child Guarantee are most concentrated, providing data broken down by sex, age group, geographical location and other relevant variables.'

### FRAMEWORK OF INDICATORS TO BE USED FOR GENERAL MONITORING

(More than one answer possible)

	Number of indicators expected	Directly relevant to the Social Protection Committee (SPC) and the Indicator's Sub-Group (ISG)	Need for ad hoc investigation	Need for in-depth analysis with active involvement of the source of the data	Stemming from information systems not yet in operation
Children in difficulty	9	3	0	1	5
Free and effective access to early childhood education services	8	1	1	7	0
Free and effective access to education (including didactic activities)	5	1	1	4	0
Free and effective access to at least one healthy meal each day	5	1	1	3	1
Free and effective access to healthcare	5	1	1	4	0
Free and effective access to healthy food	9	1	0	8	0
Effective access to adequate housing	4	3	1	0	0
<b>Total as % of total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>11 24.4</b>	<b>5 11.1</b>	<b>27 60.0</b>	<b>6 13.3</b>

Source: Istituto degli Innocenti

#### d) Ongoing data collection activities

As indicated in the previous paragraphs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, as referred to above, has invested in strengthening the system for monitoring and evaluating the social services system by promoting the implementation of existing institutional information systems, in particular by strengthening the SIOSS (System of Information on Social Services) and the SINBA (System of Information on the Protection of Children and their Families), making the information base more structured and enriching it through the annual monitoring of children outside their family of origin and the launch of a census survey on the taking into care of children and young people by the local social services. Further details could enrich the available information framework. The table below presents the list of European indicators for which an ad hoc survey should be envisaged, as currently not available.

European Indicator
Participation rate of children with a migrant background taken into institutional care and homeless children in the formal early childhood education system
Net cost of private support education for children in difficulty
% of children in low-income households receiving a free/subsidised healthy meal each day in state schools and early childhood services

As a first step, within the limits of the data actually available, context indicators were collected in relation to the target populations of the Child Guarantee in order to provide a documented information basis to serve at the outset (T=0) as the main coordinates documenting the life of children and adolescents in Italy. This action has been instrumental in assessing the impact that EU policy may have on the well-being of vulnerable children and young people. It goes without saying that this exercise – which is crucial for checking whether and to what extent the resources and interventions have brought about change at individual and community level – hides certain

pitfalls and certain results which are not necessarily obvious. With reference to the framework, which can now be reconstructed in terms of indicators, it is useful to make a number of clarifications so that the work carried out and the degree of reliability of the data collected to date can be better understood:

- the information available is not always for 2022, the year in which the actions under the Plan were launched. The timeframe varies between 2018 (few indicators) and 2022;
- where the information sources are not active and/or currently able to provide the information required for the calculation of the indicators, alternative (but still official) sources have been used which provide proxy indicators.
- For many indicators, the information was disaggregated according to the desired breakdown. However, in other cases, the available information does not allow you to go beyond the headline indicator.
- In order to enrich the information, where possible data from multiple sources of information (but consistent between themselves) have been included.

The result of this monitoring operation is summarised in a brief comment on the statistical tables drawn up for each of the target populations of the Child Guarantee, which investigate separately the issues of child poverty, social inclusion, improving the well-being of children, early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities, healthy eating, including at least one healthy meal each school day, healthcare and the right to housing.

## 5. FINANCING

Please find below a general overview of the main funds, specific or general, some of which are already mentioned in the thematic parts of the report, which contribute to achieving the objectives of the European Recommendation.

**Decree No 5 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies of 15 February 2022**, Public Notice No 1/2022, provides for social inclusion measures and support for vulnerable households:

- Interventions to support parental capacity and support vulnerable households: 401 projects, to a total amount of EUR 83 847 056, have been accepted for funding and are in the process of being contracted, from a funding allocation of EUR 84 600 000 (NRRP resources).
- Measures to strengthen social services by introducing mechanisms for the sharing and supervision of social workers: the National Plan of Social Interventions and Social Services 2021-2023 identified the supervision of social services staff as an essential level of social assistance and called for the establishment of a dedicated steering group for all activities related to its implementation. The planned investment is EUR 42 000 000, in the context of which 207 projects have been launched to a total of EUR 39 900 000 (NRRP resources).
- Housing First and post stations, with total funding of EUR 45 million (of which EUR 177 500 000 dedicated to Housing First). For this measure, 472 projects were activated to a total of EUR 392 000.00 (of which EUR 391.3 million with NRRP resources).

**Decree No 226 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies of 26 November 2021** identified the criteria for allocating the financial resources provided for the NRRP dual scheme, to a total of EUR 600 000 000 for the period 2021-2025, an investment aimed at bringing the education and training systems more into line with labour market needs, and promoting the employability of young people and the acquisition of new skills. Currently, 545 projects are

associated with this measure, to a total of **EUR 230 400 000** (of which EUR 112.7 million of NRRP resources).

**Executive Decree No 467 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies of 23 December 2021** adopted Public Notice No 1/2021 on Projects for social intervention (PrIns), from REACT-EU funding – area 6 of the **Inclusion NOP** ‘Measures to combat the impact of COVID-19’, with a total budget of EUR 90 million to which additional resources of EUR 7 310 700 were allocated (Executive Decree No 385 of 9 December 2022). The investment aims to support emergency social interventions and interventions targeting people who are homeless or in extreme poverty and situations of marginalisation. The resources allocated so far are: **EUR 67 378 000**.

**By Executive Decree of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies of 27 September 2019**, Public Notice No 1/2019 PaIS was adopted with the aim of supporting active inclusion measures and measures to combat poverty and social exclusion. The total budget of the Notice is EUR 250 million from the NOP Inclusion (ESF 2014-2020). The project proposals eligible for funding amount to a total of **EUR 139 463 386.14**.

**Law No 178 of 2020** (Budget Law for 2021 and Multiannual Budget for the three-year period 2021-2023) introduced an essential level of social assistance services defined as one operator per 5 000 inhabitants and an additional service objective defined as one operator per 4 000 inhabitants. With this in mind, in order to strengthen the municipal social services system, it provided for the provision of a financial contribution to the local social authorities. Funding from the **Poverty Fund** is structural in nature. For 2023, on the basis of the assessment carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, an amount totalling **EUR 94 317 247.51** was determined.

**Law No 178 of 2020** (Budget Law for 2021 and Multiannual Budget for the three-year period 2021-2023) for the financing of pilot measures for those who, on reaching the age of majority, live outside their family of origin on the basis of a court order, with the aim of preventing poverty and completing the transition towards independence (Care Leavers pilot), allocated **EUR 15 000 000** for the period 2021-2023 from the **Poverty Fund**.

**By Executive Decree No 284 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies of 6 August 2020, as amended by Executive Decree No 307 of 17 September 2020**, **EUR 1 800 000** was allocated for the period 2021-2023 under axis 3 of the **NOP Inclusion** for the implementation of the National Project for the inclusion and integration of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti children. The aim of the project is to promote the inclusion of children from Roma, Sinti and Caminanti backgrounds.

**By Enabling Law No 46/2021 and Legislative Decree No 230 of 21 December 2021**, with effect from 1 March 2022, the **Single Universal Allowance** (AUU) was introduced, establishing a measure to support dependent children, an economic benefit granted to households on the basis of the economic situation of the household. In 2022, the total amount disbursed under that measure was **EUR 13 203 000 000** and in the period January – October 2023 it was **EUR 14 928 300 000**.

The **Family Policy Fund** set up at the Prime Minister’s Office to promote and implement, among other things, measures to protect the family in all its generational issues and to support the National Observatory on the Family, provides for appropriations distributed by decree of the Minister for Family Policies, which for 2022 amounted to **EUR 44 050 628** and for 2023 to **EUR 97 008 500**.

The **National Fund for Children and Young People** (FNIA) established by Law No 285/1997 aims to implement measures to promote rights, quality of life, development, individual fulfilment and socialisation in childhood and young people. Decree-Law No 22/2021 allocated the management of the Fund to the Department for Family Policies, which issued the

distribution decrees, with allocations totalling **EUR 28 694 000** in 2022 and **EUR 28 794 000** in 2023.

**Decree No 170 of the Ministry of Education of 24 June 2022** established decrees allocating resources for measures to prevent and combat early school leaving, in implementation of investment line 1.4. ‘Extraordinary intervention aimed at reducing regional and local disparities in lower and upper secondary school and combating early school leaving’ under M4C1 of the NRRP. The measure provides for the investment of EUR 1.5 billion in NRRP funds. To date, 3 187 projects have been launched to a total of **EUR 499 000 000**.

By subsequent Decree No 19 of 2 February 2024, a further **EUR 750 million** was distributed among all lower and upper secondary schools to combat early school leaving and overcome regional disparities.

The same decree also allocated EUR 40 million to provincial centres for adult education (CPIAs) for the same purpose of overcoming regional disparities.

Decree No 41 of 7 March 2024 provided for the allocation of EUR 25 million to regional and local support centres for the educational inclusion of students with disabilities in order to equip them with support and learning aids.

**Decree No 343 of the Minister for Education of 2 December 2021** laid down the disbursement criteria for the funding allocated to the Plan for Sports Infrastructure in Schools (M4, C1 Investment 1.3 of the NRRP), to which EUR 300 000 000 is allocated. This investment line aims to increase the supply of sporting activities, from the top classes of the primary school onwards and throughout Italy. Currently, 445 projects are funded under this measure, to a total of **EUR 349 000 000** (of which EUR 333.3 million of **NRRP** funding).

**Decree No 343/2021** also set out the disbursement criteria for the School Day Extension and Canteen Upgrading Plan (M4C1 Investment 1.2 of the NRRP), to which a total of EUR 960 million is earmarked to finance the extension of full-time school and expand the educational offer of schools and make them increasingly open to the community, including through the construction or renovation of canteens, totalling around 1 000 buildings by 2026. Currently, 1 022 projects are associated with this measure, to a total of **EUR 519 200 000** (of which EUR 456.4 million of **NRRP** resources).

A total of EUR 4.6 billion has been allocated to the ‘**Plan for nursery schools and education services for the youngest children**’ (M4C1 Investment 1.1 of the NRRP) aimed at increasing the educational options for children aged 0-6 years throughout Italy, in line with the European target of 33% for early childhood services. By Decree No 343 of the Minister for Education of 2 December 2021 and the adoption of Public Notice No 48047 of 2 December 2021, the measure provided for EUR 2 400 000 000 for the upgrading of infrastructure for the age group 0-2 years, and EUR 600 000 000 for the upgrading of infrastructure for the age group 3-5 years; EUR 700 million provided for by Law No 160/2019 (Budget Law for 2020 and multiannual budget for the three-year period 2020-2022) and allocated by Ministerial Decree No 22 March 2021 of the Ministry of Education to crèches, kindergartens and multi-use centres.

The main objective of the **Plan for the securing and upgrading of school buildings** (M4C1 investment 3.3 of the NRRP), to which EUR 3.9 billion has been allocated, is to secure some of the school estate, also promoting a gradual reduction in energy consumption. The aim is to renovate a total floor area of around 2.7 million m<sup>2</sup> of school buildings. 3 219 projects to a total of **EUR 5 100 000 000** are associated with the plan.

**Decree No 343/2021 of the Minister for Education** defined the criteria for the distribution of funding from heading M2C3 Investment 1.1 of the NRRP for the Construction of new schools through the replacement of buildings. Public Notice 48048 of 2 December 2021 for a total of EUR 800 000 000 was issued and then an additional budget of EUR 389 million was allocated to this measure. Public Notice 128018 of 2 November 2023 allocates EUR 4 million for 2023 to local authorities, the implementing bodies for M2C3 – Investment 1.1, as grants for the rental

of buildings or for the rental of modular facilities for school use. Under these measures, a total of **EUR 1 200 000 000** was allocated for 213 projects (**NRRP** resources).

The **Schools Plan 4.0 adopted by Ministerial Decree No 161 of 14 June 2022** sets out the measures envisaged in the NRRP to speed up the digital transformation process for the Italian school system (M4C1 Investment 3.2 ‘Schools 4.0: innovative schools, cabling, new learning environments and labs), with a total expenditure of EUR 2.1 billion, of which EUR 1 296 000 000 in new projects and EUR 379 200 000 in existing projects for the transformation of classrooms into innovative learning environments, and EUR 424 800 000 for the construction of laboratories for the digital professions of the future. The allocation of resources was determined by Ministerial Decree No 218 of 8 August 2022, and 33 081 projects to a total of **EUR 2 000 000 000** (**NRRP** funding) are associated with this measure.

**Public Notice No 33956 of 18 May 2022**, ‘Social skills, learning and welcoming’ was issued to expand and support the provision of training for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 academic years with reference to axis 1 of the NOP for schools ‘Improving the quality of the education system and promoting the upgrading and adaptation of skills, promoting greater participation in training pathways and lifelong learning’, with a commitment of **EUR 1 454 219 917**, accounting for 92 % of the total amount planned. A total of 34 775 measures were authorised.

**In implementation of the CARE Action, Ministerial Decree No 25 of 15 February 2023** was issued, which provides for the implementation of training courses aimed at promoting the inclusion of pupils, students and their parents from Ukraine in the new school and social environment, with a budget of **EUR 31 133 046** for the purposes of axis I of the **NOP for schools**.

In order to ensure the implementation of specific training courses for mobility abroad, and alternating school and training courses, and PCTOs (transversal competence and guidance pathways) in the 2022-2023 academic year, Ministerial Decree No 55 of 27 March 2023 adopted a distribution plan for a total amount of **EUR 41 671 500** from the resources still available for these regions under axis I of the national **NOP for schools** 2014-2020.

**Public notice No 38007 of 27 May 2022** entitled ‘Innovative educational environments for nursery schools’ aimed at creating innovative educational environments for state nursery schools under axis V (**NOP for schools**) benefited 571 state nursery schools to a total amount of **EUR 267 800 000**.

Under axis V of the **NOP for schools**, public notice No 28966 of 6 September 2021, *Digital boards: digital transformation of teaching and organisation* was issued for the provision of basic equipment for the digital transformation of teaching and the organisation of schools. School projects to a total of **EUR 413 099 067** were admitted for funding.

**By means of Notice No 20480 of 20 July 2021**, *Local networks, wired and wireless, in schools* to promote the creation of networks that may concern individual school buildings or sets of buildings using both wired (cabling) or wireless (Wi-Fi), LAN and WLAN technologies, school projects were admitted for funding for a total of **EUR 397 306 619** under the **NOP for schools**. Under axis V of the **NOP for schools**, the *Environments and laboratories for the ecological transition* measure consists of two actions: ‘*Edugreen*’ provides for the establishment of innovative and sustainable school gardens in primary schools (Notice No 22550 of 12 April 2022) for which projects totalling **EUR 71 300 000** have been approved; the second action ‘*Green, sustainable and innovative laboratories for secondary schools*’ (Notice No 50636 of 27 December 2021) aims to promote the creation of laboratory environments for the ecological transition in secondary schools for which projects totalling **EUR 157 100 000** have been approved.

**Ministerial Decree No 129 of 1 October 2020**, within the framework of the resources due to the Provinces and Metropolitan Cities, determined the distribution of funding for extraordinary maintenance and energetic upgrading of secondary schools, to a total of **EUR 855 000 000** (of

which EUR 90 000 000 for each of the years 2020 and 2021 and EUR 225 000 000 for each of the years 2022, 2023 and 2024) from the **Ministry of Education's budget** for the years 2020 to 2024.

In order to combat educational poverty, the **NRRP** provides for a total of EUR 220 000 000 for socio-educational and structural measures to combat educational poverty in southern Italy in support of the charitable sector (M5C3-Investment 3). In this context, with Executive Decrees No 313 of 2021 and No 38 of 2022, the Ministry for European Affairs, the South and Cohesion Policies admitted for funding projects to a total of **EUR 49 964 399**, and, by means of a second notice with DDG Act 462 of 14 December 2022, projects for an additional **EUR 40 017 018** were accepted for funding. Another notice was published for the selection of projects to be funded from the NRRP, M5C 3-Investment 3 to a total of EUR 50 000 000, DDG Act 615 of 30 November 2023.

**By Ministerial Decree No 383 of 7 October 2021, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport** approved the lists of beneficiaries and proposals submitted by the regions, municipalities and metropolitan cities for the implementation of the National Innovation Programme for Housing Quality (PINQuA). The measures provided for in the Decree, which aim to reduce housing deprivation by increasing the public housing stock, regenerate the socio-economic fabric of urban centres, improve the accessibility, functionality and safety of degraded spaces and locations, often in the periphery, amount to a total of EUR 2 820 000 000. So far, 60 projects are associated with this measure, to a total amount of **EUR 744 100 000** (of which EUR 655 million from the **NRRP**).

The **integrated urban plans** (IUPs) provided for under M5C2 – Investment 2.2 of the NRRP, for which a total of EUR 3.18 billion was allocated, of which EUR 2.97 billion from the NRRP, are earmarked for the peripheries of the metropolitan cities and provide for participatory urban planning, with the aim of transforming deprived areas into smart and sustainable cities. By Decree of 22 April 2022 of the Ministry of the Interior, resources were allocated to those implementing integrated urban plans to a total amount of EUR 2 703 730 488. Specifically, the projects concern investments for the regeneration and economic revitalisation of large deprived urban areas, with a particular focus on creating new services for individuals and upgrading infrastructure. There are currently 614 projects associated with this measure, to a total of **EUR 3 400 000 000**, of which EUR 2.8 billion from **NRRP funds**.

In order to enhance and reorganise the services offered on the ground by improving their quality, M6C1 Investment 1.1. Community Houses and care for individuals in the NRRP funds 1 350 community houses – structures where multidisciplinary teams of general practitioners, paediatricians, specialists, community nurses, and other healthcare professionals' work. They can also host social workers, in order to promote greater integration of social and health services. Currently, 1 430 projects are associated with this measure, to a total of **EUR 2 361 000 000** (of which EUR 2 million of **NRRP** resources).

The **National Equity in Health Programme 2021-2027** aims to strengthen health services and make access to them fairer, also with a view to developing systemic action and capacity building in the regional health systems of seven regions of the country with lower levels of compliance with the standards laid down at national level (LEA) and greater financial and organisational difficulties in the management of the health service (Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sardinia, and Sicily). The programme has a financial envelope of **EUR 625 000 000**, supported by the ESF+ and the ERDF, and Decree No 5 of the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Health of 17 April 2023 provided for the distribution of the allocated resources.

The **Allowance for Childcare Costs** is an allowance for children under 36 months of age for the payment of fees at approved public and private crèches or in the form of home help for children with serious chronic conditions. The measure was financed for 2023 with an amount

of EUR 564 800 000, and the Budget Law 2024 (Law No 213 of 2023) reinforced the measure with an allocation of EUR 240 000 000 for 2024.

The **2024 Budget Law** (Law No 213 of 30 December 2023) approved measures in favour of families with children such as the exemption from social security contributions for women with two or more children, the increase in the allowance paid for the second month of parental leave up to the sixth year of the child's life, and the possibility for large families to access the Guarantee Fund for loans for the purchase of their first home. It also provided for an increase of EUR 50 million for 2024 from the Social Fund for Employment and Training, funding for apprenticeship training courses (for vocational training and qualifications, the upper secondary education diploma, the certificate of higher technical specialisation) and training courses combining work and school.

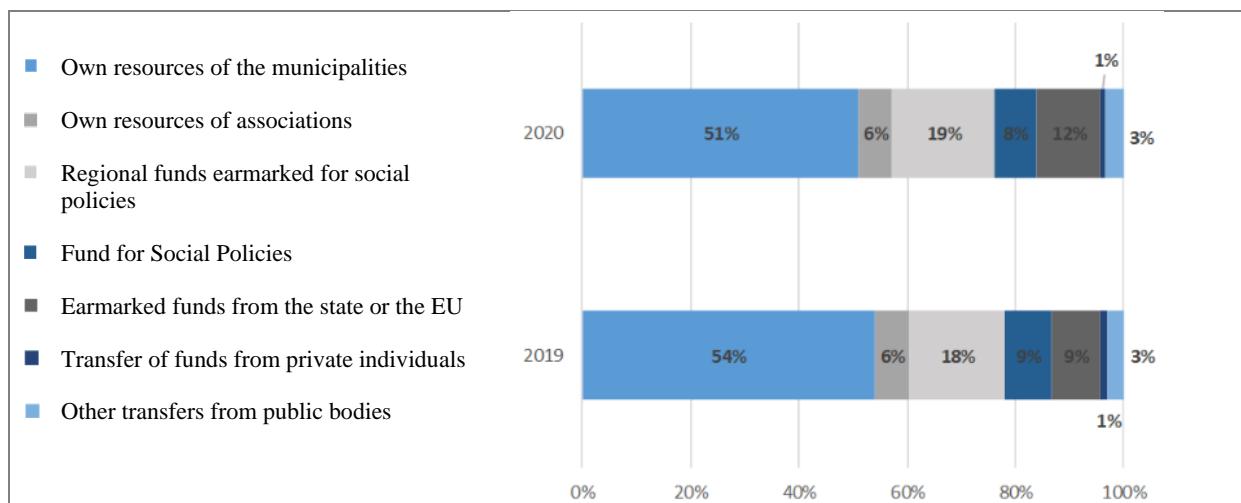
As indicated in the Action Plan presented in March 2022, the picture painted here remains incomplete, as the direct provision of services is also based on regional and municipal funding. An example of this is the area of social policies, one of those most directly concerned in terms of the provision of services.

National funding has grown substantially, in particular over recent years thanks to additional appropriations from the main funds (in particular the Non-Self-Sufficiency Fund and the share of services from the Poverty Fund) and the creation of additional funds. Since 2021, national funding has been supplemented by resources specifically earmarked for strengthening regional and local social services under Article 1 (791) of the 2021 Budget Law (Law No 178 of 2020) within the municipal solidarity fund, to an amount of EUR 215 million in 2021, rising to 650 million as from 2030. It is particularly important that, unlike in the past, most of the funds allocated have been included as structural funds in the State budget, i.e., the appropriations are automatically earmarked. This gives funding and planning certainty for measures.

As regards the sources of financing, according to the most recent data, local welfare spending, as shown in the figure, was 57% financed in 2020 from the own resources of the municipalities and associations of municipalities, a reduction of 3 percentage points compared to the previous year. After the municipalities' own resources, the second most important source of funding is the regional funds linked to social policies ('provincial funds' in the case of the Autonomous Provinces), which cover almost 19% of expenditure. The Fund for Social Policies covers of 8% of the resources employed, a steadily decreasing share (it was 14% in 2010, 9% in 2019). With respect to 2019, in the light of the reduction in expenditure financed from the own resources of individual or associated municipalities, funding from other state sources, the EU and other public bodies increased by 3.1 percentage points, from 12.1% to 15.2% overall. So overall, the funding distributed by the state and other public bodies covers 23% of expenditure on social assistance and welfare services, while more than three quarters are financed at regional or municipal level (76%). The remaining expenditure (0.9%) is financed by the private sector.

On a regional basis, in Central and Northern Italy, where social expenditure is higher, the additional share (over and above state funds) is also higher, financed from the own resources of the municipalities and associations of municipalities (61% in the Centre, 63 % in the North-East, 68% in the North-West). In the South, Sardinia and Sicily, however, this share is only 37% and 28% respectively, and the share of funding from the state or from the EU is corresponding higher.

**Figure – Expenditure on social interventions and social services of individual and associated municipalities, by source of funding.**



Source: ISTAT, Report on municipal expenditure on social services (April 2023)

We must also consider another element of the patchwork of funding for the definition and implementation of social and welfare policies in Italy, namely funding from ‘organised philanthropy’. Over recent years in particular, this sector has acted as a ‘second welfare system’, in which the involvement of private parties – associations, foundations, non-profit-making and profit-making organisations, and individual donors – acts not to replace the role and funding provided by the public sector (with enormous risks, in such cases, linked to overlapping and unequal treatment of needs and the quality of the interventions) but as a complement to them and integral part of a wider set of services, with the aim of transforming the various contributions (monetary donations but also ideas, knowledge, information, organisational cultures and models for structuring interventions) into a coherent, synergistic and modular tool with which to address the major challenges of our time. The potential of this component in future local welfare systems – a component which, especially in northern Italy, is already in many respects being consolidated – is broad and varied. This is the case with the so-called ‘donor economy’ – that is to say donations by private individuals (which also include decisions to transfer personal tax breaks to charitable bodies, institutions and organisations, in the form of a percentage of the fixed income tax of natural persons that can be used for social and cultural activities). According to recent surveys carried out by operators in the sector, for example into crowdfunding in favour of the charitable sector (and other recipients), in 2021 this form of charitable giving was estimated at around EUR 5.3 billion<sup>26</sup>, to which must be added donations in the context of corporate giving (charitable donations from businesses and commercial organisations), an increase of 26.3% in 2020 compared with the previous year, to an estimated amount of around EUR 567 million<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Granter-Italia Non Profit (2021), *Lo Stato della filantropia in Italia* (The State of Philanthropy in Italy), which can be consulted at <https://granter.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Lo-Stato-della-Filantropia-in-Italia-Ed.-2021-granter.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Dynamo Academy, SDA Bocconi Sustainability Lab (2021), Corporate Giving in Italy, which can be consulted at: <https://www.dynamoacademy.org/ricerca-corporate-giving-in-italy/>

## 6. LESSONS LEARNED AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

As described above, the national plan for Italy, the PANGI, develops a number of systemic actions aimed at promoting progress in three directions:

- stabilisation of interventions,
- strengthening existing interventions and actions; and
- innovation.

The Action Plan is a programming document running until 2030 and addressing two key issues: the first concerns how to juggle the fact that the rights of the child are universal with the need for specific action targeting some of them. The other is how the reorganisation of the different systems, starting with the administrative, social and school health systems, can improve governance at all levels and promote inter-sectoral and inter-professional collaboration. Another aspect that should not be overlooked is the increase in the number of and upskilling of all professionals working with children and young people.

In the implementation phase of the actions contained in the Plan, one of the main challenges facing Italy is the implementation of measures at regional and local level, as well as ensuring a link with (pre-)existing measures. Like other Member States, Italy must implement the Action Plan by 2030, taking into account national, regional and local circumstances, as well as (pre-)existing measures. It is precisely in view of these two points that implementation issues may arise, since regional and municipal measures are not spread and implemented uniformly across Italy.

The overall process of implementing the Action Plan can be likened to an orchestra which works when all the instruments, each with their own melody, play well together, and in particular when the performance of the group prevails over individual performances. The various actors involved must act autonomously, where this is called for, but also coordinate with each other, in a collaboration between public actors and, at the same time, between the public sector, the private sector and the charitable sector.

With this in mind, the Action Plan has also promoted the active participation of the children and young people benefiting from the measures right from the pilot phase of the Child Guarantee as an essential element in defining the priorities and giving practical effect to the rights and principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The process set in motion by the pilot phase of the Child Guarantee has made it possible to use a system of governance for policies on children and young people which, in Italy, deepens the approach initiated in the second half of the 1990s when certain fundamental laws were adopted, such as Law No 451 of 23 December 1997 on the establishment of the Parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People and the National Children's Observatory, and Law No 285 of 28 August 1997 on Provisions for the promotion of the rights and opportunities of children and young people. Almost 30 years have passed, but their relevance has not diminished. The experience gained over the years has enabled Italy to respond promptly to the challenges posed by the European Guarantee.

We are committed to responding effectively and usefully to the aims at the heart of the Recommendation. The effective sharing of tasks between the various institutional actors and levels of government and support from young people are proving to be useful tools and points of reference in this regard.