ESPN Thematic Report on Progress in the implementation of the 2013 EU Recommendation on "Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage"

Italy

2017

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The European Social Policy Network (ESPN) was established in July 2014 on the initiative of the European Commission to provide high-quality and timely independent information, advice, analysis and expertise on social policy issues in the European Union and neighbouring countries.

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Summary

In Italy, living conditions for children worsened between 2008 and 2015. This was due to the economic recession that began in 2008, as well as the generally insufficient policy measures and institutional capacity to "invest in children", as advocated by the 2013 Recommendation of the European Commission. An analysis based on the indicators adopted in the Europe 2020 strategy to assess trends of poverty and social exclusion shows that risks have increased significantly for children living in Italy. These risks were higher than those for the whole national population and higher than the average for children living in the European Union.

In Italy, key factors for child poverty and social exclusion are geographic location (Southern Italy) and large households, but also single-parent households and families with immigrant background. The difficult conditions of unaccompanied migrant children should also be taken into account.

In line with the 2013 Recommendation, in 2016 Italy adopted a national plan for childhood and adolescence, but without quantifying targets, financial resources, responsibilities and mechanisms for monitoring and assessment. This weakened the plan's potential to reduce fragmentation in legislation, services and benefits through an integrated multi-dimensional strategy, a sustained investment in children and families, a good balance between universal and sectoral policies, as well as the mainstreaming of children's rights in all relevant policies. The third pillar of the Recommendation (children's rights to participate) received less attention with respect to the other two pillars (access to resources, access to quality services). This has been echoed in policy measures introduced since 2013.

For the first pillar (access to resources), a major improvement was the introduction of a nation-wide minimum income scheme, an important advancement in the national anti-poverty strategy. Other measures consisted in bonuses to support family incomes. Employment incentives and measures to reconcile work and family life (such as an extended coverage of parental leaves) were used to promote parents' participation in the labour market. However, weaknesses still exist, such as the lack of tax relief in favour of second earners (especially in low-income households), the prevailing role of cash benefits (with respect to in kind benefits), a scarce integration between monetary transfers and social services.

For the second pillar (access to affordable quality services), health systems and family alternative care (to prevent institutionalisation of minors) maintained good legislative frameworks, while there was little improvement in education. There has been no significant investment in early childhood education and care, and poor coordination continues between housing and social policies. Other weaknesses identified include: regional disparities; reduction in financial resources devoted to relevant national funds for child well-being; lack of integration between national funds and schemes to ensure a better development of services and their better balance with cash benefits.

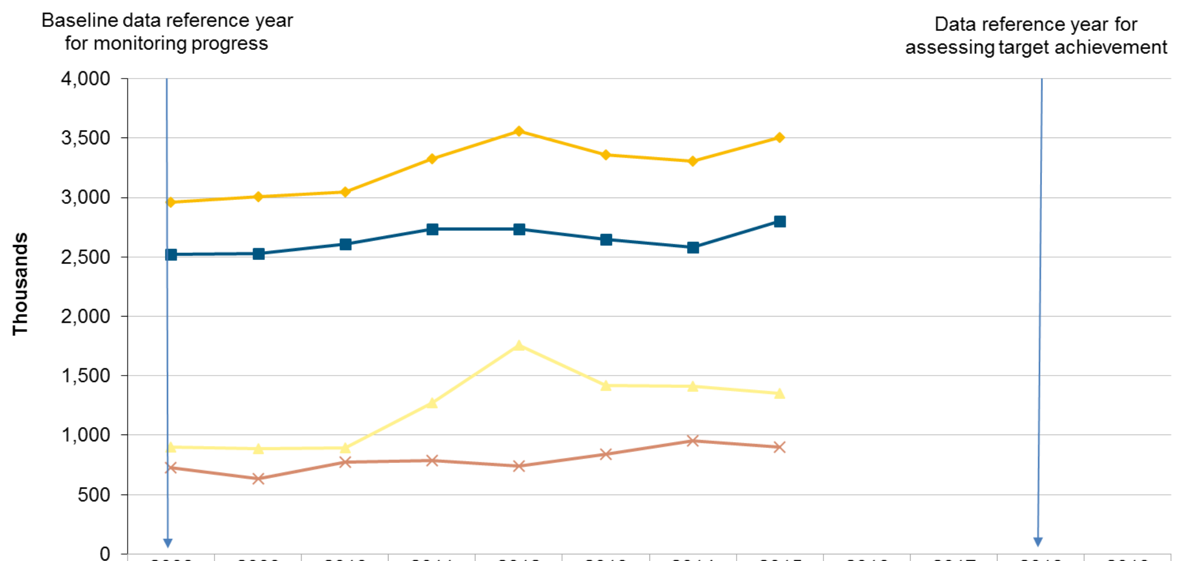
The above policy trends should be considered in the light of the specific recommendations provided to Italy by the Council of the European Union (under the European Semester) since 2013. They included actions for a national anti-poverty strategy (associated with income support schemes), to increase childcare services, to reduce early school leaving and to provide incentives in favour of second earners. Very important was the role played by the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), which provided significant resources earmarked for social services linked to the implementation of minimum income schemes and for initiatives in favour of vulnerable groups such as Roma and similar communities, the homeless, unaccompanied migrant minors, asylum seekers and refugees. These resources (although not yet characterised by high spending capacity) have fostered projects and plans, providing in many cases continuity with projects initiated as early as 2013.

In conclusion, greater efforts are necessary to implement the 2013 Recommendation and to involve children in decisions that affect them. To this end, connections between national plans (e.g. for childhood and adolescence, against poverty and social exclusion) and the ESIF programmes (both at national and regional levels) need to be improved.

1 Overall situation with regard to child poverty and social exclusion

The number of the Italian children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) increased by 18% between 2008 and 2015 (Figure 1). The AROPE indicator is determined by combining three indicators, which all increased: +50% for children in severe material deprivation (SMD), +24% for those living in (quasi)-jobless households (QJ) and +11% for those at risk of poverty (AROP).

Figure 1: Trends in number of children aged 0-17 at risk of poverty or social exclusion, thousands, 2008-2015, Italy



	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
AROPE	2,961	3,006	3,046	3,325	3,561	3,360	3,304	3,505				
AROP	2,521	2,526	2,606	2,735	2,736	2,645	2,583	2,799				
SMD	901	888	893	1,274	1,759	1,417	1,410	1,355				
QJ hhds	728	635	775	790	743	839	951	900				

Source: EU-SILC, Statistical annex to ESPN Synthesis Report (Frazer, H. and Marlier, E. (2017)

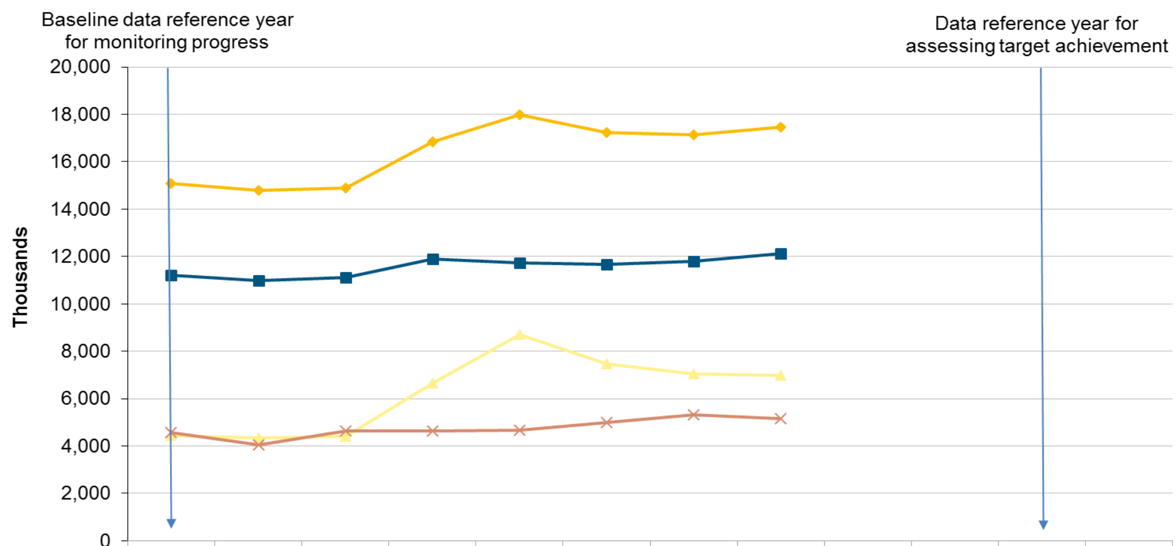
The increase in the AROPE indicator for children was higher than that for the whole population (WP; Figure 2): +3 percentage points (pp). This was due (taking into account intersection effects) to higher increases in the QJ indicator (+11 pp) and in the AROP indicator (+3 pp), combined with a decrease in the SMD indicator (-7 pp). The increases for Italian children were higher than those of the 27 Member States (EU-27)[1]: +55 pp for SMD children (+62 pp for WP); +18 pp for AROPE children (+14 pp for WP); +9 pp for AROP children (+2 pp for WP); +6 pp for QJ children (0 pp for WP).

In 2015, **the highest Italian percentages were related to persons who were AROP but not in SMD and not living in QJ households**: 15.9% for children (+4.3 pp than the EU-27 average); 11.7% for the WP (+1.5 pp than the EU-27 average). The

[1] Authors' own elaboration on data from the statistical annex to Frazer, H. and Marlier, E., 2017.

highest Italian percentages were found for people suffering from "only" one problem, both for children (22.2%, +5.4 pp than the EU-27 average) and the WP (19.7%, +3.6 pp than the EU-27 average).

Figure 2: Trends in number of people (whole population) at risk of poverty or social exclusion, thousands, 2008-2015, Italy



	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
AROPE	15,082	14,799	14,891	16,858	17,975	17,229	17,146	17,469				
AROP	11,204	10,977	11,124	11,889	11,729	11,667	11,790	12,130				
SMD	4,432	4,345	4,403	6,655	8,694	7,464	7,031	6,981				
QJ hhds	4,562	4,046	4,623	4,624	4,659	4,981	5,326	5,158				

Source: EU-SILC, Statistical annex to ESPN Synthesis Report (Frazer, H. and Marlier, E. (2017)

The **specific material deprivation rate for children** (aged 1-15 years and lacking at least 3 of the 17 items that are considered by most people to be desirable or even necessary to lead an adequate life) was **higher than the EU-28 average** (+3 pp): available only for 2014, the Italian rate was 27%.

In 2015, compared to the EU-27 averages, **Italian children living in large households had higher AROPE rates** (reported in brackets), e.g.: +15 pp for two adults with three or more dependent children (47%); +8 pp for three or more adults with dependent children (38%) and for two or more adults with dependent children (31%). Although the Italian AROPE rate for single persons with dependent children was elevated (44%), it was lower (-4 pp) than the EU-27 average.

In Italy, between 2008 and 2015, as a percentage of the population in the respective age group (reported in brackets for 2015[2]), **rates for children increased** in the above indicators: +5.1 pp in AROPE (33.5%), +2.6 pp in AROP (26.8%), +4.4 pp in SMD (13%) and +1.6 pp in QJ (8.6%). The increases were **higher than those of the whole population** (WP; rates reported in brackets for 2015): +3.2 pp in AROPE (28.7%); +1 pp in AROP (19.9%); +4 pp in SMD (11.5%); +1.3 pp in QJ (11.7%).

In 2015, **Italian rates were higher than the EU-27 rates** in AROPE (+6.6 pp for children and +5 pp for the WP), AROP (+5.7 pp for children and +2.6 pp for the WP), SMD (+3.5 pp both for children and the WP) and QJ (+1.1 for the WP, but -0.7 pp for

[2] When not otherwise specified in the rest of this Section, statistics were elaborated on data from the Eurostat online database, retrieved between 5-04-2017 and 30-04-2017.

children). Anchored at 2008 rates (i.e. adjusted for inflation), the Italian AROP rates in 2015 (32.9% for children and 25.6% for the WP) would have been even higher (respectively by 10.6 and 7.1 pp) than the "adjusted" EU-27 rates.

For immigrant households, the risk of poverty was higher than for households formed only by Italians (31% versus 9% in 2015; ISTAT, 2016). 11% of children were of immigrant origin in 2015 and constituted 22% of the immigrant population (amounting to 8% of the WP).

The difficult condition of **unaccompanied migrant minors** was also significant: with a doubling in 2016 with respect to 2015 (MI, 2017); a number that corresponded to 2% of immigrant children already residing in Italy.

The evolution of the above-mentioned indicators was anchored to **persistent regional disparities**: in 2015 the AROPE rates for WP ranged from 14% to 26% in the 8 northern regions, from 19% to 29% in the 4 regions of the Centre and from 30% to 55% in the 8 southern regions.

As a general conclusion, greater efforts are needed in Italy to meet its national 2020 targets in the field of child poverty and social exclusion.

2 Assessment of overall approach and governance

In line with the 2013 Recommendation of the European Commission on “Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage” (“the Recommendation” throughout the present report), Italy adopted in 2016 the Fourth National Action Plan for Childhood and Adolescence (“the plan”; MLSP, 2016). The plan pursues a governance improvement to meet the overarching objectives of: fighting against extreme poverty; strengthening the education system; improving health systems; encouraging participation in cultural, recreational and sports activities; reducing inequalities from an early age.

The plan did not quantify targets for actions in thematic priorities (the fight against poverty; socio-educational services and the school system; social and educational inclusion; parenting support and integrated services). This weakened the potential of the plan to reduce legislative and organisational fragmentation among institutional levels (i.e. poor coordination between ministries, departments, funds and programmes). This fragmentation has **hampered the development of an integrated multi-dimensional strategy** between relevant policy area and players. Relevant stakeholders underlined this shortcoming (CRC, 2016; ACA, 2015 and 2016) as well as **a lack of balance between universal and sectoral policies,** and **the necessity to mainstream children’s rights** in current and future policies.

The plan did not specify the financial amounts necessary to make objectives and actions feasible. This uncertainty **undermined the sustained investment in children and families**, as well as an effective protection of children from the impact of the crisis, taking into account the current features of public spending on childhood and adolescence policies: instability and cuts in financial resources; low spending capacity, associated with the difficulty of identifying – and then monitoring - actual financial resources within several components of the state budget (ACA, 2016).

The plan did not specify clear responsibilities and mechanisms for monitoring and assessing its implementation, as well as the impact of policies on children. This **hindered** the creation of a stable **system of monitoring and impact assessment** (including through the involvement of children in this exercise), as required by relevant stakeholders (CRC, 2016). The latter highlighted that **more efforts** were **necessary to involve children** in decisions that affect them. As an example, children were not directly involved in the preparation of the plan, notwithstanding the participation of a range of actors.

A positive aspect of the plan is its function as **a continuously evolving framework to foster children's rights** with attention to initiatives for vulnerable groups. In this perspective, some recent initiatives must be added to those mentioned in the plan. For **unaccompanied migrant minors**: in 2015, a national fund devoted to them was better connected with the main System of Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees; in 2016, guidelines and criteria for integrated welcome services were associated with structural requirements for public reception centres; in 2016, a law was approved concerning the age assessment of child victims of trafficking; in 2017 a law introduced norms to protect unaccompanied minors. A bill to (moderately) facilitate the acquisition of Italian citizenship for **immigrant minors** born in Italy is still under Parliamentary debate. An action programme for **disabled** children was launched in 2013 and the so-called "after us" national fund in favour of those without adequate family-support mainly due to the death of both parents was approved in 2016. For **Roma children**: a national project was carried out between 2013 and 2016 (MLSP, 2015) in line with the national integration strategy for Roma, Sinti and Travellers launched in 2012 (UNAR, 2012).

3 Pillar 1 – Access to resources

In line with the Recommendation, **strengths** of the Italian policy developments can be found in: employment incentives (A1) and work-life balance measures (A2) to foster parents' participation in the labour market; measures for family income support (B).

A1) Among employment incentives: an exemption (partial and temporary) from social security contributions for employers who hire women was introduced (2012), followed in (2015) by general measures (i.e. not targeted to specific groups of workers) aimed at favouring new open-ended labour contracts, successively (2017) made more selective (i.e. targeted to territorial areas with high unemployment risks).

A2) Among work-life balance measures: mandatory maternity benefits extended to all working women (e.g. including the self-employed; 2015); vouchers to purchase babysitting services (introduced in 2012 as an alternative to parental leave) extended to mothers who are self-employed or entrepreneurs (2015 and 2016); parental leave granted also on an hourly basis to parents who are employed under full-time or part-time labour contracts respecting collective labour agreements (2013); in absence of collective bargaining, hourly-based parental leave equivalent to half the average daily working hours (2015); as an alternative to parental leave, the transformation of full-time labour contracts into a part-time labour contracts with a maximum reduction of 50% in working hours in accordance with the duration of the parental leave (2015); extension of the duration of mandatory paternity leave for dependent employees to four days in 2018; a monthly leave granted to women who are victims of violence (2015); through collective agreements, the transfer of rest periods and holidays among employees of the same employer (to enable them to assist their children with needs for constant health care). Other measures include a strengthening of telecommuting, i.e. work from home (2015), parental leave, maternity allowances and sickness allowances devoted to non-entrepreneurial self-employed workers (2017)[3].

B) Among measures to support family income: an increase (2013) in tax deductions for families with dependent children; a bonus (2015) in favour of new-born or adopted child (doubled for low-income households), while replacing a series of previous funds; a one-off bonus (2015) to low-income households with four or more children to contribute to the costs of raising children; a voucher (2017) in favour of parents who pay for attendance at public and private nurseries for children under three years; a one-off premium (2017) at birth or adoption of a child; credit access for households with new-born babies or adopted children (2017); a nation-wide minimum income scheme ("Inclusion Income" – REI, introduced in 2017; main characteristics and expected effect on child poverty described in Annex 2a).

[3] More information can be found in the *ESPN Thematic Report on Access to social protection of people working as self-employed or on non-standard contracts – Italy* (January 2017).

However, the following **weaknesses** can be detected.

Parents' participation in the labour market (A1 and A2): the lack of personal income tax relief in favour of second earners (especially in low-income households); missed links between employment incentives and development plans aimed at increasing labour demand and avoiding substitution (i.e. hiring workers whose labour cost is lower) and deadweight effects (new jobs that would have been created anyway) in the labour market; short duration of paternity leave (insufficient to promote an effective gender equality in parenting roles); the use of babysitting vouchers, which might lead to limited utilisation of parental leave; insufficient provision of quality public childcare services.

Family income support (B): a significant increase in cash benefits with respect to in kind benefits (Annex 2b); a lack of integration between monetary transfers (e.g. bonuses and vouchers delivered by the State) and public social services (mainly provided by municipalities); a lack of coordination between new monetary benefits and other family allowances, e.g. those for dependent workers with children and for large households with at least three minors (respectively, 1988 and 1998); financial resources devoted to the "Inclusion Income" (REI) still insufficient to address the risks of poverty for Italian children (Annex 2a).

4 Pillar 2 – Access to affordable quality services

This section provides an overall assessment (strengths and weaknesses) of the most relevant Italian policies in line with the approach suggested in the Recommendation.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC). Strengths: a national plan was introduced (2013) to increase the number of nurseries and crèches in four southern regions through the reprogramming of the 2007–2013 EU Funds; a national fund to support a national plan aimed at a single integrated system of ECEC services for children aged 0-6 (2017; as envisaged by the 2015 "Good School" reform"). Weaknesses: still low investment in ECEC services and low institutional capacity to tackle persistent regional disparities in the provision of quality ECEC services (Istituto degli Innocenti, 2016).

Education. Strengths: compulsory school-to-work experiences for all students in the last three years of secondary education included in the "Good School" reform (2015) (OECD, 2017); collaboration between households and schools to tackle low educational attainment of children, supported by a national fund for combating educational poverty of minors (2015). Weaknesses: continued low investment in comprehensive educational systems and low institutional capacity to reduce early school leaving, improving educational performances and tackling persisting regional disparities (CRC, 2016; Save the Children, 2016 and 2017).

Health. Strengths: a well-structured (and effectively governed) National Health Service that also addresses the needs of disadvantaged children through universal access to services and uniform basic levels for quality services (managed by the regional authorities) recently updated (2017). Weaknesses: although declining as a national average, higher infant mortality rates in southern regions and for immigrant children (ISTAT, 2014 and 2016a); declining vaccine coverage (MH, 2015); regional disparities, especially in the provision of disability and mental health services (MH, 2014).

Housing and living environment. Strengths: national funds for monetary support were introduced to cover the costs of electricity and gas (2007) and for a temporary suspension of payment of rent and evictions (2014) in favour of low-income households; plans for social housing (2014), urban renewal and social inclusion in degraded suburbs (2014 and 2015). Weaknesses: fragmented legislative framework with overlaps between national plans, delays in plan implementation; poor coordination between housing and social policies.

Family support and alternative care. Strengths: improved rules on parental leave that also applies in the case of adoption and foster care (Section 3); a national fund for international adoption of minors, which was separated from a national fund for family policies (2016); implementation of a good legislative framework based on a low use of detention (criminal institutions for minors) with respect to alternatives (initial reception centres, community-based services) aimed at permitting the continued education of children and their reintegration into the community (MJ, 2017); a national programme (PIPPI) carried out on an experimental basis (2011-2017) to support parenting and prevent institutionalisation of minors (MLSP, 2016a). Weaknesses: reduction in financial resources devoted to relevant national funds, such as those for childhood, social policies and family policies (Annex 2b); lack of integration between national funds and schemes to ensure a better development of services and their balance with cash benefits.

5 Pillar 3 – Children’s right to participate

The monitoring report of the Third National Action Plan for Childhood and Adolescence highlighted that: participation of children in play, recreation, sport and cultural activities requires greater policy commitment to develop local projects; participation of minors in decisions affecting them was only a generic and formal principle, without practical implementation in national and local policies (MLSP, 2013). However, this assessment on the limits of the national plan did not modify the current Fourth National Action Plan (MLSP, 2016) that remains generic in terms of targets and resources (Section 2).

To foster children’s participation, the monitoring report made clear reference to projects supported by the National Fund for Childhood and Adolescence (Annex 2c). The fund allowed specific national initiatives to be implemented, such as the national programme “PIPPI” (Section 4) and the national project for the inclusion and integration of Roma, Sinti and Travellers' children (Section 2): two examples of good practice to promote the participation of children (and their parents) in decisions that affect them through a close collaboration with socio-educational services and multidisciplinary teams (MLSP, 2013a, 2015 and 2016a). The utilisation of this fund also was echoed in the current action plan.

Unfortunately, financial resources have been significantly reduced for the national funds devoted to childhood and social policies since 2008 (Annex 2b), while the definition of basic levels to ensure quality services throughout the national territory is still lacking (notwithstanding that both were created in 1997). This includes the definition of basic quality levels: to promote children’s participation in legal decision-making in areas that affect their lives with attention to vulnerable groups of children; to support their participation in play, recreation, sport and cultural activities. To fill the gap, the National Ombudsperson for Childhood and Adolescence proposed a child tailored approach for participation (ACA, 2015a).

Although **strengths** that line up with the Recommendation can be found in numerous existing initiatives, **weaknesses** still prevail in: low opportunities for children living in low-income households to participate in play, recreation, sport and cultural activities, amplified by territorial disparities, especially between southern regions and the rest of Italy (Save the Children, 2017); lack of coordination between administrative, legislative and procedural mechanisms for the promotion of child participation in decision-making that affects them (CRC, 2016).

6 Addressing child poverty and social exclusion and child well-being in the European Semester

In Italy, the National Reform Programme (NRP) is the main policy instrument to address the European Semester, including the EU Council’s Country Specific Recommendations (CSR) supported by the Country Reports that assess Italy’s progress towards its Europe 2020 targets.

Between 2014 and 2017, none of the NRPs explicitly referenced the Recommendation, while the EU Council recommended actions in four policy strands. The first strand was the fight against poverty and social exclusion to be addressed through: a minimum income pilot scheme ("Support to Active Inclusion" – SIA; Annex 2a) and family support schemes favouring low-income households with children (2014 CSR); a national antipoverty strategy, supported by rationalised social spending (2016 CSR). The second strand concerned the improvement in the provision of childcare services favouring low-income households with children (2014 CSR). The third strand recommended a reduction in early school leaving (2014 CSR). The fourth strand aimed at fostering work-life balance policies (2015 CSR) and reducing fiscal disincentives for second earners in order to facilitate their take-up of work (2016 CSR).

The 2017 NRP responded to these recommendations through: not well specified measures targeted at second earners in low-income households; an integrated system of ECEC services and measures to prevent early school leaving included in the "Good School" reform (Section 4); the REI, i.e. the "Inclusion Income" (Section 3 and Annex 2a) associated with a reorganisation of welfare benefits. Basically, the NPR did not foresee new reform programmes but provided a description of what was done in 2016 and early 2017 (UPB, 2017).

7 Mobilising relevant EU financial instruments

In Italy, 12 national operational programmes (NOP), co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), were defined within the ESIF (European Structural and Investment Funds) Partnership Agreement 2014-2020. They were complemented by 21 operational programmes for regions and autonomous provinces (ROP). The NOPs did not explicitly mention the Recommendation, to which a clear reference was made only in one ROP.

ESIF and national co-financing constituted respectively 58% and 42% of the total 2014-2020 budget (Annex 2d). As a share of ESIF, 48% was from ERDF, 25% from ESF and 1% from YEI. The national co-financing rate was 37% for initiatives supported by ERDF and 44% for those supported by ESF. ESF and YEI resources were concentrated in Investment Priorities (IPs) of three Thematic Objectives (TO): 43% for employment (TO8), 28% for education (TO10) and 20% for social inclusion (TO9). 43% of the total ESF co-financing was for NOPs and 57% for ROPs. The rates of national co-financing were 41% for NPOs and 45% for ROPs. As a total (NOPs + ROPs), 60% of ESF was allocated to the 8 southern regions.

Child well-being was taken on board in the NOP "Inclusion" (Annex 2e), in which 88% of the ESF co-financing was earmarked for social services linked to the implementation of minimum income schemes (SIA and REI; Annex 2a) under a national plan against poverty and social exclusion, whose components were initially identified in 2015. Another 7% of the ESF co-financing was earmarked for initiatives in favour of Roma, Sinti and Travellers, victims of violence, unaccompanied migrant minors, asylum seekers and refugees. As a total, 95% of the ESF co-financing concerned the IPs on: active inclusion (9i); marginalised social communities (9ii); quality services (9iv). According to these IPs, the 21 ROPs provide additional actions.

NOP "Inclusion" was complemented by initiatives within other NOPs: "Education" and "Active employment policies" to improve primary schooling and to prevent early school leaving, according to IP 10i; "Active employment policies" to foster women employment, work-life balance and gender equality, according to IP 8iv; "Metropolitan Cities" and "Legality" to improve facilities and services for the homeless, unaccompanied children, legal immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, Roma, Sinti and Travellers, according to IPs 9i and 9ii with the addition of 9v on social economy. NOP "Metropolitan Cities" and NOP "Inclusion" were connected to the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), in favour of children and the homeless.

By considering the above mentioned IPs, an estimate of the ESF co-financing "absorbed" and "spent" through current projects shows: 8% of total EU money in the programme mobilised on projects (absorption rate) and 3% of total amount already spent compared to EU money in programme budget for 2014-2020 (spending rate), or 33% compared to the EU amount absorbed.

An efficient connection between NOPs, the national plan for childhood and adolescence (Section 2), and the national plan against poverty and social exclusion would improve these rates. This connection would also be supported by the “Ex Ante Conditionalities” instrument already used to plan the ESF investments for IPs 9i (promotion of active inclusion) and 10i (prevention of early school leaving).

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Annex 1: Summary Table – Progress since February 2013

Policy area or approach	Overall have policies/ approaches been strengthened, stayed much the same or been weakened since February 2013 (in the light of the EU Recommendation)?		
	Stronger	Little Change	Weaker
Governance			
• Multi-dimensional strategy with synergies between policies		X	
• Children's rights approach & effective mainstreaming of children's policy and rights		X	
• Evidence-based approach		X	
• Involvement of relevant stakeholders (including children)		X	
Access to resources			
• Parents' participation in the labour market		X	
• Child & family income support	X		
Access to services			
• ECEC		X	
• Education	X		
• Health		X	
• Housing & living environment		X	
• Family support & alternative care	X		
Children's right to participate			
• in play, recreation, sport & cultural activities		X	
• in decision making		X	
Addressing child poverty and social exclusion in the European Semester		X	
Mobilising relevant EU financial instruments	X		

NB: The estimate of progress made in Italy was based on comparing the findings of the present report, those of a report completed in September 2013 (Strati. F., 2014) and the more recent assessment provided by the Commission Staff Working Document (EC, 2017).

Annex 2: Additional information

Annex 2a: Minimum income schemes: from SIA to REI

REI (Social Inclusion Income; Law No 33/2017 awaiting the activation decrees expected by September 2017) constituted an important advancement in a national anti-poverty strategy and replaced SIA (see below). As in the case of SIA, REI gave priorities to households with children.

REI was defined by law as a nation-wide anti-poverty measure of a universal nature: provided through means-testing mechanisms within the reorganisation of social assistance benefits (which includes absorbing the "social card" for children – see below); identified as a basic level of social benefits throughout the national territory in close association with social services (according to Law No 328/2000 for integrated social policies and services); delivered through customised projects prepared by multidisciplinary teams in collaboration with local authorities (according to Law No 328/2000) that are in charge of public services (in social, employment, training, housing, health and educational fields).

REI is financed through a "fund against poverty and social exclusion", pillar of a "national plan against poverty and social exclusion" (adopted every three years in agreement with the Regions), which will progressively increase both the level of REI and the number of beneficiaries. Resources allocated to the fund amounted to EUR 1,180 million in 2017 and EUR 1,704 million each year in 2018 and 2019. According to the 2017 National Reform Programme and recent government statements, these resources are expected to cover more than 400,000 households, corresponding to 1,770,000 persons, of which nearly 700,000 children. This means 25% of the 2,799,000 children who were at-risk-of-poverty (AROP) in 2015 (Eurostat ilc_li02; date of extraction: 09.04.2017).

According to a "memorandum" signed (14 April 2017) by the government and the "Alleanza contro la povertà" (an alliance against poverty, constituted by nearly 40 organisations), 15% of the national fund should be earmarked for services devoted to social inclusion and activation, a percentage that is increased to 25% by including the utilisation of probable additional resources such as those from the European Social Fund (ESF).

SIA (Support to Active Inclusion; Law No 147/2013) was extended throughout the national territory from September 2016 and EUR 750 million were distributed among the regions (Ministerial Decree 26/5/2016). In 2017, criteria were revised to increase both the level of SIA and the number of beneficiaries by growing resources to EUR 1,169 million (Ministerial Decree 16/3/2017), in view of a final absorption into REI. In 2016, through the national operational programme (NOP) "Inclusion" (Section 7), EUR 487 million (by summing the ESF and national co-financing) were provided to support social services associated with the SIA implementation (Ministry of Labour Policies and Social Policies, public notice No. 3/2016, August 3, 2016). These resources (to be spent between 2016 and 2019) were distributed among the regions according to the territorial areas of social services, identified in accordance with Law 328/2000.

The **social card** (Law No 133/2008) is a pre-paid shopping card (used to purchase food products, electricity and gas) devoted to parents of children 0-3 years old or persons older than 65 with very low income. Financial resources allocated to this card increased from EUR 170 million in 2008, to EUR 261 million in 2017. According to various estimates, around 50% of these resources were devoted to households with children.

Annex 2b: Resources (€ million) allocated to main national funds relevant to child well-being between 2008 and 2017				
FUNDS	**2008**	**2013**	**2017**	**Difference 2017 – 2008 in percentage**
Childhood and adolescence	43.9	39.2	28.8	-34%
Social policies	712.0	343.7	311.6	-56%
Family policies	173.1	16.9	5.1	-85%
International adoption of minors			20.0	
Socio-educational services for children (nurseries and crèches)	216.5	339.3	209.0	-3%
Nursery attendance voucher			144.0	N/A
New-born babies (1)		25	1,418.0	N/A
"After us" (2)			38.3	N/A
Educational poverty of minors			100.0	N/A
Exemption from schoolbook costs	103.3	53.6	33.0	-68%
Unaccompanied migrant minors		25.0	170.0	N/A
SIA and REI (3)		50.0	1,003.0	N/A
Social services linked to REI (3)			177.0	N/A
Social card (4)	85.0	7.5	130.6	+54%
Reduction in electricity and gas costs	50.0	80.9	57.3	+15%
Temporary suspension of payment of rent and evictions			11.5	N/A
TOTAL	1.383,8	981.0	3,857.2	+179%
Breakdown percentage of the total according to the prevailing type of action between:				
- cash benefits (5)	30%	30%	74%	+44%
- social services	70%	70%	26%	-44%

Based on multiple sources: 03.05.2017. Small differences were due to rounding. Calculations were not adjusted for inflation and took into account overlaps in actual allocation (mainly through ministerial decrees). For 2017, data were based on the 2017 budget law (No 232/2016), successively modified by agreement between the State and the Regions (February 2017). This agreement included a reduction in the National Fund for Social Policies (from EUR 311.6 million to EUR 99.8 million in 2017). As the government recently assured the restoration of the original amount, the aforementioned cut was not included in this table.

(1) Sum of resources allocated to national funds (new-born or adopted babies; support for birth rate) and to a premium for birth or adoption.

(2) National fund devoted to seriously disabled persons without adequate family support.

(3) Data related to social services linked to REI were estimated on the basis of the "memorandum" signed by the government and the "Alleanza contro la povertà" (Annex 2a).

(4) Data related to the social card devoted to households with children were estimated considering a 50% average of the total resources allocated to this monetary support (Annex 2a).

(5) Cash benefits were also attributed to the national fund for social policies, by applying a 27% average on resources allocated to local welfare systems on the basis of the data concerning municipal spending on social services in 2012 (Annex 2c).

Annex 2c: Examples of projects and programmes supported by national funding relevant to child well-being

A) The National Fund for Childhood and Adolescence (Law No 285/1997 supported child well-being projects developed by 15 large metropolitan municipalities: 35% of more than 3,600 projects (monitored by a specific databank; http://www.bancadatiprogetti285.minori.it/) promoted the children's participation in play, recreation, sport and cultural activities, while the children's right to participate is included in 28% of the projects. Intersections were apparent in the projects between these policy measures and other types of actions, namely: to fight against poverty; to promote social inclusion (also for children of Roma and similar communities); to support parenting, foster care and family adoption; to prevent abuse, ill-treatment, violence and the exploitation of children; to provide socio-educational services, education at home and through territorial facilities; to raise awareness (Istituto degli Innocenti, 2017). The fund is managed through a close and effective coordination between the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the concerned municipalities. Among good examples of initiatives are the national project for the inclusion and integration of Roma, Sinti and Travellers' children mentioned in Section 2 and the national "PIPPI" programme to prevent institutionalisation of minors (Section 4). The latter was progressively extended from the original municipalities (10 in 10 regions in 2011) to other local areas (56 in 17 regions in 2017) through financing provided by the National Fund for Social Policies (NFSP).

B) The NFSP is the most important fund to ensure the widespread integration of welfare systems at a regional and local level. Created (Law No 449/1997) to constitute a single and comprehensive fund (in association with the European Social Fund), it is mainly (90%) managed by regions and municipalities. The fund was embedded in the national reform for integrated social policies and services (Law No 328/2000), which promoted a universal approach combined with selectivity criteria focusing attention to the most in need through a balanced mix of social services and cash benefits. The fund supports municipal spending on social services, which in 2012 (last available data; ISTAT, 2015) was divided as follows: 73% in-kind benefits, of which 37% as direct services to households and individuals (actions for social inclusion, socio-educational support, labour insertion, parenting and foster care, home care, transport, housing and first aid), and 36% as services provided through territorial facilities (crèches and nurseries, socio-educational centres, day-care or semi-residential and residential care centres, family and social centres); 27% in cash benefits (income support, subsidies for food, housing and the associated fuel costs, crèches and nurseries, foster care, education, health and social assistance, residential or daily and semi-residential care, transport). The beneficiaries of social services were: families and children (40%), disabled (24.3%), elderly (19.1%), poor and homeless people (7.7%), immigrants, Roma and similar communities (2.8%), persons addicted to drugs, alcohol etc. (0.5%), and persons with multiple needs (5.6%).

C) Within the ESIF (European Structural and Investment Funds; Section 7), a funding line was launched to support services and initiatives for the homeless, promoted by regional and local authorities between 2016 and 2019. A first share of funding was allocated (Ministry of labour and social policy, public notice No 4/2016, October 3, 2016) and consisted in: EUR 25 million in the NOP "Inclusion" and EUR 25 million in the European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).

Annex 2d: The 2014-2020 ESIF budget and its components ESF and ERDF (€ million)

	EU financing	National financing	Total
ESIF (European Structural & Investment Funds)	42,668	30,957	73,624
ERDF (European Regional Development Fund)	20,650	11,999	32,650
ESF (European Social Fund)	10,468	8,086	18,555

ESF (EU financing) by **Thematic Objectives**	TO8: Employment	TO9: Social Inclusion	TO10: Education	TO11: Institutional Capacity	Technical assistance	Total
	4,087	2,269	3,156	594	362	10,468

ESF by **programme typology**:	EU financing	National financing	Total
NOPs (national operational programmes)	4,493	3,109	7,602
ROPs (regional operational programmes)	5,976	4,977	10,953
Total	10,468	8,086	18,555

ESF (EU financing) by main **regional areas**:	North-Centre	South	Total
NOPs	917	3,575	4,493
ROPs	3,244	2,732	5,976
Total	4,161	6,307	10,468

NOP Inclusion (EU financing)	ESF	Investment Priorities (IPs)
A) Social services for minimum income schemes	727	9i; 9ii
B) Marginalised communities	61	9i; 9ii; 9iv
A+B	788	9i; 9ii; 9iv
NOP Inclusion total budget	827	

Other relevant NOPs:	**NOPs** (EU financing)	ESF	ERDF	IPs
Primary schooling; Early school leaving	**Education**	779		10i
	Active Employment Policies	26		10i
Women employment and work-life balance	**Active Employment Policies**	47		8iv
Facilities/services for marginalised communities	**Metropolitan Cities**	142	113	9i; 9ii; 9v; 9b
	Legality	35	42	9ii; 9v; 9b
Total NOPs		1,817	155	
Total ROPs	**All ROPs** (EU financing)	2,192	8iv; 9i; 9ii; 9iv; 9v;10i	
Total NOPs + ROPs		4,009	8iv; 9i; 9ii; 9iv; 9v;10i	

ESF (EU financing): **projects currently in place**	Total eligible EU cost amount	Total declared expenditure	Total 2014-2020 budget
	333	109	4,009

FEAD (Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived)	EU financing	National financing	Total
	671	118	789

Authors' own elaboration on data from: http://www.opencoesione.gov.it/programmazione_2014_2020/; https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/countries/IT#; the European Commission (not yet published).

Annex 2d (continued): The 2014-2020 ESIF budget and its components ESF and ERDF (%)

	EU financing	National financing	Total
ESIF	58%	42%	100%
ERDF	63%	37%	100%
ESF	56%	44%	100%
ERDF as a share of ESIF	48%	39%	44%
ESF as a share of ESIF	25%	26%	25%

ESF (EU financing) by **Thematic Objectives**	TO8: Employment	TO9: Social Inclusion	TO10: Education	TO11: Institutional Capacity	Technical assistance	Total
	39%	22%	30%	6%	3%	100%

ESF by **programme typology**:	EU financing	National financing	Total
NOPs	43%	38%	41%
ROPs	57%	62%	59%
Total	100%	100%	100%
NOPs	59%	41%	100%
ROPs	55%	45%	100%
Total	56%	44%	100%

ESF (EU financing) by main **regional areas**:	North-Centre	South	Total
NOPs	20%	80%	100%
ROPs	54%	46%	100%
Total	40%	60%	100%

NOP Inclusion (EU financing)	ESF	Investment Priorities (IPs)
C) Social services for minimum income schemes	88%	9i; 9ii
D) Marginalised communities	7%	9i; 9ii; 9iv
A+B	95%	9i; 9ii; 9iv

Programmes and projects as a percentage of the ESF total 2014-2020 budget (EU financing) devoted to selected IPS (8iv; 9i; 9ii; 9iv; 9v;10i):	
NOP Inclusion	20%
Other NOPs relevant to child well-being	25%
All ROPs	55%
Current projects: total eligible EU cost amount (absorption rate)	8%
Current projects: total expenditure declared to the EU Commission (spending rate)	3%

FEAD (Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived)	EU financing	National financing	Total
	85%	15%	100%

Authors' own elaboration on data from: http://www.opencoesione.gov.it/programmazione_2014_2020/; https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/countries/IT#; the European Commission (not yet published).

Annex 2e: Investment Priorities (IPs) most relevant to the well-being of children (aged 0-17 years) in the context of the 2014-2020 ESIF budget (€ million)

ESF IPs: 8iv – Equality between men and women in all areas; 9i – Active inclusion; 9ii – Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma; 9iv – Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high quality services; 9v – Promoting social entrepreneurship, social and solidarity economy; 10i – Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education.

The 8ii IP (integration into the labour market of young people, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee) was not selected because: available data do not allow a clear distinction to be made between the YEI (Youth Employment Initiative and the associated PON) and other programmes; the Youth Guarantee is mostly devoted to young people in the age range 19- 29 years (90%) compared to a small percentage (10%) of young people in the age range of 15-18 years between April 2014 and July 2017.

ERDF IPs: 9b - Providing support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas.

EU financing: **NOP Inclusion**	ESF	Investment Priorities (IPs)
NOP Inclusion total budget, of which:	827	
E) Social services for minimum income schemes	727	9i; 9ii
F) Marginalised communities	61	9i; 9ii; 9iv
A+B	788	9i; 9ii; 9iv

Other relevant NOPs:	EU financing: **NOPs**	ESF	ERDF	IPs
Primary schooling; Early school leaving	**Education**	779		10i
	Active Employment Policies	26		10i
Women employment and work-life balance	**Active Employment Policies**	47		8iv
Facilities/services for marginalised communities	**Metropolitan Cities**	142	113	9i; 9ii; 9v; 9b
	Legality	35	42	9ii; 9v; 9b
Total NOPs		1,817	155	
Total ROPs	**All ROPs** (EU financing)	2,192	8iv; 9i; 9ii; 9iv; 9v;10i	
Total NOPs + ROPs		4,009	8iv; 9i; 9ii; 9iv; 9v;10i	

EU financing: **ESF** by **projects currently in place** according to the above selected ESF IPs

ESF IPs	(A) EU amount committed / absorbed	(B) EU amount already spent and declared to the Commission	(C) Total amount of EU money in programme budget for 2014-2020
8iv	9	5	258
9i; 9ii; 9iv; 9v	174	42	2,201
10i	151	63	1,550
Total IPs	333	109	4,009

FEAD (Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived)	EU financing	National financing	Total
	671	118	789

Authors' own elaboration on data from: http://www.opencoesione.gov.it/programmazione_2014_2020/; https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/countries/IT#; the European Commission (May 2017).

Annex 2e (continued): Investment Priorities (IPs) most relevant to well-being of children (aged 0-17 years) in the context of the 2014-2020 ESIF budget (%)		
NOP Inclusion (EU financing)	ESF	Investment Priorities (IPs)
G) Social services for minimum income schemes	88%	9i; 9ii
H) Marginalised communities	7%	9i; 9ii; 9iv
A+B	95%	9i; 9ii; 9iv

Programmes and projects as a percentage of the ESF total 2014-2020 budget (EU financing) devoted to selected IPS (8iv; 9i; 9ii; 9iv; 9v;10i):	
NOP Inclusion	20%
Other NOPs relevant to child well-being	25%
All ROPs	55%

EU financing: **ESF** by **projects currently in place** according to the above selected ESF IPs			
ESF IPs	(A) / (C) Absorption rate = % of total EU money in the programme mobilised on projects	(B) / (A) Spending rate = % of EU money already spent compared to EU amount committed / absorbed	(B) / (C) Spending rate = % of EU money already spent compared to EU money in programme budget for 2014-2020
8iv	3%	61%	2%
9i; 9ii; 9iv; 9v	8%	24%	2%
10i	10%	41%	4%
Total IPs	8%	33%	3%

FEAD (Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived)	EU financing	National financing	Total
	85%	15%	100%

Authors' own elaboration on data from: http://www.opencoesione.gov.it/programmazione_2014_2020/; https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/countries/IT#; the European Commission (May 2017).