

Memorandum on child poverty in Italy

Introduction

1. The Commissioner for Human Rights, Michael O'Flaherty (hereinafter: the Commissioner), fosters the effective observance of human rights, assists member states in the implementation of Council of Europe human rights instruments, identifies possible shortcomings in the law and practice concerning human rights and provides advice and information regarding the protection of human rights across the region.¹
2. The Commissioner carried out a visit to Italy from 12 to 16 January 2026. The visit focused on two issues: child poverty and the national infrastructure for the protection of human rights.² This memorandum summarises the Commissioner's observations and recommendations in relation to child poverty, whereas those concerning the national human rights infrastructure were shared with the Italian Parliament in a letter in February 2026.³ The views presented here should be considered in conjunction with observations and recommendations by other Council of Europe and international bodies, as well as guidance provided by national human rights entities.
3. Child poverty represents a cross-country thematic priority of the Commissioner. The Commissioner decided to make child poverty a focus of his visit in Italy, considering the overrepresentation of children among people living in poverty and in view of the fact that child poverty is often transmitted intergenerationally.
4. During his visit, the Commissioner met with the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Marina Elvira Calderone; the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Giorgio Silli; the President of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Human Rights, Giovanni Battista Iannuzzi; the Director General of the National Office Against Racial Discrimination, Mattia Peradotto, also on behalf of the Minister for Family; the Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescents, Marina Terragni; the Constitutional Affairs Committees of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies; the Extraordinary Committee for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights of the Senate; and the Italian Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Commissioner held a roundtable with a number of civil society organisations working on child poverty. The Commissioner visited the primary school Pisacane in Rome, where he met with children, teachers, local authorities of the city of Rome and its Fifth municipality, and representatives of civil society organisations operating there.⁴ He also visited the "Punto Luce" of Torre Maura, where he heard from teenagers, social workers and representatives of civil society organisations.⁵
5. The Commissioner held an additional online exchange with senior officials from the Ministry of Education and Merit. In preparation for the visit, the Office of the Commissioner held an online meeting with representatives of the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI).
6. The Commissioner thanks the Italian authorities in Strasbourg and Rome for their assistance in organising this visit. He is grateful to the children, families and those supporting them, civil society and other interlocutors, who agreed to share their insights.
7. Section I recalls Italy's human rights obligations pertaining to child poverty. Section II provides an overview of the situation and context of the visit. Section III introduces Italian initiatives to address poverty. Sections IV to VI analyse the key challenges identified during the visit, in particular the adequacy and sufficiency of existing measures, the funding and coordination of specific measures

¹ [Resolution on the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights](#), adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 7 May 1999.

² See the [end-of-visit statement](#) of 19 January 2026 for an overview of the issues addressed during the visit.

³ See the [letter](#) of 20 February 2026 to the Presidents of the Italian Senate and Chamber of Deputies.

⁴ Con i Bambini and Asinitas.

⁵ Save the Children and Antropos.

to tackle educational poverty, and safeguards for children in situations of particular disadvantage. Section VII provides the Commissioner's recommendations.

I. Child poverty and Italy's relevant human rights obligations

8. Child poverty causes, results from, and constitutes a failure to secure children's rights.⁶ Poverty impacts across the entire spectrum of children's human rights, as acknowledged in the instruments that Italy is party to which set out obligations to protect children and their families from poverty and its effects. These include the Revised European Social Charter of 1996, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These instruments, and the recommendations and decisions of the bodies supervising them, including the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR), safeguard the progressive realisation of the rights of children to an adequate standard of living, and the protection of a range of intersecting rights such as social security, health, education and housing. They also point to the need for a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to combating poverty, with the participation of rights-holders, including children.
9. The Revised European Social Charter guarantees the right to be protected against poverty and social exclusion (Article 30). The primary obligation it imposes on states parties is the adoption of a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach which combats poverty and social exclusion through measures that prevent and remove obstacles to social rights. Other relevant rights protected by the Revised Charter include the rights to work (Article 1), health care (Article 11), social security (Article 12), social and medical assistance (Article 13), social welfare services (Article 14), social, legal and economic protection of the family (Article 16), housing (Article 31), the rights of persons with disabilities (Article 15), the rights of children and young persons (Articles 7 and 17), and the right to be protected from discrimination (Article E).
10. The ECSR has called on member states to guarantee minimum social protection floors for children and families, including access to healthcare, social and medical assistance, social security, and family/child protection services. To ensure equal opportunities for children, it has also encouraged measures aimed at improving access to education, early childhood care, and the provision of social inclusion services, and called on member states to pay special attention to vulnerable or marginalised groups, including children in single-parent families, children with disabilities, refugee or migrant children, or children in alternative care situations. It has also emphasised the need to implement relevant policies in a manner compliant with children's rights, involving participatory approaches, systematic impact assessments, adequate funding, disaggregated data collection and ongoing monitoring of results.
11. Italy ratified the Revised European Social Charter in 1999, accepting 97 out of 98 paragraphs, including all the articles mentioned above. Italy has also ratified the Charter's Additional Protocol establishing the possibility of the submission of collective complaints before the ECSR. While the latter has acknowledged Italy's efforts in the field of social rights, it has found situations of non-compliance with a number of provisions, including Article 16, finding that family allowances did not represent a sufficient additional income for a considerable number of families. In its latest conclusions related to Article 30, in 2017, it found that there was no adequate overall and coordinated approach to combating poverty and social inclusion in Italy.
12. Other Council of Europe guidance relevant to the topic includes: the Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022–2027, focusing on equality of opportunities and social inclusion for all children; the 2019 Declaration by the Committee of Ministers on addressing child poverty, which expressed concern at high rates of child poverty in Europe; PACE Resolution 2442(2022), according to which eradicating extreme child poverty in Europe is an "international obligation and a moral duty"; and PACE Recommendation 2234(2022), which urges the monitoring of the implementation of national strategies against child poverty, with concrete targets.

⁶ Council of Europe, [Protecting the Child from Poverty: The Role of Rights in the Council of Europe](#), Report by Aoife Nolan, 2019.

13. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU recognises the rights of children, including the right to receive such protection and care as is necessary for their well-being, emphasising that in all actions related to children the child's best interests must be a primary consideration (Article 24). The Charter also recognises the right to social and housing assistance, ensuring a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, and entitles everyone residing and moving legally within the EU to social security benefits and social advantages (Article 34).
14. Also at the EU level, the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights explicitly recognise that children have the right to protection from poverty, to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality, and to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities if they come from disadvantaged backgrounds.⁷ In this sense, the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child provides for actions to fight poverty and promote inclusive and child-friendly societies and health and education systems, including through the establishment of a European Child Guarantee.⁸ Adopted in 2021 as the first EU-level instrument specifically targeting child disadvantage and poverty, the European Child Guarantee provides guidance and means for EU member states to support children at risk of poverty or social exclusion, requiring that member states guarantee that children have free and effective access to early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities, at least one healthy meal each school day, healthcare, and that they also have effective access to healthy nutrition and adequate housing.
15. In its most recent Concluding Observations on Italy, in 2019, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child addressed issues related to child poverty. The Committee urged the state to apply an approach based on children's rights to economic policy and public budgeting. It recommended conducting comprehensive and regular assessments of how budgetary decisions affect children's rights, with the meaningful participation of children, and using the findings to develop strategies that prevent negative impacts. The Committee emphasised the need to allocate adequate resources, even in times of crisis. Additionally, the Committee called for improved disaggregated data collection, guaranteed independence of the Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescents, reduced regional disparities in access to essential services, and strengthened measures to prevent discrimination against children in vulnerable and marginalised situations.

II. Overview of situation and context

16. Italy has one of the biggest economies in Europe, and its GDP per capita is in line with other major European economies. However, over 2.2 million households in the country – corresponding to 5.7 million people and to 9.8% of total residents – live in absolute poverty.⁹ This marks a significant increase compared to 2014, when 1.4 million families – corresponding to 4.1 million people and 5.7% of residents – lived in absolute poverty.¹⁰ Many households have seen their financial situation deteriorate in the wake of successive crises (the 2008 financial crisis, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 energy crisis), as the cost of living increased significantly, while salaries stagnated. From 2008 to 2024 the loss of purchasing power in Italy was 8.7%, the highest among advanced economies of the G20.¹¹ While between 2024 and 2025 salaries grew slightly more than inflation,¹² purchasing power is again expected to be negatively hit by the energy crisis following the escalation of conflict in the Middle East in early 2026.¹³ As a result, families have increasingly been falling into “working poverty”.
17. The face of poverty has changed in Italy. While older people were particularly exposed to poverty in the second half of the 20th century, children have been particularly at risk in the 21st. According to ISTAT, out of the 5.7 million people living in absolute poverty in 2024, about 1.28 million were

⁷ European Union, [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), 2017.

⁸ Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reco/2021/1004/oj>. The Child Guarantee was strengthened in May 2026 through the adoption by the European Commission of the Communication “[Breaking the cycle of child poverty – Strengthening the European Child Guarantee](#)”.

⁹ ISTAT, [La povertà in Italia - Anno 2024](#), 14 October 2025, p.2.

¹⁰ ISTAT, [La povertà in Italia – Anno 2014](#), and [Rapporto Annuale 2025](#), p.97.

¹¹ ILO, [Rapporto mondiale sui salari 2024 – Le tendenze dei salari e delle disuguaglianze salariali in Italia e nel mondo](#), p.3.

¹² OECD, [Country note – Italy](#), 2025.

¹³ Banca d'Italia, [Proiezioni macroeconomiche per l'economia italiana](#), 3 April 2026

children. Absolute poverty is particularly prevalent among minors (affecting 13.8% of all children living in Italy) and young people (11.7% of the population between 18 and 34), whereas its incidence is lower among people between 35 and 64 years of age (9.5%) and those over 65 (6.4%).¹⁴ Eurostat data indicates that, while at EU level the percentage of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion slightly decreased between 2023 and 2024, from 24.8% to 24.2%, it remained steady in Italy at 27.1%.¹⁵

18. The child poverty situation is marked by significant disparities along geographic lines, with poverty particularly concentrated in the south, in peripheral areas, and in disadvantaged urban areas across the country.¹⁶ Absolute poverty is more prevalent in households entirely composed of foreign nationals (40.5%) or mixed (33.6%), households with at least three children (20.7%), single-parent families (14.4%), and households in which adults have a low level of formal education (14.4%).¹⁷
19. Overall limited social mobility perpetuates geographic and social disparities across generations, with children raised in poverty remaining poor as adults and transmitting poverty to their own children.¹⁸ Precarious and irregular employment presents a comparatively high incidence.¹⁹ Women remain significantly underrepresented in employment and are negatively impacted by the weakness of policies to reconcile work and childcare.²⁰
20. Child poverty impacts negatively on every aspect of life. It limits access to education, housing, nutrition, health, and social relations – dimensions which are interlinked. The multi-faceted impact of poverty on children is documented by ISTAT and civil society organisations.²¹
21. The Commissioner appreciates that child poverty is recognised as a serious issue by the Italian authorities and that considerable efforts have been made over the years to address it. He also welcomes that all interlocutors are aware of the need to redouble their efforts in this field.

III. Italian initiatives to combat poverty

22. Italian authorities address poverty in general, and child poverty in particular, through programmes and measures at multiple levels. Under the Italian Constitution relevant responsibilities and competences fall on a variety of authorities, at national, regional and local levels. A constitutional reform adopted in 2001, while providing for increased regional autonomy, introduced a duty for the state to determine by law the minimum levels of provision (“Livelli Essenziali delle Prestazioni”, LEPs) relating to civil and social entitlements to be ensured throughout the national territory.²² However, in several relevant policy areas LEPs have not been determined,²³ nor have funds been allocated by central government or measures been adopted by local authorities to ensure the adequate provision of relevant services.
23. Italian authorities have adopted key strategies and multiple national plans either to alleviate poverty in general or to specifically address child poverty. Such plans have mainly been developed at sectoral level and based on specific EU obligations, rather than as part of a coherent nationwide strategy, and their implementation depends on interministerial and regional collaboration. Plans of

¹⁴ ISTAT, [La povertà in Italia - Anno 2024](#), 14 October 2025, p.2.

¹⁵ [Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

¹⁶ On children living in disadvantaged urban areas, see Save the Children, [I luoghi che contano: Infanzia e adolescenza nelle periferie urbane](#), May 2026.

¹⁷ ISTAT, [La povertà in Italia - Anno 2024](#), 14 October 2025, p.2.

¹⁸ Orsetta Causa, Maxime Nguyen, Tomomi Tanaka, [Intergenerational social mobility across OECD countries: Does the apple fall far from the tree?](#), OECD Economics Department Working Papers No. 1858, pp.28-9 and 43. See also ISTAT, [Rapporto Annuale 2026](#), p159-165.

¹⁹ Saraceno, Benassi and Morlicchio, *La povertà in Italia*, Il Mulino, 2022, pp.30-31.

²⁰ CNEL, [25th Report on the labour market and collective bargaining](#), 20 May 2024.

²¹ See, among many others: ISTAT, [La povertà in Italia - Anno 2024](#), 14 October 2025, [Le condizioni di vita dei minori di 16 anni](#), 14 July 2025, and [Rapporto Annuale 2025](#), 21 May 2025; Caritas Italiana, [La povertà in Italia - Report statistico nazionale 2025](#); Save the Children, [\(Im\)Possible Future: National survey on child poverty and aspirations](#), 30 May 2024; Gruppo CRC, [I diritti dell'infanzia e dell'adolescenza in Italia - 13° Rapporto CRC](#), 13 December 2023; ActionAid, [Cresciuti troppo in fretta: Gli adolescenti e la povertà alimentare in Italia](#), 17 October 2022.

²² Italian Constitution, Art.117, as amended by Constitutional Law 18 October 2001, n.3.

²³ Some of these areas are addressed in a bill currently under discussion before Parliament, Bill No. 1623, *Delega al Governo per la determinazione dei livelli essenziali delle prestazioni*, 11 August 2025.

particular relevance include the National plan for inclusion and fight against poverty 2021-2027,²⁴ the National plan of interventions and social services 2024-2026,²⁵ the Sixth national plan of action and interventions for the protection of the rights and development of individuals in developmental stages,²⁶ and the 2022 National action plan for the implementation of the Child Guarantee.²⁷ The latter is accompanied by significant financial support from the EU to enable Italy to implement relevant plans. Additional EU funds are deployed, together with national funds, to implement other national plans.

24. Italy has a comparatively high level of public social expenditure, which largely favours old-age and survivor pension payments (15.9% of the GDP, the highest among OECD countries). In comparison with other European countries with similar economies, a lower portion of public expenditure (5.4%) is devoted to the measures of income support and social services that are most likely to benefit children.²⁸
25. Income support programmes are composite and have changed considerably over recent years. Two key measures are the *Assegno Unico e Universale* (Single and Universal Allowance – AUU) for households with children and the *Assegno d'Inclusione* (Inclusion Allowance – ADI), a general income support instrument.
26. Until 2021, income support for families with children was limited to ad hoc bonuses and measures for specific groups, resulting in the exclusion of some of the most vulnerable households. The AUU, introduced in 2021, has addressed this gap by establishing a universal, more equitable system. The amount of the monthly contribution varies based on the family's ISEE (Equivalent Economic Situation Indicator, the official indicator of the financial situation of a household), the number of children, their ages, and any disability. In 2025, the poorest households (i.e. those under 17 227.33 euros of ISEE) received about 224 euros per month for each child under 18, whereas households with an ISEE above 45 939.56 euros would receive about 57 euros per month for each child under 18. In 2024, over 6.3 million families and more than 10 million children benefited from this support.²⁹
27. The ADI was introduced in 2023³⁰ to replace the *Reddito di Cittadinanza* (Citizen's Income – RDC), which had been introduced in 2019 as the first universal measure of income support for people living below a certain income threshold. ADI consists of financial support, up to €6 500 annually, plus possible rent contribution, for up to 18 months (renewable), and is accompanied by social and employment inclusion measures. Compared to the RDC, the ADI has narrower eligibility requirements, as it is reserved for households with ISEE under €10 140 and at least one vulnerable member – minors, people with disabilities, people over 60, or those under care. The ADI does not cover adults under 60 without care responsibilities, as they are deemed employable and redirected to the less substantial Support for Training and Work (SFL) measure. Households just above the income threshold are excluded from ADI but may access limited food assistance via the *Carta Dedicata a Te*. This, as stated by the authorities, corresponds to the current government's preference – to facilitate paths towards employment.
28. Considering the multidimensional nature of poverty, income support allowances alone cannot address all its causes and manifestations. Relevant social rights are also fulfilled through the provision of social services, including socio-psychological assistance. While the competence for the

²⁴ [Piano nazionale inclusione e lotta alla povertà 2021-2027](#).

²⁵ [Piano nazionale degli interventi e dei servizi sociali 2024-2026](#).

²⁶ [Sesto Piano nazionale di azione e di interventi per la tutela dei diritti e lo sviluppo dei soggetti in età evolutiva 2025-27](#).

²⁷ [Piano di Azione Nazionale per l'attuazione della Garanzia Infanzia](#).

²⁸ Willem Adema, Pauline Fron and Maxime Ladaique, [Sizing up Welfare States: How do OECD countries compare?](#), OECD Statistics, 2 February 2023. According to ISTAT, the majority of social expenditure (51.2%) addresses risks and needs connected to old age, followed by health (22.7%), survivors (8.9%), disability (5.7%), family (5.4%), unemployment (3.5%), other social exclusion (2.5%), and housing (0.1%). Spending on in-kind services for families with children, the elderly, and people with disabilities is below the European average. The spending by municipalities for social and socio-educational interventions and services amounted in 2022 to a total of 8.9 billion euros, corresponding to a per capita expenditure of 150 euros per year, although with much lower levels in southern regions. See: ISTAT, [Rapporto Annuale 2025](#), p.42.

²⁹ Caritas Italiana, [La povertà in Italia - Report statistico nazionale 2025](#), p.27.

³⁰ Decree-Law 4 May 2023, n. 48, converted into Law 3 July 2023, n. 85.

provision of most social services is attributed to local authorities, many relevant actions are funded by the state, in line with a *National plan for the interventions and social services*.³¹

29. In this regard, the authorities have highlighted recent measures towards the determination of LEPs in the area of social services,³² intended to ensure at least one social worker for every 5 000 residents (with a service goal of one for every 4 000), one psychologist per 30 000 residents and a socio-pedagogic professional educator per 20 000 residents, to be achieved by hiring up to 3 800 new psychologists and educators. The authorities also highlighted recent improvements in terms of real-time data collection.

IV. Adequacy and sufficiency of existing measures against poverty

30. The introduction of the AUU was unanimously praised by interlocutors met during the visit, as was the recently introduced possibility to combine it with the ADI. At the same time, it was noted that the amounts provided are not always adequate to the needs of families.
31. Several interlocutors highlighted that ADI's strict eligibility criteria leave many people at risk of poverty without support, including households marginally above the income threshold, those not meeting formal requirements, such as residency, and families excluded because of bureaucratic hurdles or obstacles of a technological nature.³³ While the move from RDC to ADI has in principle spared households with children, which continue to receive allowances, the exclusion of other groups has caused significant income losses for thousands of other families living in poverty.
32. The Commissioner observes that the support provided by ADI appears inadequate, considering the number of people facing poverty in the country and the persistent growth of child poverty. Equally, measures to support families to pay rent are welcome but likely to be insufficient, considering the low stock of social housing in the country.³⁴ While recognising that promoting access to work remains essential, the Commissioner notes that the focus on increasing employment should not lead to people without means to support themselves being excluded from financial support.
33. Interlocutors noted that the number of available social workers and psychologists is too limited in comparison to needs, and that staff shortages in wider teams result in such professionals having to devote time to administrative tasks rather than assisting people.³⁵
34. While welcoming steps taken by the Italian authorities to increase the availability of social workers and psychologists, the Commissioner considers that allocated resources may not be sufficient to address the needs of the population in general, and of children living in poverty in particular. He notes, for instance, that the incidence of mental health issues among minors has increased in Italy, as in other member states, making the provision of additional psychological services particularly important.³⁶ At the same time, the Commissioner is concerned that funds devoted to social services have been reduced in the Budget Law for 2026.³⁷

V. Funding and coordination of specific measures to tackle educational poverty

35. The Commissioner welcomes the fact that the Italian authorities have recognised the interplay of different manifestations of child poverty and that they acknowledge the need for broad action, focusing not only on material poverty or specific manifestations, but also on multi-dimensional responses addressing the root causes. He notes that quality education, in its broader sense, represents an essential factor to address child poverty and its inter-generational transmission, as

³¹ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Decree 2 April 2025.

³² See in particular: Law 30 December 2025, n. 199; Law 15 April 2024, n. 55; Law 30 December 2020, n. 178; Decree-Law 15 September 2017, n. 147.

³³ See FRA, [Franet National contribution to the Fundamental Rights Report 2024 – Italy 2024](#), 5 June 2024, p.3, and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Report di valutazione di processo dell'Assegno di Inclusione, 2024, pp.72-74.

³⁴ [OECD Affordable Housing Database | OECD](#)

³⁵ See also Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Report di valutazione di processo dell'Assegno di Inclusione, 2024, pp.74-77.

³⁶ ISTAT, [Salute](#), 13 November 2025, pp.32-33.

³⁷ Alleanza contro la povertà in Italia, [Legge di Bilancio: tagli al Fondo povertà, in un Paese sempre più povero](#), 31 December 2025.

acknowledged by many interlocutors. He observes that close coordination of different actors – including multiple ministries, relevant regional and local authorities, as well as civil society organisations and local communities – is required to ensure that policy and programmes are designed and implemented in conformity with human rights obligations, that relevant data is exchanged, and that adequate resources are made available in a sustainable manner.

36. Poverty and low educational attainment have largely reinforced each other, often influenced by factors such as birthplace, socio-economic status, citizenship, and gender, penalising people across generations. In this regard, Italy has experienced progress over the past decade – with significant input and actions from civil society – around the concept of “educational poverty”, which is considered an entry point to breaking intergenerational poverty cycles.
37. The negative cycle of poverty is exacerbated by long-standing inequalities in formal education, given limited and unequal access to early childhood and quality primary education,³⁸ and scarce availability of spaces for children and families to socialise, play sports, acquire skills through extra-curricular activities, or enjoy cultural events. The two dimensions are closely connected and often present in particularly deprived localities, such as areas of socio-economic hardship in urban peripheries.³⁹ This recalls the importance of engaging the wider “educational community” – involving local authorities, schools, communities, families and civil society organisations.
38. Regarding inequalities in formal education, three major challenges have been identified. Firstly, there is limited and unequal access to nurseries, particularly in southern regions, which not only contributes to lower educational outcomes, but also restricts access to work for women, since women disproportionately carry the responsibility for looking after children.⁴⁰ Secondly, there is limited and unequal access to school canteens, whereby children affected by food poverty may be unable to access at least one nutritious meal per day. In addition, since the absence of school canteens means children cannot access schooling in the afternoon, they lose a number of hours of schooling per year.⁴¹ Thirdly, there are long-standing issues with school dropouts, both in the form of “explicit” dropout (leaving school early) and in that of “implicit” dropout (completing school without basic skills).
39. The Commissioner welcomes reassurances from the authorities that several actions have been implemented in recent years to tackle these challenges. In particular, the Italian government has launched several initiatives focusing on infrastructure, digitalisation, and the reduction of regional disparities, leveraging resources from the EU-funded National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) and other EU funds,⁴² linked to the European Child Guarantee. These resources primarily target nursery expansion – linked to new LEPs set in 2021, guaranteeing access to nursery for at least 33% of children –⁴³ the construction of school canteens, and the establishment of orientation services to prevent school dropouts. Authorities also pointed to the introduction of criminal sanctions against parents of children not attending school, through the so-called “Caivano decree”.⁴⁴
40. However, the Commissioner learned of concerns regarding the sustainability of funding to ensure the running of new nurseries and school canteens,⁴⁵ insufficient resources allocated for free school

³⁸ In 2022, Italy spent 4.1% of its GDP on education, against an average of 4.7% in the EU and 5.1% among members of OECD. World Bank, [Government expenditure on education, total \(% of GDP\) - Italy | Data](#)

³⁹ Save the Children, [I luoghi che contano: Infanzia e adolescenza nelle periferie urbane](#), May 2026.

⁴⁰ In 2024, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women expressed concern at the “extremely low level of female employment rates”, in particular among women living in Italy’s southern regions, and at “the high number of women leaving the workforce after childbirth due to barriers to re-entering the labour market, including the limited availability and accessibility of childcare facilities and babysitting and afterschool care services”. See: CEDAW, [Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Italy](#), 27 February 2024, CEDAW/C/ITA/CO/8, para.37.

⁴¹ Comunità di Sant’Egidio, [Programma “W La Scuola”: Prevenire e contrastare la dispersione scolastica, Conferenza stampa “Tutti in classe”](#), 1 October 2025.

⁴² This is facilitated by EU institutions earmarking 5% of ESF+ resources attributed to Italy for programmes promoting inclusion, reducing educational poverty, and ensuring the right to education for vulnerable children.

⁴³ Law 30 December 2021, n. 234, Bilancio di previsione dello Stato per l’anno finanziario 2022 e bilancio pluriennale per il triennio 2022-2024, Para.172.

⁴⁴ Decree-law 15 September 2023, n. 123, also known as “the Caivano decree”, later converted into Law 13 November 2023, n. 159.

⁴⁵ See also: Francesco Luigi Buonavolontà, [I nuovi asili nido del PNRR](#), Welforum - Osservatorio nazionale sulle politiche sociali, 11 May 2026.

meals in the absence of a specific LEP,⁴⁶ and the adoption of targets that may perpetuate rather than address regional disparities.⁴⁷ It was also indicated that schools do not receive adequate accompaniment in the provision of orientation services, that explicit school dropouts are not always accurately recorded,⁴⁸ and that low educational attainment by students from disadvantaged backgrounds continues.⁴⁹ The Commissioner further notes the potential impacts of school closures on school attendance. In the absence of adequate measures to tackle the social and relational factors underlying juvenile violence, including adequate education on affectivity and sexuality, the Commissioner also notes studies linking increased juvenile incarceration rates to security-related provisions introduced by the "Caivano decree".⁵⁰

41. In relation to initiatives to address educational poverty beyond formal education, both officials and CSOs emphasised that a number of programmes have been successfully implemented in several areas, including assistance to children during their first 1000 days, educational endowments to support children in extra-curricular activities, measures to desegregate schools, and support for children surviving femicides. During his field visits, the Commissioner observed the transformative potential of programmes of this type.
42. Regrettably, however, funding does not appear to be sustained over time, leading to programmes that are "stop-and-go" and disjointed. Concern was raised about the reduction, since 2025, of the resources devoted by the state to the tax credit linked to the National Fund Against Educational Poverty.⁵¹ Recalling that the state is the primary duty bearer, an over-reliance on funding from banking foundations appears problematic.

VI. Safeguards for children in situations of particular disadvantage

43. Some specific groups are particularly exposed to poverty and social exclusion and their situation should be prioritised.
44. If a child lives with only one parent, the risk of poverty or social exclusion stands at 38.3% and increases to 53.3% if there is at least one sibling.⁵² Single-parent families, the number of which is increasing in Italy, are more vulnerable to instability in income and have more challenges in reconciling work and childcare.⁵³ In such situations the availability of adequate services – including provision of social housing, access to schools and other free or affordable educational opportunities including outside standard school hours and school days, access to free or affordable medical care, and social assistance – can make a considerable positive difference. Children of households impacted by gender-based violence, which can be a cause of separation leading to single-parent households, carry additional, specific vulnerabilities that need to be addressed through tailor-made and gender-sensitive policies and programmes.
45. Another relevant group is that of Roma children, recalling that 95% of them are at risk of poverty in Italy.⁵⁴ The situation of Roma children living in inadequate housing conditions in settlements across

⁴⁶ A Fund to combat food poverty in schools, set up with the 2025 Budget Law, has been resourced with 0.5 million euros for 2025-2026 and 1 million euros per year from 2027.

⁴⁷ Reference is made to the target of 15% coverage in some regions, indicated in Ministry of Economy and Finance, [Piano strutturale di bilancio di medio termine 2025-29](#), approved by the Council of Ministers on 27 September 2024, page 214, table A.VI.4. It should also be noted that the target set in the LEP for nurseries lags behind the European Commission's revised goal of 50%, as indicated in European Commission, [A European Care Strategy for caregivers and care receivers](#), Press release, 7 September 2022.

⁴⁸ While explicit dropout rates have improved in recent years, disparities persist and issues were reported about data reliability, given the difficulty to interlink different platforms, and incentives for schools to underreport dropouts.

⁴⁹ Data on implicit dropout paints a mixed but still worrying picture, as the proportion of students who complete the second cycle of education with basic skills that are completely inadequate increased from 7.5% in 2018 to 8.7% in 2025, with particular losses in Italian and mathematics, and persisting disparities affecting students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those growing up in the south. See INVALSI, [Rapporto Nazionale 2025](#), pp.164-169.

⁵⁰ See Antigone, ["Io non ti credo più": Ottavo Rapporto di Antigone sulla giustizia minorile italiana](#), February 2026. See also: Save the Children, [\(Dis\)armati: Un'indagine sulla diffusione della violenza giovanile, tra percezione e realtà](#), March 2026, p.25.

⁵¹ See Massimo Novarino, [La spesa sociale nella legge di bilancio 2026-28, tra continuità e tagli](#), Cantiere Terzo Settore, 7 January 2026, and Paolo Riva, [Il futuro del Fondo per la povertà educativa](#), Percorsi di Secondo Welfare, 17 February 2025.

⁵² This marks a 13% worsening since 2021. See: ISTAT, [Le condizioni di vita dei minori di 16 anni](#), 14 July 2025.

⁵³ Smallfamilies, [Genitori soli, povertà e le politiche che mancano: cosa ci dicono i numeri](#), 15 September 2025.

⁵⁴ FRA, [Roma Survey - Country Data - Italy](#), 2024.

the country is particularly alarming. One emblematic example, raised by interlocutors, is that of the community of some 545 Roma – including 316 minors, 116 of them under six – living in the camp of via Carrafiello in the town of Giugliano in Campania, who were subjected to multiple forced evictions over decades and who continue to face inadequate living conditions in shacks, caravans or tents, without access to water, sanitation and electricity, in a polluted, remote area infested by rats.⁵⁵

46. The situation of Roma in Italy has long been a cause of concern.⁵⁶ Over the past decade – following the adoption by the government of relevant strategies –⁵⁷ some improvements have been recorded, including the abandonment of the notion of 'nomadism' and of approaches based on 'emergency measures', in favour of the promotion of inclusion policies in the medium and long term.⁵⁸ However, concrete implementation has been lagging in many regions, and in 2023 the ECSR found that Italy was continuing to discriminate Roma in access to housing.⁵⁹ In 2024, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe recommended that Italy continue to act to end the practice of forced evictions, to ensure the inclusion and desegregation of Roma communities, and to combat antigypsyism and other obstacles to ensuring that Roma may access social housing.⁶⁰ Pending a decision on the merits concerning the community of Giugliano in Campania, in 2025 the ECSR requested that the government protect the families from serious and irreparable harm by providing them with accommodation.
47. The Commissioner welcomes that Italy has adopted a 40 million euros programme for Roma children, supporting projects in 31 territorial areas, including Giugliano in Campania. In May 2026, the Municipality of Giugliano approved a plan for the housing inclusion of the families currently living in the via Carrafiello settlement.
48. Children without Italian citizenship are also in a situation of particular disadvantage. As previously highlighted, not only is the incidence of poverty much higher among foreign households, but those households are also under-represented among beneficiaries of relevant allowances and services. This can happen because national and local legislation may condition access to anti-poverty measures – e.g. social housing and free school meals – with formal requirements that directly or indirectly privilege Italian nationals – such as that of holding Italian citizenship or a long-term residence permit,⁶¹ that of having resided for a certain number of years in Italy or in a specific region, or that of presenting evidence of not owning property abroad.⁶² While it is not unlawful to limit access to social rights for foreign nationals, minimum levels of subsistence have to be afforded to everyone, especially children, independently of legal status. In several cases, courts have ruled that the imposition of such requirements had been discriminatory and unlawful.⁶³ Yet, their application, including in times of crisis,⁶⁴ has led to significant cumulative effects over years, and in some cases requirements of this type continue to be applied.⁶⁵ In this regard, the Commissioner acknowledges

⁵⁵ Associazione 21 Luglio, [Cento Campi: Comunità rom e sinte negli insediamenti formali e informali in Italia – Rapporto 2025](#), pp.36-40.

⁵⁶ See, for example: Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, [Report following visit to Italy](#), CommDH(2012)26, 18 September 2012, para.62; ECSR, *Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) v. Italy*, No. 58/2009, Decision on the merits, 25 June 2010; ECSR, *European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) v. Italy*, No. 27/2004, Decision on the merits, 7 December 2005; Amnesty International, [On the edge: Roma, forced evictions and segregation in Italy](#), September 2012; and European Roma Rights Centre, [Campland: Racial Segregation of Roma in Italy](#), October 2000.

⁵⁷ The National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti Communities (2012-2020) and the National Roma and Sinti Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation (2021-2030).

⁵⁸ Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, [Fifth Opinion on Italy](#), 5 October 2022, para.66, and [Sixth Opinion on Italy](#), 11 February 2026, paras.190-203.

⁵⁹ ECSR, *Amnesty International v. Italy*, Decision on the merits, No. 178/2019, 18 October 2023, paras.75-76, 98-101, and 115-118.

⁶⁰ CM/RecChS(2024)43 - [Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on Amnesty International v. Italy](#), Complaint No. 178/2019 (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 23 October 2024 at the 1510th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies) 23 October 2024.

⁶¹ In order to obtain a long-term residency permit, a person is required to earn sufficient income, to reside in a suitable accommodation, to have already resided regularly in the country for five years, and to have passed the Italian language test.

⁶² ECRI, [Sixth Report on Italy](#), 2 July 2024, para.65.

⁶³ See, for example, Italian Constitutional Court, judgements 166/2018, 44/2020, 9/2021, 19/2022 and 67/2022, and CJEU judgement C-747/22.

⁶⁴ Virginia Passalacqua and Lorenzo Grossio, [Migrants' Equal Access to Social Benefits under EU Law: Fragmentation and Exclusion during the Covid-19 Crisis in Italy](#), *Utrecht Law Review*, 19(3), 57–72, 2023, pp.64-65.

⁶⁵ Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione (ASGI) and Centro Studi Migrazioni nel Mediterraneo (Medi), [When Institutions Discriminate: Equality, Social Rights, Immigration](#), pp.6-8.

the existence of ombudspersons for children and adolescents at both national and local levels. However, he notes that weaknesses affecting the mandates, resources and powers of Italian human rights bodies mean that the protection of children's rights rests largely on judicial actors, who are unable to redress violations rapidly.⁶⁶

49. Among foreign children, those who have arrived in Italy alone are at heightened risk of poverty.⁶⁷ In past years, Italy has adopted legislative measures to protect unaccompanied children.⁶⁸ However, some legal protections have been weakened more recently,⁶⁹ or could be weakened on the basis of recent proposals,⁷⁰ and challenges remain in practice. For instance, unaccompanied children are sometimes required to stay in first reception centres for longer than necessary – on occasion subjected to unlawful detention and to poor material and hygienic conditions.⁷¹ Furthermore, the appointment of legal guardians is not always prompt. In addition, municipalities and other actors assisting foreign children lack adequate resources to fulfil their responsibilities, and educational opportunities are not always provided.⁷²

VII. Recommendations

50. The Commissioner recommends that the Italian authorities, at national, regional and municipal levels, give priority attention to the goal of eradicating child poverty and its intergenerational transmission, in particular through:
- The coordination of all relevant initiatives and programmes through a specific, human rights based national plan to eradicate child poverty.
 - Legislative measures addressing existing geographic disparities through the determination of adequate LEPs.
 - Structural policy measures to be implemented in an integrated way by all relevant ministries and levels of administration to ensure the effective provision of adequate support. These should address, inter alia:
 - o Provision of sufficient, accessible allowances to ensure the effective fulfilment of the right to an adequate standard of living for all, without excluding households that cannot autonomously provide for themselves, irrespective of their composition, and while adopting adequate structural measures to address the issue of in-work poverty.
 - o Sustained efforts to ensure that social services are well-coordinated and designed to coherently assist children living in poverty and their families,

⁶⁶ Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, [Letter to the Presidents of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies of Italy](#), 20 February 2026.

⁶⁷ As of 30 April 2026, 14 394 unaccompanied foreign minors were recorded by the Italian authorities as present in the country, mostly nationals of Egypt (33.2%), Ukraine (17.8%), Bangladesh (11.1%), Gambia (5.7%), and Tunisia (5.2%). Their age distribution was as follows: 17 years old (56.4%), 16 (21.1%), 15 (8.1%), 7-14 (13%), and 0-6 (1.2%). The regions hosting the most were Sicily (19%), Lombardy (13.8%), Campania (12.2%) and Emilia-Romagna (7.6%). Data from Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, [Dati mensili sui Minori Stranieri Non Accompagnati \(MSNA\)](#) (accessed 21 May 2026).

⁶⁸ See, in particular, Law 7 April 2017, n. 47.

⁶⁹ E.g. through amendments providing for the possibility to assist unaccompanied minors in centres for adults, and other measures introduced through Decree-Law 5 October 2023, n. 133, converted into Law 1 December 2023, n. 176.

⁷⁰ See [DDL Immigrazione, allarme di 27 Organizzazioni: percorsi di inclusione a rischio per chi arriva solo in Italia](#), Joint statement, 19 May 2026.

⁷¹ As evidenced by a number of decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, including in the cases *H.D. v. Italy*, 41645/23, Judgment, 9 April 2026; *M.A. v. Italy*, 70583/17, Judgment, 31 August 2023; and *Darboe and Camara v. Italy*, 5797/17, Judgment, 21 July 2022.

⁷² See ANSA, [Accoglienza Minori Stranieri Non Accompagnati, ANCI Sicilia: "Grave taglio drastico delle risorse"](#), 19 July 2025, and Federazione Italiana Comunità Terapeutiche (FICT) and Coordinamento Nazionale Comunità Accoglienti (CNCA), [Fondo per MSNA, lettera aperta di FICT e CNCA al ministro Piantedosi](#), 24 September 2025. See also: Save the Children, [Cosa succede ai minori stranieri non accompagnati in Italia?](#), 27 March 2026.

addressing the multiple manifestations of poverty, including by removing barriers to accessing adequate housing, food, social assistance and psychological care.

- o Specific programmes for children with particular disadvantages, designed and executed in partnership with local administrations, civil society organisations, communities, and rights holders, albeit under the overall responsibility of national authorities.
- The sustained allocation of adequate funds to enable the implementation of LEPs and policy measures – including after the expiration of EU funds linked to the NRRP – as well as of programmes tackling child poverty.
- Adequate monitoring mechanisms, involving all relevant actors, including civil society and persons affected by poverty and exclusion, as well as human rights bodies with the adequate mandate, resources and powers to secure the protection of children's rights.