



NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHILD GUARANTEE (NAP)

THE RIGHT ROOTS FOR THOSE
WHO ARE GROWING

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Introduction

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The Recommendation, dated 14 June 2021, which establishes the Child Guarantee, is the last act of the decade that has just passed, full of proposals and exercises in the EU's responsibility towards the rights of girls, boys and adolescents. The National Plan of the Child Guarantee (CG) intends to be in harmony with these acts starting from the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child of 24 March 2021, which states in its introduction: "The Rights of the Child are human rights. Every child in Europe and in the world should have the same rights and be able to live without discrimination, recrimination or intimidation of any kind. For this reason, the protection and promotion of the rights of minors are fundamental objectives, both domestically and in the rest of the world".

Children should be able to be free to grow up without the spectre of war. The events happening near us in Ukraine require us to pay extraordinary attention to the issues of international solidarity and the guarantee of fundamental human rights. For this reason, the Italian Government has appointed a Commissioner and promoted an inter-institutional Round Table, and this Plan considers it fundamental to take action so that Ukrainian refugee children can be welcomed, together with their families, and enjoy the full extent of their rights in Italy for as long as it takes for this appalling conflict to end, so that they can return to their own country. Institutions will ensure that the welcoming takes place in safe conditions, without discrimination and ensuring a careful and vigilant network of support.

Considering the rights of minors as human rights, has consequences in the way the relationship between the full ownership of their rights, public policies, and the relationship between adults and children, starting with the parent-child relationship, is combined. The 5th Plan of Action and Interventions for the Protection of the Rights and Development of Persons of Evolving Age, approved a few months ago by the National Observatory for Childhood and Adolescence, is an example to be followed in this sense and we, in the elaboration of the Plan, have followed it.

The fundamental relationships of minors, from the emotional, relational, to the cognitive ones inside and outside the family as well as their rights must be considered valuable assets by the public sphere. It is in the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, embodied in the European Commission's European Guarantee for Children, that Italy identifies a strategic cornerstone for a strong approach to combating child poverty: "Every child has the right to adequate living conditions and equal opportunities from the earliest stages of life. Reinforcing the socio-economic inclusion of children is essential to counter the transmission of child poverty and disadvantage from one generation to the next".

In developing this Plan, we have followed the indications provided by the EU Guidelines: direct involvement of stakeholders, ministries, local authorities, regions, the Childhood and Adolescence Authority, experts and representatives of the professions, representatives of civil society, the Third Sector, and the active participation, through the YAB (Youth Advisory Board), of girls and boys.

We have structured the work into four groups: early childhood education and care, education, a healthy meal a day at school; the right to health and healthy nutrition; prevention of and fight against poverty and social disadvantage, the right to housing; governance and system infrastructure. The work of the subgroups forms the backbone of the Plan, and their coordinators are either senior figures in the government ministries, or work with them, or are figures in the local institutional world.

In the second case, the inclusion of girls and boys was considered an essential element, which was rewarded by the extraordinary contribution they made both in analysing the critical issues affecting their lives and in the ideas, values and proposals they put forward. Their contribution will support the development of the Child Guarantee in Italy through monitoring, promotion and active participation.

Before proceeding with the Plan, we took on the Child Guarantee Pilot, set up in Italy by Unicef, with the help of the Cattaneo Institute and other research centres. The contribution of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Ministry of Equal Opportunities and Family contributed to the success of the Child Guarantee Pilot. Other ministries such as Education and Health, as well as other state institutions, national and local, were decisive in the investigation.

The study proved to be very useful in identifying our country's policies, its constraints and perceived challenges. The additional, essential help from the Istituto degli Innocenti and ISTAT has enabled us to outline both the many things Italy has done in favour of childhood and adolescence, and the weak points of our welfare system.

There are two challenges: how to combine the universality of the rights of minors with specific action aimed at some of them; how to improve governance at all levels, political and institutional, administrative, social,

educational and health; and how to promote intersectorality and inter-professionalism, the increase and continuous qualification of all the professional figures working in the world of children and adolescents. It is on the strengthening of the welfare system that measures have already been taken, which later became essential levels of benefits relating to civil and social rights (LEP).

In the first case we have decided to strengthen and gradually implement universalism where it is weakest and to introduce universalism where it does not exist. However, only a system that aims at essential levels, coordinated funding, data collection and governance can overcome the criticalities over time and offer an adequate and continuous investment in the younger generations.

The Deep Dive Analyses of the Child Guarantee Pilot identified potential beneficiaries of the Child Guarantee as large groups and numerically more limited, poverty-intensive groups that do not access key entitlements. For the former: the minors living in the South of Italy (34,4% of the Italian minors); minors with mental health problems (20,4%), minors from migrant backgrounds (14%), children with only one parent (12%), minors with disabilities (4%). For the latter: minors identified as belonging to Roma, Sinti and Caminanti groups, minors with incarcerated parents, minors outside the family of origin, unaccompanied foreign minors, care leavers 18-21 years old, minors born to teenage mothers.

In the four working groups, an attempt was made to link European and national policies, enriching the analyses carried out, following the guidelines provided by Europe for drawing up national plans. Actions have been identified in each individual area of intervention and for each group of beneficiaries.

In the follow-up work, a group, which met several times, was set up at the National Observatory for Children and Adolescents. In addition to the contributions already made in the 5th National Plan for Childhood and Adolescence, other contributions have been added, such as the proposal to take greater account of the rights and needs of adopted children. There are more than 75,000 adopted children in our country and Italy is second only to the United States in terms of the number of adopted children.

The approach to the adoption process in its different phases, before, during and after adoption, including support for foster care, requires shared guidelines. That is why we propose that this issue be taken into account in the CG.

Another issue we consider crucial is that of pre-adolescents and adolescents.

This generation has less social influence, including in terms of its reduced numbers, and has experienced the most serious crisis, the 2008 crisis, in the West and radical advances in globalisation and the techno-scientific revolution. They live in a world where people other than those in the West, from ancient civilisations, compete successfully and display their economic, technological and cultural strength. Many of their peers live in highly motivated and upwardly mobile countries with growth rates unimaginable just a few years ago.

The crisis experienced by our teenagers in Italy, and in European countries is further aggravated by the pandemic and now the war in Ukraine. Many of them feel lost, their unease sometimes turns into suffering. And they're asking for help.

We have dedicated a specific in-depth study on this topic, and we did it together with the girls and boys of YAB. They also came up with a genuine request for help and a request to be leaders in the choices that affect them in order to overcome this difficult moment in their lives. In a meeting with them, they told us: "we don't want to be cured, we want to be helped". And they also say: "we are the ones who experience the problems we are talking about today, and therefore we are able to give feedback on what kind of services we need and how they are provided to us".

We draw Europe's attention to the urgent need for an appropriate strategy for pre-adolescents and adolescents.

The Plan prepares a "package" of ad hoc measures based on the interaction and integration of different areas, from schools to social-educational environments, to be implemented through the promotion of specific activities and the identification of dedicated figures and services. Measures include community centres for minors. The Plan also includes a commitment to draw up proper guidelines on adolescence.

European data reveal that, in many cases, Italy fails to reach the European average on the fulfilment of fundamental rights of children and adolescents. This is particularly true in the South and in some areas of the country, where social and regional inequalities are so great. We cannot accept the fact that many children are unable to attend nursery school, that many girls and boys drop out of school, that the number of Neet children is increasing, and that the psychological distress of adolescents is intensifying, as we have seen, as a result of the pandemic and now of the war, the dramatic extent of which alarms the international community.

Social infrastructures have to change in order to be able to relate to each of the spheres, family, social and health, economic and cultural, so profoundly altered in the lives of minors.

We need to change our welfare system. In recent times, this transformation has begun, first with a considerable increase in resources and then by changing the way they are made up: from tax deduction to direct investment and greater investment in the integrated, quality service system.

At the beginning of the current decade, Italy seemed to be lagging behind many other central and northern European countries in terms of the wide range of initiatives in favour of minors and their parents (from income support for families with children to specific educational, social and health services).

The last two years have seen the start of a new era of reform in our country, with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, together with the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Equal Opportunities and Family and other ministries, from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Education, playing a leading role. This era of reform focused on strengthening the rights of children, adolescents and their families.

The current effort is unprecedented in recent Italian history. From the Citizenship Income to the single and universal allowance for dependent children, to the numerous projects and reforms envisaged by the PNRR (which is the Italian acronym for National Recovery and Resilience Plan) in the areas of social welfare, education, including early childhood education, and health care, to the latest Stability Law that allocates additional resources for many initiatives benefiting children and adolescents, Italy is investing many billions of euros to strengthen the enforceability of the fundamental rights of its children and their parents.

This is happening in a context in which the member states of the European Union have jointly and strongly decided to invest and support the future generations of the European Union even more decisively than in the past.

The Child Guarantee should be placed within this framework.

Within the framework of the Partnership Agreement, Italy has undertaken to respect a number of thematic concentrations, including that of allocating at least 5% of the total ESF+ resources to the fight against child poverty. These resources have been allocated from the 2021-2027 National Programme for Inclusion and Poverty Alleviation and the 2021-2027 National Programme for Schools and Skills. The Agreement has been fully implemented and surpassed, as can be seen in the annex on resources.

First and foremost, the Plan seeks to promote a LEP through the universality and free provision of quality early childhood education services throughout the country. It aims in particular, to increase the supply of full-time places in childcare services to 50% coverage as a national average, and in pre-schools to 100%, by gradually reducing the financial contribution from families and extending the free-of-charge categories.

The Plan also aims to make the provision of one healthy meal a day at school an essential public service for which a LEP, an essential level of service, is established. In addition to strengthening the infrastructure, which is being implemented through structural measures supported mainly by the National Reform Programme, this school lunch service requires an organisational structure that provides education in the afternoon, through the extension of full-time education in public nursery and primary schools in order to achieve 100% coverage.

In order to cope with the high level of school drop-outs, it is foreseen not only to increase access to full-time schooling and the development of cultural welfare and outreach, but also to increase the range of educational support and mediation services for students with disabilities, learning disorders, migrant and ethnic minority backgrounds, and vulnerable family environments, as well as to expand the range of educational services with ad hoc programmes for girls and boys who intend to start working, and finally to promote "bridging" projects for the recovery of NEETs and adolescent drop-outs.

With regard to the issues raised by the CG on the right to health of minors, Italy is currently, thanks also to the PNRR, at a decisive turning point in directing resources to the system of regional assistance and local networks. A process of reorganisation of regional services is under way. Of the many innovations to be highlighted, is the one concerning the establishment of 1226 Community Houses, in which all regional services, including those for women and minors, will be included. Among these new developments in the Ministry of Health's Action Strategy, the Plan identified a number of actions, including the strengthening of existing investments in prevention and promotion of maternal and child health, the 1000 Days Project "Investing Early in Health", a special round table on adolescent mental health, effective access to free-choice paediatrics and extension of the service until the age of majority, strengthening and innovative experimentation in the field of services and resources for the prevention, diagnosis and rehabilitation of mental health disorders, and increasing the number of advice centres and counselling centres for minors.

Lastly, with regard to combating poverty, social exclusion and the right to housing, the Plan makes use of two important measures introduced in recent years to combat child poverty: the single and universal allowance for dependent children is included in the Family Act reform project, and according to a study carried out by Deep Dive Analysis, it reduces child poverty by a few points. With regard to the Citizenship Income, it too achieves a reduction in poverty among minors, and the Plan proposes a series of actions ranging from the provision of a

reduction in the period of residence in Italy required to receive the Citizenship Income, to the efforts to increase the rate of access of those entitled to the anti-poverty measure, also through promoting outreach services, in order to make the Citizenship Income more widely recognised, offering appropriate services to support the social inclusion of minors in low-income families, also by strengthening the social interventions and services against poverty provided to the beneficiaries of the Citizenship Income, such as rent contributions in relation to the number of children, support for minors' schooling, and support for parenting.

The plan also includes the proposal to support and extend the PIPPI programme (Programme of Intervention for the Prevention of Institutionalisation) throughout the country, which a few months ago became a LEP, and the support for Care Leavers, young adults who have just left the care process following separation from their family of origin on the basis of a court order. Other relevant measures concern children from a migrant background and minorities, in particular Roma, Sinti and Caminanti.

As far as the right to housing is concerned, Italy has a long way to go to reach the standards of the most efficient European countries. A number of measures have been introduced in the Plan. We will mention just one of them, which has been discussed at length and is also shared by the girls and boys: the mapping of empty public places to be used, some of them after refurbishment, as affordable housing and as recreational, sporting and cultural facilities for girls and boys.

This proposal is forward-looking as our cities, both large and small, will have to deal with the effects of the technological revolution on buildings and urban spaces.

Lastly, we have another important challenge ahead of us, a decisive one, to allow the shift of resources and policies so clearly defined in the National Child Guarantee Action Plan to really become practical steps in combating poverty and inequality, in releasing the social lift for millions of girls, boys and teenagers.

The challenge is to be able to work together to overcome the patchiness of actions, regional disparities, lack of data collection and overlapping implementation of measures.

The Plan promotes an integrated Governance model between Ministries, Regions and Municipalities that aims to encourage greater collaboration between the various institutional levels and between the social, health and educational areas of intervention. Within this model of Governance, the figure of the national coordinator of the Child Guarantee Plan plays an important role, who will also have the task of coordinating the work of a "control room", set up specifically for this Plan, composed of representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and related ADG Pon Inclusion and FSE+, Department of Family PCM, Ministry of Education and related ADG Pon, Ministry of Health and related ADG Pon, National Regional Conference, ANCI. The national coordinator will be supported by a technical-scientific support structure: Istituto degli Innocenti and ISTAT.

Further coordination and liaison tools are provided for in the Plan in relation to measures and actions carried out at regional and local level. Municipalities and Regions are fully responsible and pivotal in planning the implementation of the Plan's monitoring.

Finally, the Plan foresees the establishment of "outreach" services with the aim of reaching all minors and their families, starting with the most vulnerable or at greater risk of exclusion, in order to raise awareness and provide information among the institutional contexts and levels of governance, among the key players (operators of administrative services, local social and health services, schools, the Third Sector, etc.) and minors. It is impossible to allocate more resources and redevelop welfare for girls and boys without minors themselves, who are the recipients, being the main players in their planning.

For this reason, a proposal was made in the Plan to transform this participation into a LEP.

The help that girls and boys ask for, challenges us to new responsibilities towards them. And what we can do is to try to bring the expectations of children together with them, at the centre of our action.

A great teacher such as Edgard Morin states that this age of ours is characterised by uncertainty: "the horizon we are striving for is no longer so clear-cut and those few traits that can be identified are few and complex".

Being an adolescent today, in general and in Europe and Italy in particular, means coming to terms with uncertainty and blurred horizons. The future is more of a threat, than a prospect, for too many of them. As Morin teaches us, "you cannot eliminate uncertainty but you can choose not to be dominated by fear".

The weight of these words is felt very acutely, calling on us to take great responsibility for this generation, to take ownership of their universal rights.

We are committed to ensuring that the fear disappears more and more, and that hope can take hold.

1. THE CONTEXT, THE FRAMEWORK OF IMPLEMENTED POLICIES AND THE SPECIFIC RESOURCES

This chapter identifies some of the essential elements of the institutional, regulatory and planning framework within which the National Action Plan for Childhood Guarantee (NAP) is set.

1.1 National approach to tackling child poverty and social exclusion

Policies to combat child poverty and social exclusion are based on a system of universal and specific measures aimed at both individual children and their families.

In more recent years, a renewed awareness has emerged under the impetus of an increasing prevalence of poverty and a growing normative awareness, also internationally, of social issues, triggered, among other things, by the ratification of acts such as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000 and 2007), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, ratified in 1991) the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006, ratified in 2009), and initiatives such as the definition at European level of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the related Action Plan (2017 and 2021), as well as requests arising from the Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013, Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage.

A very significant role for addressing the issue of child poverty and children's social exclusion is played by:

- the Network for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (art. 21 D.L. 15 settembre 2017, n. 147) established at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, ensures a broad involvement of institutional and non-institutional actors. It is a permanent body for the coordination of the system of interventions and social services, responsible for the elaboration of planning tools for the use of the National Fund for Social Policies, the Poverty Fund and the Fund for non-self-sufficiency, which brings together representatives of the central, regional, territorial, association, employer, social partners and the Third Sector;
- the National Observatory for Children and Adolescents (ONIA), established under Law No. 451 of 23 December 1997 and regulated by Decree of the President of the Republic No. 103 of 14 May 2007, is chaired by the Minister in charge of family policies and it has about 50 members, representing the various central administrations in charge of policies for children and adolescents, the regions, and local autonomies, Istat, the social partners, the institutions and bodies most relevant to the sector, as well as representatives of the third sector and experts in the field. Among the Observatory's tasks, there is the preparation every two years, of the National Action Plan for the protection of the rights and the development of children and adolescents.

1.1.1 Educational services and education

The Italian education system is organised according to the principles of subsidiarity and autonomy of educational institutions. The State has exclusive legislative competence for the "general rules on education" and for the determination of the essential levels of provision to be guaranteed throughout the national territory; it also defines the founding principles that the Regions must respect in the exercise of their specific competences. The Regions have shared legislative powers in the field of education and exclusive legislative powers in the field of education and vocational training¹, while state educational institutions have teaching, organisational and research, experimentation, and development autonomy².

The principles underpinning the Italian model of school integration have helped to make the Italian education system a place of knowledge, development, and socialisation for all, emphasising its inclusive rather than selective aspects, with pupils with disabilities being placed in mainstream classes. The Ministry of Education guarantees the right to education throughout the country³ and defines the essential levels of services, i.e. both personal services, especially for hardship conditions, and essential services. In the Italian school system, the main challenges are educational poverty, early school leaving and school drop-out. The level of early school-leaving, i.e. the share of students leaving the school system without a qualification, although decreasing over time, remains one of the highest in Europe with marked regional differences (in 2020 the rate of early school-leaving in the regions of Southern Italy and the Islands was 16.3%, significantly higher than in the regions of Northern Italy 11%), gender differences (in 2020 the rate of early school-leaving was 15.6% for boys and 10.4% for girls). Lastly, drop-out is markedly higher among minors outside the family and of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti origin. A key strategy for preventing educational poverty is investment in educational services for

1 As enshrined in the constitutional reform referred to in Constitutional Law no. 3 of 18 October 2001 "Amendments to Title V of Part Two of the Constitution".

2 See Law no. 59 of 15 March 1997; Presidential Decree no. 275 of 8 March 1999.

3 Paragraph 181(f) of Law no. 107 of 13 July 2015.

0-6 year olds. The agreement in the Unified Conference on the distribution of the resources of the National Fund for the Integrated System-0-6 for the financial years 2021 (second part), 2022 and 2023 was signed on 9 September 2021. It covers the remainder in 2021 with €43.5 million. For 2022 and 2023, €309 million will be provided for each year, in line with the 2021-2025 Five-Year Plan in phase of approval, which defines how and when the resources will be allocated directly to the municipalities by the Ministry of Education, following regional planning. The fund finances renovations and building safety, running costs and staff training. The budget laws for 2021 (Law no. 178/2020) and 2022 (Law no. 234/2021) provided for a significant increase in the annual allocation of the Municipal Solidarity Fund, which is specifically earmarked for the performance of some specific fundamental functions in the social sphere (in particular, social services, nurseries, transport for disabled students). More specifically, a special allocation will be made to increase the number of places available in the nurseries of the municipalities of the ordinary statute regions, as well as of the regions of Sicily and Sardinia, with a special focus on the municipalities where these services are most lacking. The funding, initially provided by the Budget Law for 2021 (Article 1, paragraph 791) was increased by the Budget Law for 2022 (Article 1, paragraphs 172- 174), which increased it to 120 million in 2022, 175 million for 2023, 230 million for 2024, 300 million for 2025, 450 million for 2026 and 1,100 million as from 2027, also redefining the distribution criteria, in terms of service objectives, in order to remove territorial imbalances in the provision of Early childhood education and care services. Lastly, the PNRR provides for investment in childcare services and pre-schools. This represents an investment of €4.6 billion, which will help us reach 50% of the supply of 0-3 services, currently stable at 26.9% (ISTAT). Of the 3.7 billion in the PNRR, 700 million (from 2021 to 2025) are so-called "outstanding" projects provided for by *Law no. 160 of 27 December 2019 (Budget Law 2020)*, by which the Fund for nurseries and pre-schools was established (Article 1, paragraphs 59 to 61, "for the financing of interventions relating to public works to secure, restructure, upgrade or construct buildings owned by municipalities and intended for nurseries and pre-schools"). Paragraph 59 provides that the fund will be set up in the budget of the Ministry of the Interior, with an endowment of €100 million for each of the years from 2021 to 2023 and €200 million for each of the years from 2024 to 2034. The Prime Ministerial Decree of 30 December 2020, which implements the aforementioned law, also provides for the possibility of constructing and building multifunctional family centres with the resources allocated. With reference to covering the costs of managing the services, as mentioned above, the legislator has provided with Law no. 178 of 30 December 2020 (*Budget Law 2021*) for an increase in the endowment of the *Municipal Solidarity Fund*.

With respect to the prevention of social exclusion on the educational and training front, including as a coordinated response to the effects of the pandemic, an innovative strategy that the National Childhood Guarantee Action Plan promotes is that of the Community Education Pacts, referred to in the Document for the planning of school, education and training activities in all the institutions of the National Education System for the school year 2020-2021⁴. These agreements link educational institutions, local authorities, public and private institutions, various Third Sector organisations, including associations, and aim to strengthen the educational offer through the integration of the public and private social sectors.

The promotion of educational activities complementing those of the traditional school curriculum is also foreseen by the National Social Policy Plan with the planning of the action called Get UP⁵, which is introduced as an innovative action for the Childhood Guarantee. In the pacts, like in Get Up, the active participation of students is a key element in making them conscious players in the learning process. On community education pacts, the regional education offices have launched calls for expressions of interest so that schools can make use of the funds earmarked for implementing these agreements. An active and responsible role of the territorial networks as educating communities is consistent with the investments envisaged in the PNRR, in particular in Mission 5 Cohesion and Inclusion and Mission 4 Education and Research in particular in the component Enhancing the supply of education services: from nurseries to universities. The 5th PNIA also recognises and enhances the role of territorial educational pacts, supporting the definition and consolidation of the educating community on the national territory in two actions (action 28 "*Recognition of educational community pacts and the elaboration of national guidelines on the educating community*" and action 29 "*Community pacts between national guidelines and the dissemination of participatory practices*").

⁴ Decree of the Ministry of Education Ref. 39 of 26/06/2020, Adoption of Planning Document for school, educational and training activities in all Institutions of the National Education System for the 2020/2021 school year.

⁵ <https://www.minori.gov.it/it/progetto-get-giovani-esperienze-trasformative-di-utilita-sociale-e-partecipazione>.

Regarding funds supporting the education system, the following should be noted:

- Single Fund for Student Welfare and the Right to Study, which provides scholarships for low-income secondary school students⁶;
- Fund for the total or partial free supply of textbooks for pupils fulfilling their compulsory education and for upper secondary school pupils with low income⁷.

6% of the total resources of the PNRR (€12.4 billion) are earmarked for investments in the various areas of education. The main objectives are to improve infrastructure, reduce the incidence of early school leaving and reduce territorial disparities in upper secondary schools by “strengthening students’ basic skills”. The text also makes explicit reference to equal opportunities, the strengthening of transversal skills, in particular *problem-solving*, communication, and other skills increasingly in demand on the labour market.

1.1.2 Health

As far as health is concerned, since 1979 Italy has had the National Health Service (Servizio Sanitario Nazionale - SSN), a system of structures, services and operators aimed at guaranteeing universal and equal access to health services to all citizens, in implementation of Article 32 of the Constitution. The fundamental principles on which the NHS has been based since its establishment by Law no. 833 of 1978 are universality, equality and equity. The services are provided by the local health authorities, hospitals and private establishments affiliated with the NHS. Citizens have access to NHS services without any differentiation of individual, social and economic conditions in implementation of the principle of equal access in relation to equivalent health needs, but there are specific obstacles to access for the most vulnerable groups.

The constitutional law reforming Title V of the Constitution (Constitutional Law. 1/2001) established health protection as a matter of shared legislation between the State and the Regions.

Accordingly, the State has the competence to determine the Essential Levels of Care (LEA), which must be provided throughout the national territory, while the Regions plan and manage health care in full autonomy within the territorial scope of their competence. The State, Regions, Authorities and Municipalities, within their respective spheres of competence, work together to ensure uniform health conditions and safeguards throughout the country and appropriate levels of health services for all citizens. The Prime Ministerial Decree of 12 January 2017 “*Definition and updating of the Essential Levels of Care referred to in Article 1, paragraph 7 of Legislative Decree 30/12/1992 no.502*”, which defines the new LEAs⁸.

The verification of the obligations of the Regions is assigned⁹ to the Standing Committee for the verification of the provision of Essential Levels of Care (Livelli Essenziali di Assistenza - LEA), which assesses the appropriateness and effectiveness in the use of resources and monitors them using a defined set of indicators. As part of the NAP evaluation processes, it will be proposed to introduce indicators suitable for minors, in particular Child Guarantee targets, by updating the set of indicators concerning LEA provision. In the field of children’s health, the law establishing the National Health Service to date provides for maternal and child health protection, free vaccinations and paediatric care for all children (the ability to choose a paediatrician at no cost to the family is guaranteed for children from 0 to 14 years of age), the protection of the right to conscious and responsible parenthood, and the inclusive promotion of health in the age of development. It also provides for two levels of intervention: primary care at territorial level and specialist care provided on an in-patient basis. Overall, there are more than 27,000 health care facilities for taking care of patients with their various care needs. There are 2,277 family advice centres and 7,408 free-choice paediatric surgeries, as well as preventive services and Child and Adolescent Neuropsychiatry (NPIA) services provided by 101 health authorities. Included in the guarantee framework of the public health system are: the necessary and adequate services for the early diagnosis of congenital diseases, the promotion of healthy lifestyles and organised screening programmes; nutritional surveillance and prevention (art.2 Presidential Decree 12 January 2017).

6 Legislative Decree no. 63 of 13 April 2017, Article 9.

7 Legislative Decree no. 297 of 16 April 1994.

8 <https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/lea/dettaglioContenutiLea.jsp?lingua=italiano&id=4773&area=Lea&menu=vuoto>.

9 State - Regional Agreement of 23 March 2005.

Regarding the prevention of congenital diseases, it should be noted that neonatal screening in Italy is compulsory and provided free of charge to all newborns¹⁰.

In line with the framework of the European Recommendation, we would like to point out the guideline document "Investing early in health: actions and strategies in the first thousand days of life"¹¹ which focuses on the main preventive actions, with proven effectiveness, that can be adopted by stakeholders, as well as in local and national policies, useful for minimising the major risk factors and strengthening protection factors in the first 1000 days of life, i.e. in the period between conception and the first two years of a child's life.

As regards intersectoral School-Health actions, the following should be noted:

- The document "Integrated policy guidelines for Health Promoting Schools"¹²;
- The Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health (recently renewed in January 2022) for the protection of the right to health, study and inclusion¹³.

Finally, it should be noted that the PNRR devotes €15.63 billion to the "Health Mission", of which 7 is aimed at strengthening territorial health care and proximity networks. It is envisaged that 1226 "Community Houses" will be created to house all territorial services, including those for women, girls, and children. A further 11.7 billion is earmarked for investments in social protection.

1.1.3 Nutrition

Although the Italian legal system does not provide a national regulatory *framework* for the right to adequate food and although the Italian Constitution does not provide for explicit protection of the right to food, there is indirect protection through Italy's adherence to international treaties that guarantee it. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (MLPS) is the institution holding the Operational Programme I of the FEAD for the 2014-2020 planning period. The European Aid Fund for the Most Deprived Persons FEAD reaches about half of the child population in absolute poverty and about a quarter of those in relative poverty. The central coordination takes place between the MLPS, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (MIPAAF) and the Agency for Agricultural Supplies (AGEA)¹⁴.

At local level, the Canteen Commissions exercise, in the interest of users and in collaboration with the municipal administration and stakeholders, a task of supervision and control over the quality and quantity of the food given to pupils with reference to the dietary tables in force. The presence of a canteen service is a useful element in combating early school leaving (positively affecting school time and pupils' stay at school) and food poverty, which are key elements in combating educational poverty. School meals fall into the category of services on individual demand, which are organised independently by the municipalities. Over the years, these services have spread considerably in the North, in contrast to the South of Italy. Access to full-time education is a clear indicator of the use of the canteen service, while, on the other hand, the lack of full-time education and the school canteen are closely related to pupil drop-out.

In order to increase the service, it is necessary to consider three aspects that affect Italian municipalities and their competencies: cost of infrastructure, partly covered by the PNRR and by investments already made by municipalities; cost of service, which shows different approaches at territorial level; quality of service.

The resources of the Childhood Guarantee can also be used to influence the cost of the service through the municipalities, reducing the contribution to be paid by families in need. The levelling of access to school canteens, as compared to ex-FEAD systems for food aid, would make it possible to integrate public (school canteens) and third sector (food parcels) efforts in combating food poverty.

10 With the State-Regions Agreement of 16 December 2010, specific lines of programmatic actions have been identified for the promotion and improvement of the quality, safety, and appropriateness of pre-natal care, and also to reduce the number of caesarean sections. These actions are coordinated and monitored by the National Birth Pathway Committee and similar centres set up within each Region and Autonomous Province as well as at the level of the local health authority. For further information, see: <http://www.quadernidellasalute.it/portale/donna/dettaglioContenutiDonna.jsp?lingua=italiano&id=4483&area=Saluteonna&menu=nascita>.

11 The document is available at the following address: www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_publicazioni_3120_allegato.pdf.

12 See https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/temi/p2_6.jsp?area=stiliVita&id=2378&lingua=italiano&menu=progetti. 'Agreement at the State-Regions Conference of 17 January 2019.

13 Protocol originally stipulated in 2015. The document is available at the following link: https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/news/documenti/newsletter/Protocollo_intesa_MIUR_MS_rev_27032015.pdf.

14 The national coordination offices of the Lead Partner Organisations are: the Food Bank Association of Rome, the Banco delle opere di Carità, Caritas Italiana, the Community of S. Egidio, the Italian Red Cross and the Food Bank Foundation.

1.1.4 Housing

The high level of housing deprivation, caused by unsustainable rents, is recorded by the data on evictions for arrears. Faced with the so-called “eviction emergency” exacerbated by the pandemic, Law Decree no. 18 of 17 March 2020 (*Decreto Cura Italia*) had provided for a freeze on evictions for arrears until the end of 2021. Significant rental support policies are, in particular, the National Fund for Supporting Access to Rented Housing (hereinafter FNS) (Law no. 431 of 9 December 1998 “regulating leases and the release of properties used for residential purposes”) and the Fund for blameless default (Decree-Law no. 102 of 31 August 2013 converted with amendments by Law no. 124/2013).

Concerning the severe housing emergency, in 2015, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies approved the Guidelines for Combating Severe Adult Exclusion¹⁵. With these guidelines, Italy has officially adopted the *Housing First* approach, which identifies housing as the starting point for social inclusion paths. At central level, the role of the Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Sustainable Mobility is supported by the competence of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, with exclusive reference to housing support services for people with particular needs (various forms of assisted living), including services aimed at serious housing marginalisation (e.g. homeless people). The combination of different competences in housing clearly makes governance complex. Regional and municipal administrations have wide margins of action on procedures, access requirements and amounts to be transferred under the National Fund for Supporting Access to Housing (NSF) and can increase the fund with their own resources. Access to the FNS depends on budgetary constraints and the choices of local authorities regarding the criteria for disbursing the available funds. Consequently, given the same economic conditions, families residing in different municipalities may or may not receive the subsidy, or may receive it in a different amount. Regions and municipalities are responsible for the planning and administration of public housing, but they are not able to meet the demand for social housing: Italy has only 4% of public and/or social housing stock, while the European average is 20%. Due to the strong management and administrative decentralisation of public housing, it is not possible to give a consistent picture of the level of coverage of public interventions on a national scale, even in terms of data. This is an area that will be explored in agreement with the State-Regions Conference and ANCI, since it is a field where there are strong territorial differences in terms of the supply of public housing and the characteristics of the private market, and an Observatory on housing conditions will be created, which will be able to benefit from the information system being set up by the Ministry of Infrastructure¹⁶. In relation to the status of girls and boys of foreign origin, there is a need to liaise also with the National Anti-Discrimination Office of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (Unar) in order to combat discrimination on the private market, as highlighted by the protocol signed with the Italian Federation of Professional Real Estate Agents aimed at preventing and combating all types of discrimination linked to the procedures of purchase or rental of real estate. Mission 5 “Cohesion and Inclusion” of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) foresees an investment in both Urban Regeneration and Social Housing interventions (Component 2.2, €9.02 billion) and in interventions aimed at enhancing the supply of temporary housing (based on the *Housing First approach*). However, there are no specific references to the hardship or housing exclusion of minors.

1.1.5 Social responses and national projects for specific targets

The law n. 328/2000 established the integrated system of social work within an institutional and social collaboration network, based on the principle of vertical and horizontal subsidiarity. Up to now, there was no organic definition of the essential levels of benefits relating to civil and social rights (LEP), which constitute the fulcrum of the Italian multilevel welfare system. With the legislation that introduced the national measure to combat poverty (Law 33/2017 on Support for active inclusion, Legislative Decree 147/2017 on Inclusion Income, Legislative Decree 4/2019 on Citizenship Income) essential levels of benefits have been formally defined not only in the monetary component, but also in the active policy component, setting the basis for the recognition of a real individual right to be taken care of by social or labour services. In the context of the current national social planning, a first group of essential levels of benefits relating to civil and social rights (LEPS) have been declared, already identified in legislation or in view of their formal recognition, which then took place with the Budget Law No 234 of 30 December 2021, Article 1, paragraph 170. Together with the LEPS, funding arrangements have been identified to ensure their effective implementation. This includes the implementation of Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee.

¹⁵ <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/poverta-ed-esclusione-sociale/focus-on/Poverta-estreme/Documents-Linee-di-indirizzo-per-il-contrasto-alla-grave-emarginazione-adulta.pdf>.

¹⁶ See sheet 6 of GROUP 3. The fight against poverty and the right to live in relation to the information system of the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Therefore, a process of progressive identification of LEPS, as per Law no. 328 of 8 November 2000, art. 22) is under way, aimed at guaranteeing also to the social services system the right reliability and structure in view of a more effective, appropriate and integrated support to the recipients of the interventions. Table 1.1 identifies the LEPS and some reinforcing actions that are identified as priorities in the present planning within the framework of the National Social Plan, the Poverty Plan, and the Plan for non-self-sufficiency. The last column of the table indicates the sources of financing identified for each of them, consisting of national funds and/or European funds, from an integrated perspective as far as possible. The programming of the national resources dedicated to combating poverty and social exclusion of children unfolds first and foremost thanks to the planning carried out within the national body of *the Network of Social Protection and Inclusion*, established by art 21 of Legislative Decree no. 147 of 15 September 2017, chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and composed of representatives of central institutions (Ministry of Economy and Finance, Ministry of Education, University and Research, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, Family Policy Department - PCM) of the Regions, Municipalities and INPS. The purpose of the network is to promote greater territorial consistency in the provision of services, to define guidelines for interventions, to involve the social partners, the Third Sector and all the productive and social forces of the community to improve the processes of accompaniment towards autonomy of the most fragile people, including minors and their families. In July 2021, the Network approved the new National Plan of Social Interventions and Services¹⁷, which provides a unified framework containing within it the National Social Plan 2021-2023 and the Plan for Combating Poverty 2021-2023, and set up a steering committee, the seat of governance for social projects managed by the Ministry under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR).

The National Social Plan identifies priorities linked to the National Social Policy Fund (NSF) and its programming. Similarly, the Plan for Social Interventions and Services to Combat Poverty identifies the main anti-poverty interventions to be carried out on the territory. The National Social Plan, in order to pursue cohesion and inclusion, aims at building a public infrastructure of services, also by enhancing the contribution of the community and its third sector organisations, but without departing from the responsibility of the different levels of government, each according to its competences, in guaranteeing access to essential services.

The National Plan of Interventions and Social Services 2021-2023 envisages that the Childhood Guarantee is one of the measures identified as a priority in the planning of the National Social Plan and in relation to the related FNPS (MLPS 2021, 12, table 1.1). The plan pursues the objective of strengthening the Childhood Guarantee also through the implementation of LEPS. The Plan reaffirms the co-participation of funding sources (as already enshrined in Legislative Decree no. 147 of 15 September 2017 establishing REI) and in particular of the REACT-EU programme with regard to the objectives - and LEPS - of the Poverty Plan and of the PNRR with regard to the National Social Plan itself. From the point of view of cross-sectoral coordination, the Plan pays attention to the role of the Third Sector, which has also been strengthened by the recent Guidelines on the relationship between public administrations and Third Sector entities, set out in Articles 55-57 of the Third Sector Code (Ministerial Decree no. 72 of 31/3/2021).

Table 1.1 Essential Level of services (LEPS) and main strengthening actions

Interventions	acronym	type of intervention	Service/ Monetary transfer	scope of discussion in the Social Plan (1)	main sources of national funding (2)
Use of the ISEE as a means test	ISEE	LEPS	S	PSN	Budget
Professional social work.		LEPS	S	PPOV	Poverty Fund, FNPS, PON Inclusion, Municipal Solidarity Fund.
Strengthening of social professions		Upgrade	S	PSN	FNPS, Poverty Fund, PON Inclusion, Municipal Solidarity Fund.
Social Task Force		LEPS	S	PPOV	React, Poverty Fund, FNPS, PON Inclusion
Single entry point	PUA	Upgrade	S	PSN	FNPS, FNA
Multidimensional evaluation and individualized project		LEPS/Upgrade	S	PSN PPOV	FNPS, Poverty Fund, PON Inclusion, POC
Supervision of social service staff		LEPS	S	PSN	PNRR, FNPS
Protected resignation.		LEPS	S	PSN/PNA	PNRR, FNPS, FNA
Prevention of child-placement	PIPII	LEPS	S	PSN	PNRR, Poverty Fund

¹⁷ <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/priorita/Documents/Piano-Nazionale-degli-Interventi-e-dei-Servizi-Sociali-2021-2023.pdf>.

Child Guarantee		Upgrade	S	PSN	PON Inclusion
Promotion of school and local relations	GET UP	Upgrade	S	PSN	FNPS, POC, PON Inclusion
Careleavers		Upgrade	S	PSN PPOV	Poverty Fund
Monetary Income Support	RdC/Social allowance	LEPS	MT	PPOV	Budget (Rdc Fund)
Social or work taking charge	Social inclusion pact or work inclusion pact.	LEPS	S	PPOV	Poverty Fund, PON Inclusion
Food Support	FEAD	Upgrade	S	PPOV	FEAD, REACT, PON Inclusion 2021-2027
Housing First		Upgrade	S	PPOV	PNRR, Poverty Fund
Centers to combat poverty	Post Stations	Upgrade	S	PPOV	PNRR, Poverty Fund
Fictitious Residence Services.		LEPS	S	PPOV	Poverty Fund
Projects “after us” for the priority categories.		Service goal	S	PNA	“After Us” Fund
Projects “after us” and “independent life”		Upgrade/LEPS	S	PNA	PNRR, FNA, “After Us” Fund
Helplessness allowance		LEPS	MT	PNA	Public budget
Services for non self-sufficiency		Upgrade/LEPS	S	PNA	FNA, dedicated resources

Legend of Table: PSN National Social Plan; PPOV Plan for the fight against poverty; PNA Plan for the non self-sufficient; FNPS National Fund for Social Policies; FNA Fund for non self-sufficient people; PNRR National Recovery and Resilience Plan; REACT EU Recovery Assistance of Cohesion and the Territories of Europe; FEAD European Fund for aid to the poor; POC Complementary operational plan for inclusion; ISEE Equivalent Economic Situation Indicator; PUA single entry point; Rdc Basic Income.

The 2021 Budget Law (Law 178/2020) led to the formal definition in law of an essential level of care defined in terms of a ratio of social workers to population of at least 1:5,000 and to allocate resources aimed at its achievement within the public service (art. 1, paragraphs 797-804) Further LEAS¹⁸ were identified in the Plan and defined in law with the 2022 Budget Law (art. 1, paragraph 170, Law 234/2021).

The National Social Plan foresees an allocation of the FNPS for “interventions for minor persons” (MLPS 2021, 21), about 192 million/year until 2022. National funding is growing substantially. In addition to the national funds, as of 2021, resources specifically earmarked for strengthening territorial social services have been added by Art. 1 paragraph 791 of the 2021 Budget Law (Law 178/2020) within the Municipal Solidarity Fund, amounting to 216 million in 2021, increasing to 651 as of 2030. This provides certainty of resources and offers the possibility of effective planning of interventions.

In addition to national funding, European funds or national funds linked to European programming have increasingly been added since 2014. The Inclusion and Poverty PN (social services) and the FEAD (mainly dedicated to food support). To these REACT-EU sums are added, included in the tail end of the PN Inclusion and Anti-Poverty and FEAD 2014-2020 programming, amounting to 90 and 190 million respectively. The picture is completed by the resources (about 300 million) of the POC Inclusion and the PNRR, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which has allocated 1.45 billion for three specific nationally directed social interventions (concerning social and health interventions, interventions in support of persons with disabilities and interventions against extreme poverty).

All the funds mentioned above are for the most part intended for the implementation of interventions that will be carried out by the territorial social areas. This scenario leads us to consider the connection that will have to progressively strengthen the link between the national programming with a more strategic character, the regional social programming and the territorial programming in charge of the Ambiti Territoriali Sociali, in compliance with the indications of art. 23 of Legislative Decree no. 147 of 15 September 2017.

With regard to prevention and support measures for so-called vulnerable families, the P.I.P.P.I. programme is central¹⁹ (Programme of Intervention for the Prevention of Institutionalisation) the result of the collaboration

¹⁸These are the following services: a) emergency social care; b) supervision of social services personnel; c) services for safe discharge from social care; d) prevention of family separation; e) postal services for the homeless; f) supported and independent living projects for the disabled.

¹⁹<https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/infanzia-e-adolescenza/focus-on/sosporte-alla-genitorialita/Pagine/default.aspx>.

between MLPS and the University of Padua, the approach and logic of which have been systemised and disseminated thanks to the approval in the Unified Conference, in December 2017, of the National Guidelines for Intervention with Children and Families in Vulnerable Situations²⁰ (P.I.P.P.I. model). These Guidelines, together with the Guidelines more focused on the area of protection on family foster care²¹ (approved in 2012) and the Guidelines for the reception in residential services for minors²² (also approved in 2017), sanction the official nature of a method of taking charge and accompaniment that starts from prevention and embraces the area of protection, whose implementation is supported thanks to the resources of the FNPS. All the actions and interventions outlined in the Guidelines concerning intervention with children and families in vulnerable situations have been incorporated into the definition of a LEPS. In order to support the recognition of P.I.P.P.I. model, activities as LEPS, there is annual funding from the FNPS of about 4,000,000 euros. As of 2022 with an extension to all the social territorial areas on the PNRR with total funding of €84,600,000, an action already launched with public notice no. 1/2022 of 15 February 2022. Further extension will be supported from the resources of the PN Inclusion and fight against poverty as a specific action of the Child Guarantee.

In relation to specific targets of the Recommendation, the following national actions are recalled that the NAP intends to strengthen

- the *National Project for the Inclusion and Integration of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti Children*²³, promoted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Istituto degli Innocenti and supported with a Pon Inclusion allocation for the period 2018 - 2023 for a total amount of 3,600,000, which to date is being implemented in the main Italian metropolitan cities;
- the *National Experimentation of interventions in favour of those who, on reaching the age of majority, live outside their family of origin on the basis of a provision of the judicial authority*²⁴, is carried out in cooperation with the Regions and Local Authorities and the Istituto degli Innocenti and is aimed at care leavers, supported by a three-year funding of 15 million Euros, renewed;
- *The "Neet Working"*²⁵ *National Emergence and Orientation Plan*, aims to reduce the over three million young people in the 15-34 age group who do not study, do not work and do not undergo training, adopted by the Department of Youth Policies and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies;
- the *"PERCORSI" project*²⁶ *for the socio-work integration of vulnerable targets, in particular for unaccompanied foreign minors*, was launched in 2016 with the aim of creating integrated paths of socio-work integration aimed at unaccompanied minors, including those entitled or seeking international protection, and young migrants who have entered Italy as unaccompanied minors.

In relation to the system of public support for families with children, with particular attention to child poverty, two important measures are worth mentioning that have profoundly changed the overall scenario and significantly mitigated the inherent distortions in public welfare policies that families with underage children have suffered over the decades:

- the Single and Universal Allowance for Dependent Children (AUUF) (Legislative Decree no. 230 of 21 December 2021 implementing Delegated Law no. 46 of 1 April 2021) in favour of households for each child up to the age of 21 and from the seventh month of pregnancy, which rationalises and replaces in a single solution the existing measures - IRPEF deductions for dependent children, allowances for the family unit, allowance for the third child, childbirth allowance or baby bonus, birth premium. The Single Allowance, in force since March, aims to cover, from a universal perspective, all those families with daughters and sons who did not have access to household allowance (in particular, self-employed workers, unemployed people and direct farmers).
- the establishment of the Citizenship Income (RdC)²⁷ (Decree-Law no. 4 of 28/1/2019, converted into Law no. 26 28 March 2019), a measure aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion, the disbursement is upon adherence to a personalised path of accompaniment to employment and/or social inclusion. In the

20 <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/notizie/Pagine/Linee-di-indirizzo-per-il-sosporte-alle-famiglie-vulnerabili-per-la-tutela-dei-bambini-e-dei-ragazzi.aspx>.

21 <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/infanzia-e-adolescenza/focus-on/minorenni-fuori-famiglia/Pagine/default.aspx>

22 <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/infanzia-e-adolescenza/focus-on/minorenni-fuori-famiglia/Documents/Linee-guida-accoglienza-minorenni.pdf>.

23 <https://www.progettonazionale.it/>.

24 <https://poninclusion.lavoro.gov.it/areeintervento/lottaallapoverta/Pagine/Care-Leavers.aspx>.

25 <https://www.politichegiovani.gov.it/comunicazione/news/2022/1/firma-piano-neet/>.

26 <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/notizie/Pagine/Minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati-al-via-il-progetto-Percorsi-4.aspx#:~:text=3%20novembre%202021,ingresso%20in%20Italia%20come%20MSNA>.

27 <https://www.redditicittadinanza.gov.it/>.

so-called Social Inclusion Pacts, families with underage children benefiting from the Citizenship Income commit to ensuring school attendance and engagement, as well as preventive and curative behaviours aimed at protecting children's health directly linked to the objectives of the Childhood Guarantee in terms of educational and health rights of underage persons. The Budget Law for 2019 established the Citizenship Income Fund (financed from 2022 with 8,784.9 million euro and increased by 1,065.3 million euro for the same year by Law 234/2021).

The Poverty Fund, instead, is used to finance the interventions provided for by the National Plan for Combating Poverty and to strengthen the services accompanying households benefiting from the Citizenship Income on their path to autonomy, defined through the signing of Pacts for Social Inclusion, which acquire the nature of essential levels of services, within the limits of available resources.

The resources related to the Poverty Fund amount to a total of 619,000,000 euros for 2021, 552,094,934 euros for 2022 and 439,000,000 euros for 2023, taking into account the resources allocated to the *Ambiti territoriali* for the Contribution related to the recruitment of social workers.

The interaction between the Single and Universal Allowance for Dependent Children and the Citizenship Income seems virtuous - although to be verified in future monitoring of the two measures, especially in the intensity of the interaction. Even though it is not a measure against poverty, the Single and Universal Allowance for Dependent Children is a means-tested measure - which assumes more relevant amounts for the most vulnerable families - and therefore interacts well with the measures more properly related to the fight against child poverty, alleviating in part any possible distortions - one thinks in this regard of the corrective effect that the introduction of the AUUF has on the equivalence scale of the Citizenship Income, also due to the universal accessibility of the measure. The interesting simulations on monetary transfers in the fight against poverty and social exclusion of children, contained in the UNICEF document, *Deep Dive Analysis of Policies, Programs, Services, Budgets, and Mechanisms Addressing Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in Italy*, while confirming that children are the period of life in which they experience the highest risk of poverty, show the growing positive impact on the reduction of poverty for minors of the recent innovations in monetary transfers from the Citizenship Income and the Single and Universal Allowance for Dependent Children.

With regard to children with disabilities, the support measures for individuals and families see a significant increase during the current legislature, it should be noted, among others, that for support teachers with Law no: 178 of 30 December 2020, the Fund for the increase of teaching staff is refinanced amounting to: 62.76 million euros in the year 2021; 321.34 million euros in the year 2022; 699.43 million euros in the year 2023; 916.36 million euros for each of the years 2024 and 2025; 924.03 million euros in the year 2026; 956.28 million euros in the year 2027; 1,003.88 million euros in the year 2028; 1,031.52 million euros from the year 2029. The number of support teachers is increased by: 5,000 posts from the school year 2021/2022; 11,000 posts from the school year 2022/ 2023; 9,000 posts from the school year 2023/2024 (Ministry of Education).

1.1.6 Supporting the community and families

The initiatives taken by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in support of vulnerable families include both the above-mentioned innovative measure of the single allowance within a framework of strategically defined reforms, the so-called "Family ACT", and a series of measures in favour of the NAP targets. In particular, several focuses can be identified that intersect, directly and indirectly, with the themes of the European Recommendation.

With regard to the Family Act, the bill proposed by the Minister for Equal Opportunities and the Family and the then Minister for Labour and Social Policies, containing "Delegations to the government for the adoption of universal allowance and the introduction of measures in support of the family" is an organic plan of measures designed for families with children.

The draft law committed the Government to: strengthening policies to support families with regard to educational and schooling costs, as well as sports and cultural activities; reforming parental leave, with the extension to all professional categories and mandatory and structural paternity leave; introducing incentives for women's work, from deductions for care services to the promotion of flexible work; ensuring that young people under 35 play a leading role, promoting their financial autonomy with support for university expenses and for renting their first home.

There are therefore clear links with the aims of the European Recommendation, which can be further implemented by the future National Plan for the Family currently being drawn up by the National Observatory for the Family, a technical support body for the development of national measures for families, is established within the Department for Family Policies. The Observatory is currently working on the final steps for the elaboration of a new National Plan for the Family, which will be based on the following aspects: the demographic

issue; the relationship between genders and generations; the issue of inequalities; the issue of work from a gender equality perspective. Critical issues and proposals for overcoming them have been identified for each of the areas considered. Many of these proposals respond to the problems and targets of the Child Guarantee. The project "Support for the development of Family Centres and the coordination of interventions in the field of protection and social inclusion services for multi-problem families and/or particularly disadvantaged persons" is implemented by the Department for Family Policies - Presidency of the Council of Ministers in collaboration with Studiare Sviluppo, as implementing entity, within the framework of the National Operational Programme "Inclusion" ESF 2014-2020 - specific objective 9.1 "Reducing poverty, social exclusion and promoting social innovation".

The National Operational Programme "Inclusion" supports the definition of common intervention models to fight poverty and promotes, through system actions and pilot projects, innovative models of social intervention and integration of communities and people at risk of exclusion, such as Family Centres. More specifically, in line with the PON Axis 3 guidelines, "Systems and models of social intervention", the project promotes the distribution and consolidation of Family Centres on the national territory to support multi-problem families.

As part of the Childhood Guarantee pilot phase, a peer support model for vulnerable families is being developed in Family Centres, with a focus on families with children with disabilities. The project aims at enhancing the role of the family and the parental competences of care and nursing, especially through peer support schemes, in which families support, inform and guide each other in dedicated spaces and times.

Another activity carried out by the Department for Family Policies that reaches out to many children is the Summer Centres. In the last two years, 2020 and 2021, the Department has provided funding for municipalities that, in partnership with other public bodies or third sector entities, carry out initiatives to strengthen daytime summer centres, territorial socio-educational services and centres with an educational and recreational function, intended for the activities of minors in the 0-16 age group. 135 million euros have been earmarked for the Summer Centres for both 2020 and 2021, and about 95% of the municipalities have signed up. Some of these activities aim at the implementation of non-formal and informal education and play activities for the empowerment of children and adolescents, oriented towards the promotion of active citizenship, social inclusion and the fight against educational poverty, participation, and environmental protection. Actions in support of families also include measures to reconcile family and work, from parental leave to smart working, and resources allocated to certain school orders. Regarding the latter, it is important to mention the Fund for nursery schools and pre-schools (mentioned in the section on education) and the Bonus for nursery schools and home care for families with children between 0 and 3 years old attending a nursery school (public or private) or needing home care for chronic diseases.

Lastly, in a more general perspective of attention to gender inequalities, it seems appropriate to point out two interventions by the Department for Equal Opportunities on gender equality. The first is the coming into force of the National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021-2026), a document that identifies 5 priorities (work, income, skills, time, and power) on which to act to guide government action in terms of equality. In the second case, under Measure 5 Component 1 of the PNRR (for funding amounting to 10 million euro), the definition of a national gender equality certification system is envisaged, to be submitted to enterprises, and based on the creation of an information system for the collection of gender-disaggregated data and certification information with the contribution of the Department for Equal Opportunities.

Among the resources that will contribute, albeit indirectly, to supporting the implementation of specific objectives of the European Recommendation, it is necessary to refer to the Fondo Infanzia Adolescenza (Fund for Childhood and Adolescence) referred to in Law no. 285 of 28 August 1997, Disposizioni per la promozione di diritti e di opportunità per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza (Dispositions for the promotion of rights and opportunities for children and adolescents), which still supports innovative projects and services in a fundamental territorial network composed of the 15 cities that are the direct beneficiaries of the Fund, i.e. Venice, Milan, Turin, Genoa, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, Bari, Brindisi, Taranto, Reggio Calabria, Catania, Palermo and Cagliari. The network of cities meets periodically (Coordination Table 285) and represents a laboratory of experiences that can offer food for thought and experimentation in relation to the objectives of the Child Guarantee.

Finally, in relation to specific targets, unaccompanied foreign minors, children with disabilities and adolescents, specific contributions in terms of direction and analysis, as well as in terms of intervention, linked to the drafting of the National Plan for preventing and combating the sexual abuse and exploitation of minors, by the Observatory for combating paedophilia and child pornography, will certainly be valorised during the subsequent updates.

1.1.7 The Child Guarantee Framework: the Child and Adolescent Guarantee Authority.

In this description of the institutional and planning context within which the Action Plan and the Recommendation are placed, it was impossible not to mention the Guarantor Authority for Childhood and Adolescence (Agia), established by Law no. 112 of 12 July 2011, a third and independent authority, set up to guarantee the rights of children. The numerous competences attributed to the Authority (article 3 Law no. 112/2011) can be traced back to different actions: promotion and awareness-raising; cooperation with the networks that in various capacities deal with minors; elaboration of proposals, opinions, and recommendations. The listening and participation of children and young people is central and transversal. To this end, Agia implemented a strategic participatory mechanism through the Consultation of Girls and Boys and engaged in listening to unaccompanied minors, the results of which are included in a report.

The Authority promotes the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other relevant international instruments, as well as projects aimed at ensuring that children and young people are aware of their rights and that they are fully entitled to them. They include, by way of example, the projects "Repair: conflicts and mediation at school", "Vademecum From zero to six: rights at school", "Speech groups for children of separated parents", "The Charter of Rights for Children of Detained Parents", "Children Speak Right(s)", a CRC outreach project. The Supervisory Authority is also engaged in study and proposal activities, including research on the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of children and young people and the study on early school leaving, as well as in monitoring activities of the voluntary guardianship system pursuant to Article 11 of Law no. 47 of 2 April 2017.

The main instruments with which the Guarantor Authority carries out its action are recommendations and notes, which pursue the objective of moral persuasion and direct the action of institutions in terms of legislation and government action. At the Authority's instigation, it is also envisaged that it will participate as an observer (permanent guest) in the activities of the main collegial bodies entrusted with the definition of strategic interventions of policies dedicated to persons under the age of 18.

The Authority chairs the National Conference for guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents, which is composed of regional and autonomous province guarantors. The Guarantee Conference promotes the adoption of common lines of action and a constant exchange of data and information about persons under the age of majority. The Authority took part in the planning phase of this Plan and will continue to do so, maintaining its third-party role in guaranteeing rights, by participating as a permanent guest in the Plan's national coordination body, as well as carrying out ongoing monitoring of the actions envisaged by listening to persons of minor age.

1.2 Relationship between existing national strategies and other policy measures and the NAP

The Ministry of Labour is home to the Managing Authority for the European Social Fund resources dedicated to the implementation of the National Operational Plan (PON) Inclusion and the National Agency for Active Labour Policies (ANPAL) which plays the role of Lead Authority for the European Social Fund plus, including the part reserved for the design for the implementation of the Childhood Guarantee. The new European Social Fund will also include resources for food and material assistance for people suffering from severe material deprivation.

Also important is the link with the Social Protection and Inclusion Network and the National Observatory for Children and Adolescents.

In Italy (as in most EU countries), coordination between institutions dedicated to the five *policy* areas covered by the Childhood Guarantee is not yet fully developed. The systems of education, health and social services and interventions have developed in parallel over the decades; attempts at programmatic and planning integration are still under way, starting with the *governance* structures that have been created over the years: the National Observatory for Childhood and Adolescence referred to in Presidential Decree 103 of 2007 (and established by Law no. 451 of 23 December 1997), which is the main coordination table for children's and adolescents' rights and which brings together all the most important players in the sector, public authorities, civil society, social partners and employers; the table of reserved cities, as provided for by Law 285 of 28 August 1997; thematic tables (e.g. foster care and reception) and the Network for Social Protection and Social Inclusion.

In Italy, the President of the Council of Ministers - Department for Family Policies - is responsible for guiding and coordinating child and adolescent policies, in accordance with the specific competences of the other central administrations. Within this framework, social and inclusion policies are the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health are in charge respectively of the management of the national education system and of health and prevention structures, including at territorial level.

Aware of the fact that the programming exercise required by the EU also requires linking up with existing planning and investments to “ensure the coherence of policies in the social, education, health, nutrition and housing sectors at national, regional and local level and, where possible, increase their relevance for supporting children in an integrated manner”, the Plan therefore takes into account the addresses and proposals contained in the following programming and policy acts:

- National plan for social interventions and services 2021 - 2023 in its two components: National Social Plan 2021-2023 and National Plan for Social Interventions and Services to Combat Poverty 2021-2023 (national integrated social policy programming plans);
- 5th Plan of action and interventions for the protection of the rights and development of persons of developmental age 2022 -2023 (programmatic and guiding tool that identifies priority interventions in favour of persons of developmental age in implementation of the CRC) - 5th Plan Childhood Adolescence;
- Documents of the working groups of the national observatory on the condition of people with disabilities
- National prevention plan (instrument for programming prevention and health promotion);
- Technical table on mental health (programming acts, analysis of criticality of services /appropriateness of treatment paths);
- National digital school plan (MIUR guideline for Italian school innovation);
- “Investing early in health measures and strategies in the first thousand days of life”, the subject of the State-Regions Agreement of 20 February 2020.
- the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRP).

The working group has also referred, in the drafting of the national plan, to all the EU documents/ recommendations mentioned in the guidelines for the content and format of the National Action Plan for the implementation of the European Child Guarantee and has made an analytical connection, not included here for reasons of space, between the selected aims and objectives and the content of the European background documents mentioned in the guidelines for the drafting of the National Plans.

2. COORDINATION OF THE CHILD GUARANTEE

As underlined in the Recommendation, the governance system envisaged by our country to implement NAP considers existing national structures and mechanisms and strengthens them in accordance with the following criteria:

- Promoting the active participation of the girls and boys;
- Intersectorality and multidisciplinary;
- Enhancement of stakeholders.

The governance of the NAP is characterised by a two-dimensional development, as the implementation process involves both strong empowerment and growth of administrative management capacity on the part of the Administrations – both central and peripheral – and wide involvement of actors and stakeholders.

We can therefore identify both a *vertical governance*, which requires the building of a direct and stable relationship of collaboration with the Regions and the Municipalities starting from national level actions that are justified by the need to reduce territorial inequalities and achieve a minimum set of essential levels of social services to be ensured throughout the national territory; and a *horizontal governance*, along a horizontal chain that includes a series of institutional and non-institutional partners that play the role of intermediate bodies, implementing subjects or beneficiaries of the interventions.

2.1 The national coordinator

The national coordination figure identified by Italy is a figure characterised by extensive institutional and parliamentary experience, with particular reference to child and adolescent issues. It is currently the point of reference for the working group set up within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to draw up the action plan, as well as for the working group set up within the National Observatory for Children and Adolescents (Law 451/1997, currently regulated by Presidential Decree 103 of 14 May 2007). Its reference and coordination function will continue to be fully operational, involving all areas of governance, as illustrated below.

The national coordinator will be supported by a scientific/technical support structure with the following tasks: scientific advice in relation to the various areas of implementation of the plan and the recommendation; carrying out surveys and preparing reports in support of requests from the coordinator; collaboration on technical/scientific co-ordination – development of communication and dissemination materials and actions for the contents of the action plan and the initiatives promoted; information and training support for the implementation of the interventions; technical and scientific assistance for the collection, analysis and reporting of data for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the plan; technical and organisational support for the national steering committee connected to the action plan.

To support the national coordinating figure, an overall structure at central, regional, and local level is envisaged. In line with the European Council's Recommendation under point 11 a, adequate resources for its mandate are guaranteed.

2.2 The central level of governance on the Child Guarantee

At the national level, a steering committee will be set up - coordinated by the national coordinator - composed of representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the related ADG Pon Inclusion and FSE+, Department for Family Policies PCM, Ministry of Education and the related ADG Pon, Ministry of Health and the related ADG Pon, Conferenza Stato Regioni, ANCI, Istituto degli Innocenti, ISTAT.

The structure of the committee may take on different configurations, including other ministries in relation to specific strategic or in-depth needs.

The functions performed are: support to the national coordination figure who will have to maintain relations with the relevant European and national frameworks; sharing of the planning and design acts of each of the four strategic ministries in order to respond to the needs which are at the core of the European guarantee system; guarantee of connection with the Youth Advisory Board which will accompany the implementation and monitoring of the NAP; drafting of the monitoring and evaluation plan; monitoring of the implementation of the national CG plan and of the sectoral components (Education, Health, etc.) referred to therein; drafting of periodic reports/contribution to the collection of qualitative and quantitative information needed to fulfil the information obligation; periodic review of the plan also with a view to identifying and defining new essential levels of social services for children and adolescents; periodic meetings with the delegates of the individual Regions, whose tasks are indicated in point 2.2.

2.2.1 Link with general national policies on children and adolescents

Coordination with the National Observatory for Childhood and Adolescence, chaired by the Minister in charge of family policies, ensures that the contributions of strategic stakeholders for the Childhood Guarantee are exploited. The National Observatory, which is a permanent body, provides the opportunity, both through its plenary work and the possibility of setting up specific working groups, to facilitate the link between the specific programming exercise required by the EU and overall policies in the field of children and adolescents, including during the implementation phase of the plan.

In the context of the Observatory, with the establishment of a technical group for the Child Guarantee which will have the national coordinating figure as its reference, the following functions will be exercised: the link between the planning of the Child Guarantee and the national framework of policies for children and adolescents; sharing experiences and information in order to reconnect the aims of the implementation plan of the European Recommendation with the aims of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution no. 70 of 25 September 2015 (Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development); developing joint projects; analysing information from monitoring.

2.2.2 Link with national planning for social policies and inclusion

The Network for Social Protection and Social Inclusion, established at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy will accompany the implementation of the NAP by guaranteeing: linking the plan to national social and inclusion planning; sharing experiences and information to reconnect the aims of the plan implementing the European Recommendation with the aims of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals, mentioned above; developing joint projects; analysing information from monitoring.

A technical group for the Child Guarantee will also be set up within the Network, which will have the national coordinating figure as its reference.

2.2.3 Third sector and social partners

The participation of the social partners and the third sector in the general action of implementation and monitoring of the Childhood Guarantee is guaranteed by the national coordination figure, also through the National Observatory for Childhood and Adolescence and the Network for Social Protection and Social Inclusion.

The NAP's actions aim to support synergic models of relations between the public and the private social sector, which, by offering integrated projects between structures, favour and strengthen responses to the needs of children and adolescents.

2.3 The regional and local level of governance on the Child Guarantee

In order to ensure coherence between the guidelines and priorities shared in the NAP and territorial planning, it is necessary to strengthen the harmonisation of planning at national, regional and local levels of government, making them all consistent with the priorities of the NAP. According to the provisions of Article 117 of the Constitution and Legislative Decree 147/2017, the National Plan of interventions and social services 2021-2023, as well as the priorities assumed by the National Social Plan (PSN) among which the Childhood Guarantee is highlighted, on the social side "regional social planning constitutes a fundamental element where the LEPS and the guidelines and priorities shared in the National Social Plan are integrated with those of regional and autonomous provinces' competence" (See PSN 21 -23).

Consistent with the provisions of Article 8 of Law 328/2000, Article 23 of Legislative Decree no. 147/2017 and Article 1, paragraphs 160 - 164 of Law 234/2021, the Ambito territoriale sociale (ATS) is the optimal territorial dimension of reference for planning closest to the needs of children at risk of social exclusion, as well as for the integrated provision of services in the social, health and educational sectors. The ATS are therefore the best place to plan, coordinate and implement interventions and activities useful for achieving some of the NAP objectives. The integrated offer of measures and services according to the coordinated methods constitutes an essential level of services pursuant to Article 23 of Legislative Decree no. 147/2017. Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 5 art. 21 of Legislative Decree no. 147/2017, in compliance with the regional organisation methods and comparison with local self-governments, the territorial round tables of the Social Protection and Inclusion Network may provide the intersectoral and multidisciplinary coordination frameworks for planning and monitoring the local implementation of objectives and interventions provided for by the National CG Plan. At municipal level (art. 170 of the Consolidated Act on Local Authorities, Legislative

Decree no. 267 of 18 August 2000), the Single Programming Document (DUP) is the fundamental tool for the strategic and operational planning of local authorities, in which the objectives of the Recommendation must be included. *The aim is to strengthen and reinforce existing governance structures, including by law, while avoiding unnecessary duplication.*

Therefore, the following is anticipated:

at regional level:

- In order to have a stable political-institutional reference point that can activate the decentralised coordination structures and liaise with the national coordinator and the steering committee, at the regional level the President of the Region identifies a precise political delegation to be given to one of the councillors competent in the matter on the basis of the National Partnership Agreement that Italy has signed. In fact, with this agreement, Italy has undertaken to allocate at least 5% of the total ESF+ resources to support the fight against child poverty under the Social and Education Programming (National Programme for Inclusion and the Fight against Poverty and the National Programme for Schools and Skills 2021-2027). This delegate identified by the President of the Region also coordinates with the National Steering Committee.
- A regional steering committee on the Child Guarantee is set up – within the Regional Table of the Social Protection and Inclusion Network or through the creation of a special table – involving the social, health and education sectors, together with the third sector and professionals with expertise in the field. The committee is a formal and permanent institutional framework for coordination and planning and is chaired by the person delegated by the President of the Region.
- Direct permanent mechanisms (consultation groups) and indirect mechanisms (periodic surveys) are foreseen for the participation of minors in the co-design, implementation and monitoring of the actions related to the Child Guarantee system, ensuring that those involved represent the categories of minors most at risk of poverty and social exclusion as identified in the Child Guarantee Recommendation, respecting gender equality.

At local level:

- The assumption of the objectives pursued by the Childhood Guarantee in the municipal Single Programming Document;
- the activation, within the Territorial Table of the Network of Protection and Social Inclusion, or within the Conference of Mayors or the Social Metropolitan City, of a local steering committee on the Child Guarantee (social, health, educational and third sector sectors and representatives of the boys' and girls' participatory bodies), which is a formal and permanent institutional context of connection and participatory planning with the stakeholders to facilitate the monitoring, at local level, of the actions envisaged by the NAP. This group can also serve to ensure coherence between the programming of the area plan (where it exists) and the Child Guarantee objectives envisaged in the DUP;
- the activation of permanent direct mechanisms (consultation groups) and/or indirect mechanisms (periodic surveys) for the participation of minors for the purpose of co-designing, implementing, and monitoring the actions referred to the Child Guarantee system, ensuring that those involved represent the categories of minors most at risk of poverty and social exclusion, respecting gender equality.
- Finally, from a topic-related point of view, it will also be important to liaise, when necessary, with other topic-based observatories, such as the National Observatory for the Integration of Foreign Pupils and Interculturality, a consultation body whose tasks include finding solutions to adapt integration policies to the real needs of an increasingly multicultural and constantly changing school. Its members include representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Universities and Research, representatives of other ministries involved in the integration of foreign pupils, representatives of research institutes, associations and bodies of national importance and head teachers of schools with a high degree of social complexity.
- The link with the Ministry of the Interior will also be important regarding the reception of foreign minors.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN IN DIFFICULTY AND THE DIFFICULTIES THEY FACE IN ACCESSING SERVICES

The starting point for identifying children in difficulty is the incidence of individual absolute poverty (% of people living in households in absolute poverty over residents)²⁸. In 2020 this figure for the population aged 0-17 years is 13.5%, the figure rises to 13.9% for girls up to 17 years and is 13.1% for their peers. This figure drops to 9.4% when considering the total sample. According to these figures, therefore, the issue of absolute and relative poverty strongly affects children in our country. The analysis of the last decade shows a non-constant trend of this index among the female and male underage population, but clearly indicates a growth of this index, which triples the reference values over the time period considered.

The comparison over the decade of the incidence of absolute poverty among children and young people of all ages confirms the generational imbalance of the phenomenon, to the point that the highest values are found for each year for children and young people systematically.

Similar trends can be found when analysing the incidence of individual relative poverty by gender among younger people, as well as when comparing the incidence in the overall population of all ages and among children and young people aged 0-17 – confirming the proportionally greater disadvantage experienced by the latter citizens over time.

The territorial distribution of absolute and relative poverty clearly shows the deep territorial differences that characterise our country and the strong concentration of poverty and vulnerability in the southern regions. In single-parent households, the incidence of poverty is significantly higher than in households with both parents (especially with a median income poverty line of 40%), clearly due to a high presence of adults with low or no income from work (a factor that limits the possibility of accessing household allowance and deductions for dependent children). When broken down by the gender of the sole parent, all poverty indicators by income before transfers are worse for women. Some statistical references are given in Annex 4 to this document.

3.1 The children of Ukraine

The emergency situation created in Ukraine as a result of Russia's aggression makes refugee children a priority target on which specific actions will be directed and others will be strengthened so that they can adequately respond to the needs of these minors who on their own or with part of their families are arriving in our country. Alongside the objectives of hospitality, support, physical and psychological care, guarantee of access to the education system and local health services, the Italian institutions also undertake to put in place all the necessary measures to ensure maximum security with respect to the stay in Italy, according to the standards provided by the Italian legal system, and with a view to facilitating a possible safe return.

Among the interventions already underway are the establishment of an inter-institutional round table at the Department of Civil Protection for identification and monitoring and the appointment of a delegated extraordinary commissioner for the coordination of procedures aimed at assisting unaccompanied foreign minors with Decree no. 876 of 13 March 2022 adopted by the Department of Civil Protection. Extra resources have been allocated by the Minister of Education (1 million euros) for school reception and psychological support in schools. With DECREE-LAW no. 21 of 21 March 2022, urgent measures to counter the economic and humanitarian effects of the Ukrainian crisis, Italy provides:

- regarding humanitarian assistance, a system of widespread reception, sustenance, and contribution for access to the National Health System is envisaged. The Civil Protection Department is authorised to define forms of widespread assistance to be implemented through municipalities, third sector bodies, voluntary service centres, associations and religious bodies (for a maximum of 15 thousand people), and to define forms of support for the assistance of persons enjoying temporary protection who have found independent accommodation (for a maximum of 60,000 persons) and to grant the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano a contribution for access to the National Health Service for applicants and holders of temporary protection (for a maximum of 100,000 persons). An amount of €348 million is allocated for this purpose for 2022.
- In measures to address increased needs in the field of immigration, exemptions have been provided for sufficient staff to deal with an increased administrative burden in asylum procedures.
- There is also a temporary exemption from the rules on recognition of health professional qualifications for Ukrainian doctors. Until 4 March 2023, the temporary exercise of health professional qualifications and

²⁸For the data presented on the following pages, see the box at the end of the chapter and the appendix with the tables and full details.

the qualification of socio-medical worker is allowed for professionals who are Ukrainian citizens residing in Ukraine before 24 February 2022 and who intend to practice in the national territory - in public or private health or socio-medical facilities - a health profession or the profession of socio-medical worker on the basis of a professional qualification obtained abroad and regulated by specific EU directives.

3.2 Homeless minors or minors in a situation of severe housing hardship

With reference to the Ethos ranking on severe housing exclusion and homelessness, the phenomenon of homeless children is largely unknown in Italy (minors are always guaranteed accommodation), while there are homeless minors (living in facilities with various features), with insecure or inadequate accommodation. Housing deprivation is one of the most complicated areas to investigate in terms of data collection. Some interesting information on the topic comes from the Eu Silc survey on housing problems and the categories of households that could be in vulnerable situations. The data in the annex allow us to point out that the financial stress of housing costs affects single-parent families more than two-adult families. On the other hand, stress related to overcrowding appears to be an issue especially in families with daughters and sons. In addition, according to Home Office surveys, households at risk of eviction due to arrears between 2019 and 2020 decreased from 43,180 to 20,024. This figure should be viewed against the background of the Cura Italia decree which, among other measures, provided for a temporary freeze on evictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The barriers encountered by homeless minors concern all areas considered here, in particular:

- access to information about their rights and dedicated services and preventive health services;
- access to one healthy meal a day (canteen service), as part of nutrition;
- access to forms of economic support, including housing and affordable housing, for shelter and poverty alleviation.

The local level is important in relation to art. 5 of Law Decree 47/2014, converted into Law 80/2014, which stipulates that Mayors have a number of powers to reduce insecure housing, an important issue for minors living in illegally occupied buildings, which often becomes an obstacle to enjoying all the rights that should be guaranteed to them.

3.3 Children with disabilities

The identification of beneficiaries in the target group of children with disabilities is affected by the practice of placing the school system at the centre of certification. For this reason, the figures for disabled children are based almost exclusively on school attendance. In all schools, the ratio of pupils with disabilities has risen over the last five years, a trend partly linked to greater awareness of certain forms of disability certification, and seems to characterise secondary school in particular. Generally speaking, it is in this school order that the highest incidence of services for overcoming architectural obstacles is found, although the difficulty for disabled children and adolescents to access and experience the school is widespread.

The main barriers encountered by children with disabilities concern access to specialist and preventive services in the field of health and overcoming architectural barriers in the field of housing and education.

3.4 Minors with a migration background, unaccompanied minors, and minorities

Minors living in households with a non-Italian national as main reference person have much higher poverty rates than others. The number of foreign minors has risen slightly in recent years, and overall, they account for just over 10% of the resident minor population, although their presence, like that of adults, is highly concentrated throughout the country. Growth mainly affects children and young people rather than their peers. From a territorial point of view, the child component of the foreign population is more proportionally represented in the northern regions, a trend that has been reinforced over the entire three-year period under consideration. In the subset of unaccompanied foreign minors, in the last five years, the presence of these minors has been characterised by a changeable trend linked to the different migratory flows that have affected the period under consideration. As of 31 December 2021, there were 12,284 unaccompanied foreign minors on the territory of the State. Sicily continues to be the region that receives the largest number of minors, followed by Calabria and Lombardy. It is also noted that during 2021, the number of unaccompanied foreign minors who have reached the age of majority is 4,503. For minor persons belonging to Roma, Sinti and Caminanti groups, only estimates collected by third sector associations dealing with these minorities are available.

The 21 July Association estimates that there are approximately 54,000-81,000 foreign minors identified as belonging to these groups:

- access to information about their rights and dedicated services, the health system and PLS, neuropsychiatric and psychological support services, in the health sector;
- access to one healthy meal a day;
- access to economic support also linked to housing and affordable adequate housing, in relation to housing and anti-poverty;
- access to 0-6 education services, full-time education and educational continuity.

3.5 Minors with mental health problems

According to estimates in the 2019 Guidelines on Neuropsychiatric and Neuropsychological Disorders in Childhood and Adolescence, prior to the pandemic, the proportion of children and adolescents with mental health problems was around 18-20% of the total. In the 10-19 age group, the estimates relate to 16.6% of girls and boys (i.e. 956,000 individuals), with percentages reaching 17.2% for the female population (16.1% for the male population). ISTAT data on the mental health²⁹ index for girls and boys aged 14-19 reveal a gender-based distinction: for boys this index has higher figures than for girls. With respect to barriers, some significant figures come from the Summary Document of the Mental Health Technical Table. According to this document, the number of users referred to the four NPIA service areas (neurology, psychiatry, complex disability, specific disorders) has doubled in the last decade. Among children and young people with neuropsychiatric disorders, only 60 out of 100 have access to a community NPIA service, of whom only 30 can expect adequate rehabilitation treatment and therapy. The region or area of residence is relevant. Between 2017 and 2018, there was an increase in admissions for neurological disorders between 0 and 17 years of age by 11% and for psychiatric disorders in the same age group by 22%. Given these trends, it is worth noting that of the 43,863 total admissions that took place in 2018, only 13,757 were focused on NPIA wards, with the remainder flowing into adult psychiatric wards. The lack of NPIA services on the local territory, together with a more general inadequacy of health services for children and young people, is also one of the emergencies highlighted by the Youth Advisory Board, which was fully involved in the consultation activities. Special attention should be paid to children and adolescents who have been adopted in relation to both post-adoption services and specific care needs. In this respect, there is a need to strengthen the intervention of the social and health services regarding complex issues, with particular reference to the adoption background, where trauma and neglect intersect. As can be seen from what has just been described, the barriers identified for children with mental health problems are mainly concentrated in the health sector and are as follows: access to dedicated neuropsychiatric services and psychological support.

3.6 Children in alternative care facilities

The year-end 2019 figure shows the presence of 13,555 children and young people under the age of 18 in family foster care, a figure that represents 1.4 per thousand of the child population resident in Italy.

A regional breakdown reveals significant regional differences in the spread of the phenomenon. In relation to the resident minor population, the regions where foster care is most practised are Liguria and Piedmont, with values of more than 2 cases per thousand, while on the opposite side, with values of less than one foster care case per thousand residents, are the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, Campania, the Autonomous Province of Trento and Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

With regard to the age of those hosted, the distribution in the various territories confirms the substantial prevalence of pre-adolescents and adolescents, with a significant presence of young people close to the age of majority in the 15-17 age bracket, which strongly raises the issue of adequate support towards paths of autonomy. No significant gender difference is detectable among those hosted, who are characterised by a similar share of boys and boys and girls. While the number of children and young people accommodated in residential services for minors has levelled off in recent years, following a period of decline that lasted until 2010, at the end of 2019 the number of children and young people aged 0-17 received in residential services for minors, not counting unaccompanied foreign minors, is increasing, and is estimated at 14,000. In relative terms, at the end of 2019, in relation to the

²⁹The index is a measure of psychological distress, obtained from a synthesis of the scores achieved by everyone of 14 years and over, based on five questions from the SF36 questionnaire (36-Item Short Form Survey). The questions refer to the four main dimensions of mental health (anxiety, depression, loss of behavioural or emotional control and psychological wellbeing). The index varies between 0 and 100, with mental health improving as the average value of the Index increases.

resident population of the corresponding reference age, 1.5 minors were affected for every 1,000 resident children and adolescents aged 0-17. With respect to barriers, it should be underlined that the difficulties encountered by this target group are mainly recorded in the transition phase from juvenile age and care facilities - just think of Care leavers - and are concentrated mainly around housing and the fight against poverty (with difficulties in accessing forms of economic support including adequate and affordable housing).

Box 1. Summary of key target groups of children in difficulty

Children in difficulty	Information (data, variables, estimates)	Values (as at 2020)
Children living in poverty	Incidence of individual absolute poverty (0-17 years)	1,336,387 minors (representing 13.5% compared to 9.4% of the total population)
	Incidence of relative poverty (0-17 years)	2,024,051 minors (20.4% compared to 13.5% of the total population)
Children without a fixed abode or in severe housing hardship	Financial stress due to housing costs, families with daughters and sons	8.4%
	Financial stress due to housing costs, single parent families	0.22 million, or 19.8% of the total number of minors in single-parent families
	Financial stress due to overcrowded housing, families with daughters and sons	4.03 million, or 41.5% of the total number of minors
	Financial stress due to overcrowded housing, single-parent families	0.42 million, or 37.6% of the total number of minors in single-parent families
	Families at risk of eviction due to arrears	20,024
Children with disabilities	Pupils with disabilities per 100 pupils per school year	3.5% (about 300,000 students)
Minors with a migration background, unaccompanied minors and minorities	Resident foreign minors	1,022,471 (equivalent to 10% of the resident child population)
	Unaccompanied foreign minors	7,080
	Minors who can be identified as belonging to Roma, Sinti and Caminanti groups	54,000-81,000 (Estimated)
Minors with mental health problems	Minors with mental health problems	18-20% (estimate)
	Minors and young adults with mental health problems aged 10-19 years old	16.6% (equivalent to 956,000 subjects)
	Mental health index for children and young adults aged 10-19 years	73.8
	Access to a local NPIA service	60 children out of 100
	Admissions for neurological disorders in NPIA wards	13,757 out of 43,863 (about 31%)
Minors in alternative care facilities, in particular care facilities	Children and young people aged 0-17 years in family foster care to individuals, families, and relatives	13,555 (representing 1.4 per thousand of the total Italian resident minor population, as of 2019)
	Children and young people aged 0-17 years in residential services for minors	14,053 (representing 1.5 per thousand of the total Italian resident minor population, as of 2019)

Finally, for each of the target groups of children in difficulty described above – the quantitative dimensions of which are summarised in Box 1 – a further schematic diagram is proposed to represent the extent of difficulty that each target group encounters in accessing the rights that the Recommendation intends to promote. The extent of these difficulties is summarised using a high/medium/low scale, with “high” indicating the most disadvantageous condition in terms of access.

Box 2. Intensity of barriers to access for the main target groups of children in need

Children in difficulty	Health	Nutrition	Housing/ combating poverty	Education
Children without a fixed abode or in severe housing hardship	high	high	high	high
Children with disabilities	medium	low	medium	medium
Minors with a migration background, unaccompanied minors, and minorities	high	high	high	medium
Minors with mental health problems	high	low	low	medium
Minors in alternative care facilities, in particular care facilities	low	low	high	medium

4. THE SPECIFIC CATEGORIES OF GIRLS AND BOYS INCLUDED IN THE ACTION PLAN

The existing actions and those that will be strengthened and/or activated under this plan are aimed at minors living in poverty or at risk of social exclusion and provide for specific action or intervention aimed at:

- minors displaced by the war in Ukraine;
- homeless minors or minors in situations of severe housing hardship;
- minors with disabilities;
- minors with mental health problems;
- minors from a migrant background or belonging to ethnic minorities, in particular Roma;
- minors in alternative care facilities, in particular institutional care;
- minors in unstable family situations.

By virtue of the strong connection with other national initiatives, Italy's commitment to the practical implementation of the contents of the European Recommendation therefore covers all the targets identified, plus it also introduces a particular focus on:

- strengthening measures in favour of pre-adolescence and adolescence, because the pandemic has revealed the particular fragility of girls and boys aged between 11 and 18, who show increasing psychological and social distress, as has emerged both during the drafting of the plan thanks to the hearings, and from the group on the Covid emergency created within the National Observatory for Childhood and Adolescence, which has devoted a specific study and an exploratory document to the impact of the health emergency on adolescents, which has been and will be a point of reference;
- adopted minors, a category of minors at risk due to previous traumatic experiences (abuse, neglect, institutionalisation, interruption of emotional ties), due to the risk of developing psychiatric diseases, and due to the deleterious effects of discrimination (since they were adopted and/or belonging to minority entity groups). In our country, there were about 73,500 adoptions (international and national) between 2001 and 2021.

5. DISSEMINATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING BASED ON AN OUTREACH APPROACH

As stated in the Recommendation, all children, and their families, starting with those most in need, must be aware of their rights to access key services in order to claim and fully enjoy them.

In line with this fundamental principle, according to an ecological approach to social policies, this plan identifies three levels of action both to provide adequate and timely information and to implement interventions that potentially affect all minors and their families and that truly reach the “unreachable”, or in any case the most vulnerable targets:

- Awareness and information of institutional contexts, the plan provides for a system governance aimed at building or enhancing spaces and bodies for coordination and cooperation between the various sectors, actors, and levels of government.
- Awareness-raising and information for key players (operators of administrative services, local health and social services, schools, third sector, etc.) Actions envisaged: information disseminated on the plan itself and the framework of Community policies to which it is linked; specific training initiatives to achieve a higher quality and adequate interventions; guidelines. The National Observatory for Children and Adolescents will be a useful interlocutor. These are some tools to inform and circulate the contents: creation of a website of the National Child Guarantee; opening of a dedicated social profile; creation of a newsletter to promote experiences and projects; webinars and in-person seminars.
- Awareness-raising, information and involvement of minors and their families, starting with those who are the most vulnerable. The aim is to promote universal access to services by breaking down barriers, especially for the most vulnerable. This is achieved both by improving information (so it is also a question of the quality and sensitivity of public communication) and by reorganising services so that they themselves reach the potential beneficiaries. The contents of the activities will be defined and adapted based on the target groups.

Box 3. Youth Advisory Board requests PARTICIPATION

- a) We ask for greater involvement of children and young people in the planning of the services dedicated to us, but also in the evaluation process. We are the ones who experience first-hand the problems we are talking about today and for this reason we can give feedback on the types of services we need and how they are provided to us.
- b) We need to express ourselves on the quality of the interventions through simple and interactive tools: digital smileys useful even for children; multilingual feedback questionnaires, feedback boxes.
- c) In the same way, information on child and adolescent services must be tailored to the child and adolescent both in the language used and in the choice of the channels in which it is disseminated. School advisory bodies, class, and institute representatives, should also be present in lower secondary schools, to ensure broader participation and to provide education on responsible and participatory management.
- e) Finally, we ask that entities such as the YAB, where young people commit themselves personally and as protagonists to improve the quality of life in our country, be not only listened to but adequately endorsed and supported, so that their guidelines are considered an integral part of democratic life and give a concrete contribution to overcome also the critical issues found in this survey.
- f) With regard to the participation of children and young people in the implementation of the Child Guarantee, we finally call for the creation of local YABs and the provision of adequate funding.

Finally, the size of the operational outreach in the field sees the Plan promote working methods that make universal or specific services next, with interventions and professionalism that ensure that needs are listened to and accepted according to a proximity approach (or outreach services). In this perspective, it is envisaged that guidelines for outreach social and socio-educational work with vulnerable minors be drawn up to detail homogeneous operational criteria in relation to their placement (PUA at community houses/family consultants/Family Centres).

6. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

Child Guarantee pilot

Following the inclusion of Italy in 2020 among the target countries for which the European Commission has established the launch of the Child Guarantee pilot, in December 2020, with a specific Decree, an inter-ministerial "steering committee" was established for the implementation of the pilot experience of the *Child guarantee*. The group is composed of representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Department of Family Policy, UNICEF, and representatives of the technical assistance provided by the Institute of the Innocents. During the periodic meetings of the aforementioned working group, the general terms of reference for the launch of a Deep Dive Analysis of Policies, Programmes, Services, Budgets, and Mechanisms Addressing Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in Italy were defined: during the second part of 2021, cross-cutting research and analysis was, therefore, carried out on all the programme areas and vulnerable groups identified by the proposal for a European Recommendation, whose results supported the work of drafting the NAP.

Preparation of the National Action Plan

By Decree of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies no. 206 of 29 October 2021, a special Working Group was established called "Social policies and interventions in favour of minors in implementing the Child Guarantee" chaired by the national coordinator, Sen. Anna Maria Serafini, and composed of the main stakeholders interested in the implementation of the Recommendation: representatives of the Institutions (Ministries and Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Regions, Municipalities /ANCI), of the National Authority for Children and Adolescents, Unicef, ISTAT, and representatives of the tertiary sector and experts. With the support of the scientific technical assistance of the Institute of the Innocents, the Working Group carried out the activities aimed at defining the national operational action plan to implement the Recommendation of 14 June 2021. In plenary session, the group met five times, initially promoting an extended discussion on the contents of the Recommendation and on the consequent priorities to be adopted in the PANGI, description of the Deep Dive Analysis, taken into consideration the European funding lines and national framework, setting and subdivision of the components into four working sub-groups. During the meetings, one was totally dedicated to an in-depth study of the theme of adolescence, in particular: psycho-emotional health; early school leaving and drop out; new projects and significant experiences for services dedicated to adolescents. A further meeting was intended for discussions with the Youth Advisory Board, fully described in the next paragraph relating to the involvement of under 18s. The Working Group paid special attention to the identification and definition of essential levels of social benefits for children in compliance with the guidelines developed by the National Observatory for Children and Adolescents (pursuant to Law 451/97), and which took shape in the 5th National Plan for Childhood and Adolescence. In its drafting, the available knowledge was valued starting from the results of the Deep Dive Analysis and with the specific contribution of Istat.

The last meeting of the working group in plenary session was dedicated to sharing the PANGI in the presence of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies, On. Andrea Orlando.

As mentioned, the Group was divided into 4 working subgroups, responded to the needs considered central in the guarantee system: high-quality early childhood education and care, education and school activities, at least one healthy meal per day at school; healthcare and healthy nutrition; combating poverty and the right to housing; system governance and infrastructure. The work of the sub-groups took place in 12 online meetings during which hearings were organized with experts outside the working group in relation to specific issues considered relevant. Each subgroup drew up target sheets in relation to the assigned theme.

In this logic of integration among stakeholders, the discussion with the National Observatory for Children and Adolescents, which plays the role of reference interlocutor in the finalisation phase of the PANGI as well as during its implementation and monitoring, has played a crucial role. A special working group was set up within it (composed of representatives of the Ministries, experts and representatives of the trade unions and the Tertiary Sector present in ONIA), which contributed to the analysis and proposals for the drafting of the Plan and whose contact person was Sen. Anna Maria Serafini to ensure consistency between the two paths. The last plenary meeting was dedicated to sharing the PANGI in the presence of the Minister for Equal Opportunities and the Family, On. Elena Bonetti.

The involvement of the under 18 stakeholders

In compliance with European guidelines, the Youth Advisory Board was set up in December to test a mechanism for the active participation of young children and adolescents in the institutional processes related to the Child

Guarantee. 23 boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 21, from all over Italy, including young Italians and with a migratory background, second generation girls and boys, Roma Sinti and Caminanti, care leavers, young people with disabilities, volunteers engaged in different ways in their communities. Starting from personal experiences and the concrete challenges encountered in their journey, in view of the hearing held on 24 February 2022, the young people gathered to reflect on the causes of social exclusion, starting with the issues identified as priorities by the Recommendation: education, health, nutrition, housing conditions, education and early childhood care. The group then extended the reflection to over 900 of their peers, engaged through an online survey whose results were very important in supplementing the cognitive framework and guide the expression of the objective actions. In the phase when the plan was being discussed and drawn up, as anticipated, the working group in plenary session heard the Youth Advisory Board, collecting proposals and demands, which are reported in detail in the objectives. In relation to the participation of the beneficiaries, it should be noted that during the process of drafting the Plan, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies also enhanced the already existing specific participatory bodies on targets of the Recommendation, in particular the National Youth Conference of the national experimentation for the accompaniment to the autonomy of Care leavers.

Implementation and monitoring phase

As described in the paragraph on governance, the national steering committee is set up as the first level of stakeholder involvement, providing for the presence of the representatives of the Regions and Municipalities. In addition, liaison with two inclusive bodies of multiple institutional entities, social partners, associations and the world of research and experts is organic, namely the National Observatory for Children and Adolescents and the Network for Social Protection and Inclusion.

Attention to the conscious, informed, and active involvement of stakeholders is then also expressed at the territorial level, as stated previously and well-articulated in the sheets, enhancing the involvement of young people at all levels, in ad hoc structures. Cooperation with stakeholders is, in fact, considered strategic for implementation, information and monitoring purposes.

7. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

The NAP integrates the recommendations of the young people of the YAB, since they are an integral part of the Plan. The general objectives are outlined here succinctly, while the sheets in Annex 1 illustrate: any intermediate objectives, implementation methods, promoters, and stakeholders, as well as the sources of funding and indicators for monitoring and evaluating the attainment of the objectives.

The overall picture that emerges is that of a plan that integrates and enhances existing plans, identifying some areas of empowerment and innovation that lean towards the attainment of new essential levels to guarantee the full enjoyment of rights by children.

The actions - objective were divided into four areas:

- High quality early childhood education and care, learning and school activities, canteens
- Wellbeing, health and healthcare
- Combating poverty and the right to housing
- System governance and infrastructures

The general approach chosen for the selection of the objectives, and their implementation in the Plan, promotes the following quality criteria:

- extending the infrastructure of the local system of public services, enhancing the relationship with the social private sector and associations with respect for each other's roles and competences – identification of essential levels
- promotion of consultation, co-design and shared programming between institutions and between stakeholders, both in a horizontal and vertical dimension;
- giving priority to strengthening prevention in the various areas;
- always putting the child at the centre, not considering the various areas of a minor's life as separate, but as part of a unicum that needs an overall view;
- putting in place and building new integrated service models characterised by the encounter between professional and institutional cultures that can dialogue with one other, enhancing the collective and community dimension;
- promoting and supporting effective synergies with the aim of providing continuity of action;
- investing in the socio-economic measurability of the policies undertaken and the interventions to give value to the investment in the future that NAP carries out.

In general, the processes of impoverishment in place require a policy of a major strengthening of existing infrastructures in the social, health and educational sectors. The action sheets in Annex 1 highlight an effort to set targets on a short-, medium- and long-term scale up to 2030 to reach, in some cases, the maximum coverage and guarantee with respect to services that must have effective and free access, i.e. education and early childhood care, inclusive education and school activities and a healthy meal every day at school, health care, and the others identified as having effective access, i.e. healthy nutrition, adequate housing.

Finally, even if not always specified in the action sheets and objectives, the implementation of the actions and certainly the monitoring and evaluation of the Plan will also consider gender discrimination in line with the indications of the recent National Strategy for Gender Equality adopted in July 2021 by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department for Equal Opportunities. The monitoring will therefore adopt an intersectional approach that considers the different childhoods and adolescences in our country, which are determined by the multiple and varied subjective conditions of children.

7.1 The Recommendations of the YAB for the National Plan

Based on the results of the survey, we propose a series of recommendations, hoping that the “Working Group on Social Policies and Interventions in Favour of Minors in the Implementation of the Child Guarantee” can consider them as guidelines, suggestions, and contributions to the drafting of the National Plan.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION	<p>a) Campaigns are needed to help create a culture that is more inclusive and respectful of all differences, so that girls and boys of all age do not feel excluded because of their origin, because of their belonging to an ethnic group, their sexual identity or their disability. We need to learn to regard differences as valuable resources and to value the uniqueness of each one of us. This perception must spread to all levels, first and foremost in politics, on TV and at school.</p> <p>b) Difficulties in accessing certain services and limitations on participation lead to exclusion and are often linked to a disability or to difficulties in linguistic and/or cultural understanding. It is, therefore, necessary to work to break down architectural barriers and to overcome linguistic barriers with information</p>
EDUCATION	<p>a) We need teachers who can grasp our fragility, teachers who can relate to special cases, such as our newly arrived companions in Italy or those with learning difficulties or mental health problems. We need more support teachers and figures who can provide specific support, such as cultural mediators and psychologists.</p> <p>b) We ask that more innovative teaching methods and laboratory activities be introduced, to foster relationships within the classroom and support students in managing and overcoming fragility, in discovering their talents and motivations</p> <p>c) We also ask for a school that can prepare us for life outside the school. We need more sex education, education for body care, education for interculturality, sustainability, all those issues that in recent decades are part of our daily lives and without which we would not be prepared to face adult life and to overcome the great changes of the 21st century, such as climate change, migration, digitalisation and technological transformations.</p>
HEALTH	<p>a) Physical and mental health are the rights of every child, not just those who can afford it! We ask for health services - for physical and mental health - tailored to children and young people, free of charge, which are easier for us to access and adapted to our needs. We also need more listening services and psychological support.</p> <p>b) Specialist medical services, paediatricians and child neuropsychiatrists, must be more widespread in the territory, so that all young children and adolescents with special needs can avail themselves of the right to quality care.</p> <p>c) We also ask for positive messages about the psychological distress that many of us face. There is still a good deal of prejudice about psychological suffering, and many of us fear being misjudged and discriminated against if we express our emotional distress and ask for help.</p> <p>d) We need up-to-date information, which we can easily understand, translated into multiple languages and respectful of cultural, gender and individual differences, regarding medical and psychological services.</p>
NUTRITION	<p>a) More information is needed on Eating Disorders and how to prevent them.</p> <p>b) Regulations are needed to protect children and adolescents from the spread of harmful images, stereotyped perfect bodies and beauty canons, which make adolescents aspire to unattainable and unrealistic models.</p> <p>c) We should make quality food more accessible and less expensive, educate people about healthy eating and provide support for families or at least the provision of a balanced lunch at school, as is already recommended in the Child Guarantee.</p>
HOUSING	<p>a) We suggest mapping disused and abandoned public places that could be rehabilitated and used for affordable housing for families in difficulty, but also to accommodate recreational, cultural and sports facilities for children and young people, which provide the quality of comprehensive housing: at home, in the neighbourhood, in the community, in connection with the territory.</p> <p>b) More funds are needed to support families facing rents and bills that are too high in relation to their wages, as well as more social housing.</p> <p>c) We must aim to provide basic services such as water, electricity, gas, and essential transport throughout Italy.</p>
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE	<p>a) It is important to instil healthy lifestyles to children from a very early age: movement, hygiene and balanced nutrition must be priorities that are promoted from pre-school and nursery.</p> <p>b) The fight against violence must be strengthened. Italy has not yet adopted a specific national plan to combat violence against children, so it is urgent that this be done.</p> <p>c) More support is needed for new parents, both financially and in terms of information, in order to ensure more equitable access to available services (e.g. nurseries and schools).</p>
PARTICIPATION	<p>a) We ask that children and young people be more involved in the planning of the services dedicated to them, but also in the evaluation process. We are the ones who experience first-hand the problems we are talking about today and for this reason we can provide feedback on the types of services we need and how they should be provided to us.</p> <p>b) We need to be able to express our opinions regarding the quality of the interventions through simple and interactive tools: digital smileys, which are useful even for children; multilingual feedback questionnaires, feedback boxes.</p> <p>c) In the same way, information on child and adolescent services must be tailored to the child and adolescent both in the language used and in the choice of the channels through which it is disseminated.</p> <p>d) School advisory bodies, class, and school representatives, should also be present in lower secondary schools, to ensure broader participation and to provide education on responsible and participatory management.</p> <p>e) Finally, we ask that entities such as the YAB, where young people commit themselves personally and as protagonists to improve the quality of life in our country, be not only listened to but adequately endorsed and supported, so that their guidelines are considered an integral part of democratic life and give a concrete contribution to overcome also the critical issues found in this survey.</p> <p>f) With regard to the participation of children and young people in the implementation of the Child Guarantee, we lastly call for the creation of local YABs and the provision of adequate funding.</p>

7.2 High quality early childhood education and care, learning and school activities, canteens

Within the framework of the objectives of prevention and action against social exclusion, educational services for young children in the first six years of life (Early Childhood Education and Care), the school lunch service, the provision of full-time schooling and initiatives against early school leaving are included. Free and universal access to these basic services provides for the organisation of benefits that will provide equal opportunities for all children and teenagers, especially for those living in areas with high rates of absolute and educational poverty, in a disadvantaged situation or who are part of the most vulnerable categories defined by the Recommendation.

ACTION 1 - Early Childhood Education and Care (0-6)

ACTION 2 - School meals and full-time school extension

ACTION 3 - Education and school-based activities: tackling school drop-out

ACTION 4 - Inclusive school-age practices and social inclusion for children and young people with a migratory background, and in transition to adulthood

Develop and expand the supply of full-time places in educational services for children, developing equitable and sustainable accessibility. The goal is to promote quality educational services and the impact of the measures provided for by NAP by 2030 throughout the country, developing initiatives aimed at extending the provision of full-time positions in educational services for children towards 50% coverage as the national average, in nursery schools towards 100%, to facilitate access, gradually reducing the financial contribution by families and extending the free bands. The progressive implementation of resources must be promoted both for infrastructure interventions, as well as for the management and categorisation of the provision. The goal to be achieved by 2030 is, therefore, the attainment of zero cost for all children within the ISEE band of 26,000 euros. This threshold would allow us to bring closer to the educational service both the families of the neediest categories and those with lower-middle income, which are currently considered at risk of exclusion. The intermediate objective, by 2023-24, aims to attain zero cost for the ISEE band up to €9,500, the absolute poverty line. The construction of a national information system connecting the information systems relating to educational services for children and pre-schools with other national surveys relating to the requests of the Recommendation is envisaged. As already anticipated, there are already investments in this sector, think of the PNRR, which provides for a significant investment in early childhood and could have very positive effects. This is 2.4% of the total resources envisaged, i.e. €4.6 billion that will be allocated to early childhood education with the creation of 228 thousand new places, to more than double the public coverage in the age group 0-3 years.

The objective is connected to actions 1 and 2 of the 5th Plan for Childhood and Adolescence.

Making the provision of a healthy meal a day at school an essential public service for which a specific LEP is established, with the extension of full-time schools. The school canteen service requires, in addition to the strengthening of the infrastructure that is being implemented through structural interventions supported, in particular, by the PON "For the school" 2014-2020 in the less developed regions, and by the PNRR, which is providing an investment of 400 million for the construction of school canteens to promote full time schooling, an investment of 300 million for school gyms and an investment of 500 million to support activities in schools, through an organisation of school time that provides for an educational offer also in the afternoon through the extension of full time in public kindergarten and primary school in order to achieve 100% coverage; to make the universal service it will be necessary to gradually guarantee free access to all children starting from those belonging to families in absolute poverty, with ISEE less than 9,500 euros, and after moving towards families with ISEE less than 26,000 euros. Finally, to cope with the high dropout rate, there is a plan to start the integration processes of the canteen service also in the lower secondary school. The objective is connected to the provisions of Action 13 of the 5th Plan for Childhood and Adolescence.

Reducing both the lack, incomplete or irregular use of education services by young people of school age, and the so-called implicit school failure, namely, the failure to reach the minimum levels of competence with respect to the degree of school attended. School failure and early school leaving are prevalent among all the categories of beneficiaries considered priorities for the Child Guarantee, but action is needed in the southern regions. The NAP aims to increase access to full-time schooling, the educational provision of support and mediation figures for students with disabilities, learning disorders, students with a migratory background and ethnic minorities, precarious family contexts; to expand the educational provision and "bridge" projects for the recovery of Neet and dropouts in adolescence; for the upper secondary school, to increase the duration

of the school day, dedicating the additional hours to enhancement activities calibrated to the interests of the children, and that, therefore, can represent an alternative to early school leaving, to systematically mapping local contexts with a higher rate of underachievement by intervening on the quality of the education. Specific objectives will be defined in the sector programming indicated among the sources of funding, those identifying trends in 2030: in the southern regions, achieve the target of lowering the dropout rate from the current level of 16.5% to the current national average value of 13% and push the national average value of 13% towards the European average of 9%; increase the percentage of schools accessible to students with motor disabilities from the current level of 34% through priority resources for regions with lower coverage.

There are many resources to coordinate, as per the attached sheet. For some objectives, see actions h1 in the PON Inclusion and the fight against poverty.CG “Socio-occupational integration of vulnerable young people” and h2.CG “ Enhancement, transparency and development of skills, individual implementation to increase the level of social and economic inclusion of minors who are third-country nationals”. As already mentioned, the PNRR allocates about €11.5 billion to primary and secondary education, to physical and digital infrastructures, measures against early school leaving, and strengthening the educational offer. The objective is linked to the provisions of the 5th Childhood and Adolescence Plan to action 28 and action 29.

Consolidate active support for the educational, training and socio-occupational integration of minors and young people with a migratory background and in transition to adulthood. Consolidated partnership with the competent central administrations and strengthened collaboration with Regions and local authorities to co-design measures with local social services, local public and private educational and training agencies, labour services, social and economic partners, third-sector bodies, as well as intercultural mediation services and support with the transition to the world of work. Customised educational and social pathways will be activated, as well as local support to reduce the phenomena of marginalisation of minors and young people with a migratory background, with attention to the most vulnerable (e.g. unaccompanied minors). The activities will be supported by the following funds: National Fund for Migration Policies (Fondo nazionale per le politiche migratorie, FNPM), as Responsible Authority and PN Inclusion FSE + 2021-2027 as Intermediate Body, see actions h1.CG with a forecast of €92 million in the period and action h2CG for a forecast of €24 million, Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (Fondo Asilo, Migrazione e Integrazione, FAMI) 2021-2027, as an Intermediate Body for the OS. “Legal migration and integration”. Each fund has its own rules regarding the target audience that can be involved, implementation timing, controls, monitoring, and geographical concentration. Accordingly, the indicators for this action will be defined by combining the different funds according to the rules governing their implementation.

7.3 Wellbeing, Health and Healthcare

The main critical issues in the health area may be interpreted considering the combination of appropriateness/ accessibility and equality. Acting on the dimension of accessibility by removing barriers to service access does not in itself guarantee that social and regional inequalities are overcome. To combine the two aspects, a dual purpose will be pursued: on the one hand, the need to identify preventive interventions aimed at a wide audience of minors, and on the other, the need to reflect on critical issues in the access of some specific targets. Objectives and actions have been divided into three areas. The dossier with the action sheets also reports actions already started and consistent with the purposes of the NAP.

AREA 1. Prevention and high quality services

ACTION 1 - The importance of the first 1,000 days of life

ACTION 2 - Youth Counselling Centres

ACTION 3 - Promotion of affectivity, sexuality, and gender equality education

AREA 2. Psychological and social well-being of children, pre-adolescents and adolescents

ACTION 4 - Establishment of a permanent technical round table on mental health in the 0-18 age group

ACTION 5 - Strengthening of Developmental Psychology and Child/Adolescent Neuropsychiatry services

ACTION 6 - Extension up to age 18 of the Primary Care Paediatrician

ACTION 7 - Strengthening of the information system

AREA 3. Access to health services for minors with a migration background, unaccompanied foreign minors, and minorities

ACTION 8 - Compulsory registration with the national health service for all foreign minors

ACTION 9 - Right to information

ACTION 10 - Facilitate access to psychological care for adolescents with a migrant background or belonging to minorities

ACTION 11 - Interventions and policies aimed at receiving and protecting foreign minors from Ukraine

ACTION 12 - Establishment of an interinstitutional round table on minors with disabilities

Below are the contents of the three areas and the objectives we want to meet with the actions indicated.

AREA 1. Prevention and high quality services

This intervenes on the early detection of need and vulnerability and addresses a wide audience of recipients, parents, families, and minors present in Italy. It also addresses several problems linked to regional differences and disparities in access linked to the origin of minors or their cultural affiliation. The aim is to protect and improve children's health conditions and development opportunities and to counteract the early onset of inequalities.

ACTION 1 - Ensure the conditions necessary for adequate physical and mental development in the first thousand days of life.

We want to fully implement the guideline document "Investing early in health: actions and strategies in the first thousand days of life". The action acts on the social risk that produces health poverty and damage in the first 100 days, supporting the activation of organic interventions at the level of integrated local services. To achieve the goal, the National Plan for Inclusion and the fight against poverty contributes with the forecast of €120 million in the period 2021-27 for action I1.CG "Socio-educational interventions aimed at people in economic difficulty: strengthening services for families with complex needs and children in the first thousand days of life". This action is connected to action 31 of 5th Plan for Childhood and Adolescence.

ACTION 2 - Youth Counselling Centres. Protect and improve the physical and mental health conditions of adolescents and tackle inequalities.

The aim is to promote a multidisciplinary and holistic approach to adolescent health through specialised operators and the identification of dedicated operational units and/or the widespread distribution of "Youth Consultants", but also to work in school contexts. The proposed interventions are in line with the 5th Childhood Plan, especially in relation to actions 6 and 7. DECREE 30 November 2021 - Fund for the promotion of well-being and the person aimed at facilitating access to psychological services. To be implemented in the new Programming

ACTION 3 - National action to promote affectivity, sexuality, and gender equality education.

The proposal is linked to action 10 of the 5th Childhood Plan which proposes to "Promote the psychological and physical well-being of minors in educational services and in schools of all levels by implementing programmes focused on life skills" - Training and information on the right to affectivity and sexuality of minors and young people with disabilities will also be promoted to create awareness and the ability to give adequate responses.

AREA 2. Psychological and social well-being of children, pre-adolescents, and adolescents.

It targets minors in a broad sense, with a particular focus on pre-adolescents and adolescents, and intercepts specific categories among those indicated by the Child Guarantee, such as minors with mental disorders and minors from migratory backgrounds or belonging to minorities. The need for greater attention to this age group is a central theme of the Youth Advisory Board's proposals.

The NAP provides a framework for policies aimed at defining services and figures for the prevention, diagnosis, and rehabilitation of mental health disorders, to be pursued through measures that structure a system specifically oriented to minors (unlike the overlap with the adult area currently recorded at some levels), with particular attention to the information and communication problems presented by foreign minors and

minorities. To define these services, it appears necessary to introduce a centralised information system to collect data on services for the diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of psychological and neuropsychic disorders. There are four related actions, as per Annex 1, with no change in expenditure or to be included in specific multi-year programming:

ACTION 4 - Establishment of a permanent technical round table on mental health in the 0-18 age group.

ACTION 5 - Strengthening of Developmental Psychology and Child/Adolescent Neuropsychiatry services.

ACTION 6 - Extension up to age 18 of the Primary Care Paediatrician.

ACTION 7 - Strengthening of the information system.

AREA 3. Access to health services for minors with a migration background, unaccompanied foreign minors, and minorities.

The Italian legal system provides that all minors must be registered with the National Health Service (State-Regions Agreement 2013, Indications for the correct application of the legislation for healthcare to the foreign population by the Italian Regions and Autonomous Provinces). Access to health services is therefore a universal measure. On the other hand, in-depth studies of certain categories of minors reveal the existence of practices that go in the opposite direction to universality: age restrictions, up to the age of 14, restrictive applications for children of irregular Community immigrants, no option to access Primary Care Paediatricians but only doctors in the office or outpatient clinics for temporarily present foreigners or Community citizens. Similar problems are also common to Roma, Sinti and Camminanti.

ACTION 8 - Compulsory registration with the national health service for all foreign minors to ensure effective access to health services. Intervention with no change in expenditure

ACTION 9 - Right to information and access to health services for minors with a migratory background, unaccompanied foreign minors, and minorities. The action is linked to the provisions of the National Plan on Inclusion and the fight against poverty in relation to promoting the social inclusion of minors who are third-country nationals. The action is also linked to the provision of the National Plan for Inclusion and the fight against poverty h2.CG (for a forecast of €24 million in the period 2021-27) and K1.CG (for a forecast for the period of €90 million)

ACTION 10 - Facilitate access to psychological care for adolescents with a migratory background or belonging to minorities Providing, at primary care levels, communication and mediation figures and services to facilitate access to mental health services for adolescents with a migratory background or belonging to minorities (general and/or programmatic administrative intervention). Reinforcement of psychosocial support services for unaccompanied minors in local reception facilities. The action is also linked to the provision of the National Plan for Inclusion and the fight against poverty h2.CG (for a forecast of €24 million in the period 2021-27) and K1.CG (for a forecast for the period of €90 million). Other resources to be implemented from regular funds.

ACTION 11 - Interventions and policies aimed at receiving and protecting foreign minors from Ukraine. Strengthening the census, reception, and assistance of unaccompanied foreign minors (UAFMs) from Ukraine in order to ensure constant monitoring of attendance and ensure protection and access to all services. Implementation of supranational and national legislation on the protection of minors and of UAFMs (by way of example, but not limited to, Italian Law no. 47 of 2017, Italian Legislative Decree 142/2015, Italian Law 184/83).

ACTION 12 - Establishment of an interinstitutional round table on minors with disabilities.

Establishment of an interinstitutional table dedicated to minors with disabilities and aimed at identifying the different problems and needs of this target group. The round table would focus on identifying barriers to access for minors with disabilities in different areas (school, health services, sports activities, etc.) and on this target group's rights, including civil rights and participation.

7.4 Combating poverty and the right to housing

In the Italian context, public support for families with children has historically been characterised by a fragmented, compartmentalised and often inconsistent framework of measures, even in terms of access criteria, and by a concomitant centrality of monetary transfer interventions rather than the provision of and access to services deemed essential. There are two important measures that have profoundly changed the overall scenario. On the one hand, there is the establishment of the Single and Universal Allowance for Dependent Children (Assegno unico ed universale per i figli a carico, AUUF) for families for each child up to the age of 21 and starting from the seventh month of pregnancy, which rationalises and replaces existing measures in a single

solution. On the other hand, there is the establishment of the Citizenship Income (Reddito di cittadinanza, RdC) aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion. Its disbursement is conditional on the adult family members declaring themselves available for work, as well as adherence to a personalised pathway to work integration and social inclusion that provides for activities to serve the community, professional retraining, completion of studies, and other commitments identified by the competent services aimed at integration into the labour market and social inclusion.

In this changed scenario of policies for the effective fight against poverty and the right to housing, and in response to the criteria of appropriateness/accessibility in reference to the Child Guarantee's different targets of interest, specific actions have been identified to achieve further progress.

ACTION 1 - Access to the anti-poverty measure also for families from a migrant background
ACTION 2 - Increase in the take-up rate of those entitled to the anti-poverty measure
ACTION 3 - Access to benefits and services for ethnic minorities, in particular Roma, Sinti and Camminanti
ACTION 4 - Providing appropriate services to support the social inclusion of minors in families living in poverty
ACTION 5 - Reshaping the rental contribution for households benefiting from the Citizenship Income
ACTION 6 - Increasing the supply of affordable housing
ACTION 7 - Guidelines for promoting social well-being and social inclusion in the different life contexts of pre-adolescents and adolescents and providing widespread meeting/community spaces for minors aged 10-17
ACTION 8 - GET UP Project - Young Transformative Experiences of Social Utility and Participation (Giovani Esperienze Trasformative di Utilità sociale e Partecipazione)

On the front of the fight against poverty, considering the local, gender and family background specificities, the NAP's objectives are:

ACTION 1 - Facilitate access to the anti-poverty measure also for families from a migratory context, reducing the period of residence in Italy necessary to receive Citizenship Income through a legislative, operational, and administrative intervention. In this regard, based on a hypothetical reduction set at 5 years, taking as a reference the total expenditure envisaged in current legislation for 2021 of €8.798 billion, there is an increase of 3.4% - €276 million - which brings the total cost to €9.097 billion. This cost does not consider the reduced amount disbursed in relation to the introduction of the Single and Universal Allowance, considering that the total starting cost would be €8.143 billion. In 2022, presentation of the regulatory amendment to Budget Law 2023, for an additional cost of €276 million. Measure in operation from 2023.

ACTION 2 - Increase the take-up rate of those entitled to the anti-poverty measure.

In the context of promoting outreach services, in order to promote the awareness of Citizenship Income, implement the regulatory provision that authorises the INPS (Italian National Social Security Institute) to send informative communications on Citizenship Income to households that, following certification by the ISEE (Indicatore della situazione economica equivalente, Equivalent Economic Situation Indicator), have values for the indicator and its components compatible with the economic requirements for access to the Rdc (see Article 5, paragraph 2, Italian Decree-Law 4/2019). Ordinary resources with no change in total expenditure.

ACTION 3 - Promote access to benefits and services for ethnic minorities, in particular Roma, Sinti and Camminanti, by strengthening the Take-up mechanism for full access to universal measures to combat poverty through awareness-raising measures carried out at school and directly in formal or spontaneous settings. Enhancement action from 2022, as programmed in the 2021-2027 Inclusion PN. 2021-2027 Inclusion PN expected resources of €18 million.

ACTION 4 - Offer appropriate services to support the social inclusion of minors in families in poverty, through:
a) strengthening interventions and social services to combat poverty activated for beneficiaries of Citizenship Income within the definition of the Social Inclusion Pact and implementation of the supports provided for therein, which constitute essential levels pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 14 of Italian Decree-Law 4/2019;
b) extension of the PIPPI programme (Programma di Intervento Per la Prevenzione dell'Istituzionalizzazione, Intervention Programme for the Prevention of Institutionalisation);
c) support to young adults leaving a care path following removal from their family of origin based on a provision of the judicial authority ("care leavers");
d) extension of the use of the Ministry of the Interior's National Fund for receiving UAFMs to cover the costs associated with administrative continuation of care up to age 21 ordered by the judicial authority pursuant to Article 13, paragraph 2 of Italian Law 47/2016. Multiple funds as per action sheet.

On the complementary front of the right to housing, here too considering the specificities, especially regional ones and family background, the following objectives are envisaged:

ACTION 5 - Reshaping the rental contribution for households benefiting from Citizenship Income, differentiating the contribution according to household size, reducing it for single-person households and

gradually increasing it as the number of members increases. The overall impact is substantially unchanged.

ACTION 6 - Increase in the supply of affordable housing: a) mapping the housing condition and public housing and non-residential buildings, to help define appropriate interventions by structuring monitoring for the sizing of the housing stock and the public component, and evaluating the dynamics of housing deprivation, within the establishment of the housing condition Observatory; b) improving the quality of urban decor and the social and environmental fabric, including through renovation of public buildings, with particular reference to developing social and cultural, educational and didactic services, or promoting cultural and sports activities; interventions for sustainable mobility. Construction of new public housing structures, to reduce housing difficulties, with particular reference to the existing public stock, and the redevelopment of degraded areas, focusing mainly on green innovation and sustainability; c) finding accommodation to be used for public housing, including by checking the unoccupied stock acquired by Municipalities as a result of sanctioning procedures for illegal building conduct, to be made available by resolution of the municipal council with justification of the public interest, and by checking stock confiscated from the Mafia and available to the state property. Introduction in the calls among the priority criteria of favourable treatment for families with minor children; d) feasibility study on enhancement of “agenzia Casa” (housing agency) services for intermediation with the private market and provision of housing at reduced rates against 1. guarantees on the conduct of the contract by ETS; 2. support with housing; 3. possibility of setting up funds for 3 months’ advance and support for non-culpable arrears. PNRR: Investment 2.1 €3.30 billion; Investment 2.3 €2.80 billion

Finally, two further objectives are pursued to increase the inclusion, quality of life and well-being of pre-adolescents and adolescents:

ACTION 7 - Guidelines to promote social well-being and social inclusion in the different contexts of life of pre-adolescents and adolescents and widespread provision of meeting/community spaces for minors aged 10-17.

The objectives are the definition of intervention models specifically aimed at the needs of pre-adolescents/adolescents and services dedicated to this group, and the proposed socialisation and communal experiences as a response to the needs of children, young people, and adolescents to meet, have recreational and educational experiences, have fun, experiment, and discover interests. The aim is to develop greater potential related to adolescents’ empowerment and resilience. On the other hand, a specific investment is expected in the meeting/community spaces, as indicated in the National Plan for Inclusion and the fight against poverty, action k3.CG, with a forecast of €60 million in the period 2021-27.

ACTION 8 - GET UP project aimed at promoting interventions that are embedded between the school and the local area for trialling projects that promote self-management and autonomy skills for boys and girls and develop their involvement in the town or city’s social context. In the National Plan for Inclusion and the fight against poverty, see action k2.CG, with a forecast of €80 million in the period 2021-27.

7.5 System governance and infrastructures

In the Italian system, there are two crucial nodes to support NAP objectives and create an integrated and favourable strategic framework to promote inclusion policies for minors:

- ensure the “coherence of social, education, health, nutrition and housing policies at national, regional and local level and, where possible, increase their significance in providing integrated support to minors”.
- develop the administrative, social, health and educational infrastructures with the same level and equal offering throughout the country, which still features strong imbalances and unequal opportunities. The administrative competences in this framework are strategic: the implementation of the PNRR is seeing a strong effort aimed at capitalising on new resources and competences, which is also considered essential to implement the actions integrated in this Action Plan.

ACTION 1 - An essential level of participation of girls, boys, and young men/women in their life contexts and in institutions

ACTION 2 - Regional programming consistent with the Child Guarantee objectives

ACTION 3 - Local programming consistent with the Child Guarantee objectives

ACTION 4 - Local multidisciplinary social/health équipe

ACTION 5 - Networks

ACTION 6 - Outreach measures (reduced access and service constraints)

ACTION 7 - Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system

ACTION 8 - Monitoring healthcare for children and adolescents

Therefore, the following objectives are promoted:

ACTION 1 - Ensure coherence between the different intervention chains thanks to the design of national governance: this favours synergy and integration between the different public entities responsible for policies consistent with the Child Guarantee and aimed at preventing and combating the exclusion of minors and their families, ensuring synergy between public and private social sectors, ensuring the participation of minors in their life contexts and in institutions, including by defining essential levels of benefits concerning the right to participation of children and adolescents and through actions to compare and deepen the existing participatory experiences in Italy and abroad.

ACTION 2 - Promote coherence and harmonisation between the guidelines and priorities shared in the Child Guarantee Implementation Plan and regional and local programming, to support and facilitate the programming and related implementation of local interventions to the priorities outlined at national level, and to coordinate efforts when planning national and European resources, also ensuring at this level the participation of minors involved in the CG Recommendation.

The achievement of these objectives is ensured by the activation at different government levels (national, regional, and local) of a control room on the Child Guarantee that brings together all stakeholders in a formal and stable institutional context of connection and participatory programming. As for the national governance level, at the local level too there are direct and indirect mechanisms for consultation and participation of minors to co-design, implement and monitor actions related to the Child Guarantee system.

An action straddling the programming and institutional politics aspects of governance is the development of appropriate skills to govern multidimensional processes and to activate efficient spending methods.

ACTION 3 - Strengthen the transversal, multidisciplinary and interconnected nature of interventions aimed at minors through the local multidisciplinary social-health team; ensure a close connection between school and social education, reform the study and training paths of the professional figures comprising the multidisciplinary team to disseminate and promote an approach based on multidimensional analysis; ensure a specific focus on the objectives/targets of the child guarantee, including by defining a national plan of continuous and integrated postgraduate training; identify models/standards of minimum organisational functioning at ATS (Ambito Sociale Territoriale, Social Welfare division) level, also defining the ratio between operators and inhabitants, which enables the definition of a functional LEPS to guarantee the effectiveness and full operation of the multidisciplinary teams.

ACTION 4 - Pursue multi-level integration of the local social and health sphere with the educational sphere by building or making permanent, regular and organised coordination NETWORKS at regional and local level to plan/monitor cross-sectoral policies and facilitate the implementation of the PANCG.

ACTION 5 - Promote proactive approaches and break down barriers to access to community services for minors and their families (especially for particularly vulnerable targets), by activating within the system outreach MEASURES that ensure minors' rights are exercised, their needs are heard and accepted, according to a local and continuous approach in the development of the different evolutionary phases.

ACTION 6 - Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system within the framework of the Unitary Information System of social services to overcome data fragmentation, while strengthening and better structuring the information base and enhancing the implementation of existing or start-up institutional information systems.

ACTION 7 - Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of healthcare for minors within the provisions of the New System to Guarantee Essential Levels of Assistance by promoting the adoption of indicators and shared methodologies to use when evaluating treatment processes, also integrating the gender perspective.

8. MEASURES, FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND DEADLINES

Ordinary, specific, or extraordinary resources will be used to implement the Action Plan.

In Italy, expenditure on children and teens essentially falls into three main areas: social welfare, education and training, and healthcare. Social welfare expenditure for children and families amounts to approximately 1.5% of GDP. These funds do not represent the full extent of the public budget commitment for families, as they do not include the personal income tax deductions granted to taxpayers with children under 18 or the spend on education. The expenditure on the protection of children's health should be added to the resources listed above. In conclusion, considered overall, the public expenditure on children and teens can be estimated at around €100 billion per year, or about 6% of GDP. Conversely, at local level, the monitoring of the available funds is supported by the current ISTAT survey on the social expenditure of individual or associated municipalities. From the results of this annual survey, it can be inferred that in 2018 - the last year for which data are available - the social expenditure of the municipalities, managed individually or in association, amounts to approximately EUR 7 billion 472 million, indicating a reversal of the drop in expenditure seen in the three-year period 2011-2013. The bulk of this funding, approximately EUR 2.8 billion, is earmarked for children and households with children (38%). The share of expenditure aimed at families with children is clearly lower than the European average (4.1% and 8.3%). With regard to social care, on 6 October 2021 the Minister for Labour and Social Policies signed the decree that relaunched the National Fund for Social Policies, a container for the National Social Plan 2021-2023 and the National Plan of Measures and Social Services to combat poverty 2021-2023. A total of €390,925,678.00 has been allocated to the Fund for each of the years 2021, 2022 and 2023. The regional governments are required to plan how to use their funding allocation for the three-year period 2021-2023, within 60 days from the issuance of the decree. The regional quota of the National Fund for Social Policies also finances the actions aimed at implementing the Guidelines for actions to assist vulnerable children and families (P.I.P.P.I.), for a minimum of EUR 3,937,500.00.

Service provision is also supported by the Municipal Solidarity Fund established by Article 1, paragraph 380 of Law no. 228/2012 (2013 Stability Act). The annual funding allocation is set by law and comes partly from a share of the revenues from the municipal property tax (IMU), which is paid to the municipalities themselves. The increase in the Fund provided for in the last two budget laws is specifically intended:

- to develop the social services offered by local councils acting individually or in association in the "ordinary statute" regions. The amount allocated for 2021 is EUR 216 million; this will gradually rise to EUR 651 million when the Fund is fully operational from 2030, as provided for in the 2021 Budget Act (Art. 1 paragraph 791 of Law no. 178/2020);
- the increase in the number of kindergarten places available in the municipalities of the ordinary statute regions plus Sicily and Sardinia. The funding was initially provided for in the 2021 Budget Act (Article 1, paragraph 791) and was then increased in the 2022 Budget Act (Article 1, paragraphs 172- 174) to 120 million in 2022, 175 million in 2023, 230 million in 2024, 300 million in 2025, 450 million in 2026 and 1,100 million starting from 2027.
- the increase in the number of non-autonomous disabled children attending kindergarten, primary and middle schools who use school bus services, with the sum of 30 million euros for the year 2022, 50 million for 2023, 80 million for 2024, 100 million for 2025 and for 2026 and 120 million euros from 2027 onwards (Art. 1, paragraph 174, of the 2022 Budget Act) to be allocated to the municipalities in the ordinary statute regions as well as Sicily and Sardinia.

There is also a specific ordinary fund: the National Fund for Children and Adolescents, which is under the responsibility of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers - Department of Family Policy and is connected to Law 285/97. The most recent decree of 2021 allocated reserved funding to 15 selected cities (Venice, Milan, Turin, Genoa, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, Bari, Brindisi, Taranto, Reggio Calabria, Catania, Palermo, and Cagliari) which were guaranteed funds of EUR 28,794,000 from the National Fund for Children and Adolescents for 2021.

9. EU FUNDING

Italy's policy choices in relation to the Child Guarantee explicitly highlight the need to promote the complementarities and crossovers between funds contributing to the strategic objectives, in order to strengthen their effectiveness, while maintaining their respective specialisations.

Under the ESF+, policies for children are the target of a specific thematic cluster, which provides for the assignment of at least 5% of the total ESF+ resources allocated to Italy (EU share excluding Technical Assistance, for an amount of € 710,936,118.60 of which 334,703,884 on the School 21-27 NOP and the rest on the Inclusion and Fight against Poverty NP) to the implementation of the Child Guarantee through targeted actions and structural reforms aimed at fighting child poverty, as provided for by Article 9, paragraphs 3-4, of Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 and implemented in Section 6.2 of the Italian Partnership Agreement.

The "Child Poverty" focus will be fully covered by two national programmes (PN School and Skills and PN Inclusion and Poverty), but regional programmes can also join in, with actions in all the areas covered by the Child Guarantee: equal access to childcare, education, health care, decent housing and adequate nutrition.

With particular reference to *the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy Programming* for the ERDF and the ESF Plus, the complementary action of these two funds is relevant, as is relevant to this Plan, to the Strategic Objective of Policy no. 4, *A more social and inclusive Europe*.

The contribution of both funds is essential to integrate and strengthen ordinary actions in *all the policy areas covered* - work, education and training, inclusion and social protection and health.

Overall, funds of EUR 17,535,081,411 have been allocated to this objective, broken down as follows:

3,316,359,039 to the ERDF	14,218,722,372 to ESF Plus
<i>of which</i>	<i>of which</i>
<i>Most developed 80,488,867</i>	<i>Most developed 4,958,683,587</i>
<i>Transition 91,424,320</i>	<i>Transition 667,193,272</i>
<i>Least developed 3,144,445,852</i>	<i>Least developed 8,592,845,513</i>

The ESF Plus contributes significantly to alleviating situations of disadvantage by supporting people and reinforcing service provision, whereas the ERDF focuses on the provision and adaptation of infrastructure and technology. Regarding social and labour integration and inclusion measures for third-country nationals, the integrated action of the ERDF and ESF Plus is continuously accompanied by the work of AMIF.

Regarding employment policies the primary expected outcome to pursue, particularly in the South of Italy, is an increase in the employment and employability of young people and women. The ESF Plus prioritises these and other vulnerable *target groups*. The objectives are synergistic with those of the Child Guarantee: improved access to the labour market for young people; support for the social economy; encouraging new forms of public-private partnership, particularly in the most fragile communities and to offer services for children, teens and families; increasing the number of women in employment by promoting work-family conciliation services and innovative *corporate welfare programmes*. In the area of education and training policies, the primary expected outcomes, particularly for the South of Italy, relate to: improving the core skills of the population, reducing the school dropout rate and raising the numbers of students in higher education. The ESF Plus also supports actions to strengthen systems and to train and retrain teachers and staff. Integration between the ESF Plus and ERDF measures is particularly important in terms of disseminating digital content and services and developing innovative methodologies; the consolidation and diffusion of work experience-based learning is also a means to combat the school dropout rate.

The ESF Plus supports STEM-strengthening pathways, with a particular focus on participation by girls, to overcome gender stereotyping and increase the level of female employment. Preventing and countering early school-leaving and insufficient levels of basic skills are a priority in the fight against educational poverty, with greater attention being paid to the crucial role of pre-school education by integrating systemic measures and extending the offer - particularly the services for the 0-3 age group, which are still very lacking in the South - to social inclusion measures and measures to combat child poverty.

In order to improve inclusivity in education and training systems, ESF Plus and ERDF support programmes for deserving students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

Regarding inclusion and social protection policies, the expected outcome to be pursued is improved accessibility and quality of public services in order to reduce social inequalities and regional disparities in service provision, also taking into account particular situations of problematic access caused by insularity. Players in the Third Sector have a crucial role, as the local services work closely with them and their work is recognised and valued,

also through co-programming, co-planning, collaboration agreements, innovative partnerships, impact funding, and support and capacity building actions.

For third-country nationals, the preference is for measures that are integrated between the various sources of financing (ESF Plus, ERDF and AMIF) to support socio-occupational integration and social inclusion and facilitate access to a wide range of services designed to highlight forms of illegal labour and the fight against exploitation of workers. Targeted measures are directed in favour of children and victims of trafficking. With reference to the Sinti and Roma communities, actions are planned to promote equal treatment when accessing education and training, work, social and health services, with particular attention paid to young people, women, and children.

Regarding the measures to combat extreme poverty and marginalisation, in continuity with the ERDF 2014-2020 Programme, ESF Plus acts to support people living in deprivation by strengthening the distribution network for food and material aid.

With regard to early childhood, in line with the Child Guarantee initiative, measures have been planned to prevent and fight child poverty through a multidimensional approach, as well as measures to facilitate access to early childhood services for disadvantaged children.

With reference to combating the housing disadvantage of people with social fragility, where appropriate, integrated actions are favoured with ERDF infrastructure and technological provision/adaptation interventions and ESF Plus interventions to support housing and social services, including through forms of public-private partnership and the use of funding programmes. ESF Plus and ERDF support the development and dissemination of social innovation initiatives through measures designed to facilitate and strengthen bottom-up programmes designed to stimulate the entrepreneurial capacity of communities and individuals. The structuring of social care funding is illustrated in the National Inclusion and Fight against Poverty Programme 2021-2027. The Programme will endorse the following principles, which relate to the themes of social protection and inclusion as indicated in the Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The 2021-2027 Programming Partnership Agreement has essentially allocated a key role to the 2021-2027 National Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Programme in terms of specifically contributing to the attainment of the following thematic concentrations, with regard to the share of ESF+:

- 30% share of resources dedicated to social inclusion;
- 3% share of resources for the support of the impoverished (exclusively);
- 5% share of resources to support the fight against child poverty;
- 0.25% share of resources for the capacity building of social partners and NGOs.

The Programme can rely on a share of funding from the ERDF in addition to the share of ESF+ resources earmarked for strengthening social infrastructure which, in certain contexts and for certain target audiences, is a precondition for finding a route out of extreme social marginalisation. Other specific, important, and cross-cutting actions include the investments in institutional capacity-building and stakeholder skills, which will be carried out along three main lines: Programming, Management and administrative capacity, Monitoring and evaluation capacity. The implementation of the NAP in relation to the implementation of the 5% quota will benefit from this, since this cross-cutting reinforcement strategy will help implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Within the framework of the Partnership Agreement, Italy has undertaken to respect several thematic concentrations, including that of allocating at least 5% of the total ESF+ resources to the fight against child poverty. This funding has been allocated from the National Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Programme and the National School and Skills Programme 2021-2027.

In particular, the National Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Programme 2021-2027 provides for a total investment over the three-year period of 4,079,865,834, divided into five priorities.

In the National Programme, the Child Guarantee is a priority for the implementation of measures for the target groups who are same as the recipients of the Child Guarantee, in line with Art. 11 of the ESF+ Regulation "Support for youth employment" and with the National Plan for Young People and Women at Work, and this has been taken on with a view to complementing the actions envisaged in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) for the other target groups.

10. DATA COLLECTION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In the stages leading up to the launch of the Child Guarantee, a framework of knowledge of the areas of interest was reconstructed through a deep dive analysis and group work. This involved defining and collecting the contextual and background indicators which gave a broad outline of the scope and characteristics of the areas of application and the communities targeted by the measure. The information acquired, although lacking and patchy in many respects, provided a basis for the steering and launch of the projects that support the European Recommendation, as well as for the drafting of the NAP.

The monitoring and evaluation cover a variety of aspects:

- The organic components of the NAP, such as governance and stimulus actions relating to steering activities and consultation bodies
- The progress of the indicated actions, to achieve the objectives of the NAP, but linked to different planning documents.

In both cases, but certainly in the second, the connection work to be carried out by the national steering committee is strategic.

The evaluation activity will also support the implementation of the plan as an exercise in verifying the sustainability of the objectives over time, for those aimed at creating the essential service levels. This will allow the formulation of a more precise structure for the essential service levels (ESLs) by analysing how far they are sustainable for the local authorities. This is indispensable in terms of verifying the necessary funding.

The monitoring and evaluation of the NAP will follow the indications provided by the Indicators Sub-Group (ISG) of the Social Protection Committee of the Council which has identified indicators at national and European level (see Annex 3 to this document for the list of indicators). Evidence will be given of the results gradually achieved, by:

- measuring the degree of effective implementation of each objective and each action in the NAP, in relation to the use of resources and time - in this regard, see the data sheets for each action, which in some cases already have full sets of input, process and results indicators;
- monitoring the impact of the Child Guarantee on the target population of children and teens in terms of improving their living conditions and access to services and opportunities for the future, by using indicators that can identify the expansion of services, taking into account the geographical areas and territories with the highest concentrations of socially and educationally disadvantaged children relevant to the CG. Data will be broken down by gender, age group, geographical position, and other relevant variables.

The programme will be supported by the National Institute of Statistics and the Hospital of the Innocents.

The monitoring and evaluation frameworks resulting from these two actions will provide the basis for evaluating the progress made in the implementation of the Recommendation, and for the preparation of the *biennial* reports provided for in paragraph 11(f) of the Recommendation and, as set out in paragraph 12(e), for the review that the Commission must undertake five years after the adoption of the Recommendation, in 2026.

In relation to point a), we suggest a *biennial* monitoring and evaluation of the progress in implementing the actions proposed in the NAP through the *supervision* of the Coordinator, the provision of data and information elements by the *promoters and the actors involved* at different governance levels in the implementation of the measures that attest the progress in the implementation process - also on the basis of the indicators declared during the drafting of the NAP -, the elaboration of the information thus collected and the comparison with the *stakeholders* in order to possibly improve things during the process - with special focus on the involvement of children, boys and girls through the YAB (Youth Advisory Board).

In relation to point b) it is worth noting that the Recommendation makes a distinction between the national and EU monitoring frameworks. EU-level monitoring and evaluation will be based on harmonised data collected across the European Union, such as the EU-SILC survey. As the Recommendation itself mentions, the Commission will work with the Social Protection Committee "to establish a common monitoring framework using existing data sources and indicators, and, if necessary, to further develop agreed and standardised quali-quantitative outcome indicators in order to assess the implementation of this Recommendation" (Art. 12, Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004). At EU level, further consideration should therefore be given as to how to ensure the effective monitoring and evaluation of Child Guarantee implementation - this work is currently being undertaken by the Social Protection Committee (SPC) and its Indicators Subgroup (ISG).

At the same time, the Recommendation encourages the Member States to start reflecting on how to build on the information available at national level. In this respect, the aim is to provide cognitive elements to monitor the quantitative dimension of the profiles of the potential beneficiaries of the measure, on the one hand the

target of “children in need” - defined as people at risk of poverty and social exclusion - and on the other hand giving special focus to specific targets: those with serious housing problems or who are homeless; those with disabilities; those with mental health problems; those coming from a migrant background or belonging to ethnic minorities (Roma); those in alternative care facilities, notably institutional care; those in difficult family situations.

To assess the quantitative dimension of these population segments, in the progress steps of the National Plan (NAP), priority should be given to data from official statistical sources, namely ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics), the competent government ministries and the regional governments.

On the other hand, it must be stressed that the lack of data useful for the accurate assessment of certain target populations of beneficiaries - and even more so for the assessment of those groups and the services required - leads to data enhancement strategies being incorporated into the drafting of the NAP (see the specific action-objective). These strategies are:

- exploring current statistics to unlock the as yet untapped potential of the datasets;
- enhancing administrative sources;
- speeding up the implementation of already planned information systems;
- carrying out ad hoc quantitative or qualitative surveys.

As we know, some population targets are well covered by the data available to date, e.g. minors at risk of social exclusion and in poverty or minors living away from home. However, data is still lacking for some of the target beneficiaries, such as the homeless, young people with mental health issues, children and young people from ethnic minorities, especially the Roma people, and those living in difficult family situations. The information gaps are even more significant when it comes to addressing the access of these targets to services deemed essential by the CG Recommendation (early childhood education and care (ECEC); education (including school-based activities); school meals; healthcare; healthy nutrition; adequate housing). For those targets where information is most lacking, it can be assumed that, at least during the initial phase of NAP implementation, estimates and proxy data will have to be used while the data sources are being enhanced.

There are various issues involved in collecting data for the CG. One example is filling the gaps in the information about people from ethnic minorities, in particular the Roma, which is a complex challenge that requires the balancing of the need for knowledge against the provisions of EU Regulation 2016/679, GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). Other examples include the effective access and use of administrative data to supplement statistical surveys; upgrading the infrastructures and data collection capabilities of the local social services that manage information of interest to the CG on a daily basis, within the framework of the SIUSS (*Unified Social Services Information System*) and its SIOSS module (*information about social service provision*) and SINBA (*children and family welfare information system*).

Finally, useful elements for monitoring and evaluating the application of the CG may result from the objectives of the recent Multiannual Plan for the integrated education and training system of children aged 0-6 years old, from 2021 to 2025, and from those of the National Plan for interventions and social services 2021-2023 of August 2021, which already includes the Child Guarantee. These objectives will be pursued through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) Italy Tomorrow, which draws on funds from Next Generation EU and the Multiannual Financial Framework - MFF, as well as through the future planning of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), which allocates about EUR 88 billion to actions to tackle child poverty and at least 25% to social inclusion.

The possibility of promoting participatory evaluation processes in the territories involved will be verified according to the Guidelines on participatory evaluation (drafted pursuant to Legislative Decree no. 150 of 27 October 2009 and Presidential Decree no. 105 of 9 May 2016 - Art. 3 paragraph 1) and prepared by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers - Department of Public Service. The encouragement of citizens' engagement with public policy and decision-making - better known as the subsidiarity principle - is inspired by Article 118 of the Constitution. Horizontal subsidiarity sees the citizen, whether alone or through associations, as an active individual able to work with public institutions on matters that concern the social realities that most affect them.

