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Presentation of the Organization

This is the contribution elaborated by the Italian National Committee for UNICEF ETS Foundation (UNICEF Italy), which is part of the general structure of UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund, the UN subsidiary body responsible for protecting and promoting the rights of children and adolescents (from 0 to 18 years) around the world and to contribute to the improvement of their living conditions. UNICEF Italy uses the concluding observations of the UN Committee and its General Comments as references, constantly translating them and promoting their wide dissemination.

The Italian National Committee for UNICEF is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that is part of the Italian third sector but is also one of the National Committees present in donor countries, which operate on the basis of a Cooperation Agreement with UNICEF International and according to joint and continuous planning of its activities.

In line with UNICEF International, UNICEF Italy's actions are inspired by the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (CRC) and the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

Consultations for drafting the contribution

UNICEF Italy has stipulated collaboration agreements with Institution, Universities, National and private research centres, actively participates in institutional working groups, in a network with NGOs, which pursue the implementation of the CRC in Italy. The Italian National Committee for UNICEF also systematically collaborates with UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight (GORF) for the generation of evidence, the collection and processing of data, the carrying out of research and in-depth analysis on topics of interest to children.

The context of protection of migrant and refugee children was drafted in close cooperation with the UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) - National Response in Italy which, in close coordination with national and local authorities, civil society, and other international organizations, operates in Italy since 2016 to uphold the rights of every child, with a specific focus on refugee and migrant children, women and families. Through a programmatic presence and technical assistance, UNICEF ECARO - National Response in Italy actively promotes the protection, inclusion, education, and participation of children on the move.

The points of view of the girls and boys involved through the U-Report Italy and U-Report On The Move (UROTM) platforms were used in the contribution.

INTRODUCTION

Since the last CRC reporting process, concluded in 2019, Italy has faced a complex and articulated period from a political, economic, social and demographic perspective, with direct and indirect implications on the condition and rights of children. The political framework is characterized by a difficulty in ensuring continuity and coherence in government action and an ideological opposition between political parties and groups that slows down the implementation of structural policies in favour of children and adolescents. In economic terms, strong territorial and social inequalities persist, with a high incidence of child poverty, particularly in the Mezzogiorno, which geographically includes the Southern and the Insular part of the country.

Society continues to be undergoing profound transformations: the progressive ageing of the population, the drop in the birth rate and the raise of new forms of family vulnerability pose significant challenges in terms of intergenerational equity and protection of the rights of children and adolescents. In addition, there are migratory and cultural dynamics that require a renewed commitment to inclusion and social cohesion, under penalty, the risk of creating new and exacerbating the discriminations already present.

In this context, it is fundamental to analyse how such factors affect access to education, health, housing and social protection services and to identify the actions necessary to guarantee all children equal opportunities for growth, development and participation, without any discrimination.

On the occasion of the last national political elections in 2022, UNICEF Italy presented to the Italian Government and Parliament the UNICEF Agenda 2022-2027 “*What must be done*”¹, a programmatic and policy document full of concrete proposals, in line with the CRC, the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Children and Adolescents of 2019.

The Agenda represents for UNICEF Italy a strategic tool for promoting systemic changes, with a broad, multisectoral and inclusive vision.

The priorities on which UNICEF Italy's commitment is focused reflect the most urgent challenges identified globally and are inspired by the wishes expressed, in Italy, directly by children and young people on the occasion of the 75° UNICEF birth anniversary, in particular:

- Climate change;
- Non-discrimination;
- Quality education;
- Mental health and psychosocial well-being.

Through annual monitoring based on updated data and evidence resulting from public sources and a survey of the most recent legislative provisions and ongoing parliamentary activities, UNICEF Italy aims to provide a contribution to analyse how Italy is implementing the CRC and all other commitments undertaken, at international and national level both from a normative point of view and through the policies and practices adopted. This contribution is the result, in particular, of this constant analysis of monitoring the actions of the Government and Parliament.

¹ [UNICEF Italy Agenda 2022-2027 “What must be done”](#)

1. GENERAL MEASURES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRC IN ITALY – artt. 4, 42 e 44 -

1.1 Data collection

A crucial element for the development of efficient policies targeting children and adolescents is the availability of a robust, up-to-date and disaggregated data collection system. Having timely data broken down by age, gender, territory, socioeconomic status or vulnerability allows a better understanding of the emerging needs of children, identify gaps in existing services, plan more targeted interventions and allocate public resources more efficiently. Furthermore, the availability of data over a medium to long-term time frame is crucial for assessing the impact of the policies adopted and guiding future choices in an informed manner.

This need becomes even more relevant when it comes to minors in vulnerable conditions, for whom up-to-date, disaggregated and comparable data are too often lacking. The Italian information system, in fact, suffers from serious structural deficiencies: it is fragmented, partial, and presents strong differences between the Regions, making it difficult to compare and build a coherent national framework.

As early as 2019, an explicit recommendation to improve the data collection system on minors was made to Italy in the Concluding Observations. To date, that recommendation remains as relevant and urgent as ever.

The National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) is playing a crucial role in this context. In addition to permanent work, for example on the monitoring of the Development Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda and on the indicators of Fair and Sustainable Wellbeing (which have entered the Economic and Financial Document by law), it highlights the importance of the research “Children and young people: behaviour, attitudes and future plans”² conducted by ISTAT with the aim of gathering information on certain fundamental aspects of the daily lives of boys and girls between 11 and 19 years of age living in Italy, with specific attention being devoted to boys of foreign citizenship.

UNICEF recommends the adoption of a more integrated and uniform informative system at a national level to ensure equal rights to all children and adolescents, regardless of the territory in which they live, in particular to:

- Build an integrated and coordinated national system of data collection, programming and financing, capable of overcoming current territorial inequalities and guaranteeing timely and effective interventions for all minors, with particular attention to those in vulnerable conditions;
- Fill current gaps in the systematic collection and interoperability of public source databases relating to childhood and adolescence;
- Involve central and regional institutions, local authorities and Third Sector entities to build a permanent data collection system, also including children and adolescents, which can effectively guide public policies, encouraging their monitoring and impact assessment, ensuring greater territorial equity;

² [Indagine bambini e ragazzi – Anno 2023 – Istat](#)

- Ensure the utilization of childhood and adolescence indicators in the SDGs fulfilment's monitoring process;
- Strengthen the national capacity to collect, collate, disseminate and use high quality data to monitor and analyse progress in the fulfilment of children's rights, including of the most vulnerable groups;
- Improve the CRC's and the other human rights treaties' monitoring and reporting mechanisms in order to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs framework;
- Monitor child poverty in all its dimensions and progress made towards the elimination of all forms of child poverty.

1.2 Public spending for children

Policies addressed to childhood and adolescence represent a crucial field to an equitable and sustainable development of a society. Investing in this area means intervening strategically on families living conditions, preventing educational poverty, reducing social inequalities and ensure that every child and adolescent have equal opportunities for growth.

In Italy, these policies are divided into a multiplicity of interventions ranging from social welfare area to education, up to health services.

A reflection on resources, in different capacities, invested directly and indirectly in favour of childhood and adolescence is unavoidable. In particular, the *National Plan of Action of the Child Guarantee* (PANGI) estimates the overall size of public spending on children and adolescents at around 100 billion euros per year, divided between the social welfare, educational and school areas, and the health area. In the Italian government report on the implementation of the *European Guarantee for Children* (March 2024), a summary picture is provided of the main funds –both specific and general – that contribute to the implementation of the European Recommendation, supported in turn by community resources such as the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the Next Generation EU.

That framework includes over *thirty different sources of funding of a state or community nature*. This is, however, only a *partial reconstruction*, since –as the report itself specifies – the *direct provision of services is also based on regional and municipal resources*, which are difficult to map systematically.

In the context of social policies alone, it emerges that the State and other central public bodies finance 23% of overall spending, while over three quarters (76%) is paid by Regions and Municipalities; the residual share comes from the private sector.

Some fundamental considerations clearly emerge from this scenario. Such a fragmented and *complex system requires stronger institutional coordination* and greater integration of funding sources, in order to ensure coherent programming and avoid dispersion of interventions³.

The inclusion, in 2022, of the Single Universal Allowance, a structural measure to support families with dependent children, is highlighted. The allowance is paid monthly, in proportion to the ISEE, and has the objective of simplifying and rationalizing previous fragmented interventions, guaranteeing continuous economic help, regardless of the working status of the parents.

³ [Concluding document Fact-finding investigation on material, moral and cultural degradation in the condition of minors in Italy, with focus on the spread of alcohol, new drugs, aggression and violence, Children and Adolescents Commission, November 2024](#)

Another tool with significant impact on childhood is the Inclusion Allowance, which has been active since 1° January 2024. Designed to replace Citizenship Income, the allowance is aimed at families in poverty condition with at least one “fragile” component (minors, disabled people, over 60s or people taken care of by social services). This measure is not limited to monetary transfer but also involves the activation of personalized social and work inclusion paths, in collaboration with local services. This is a fundamental action to support vulnerable family units, preventing phenomena of exclusion and marginality that directly affect minors.

The Italian childhood and adolescence policies system is still highly fragmented, with various state, community and local sources of financing, which contribute to financing interventions that are often not coordinated with each other as better specified above. In addition, a significant proportion of the spending is managed at regional and municipal level, with the risk of accentuating territorial disparities in access to services. This continues to make it difficult to define an overall framework on resources for children and adolescents, as already highlighted several times by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

UNICEF recommends to:

- Build a unique and transparent system for monitoring and reporting public expenditure on children, which includes all sources –national, regional, municipal and European – to ensure an integrated vision and more effective programming, starting precisely from knowledge of the amount of resources allocated to children and adolescents as a whole;
- Create a constant analysis and rationalization of the expenditure allocated to children, to make it more efficient and targeted, with concrete effects on the quality of the services provided;
- Improve the effectiveness of these interventions, promote greater rationalisation and coordination of public spending for children, to ensure coherent programming and more efficient and targeted service delivery;
- Carry out an ex-ante and ex post impact assessment of the resources invested, which places children and adolescents at the centre;
- Improve reporting process and spending efficiency, concerning the programs which have a direct impact on children’s wellbeing;
- Monitor and enhance SDGs investments related to childhood and adolescence. It is necessary to increase interventions in core areas: child protection, gender equality, adolescent development, nutrition and early childhood development;
- Adopt a reporting mechanism on children’s and adolescents’ rights based on results with a special focus on tackling inequalities and discriminations, including all forms of discriminations against women. Particular emphasis will need to be placed on monitoring the allocation and utilization of funds specifically allocated for reducing inequalities in the access and delivery of services for children and adolescents (both in terms of coverage and quality) across regions and for vulnerable groups;
- Conduct systemic analysis on equity gaps in order to better understand the drivers and determinants that hamper children’s right to access essential social services.

1.3 National Plans of Action

Monitoring the implementation of the National Action Plans on children and adolescents (in particular: the National Plan for Childhood and Adolescence, the National Action Plan for the European Child Guarantee, the Multi-year Action Plan for the integrated System 0-6 years old, the National Action Plan to prevent and combat child abuse and sexual exploitation, the National Plan

for the Family, the National Social Plan, the National Plan on Poverty, the Action Plan on Enterprises and Human Rights) developed in collaboration with Government authorities, international organizations and third sector organizations, is essential to guide the actions and decision making process of the Government.

In the current context, it is crucial to remind the PNRR (the National Recovery and Resilience Plan)⁴, and the 2022-2027 Partnership Agreement, recently undersigned with the European Commission: they are both significant sources of funding to implement policies also for children's rights in Italy.

In July 2025, the VI National Plan of Action for Children (*the National Plan of Action and Interventions for the Protection of the Rights and Development of Subjects of Developmental Age*, as named by the law) was adopted by the National Observatory for Children. The difficulties reported in the implementation of all the measures envisaged in the previous Plan and the lack of involvement of children and adolescents in the drafting are highlighted, despite the adoption of the Guidelines on participation and what happened on the occasion of the adoption of the V National Action Plan for children and adolescents for the two-year period 2022-2023.

UNICEF recommends to:

- Adopt an organic vision of the law, policies and practices that concern children and adolescent rights according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, paying equal attention to their adoption, implementation, monitoring, having regard to impact assessment as a guiding criterion, using data from public sources to support policies.

Regarding the VI National Plan of Action for Children, UNICEF recommends to:

- Ensure listening to and participation of children and adolescents in monitoring, paying particular attention to the involvement of the most disadvantaged groups;
- Promote, in the implementation phase, an institutional rebalancing that enhances the role of strategic ministries such as Education, Labour and Social Policies, Health, and Culture, in addition to the Ministry of Family and Equal Opportunities;
- Ensure participatory monitoring tools to ensure that the Plan can be evaluated not only in terms of administrative sustainability, but also in terms of the impact on the rights, inequalities and real well-being of children, guaranteeing the listening and participation of children and adolescents.

1.4 Essential levels of benefits for children

Another essential step for the full realization of children's rights in Italy concerns the adequate implementation of the 'Titolo V, Parte II' reform (art.117, Italian Constitution) which refers to the so called 'essential levels of benefits' in fulfilling the civil and social rights of all citizens in the whole national territory, a process which will be essential to overcome the deep-seated disparities in the delivery of essential social services across regions.

⁴ <https://www.italiadomani.gov.it/it/home.html>

Home - Italia Domani - Portale PNRR

Una nuova Italia è pronta a partire con il Piano Nazione di Ripresa e Resilienza, un piano di investimenti parte di Next Generation EU.

Particular attention will be placed on ensuring the realization of rights to those children who belong to the most vulnerable and discriminated groups of the population: children with disabilities, migrant and refugee children, children belonging to ethnic minorities, and children who live in contexts of high social vulnerability.

This will be done undertaking actions that will contribute to promote and ensure the fulfilment of principles of equity and equality enshrined in art. 3 of the Italian Constitution.

UNICEF Italy recommends to:

- Define and implement the essential levels of benefits for the full realization of the rights of children in Italy – in implementation of the reform of Title V, Part II (art. 117, Italian Constitution) – a fundamental process for overcoming disparities in the provision of compulsory education, social, health and cultural services in all regions and improving the standard of living of all children and adolescents in the country, consistent with the rights enshrined in the CRC;
- Promote a review of the financial governance of policies for children, including through the definition of essential levels of services and benefits with adequate levels of investment to be guaranteed throughout the national territory for their adequate implementation.
- Ensure respect for the principle of non-discrimination in the reforms being defined which provide for greater decentralization to the Regions of competences which also concern children and adolescents (Reform of Differentiated Autonomy).

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES - artt. 2, 3, 6 e 12

2.1 Non-discrimination

In Italy, social and economic inequalities continue to deeply influence the life opportunities of children, starting from early childhood. The family background of origin, gender, the territory in which one is born and grows up, and ethnic or migratory origin, are still determining factors in access to fundamental rights today. This condition highlights a persistent violation of the principle of non-discrimination, stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Children and Adolescents.

In the 2019 Concluding Observations, it was expressly recommended to Italy to undertake specific measures to ensure greater protection and inclusion of children in conditions of poverty, with disabilities, or from migratory backgrounds.

a. Children in poverty condition

The most recent data confirms the critical situation. According to ISTAT, in 2023 there were 1.295.000 children in absolute poverty condition, an alarming picture which represents one of the most serious expressions of social exclusion. Poverty adversely affects access to education, health, services and the psychophysical well-being of children and adolescents, compromising their future development.

Regarding child poverty, UNICEF Italy recommends to:

- Respect and implement the principle of non-discrimination set out in Art. 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Adolescent;
- Continue with the implementation of the National Plan of Action on the European Child Guarantee;
- Prioritize the prevention and fighting of child poverty in national development plans and strategies;
- Advocate for the inclusion of children's rights in policy programming and resources dedicated to children and adolescents;
- Regularly measure and monitor child poverty rates;
- Allocate more resources to social, educational, health and cultural quality services.

b. Children with disabilities

The situation of children with disabilities also sets relevant challenges. In the educational year 2023/2024, nearly 359,000 students with disabilities were registered, representing 4.5% of the total

enrolment (source: Ministry of Education and Merit), with an increase of some 21,000 over the previous year. However, only 41% of school buildings are found to be fully accessible to students with motor disabilities, reflecting structural barriers that hinder the right to inclusive and equal education.

Regarding children and adolescents with disabilities, UNICEF Italy recommends to:

- Provide children with disabilities with equal opportunities with their peers, in all contexts of daily life;
- Improve the data collection system and overcome the lack of data for the age group of children between 0 to 6 years old, thanks to the collaboration with the relevant national institutions;
- Consult with persons with disabilities, including children, considering the full range of disabilities, as well as the specific needs of children and their families;
- Identify the Essential Levels of Benefits for the rights of children and adolescents with disabilities;
- Ensure full implementation of the measures set out in the National Plan of Action on Child Guarantee;
- Promote universal design, creating products, environments, programs and services that can be used by all people, to the largest extent possible, without the need for adaptations or specialized designs, also paying particular attention to the child dimension.

c. Migrant Children

Concerning, in particular, unaccompanied foreign minors (UASCs), as of 31 December 2024, the national receptional system hosted 18,625 of them, in decrease compared to 23,226 in 2023 and 20,089 in 2022. Beneficiaries received in the Reception and Integration System (SAI) are also dropping: they were 9,510 in 2024, compared to 11,550 in 2023, 11,910 in 2022, and 8,075 in 2021. These numbers show a decline in institutional care, which must be carefully monitored to prevent the decline in beneficiaries welcomed from corresponding to a reduction in guaranteed protections.

In summary, despite the commitments made at the international and national levels, strong inequalities persist in access to rights and services by children, particularly the most vulnerable.

UNICEF recommends an urgent strengthening of inclusive and targeted public policies capable of overcoming structural discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities for all children and adolescents, regardless of their personal, family or origin.

Regarding UASC, UNICEF Italy recommends to:

- Repeal discriminatory laws, policies and practices against migrant and refugee children;
- Fund interventions aimed at strengthening the protection and promotion of the rights of children in vulnerable situations, such as UASC;
- Ensure the listening and participation of persons of minor age in trials relating to matters affecting them;

- Guarantee the right to universal access to quality education, including by supporting educational institutions of all levels in responding to the training and linguistic needs of UASC;
- Reform the Citizenship Act to facilitate its acquisition.

c. Children living in prison with their mother

The protection envisaged by art. 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which establishes the right to maintain the child-parent relationship, becomes indispensable when the parent is in prison and detention requires the interruption of family relationships. In this condition, the relationship with one's parent, central to the child's growth, also proves to be the greatest protection for the prevention of psycho-affective distress of the children involved, for whom it is necessary for institutions to contribute to developing inclusive and non-stigmatizing behaviors, in welfare agencies, schools and in civil society in general.

The issue of children living in prison with their parents is still very current and remains a priority of the UNICEF Agenda, as part of a general action aimed at raising awareness among the community on the culture of the rights of children, promoting knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child also in penitentiary facilities and disseminating models that allow to avoid, as much as possible, the permanence of children in prison.

According to the data of the Italian Department of Penitentiary Administration, as of 30 June 2025 there are a total of **17 mothers in prison, with 19 children living with them**⁵. During the pandemic, there was a significant decrease in this number, reaching 18 presences at the end of 2021, compared to 48 two years earlier. This data demonstrates how it is possible to resort to alternative solutions, through penal execution paths that limit the entry of children into prison and at the same time avoid separation from their mothers.

Despite Law no. 62 of 2011 - which established the ICAMs (Institutes with attenuated custody for detained mothers) and the Protected Family Homes, with the aim of creating special structures designed to recreate an atmosphere close to a family environment - the public financial resources used to establish attenuated detention contexts have proven to be insufficient and to date there are only two Protected Family Homes - in Rome and Milan - established thanks to the initiative of local public administrations and managed by NGOs.

According to the analysis carried out and with the aim shared by many to prevent children from crossing the threshold of prison, it is necessary to intervene again at a legislative level to eliminate those problematic profiles that emerged during the application of law no. 62/2011, without modifying its essential structure. The fundamental aspect to be valorized is the experience of the Protected Family Homes, rather than the ICAMs that represent an alternative solution to penitentiaries but still maintain a detention connotation that should limit their application only to the most serious types of crime.

UNICEF recommends:

⁵ https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_14_1.page?contentId=SST1460728

- The model of the Protected Family Homes has to be promoted through the elimination of the economic constraints contained in law no. 62/2011, pursuant to which their creation is envisaged without costs for the State.
- A measure envisaged by the 2020 Budget Law provided the possibility to finance Protected Family Homes through a fund of 1.5 million euros for each of a three-year period (2021-2023). This fund could become structural, in order to create a greater number of structures and promote projects and agreements on extra-penitentiary reception. This could also be addressed by using the “*Cassa delle Ammende*” fund which, among the institutional purposes identified by the founding law, includes the financing of prison construction projects aimed at improving prison conditions.
- Resort - as happened for the Protected Family Home in Rome - to the use of assets confiscated from the criminal organizations, which are numerous and often unused.
- The reference measure for the application of precautionary custody for mothers with children under the age of 6 should become the Protected Family Home, restricting the use of ICAM only in cases of precautionary needs deemed particularly intense.

2.2 The voice of young people and adolescents

According to article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which establishes children’s right of participation and listening and as a concrete tool to ensure its implementation, UNICEF has created the U-Report digital platform. Born with the aim of amplifying the voice of young people and adolescents on issues of their interest, it is present in 102 countries and with approximately 37 million participants (U-Reporters) and allows young people and adolescents to express their opinion in anonymous, free and voluntary manner through participation and answer to surveys on various topics.

Based on local priorities and on UNICEF mandate, U-Report also offers information, support and guidance services, becoming a concrete tool for strengthening youth participation and improving access to rights and opportunities.

In Italy, U-Report is divided into: U-Report On the Move (UROTМ), which gathers opinions and ideas from UASC and young refugees and migrants present in the country; and U-Report Italy, which represents a vehicle of social inclusion and empowerment of the young generations, as a listening and sharing channel for girls and boys.

The UROTМ platform involves a community of over 19.000 young members, mostly UASC and young migrants and refugees present in Italy in the age range 15-19 years old (80%). U-Report Italy instead, as of today has more than 10.000 subscribers among which include girls and boys in the same age range (15-19 years old)⁶.

The data emerging from the respective surveys launched in the two-year period 2024-2025 –seven for UROTМ and six for U-Report Italia – represent an important direct testimony of the experiences, difficulties and requests expressed by young people, within the framework of the rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and have highlighted structural critical issues

⁶ For further details on the recommendations for UASC and young migrants and refugees, please refer to the UNICEF ECARO recommendations

in access to fundamental rights, confirming the concerns already expressed by the UN Committee in previous CRC monitoring cycles.

A first thematic transversal area regards mental health and psychological well-being. The data gathered highlights how the emotional disorder represents a common condition among the youngest, even though with different causes and contexts. 60% of young migrants interviewed through UROTM declared that the reception process had a negative impact on their psychological well-being, generating anxiety, stress and uncertainty. In the face of such a need, access to appropriate psychological services appears seriously insufficient: only 18% of young migrants have had access to a psychologist, and this is because of linguistic, economic and bureaucratic barriers. Even among Italian children, the picture isn't less alarming: according to surveys by U-Report Italy, 73% of adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age reported having experienced anxiety or negative emotions related to their school career, mainly due to the workload and the fear of not being up to par. In both cases, the need emerges to enhance psychological support, making it accessible, culturally adequate and timely.

Another shared critical area is that of discrimination and recognition of identity, based on a survey carried out through U-Report. 46% of young migrants declared that they perceived attitudes of suspicion and fear from the citizens, while 39% suffered discrimination due to skin colour. At the same time, among young Italians, 69% believe that racial discrimination is a real and tangible problem. The data according to which 48% of Italian u-reporters in the 15-19 age group have witnessed discriminatory acts at least once, particularly in schools and on social media, is worrying, just as the 39% who declared having personally experienced or witnessed discriminatory behaviour towards women and girls in school contexts. Furthermore, on the issue of protecting LGBTQIA+ rights, 51% of young Italians perceive that these rights are less guaranteed in Italy than in the rest of Europe. Many report insufficiently inclusive school and work environments, where fear of judgment and the difficulty of being oneself prevail.

This evidence indicates the need for systemic commitment to fight all forms of discrimination and promote a genuine culture of respect for differences, whether ethnic or gender or orientation. According to 42% of Italian u-reporters, in order to achieve progress in this field it is essential to raise awareness among civil society and, according to 27%, to practice more education in affectivity.

Education is a further common node. While the right to education is recognized, in fact significant obstacles remain. 27% of young migrants had to wait more than five months before entering school, and 47% were unable to participate in Italian courses in the first two months of arriving in Italy. On the Italian side, despite the absence of material obstacles, the school emerges as a place of strong psychological pressure, contributing –as mentioned – to the mental distress widespread among students.

This framework suggests the urgency of rethinking access to education in an inclusive, timely and sustainable way, strengthening on one hand the linguistic and cultural mediation services for those arriving, and on the other hand revising the school model to better respond to the emotional and formative needs of adolescents.

An aspect that the two groups of interviewees strongly share concerns the desire for active participation and the request for safe spaces. 42% of young migrants underlined the importance of having protected places to carry out recreational and sporting activities, while 80% of Italian adolescents expressed their willingness to engage personally in the fight against climate change. Most of the latter indicated a desire to participate in local initiatives, promote petitions and influence environmental policies.

It is clear how both groups of young people ask to be listened to and involved in decision-making processes, demanding physical and symbolic spaces of expression, commitment and growth. Finally, the central value of the relationship with adult figures emerges from both projects. According to 63% of young migrants, educators in reception facilities represent the main point of reference, and 60% wish to maintain the relationship with their guardian even after reaching the age of majority. This emotional and educational relationship is experienced as fundamental to orient oneself and feel supported. Likewise, even among young Italians there is a perceived need for adults to listen to their requests and opinions in many fields and know how to accompany without judging, listening without imposing themselves.

In conclusion, the results gathered in the U-Report On The Move and U-Report Italy surveys give a significant cross-section of the living conditions and expectations of young people who, although starting from very different experiences, share profound needs: the right to be heard, recognition of their identity, psychological well-being, equitable access to education and the possibility of participating in building and shaping their future.

UNICEF recommends a major consideration of the evidence here exposed in the adoption of public policies toward greater inclusiveness, interculturality and intergenerational responsibility, so that the voice of young people – migrants and Italians – is not only listened to but also welcomed and transformed into concrete action.

Considering the results emerging from the surveys promoted in the two-year period 2024–2025 by U-Report On The Move and U-Report Italy, which unequivocally reveal the urgent and shared need on the part of migrant and Italian adolescents to be listened to, involved and accompanied in growth and active citizenship paths, UNICEF recommends to:

- Make structural the direct and continuous involvement of girls and boys –including unaccompanied foreign minors – in national and local decision-making processes, starting from the implementation of the VI National Plan for Children and Adolescents, in implementation of Art. 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Strengthen and make psychological support services truly accessible, in particular for migrant and refugee adolescents, by removing linguistic, economic and bureaucratic barriers, and also addressing the widespread discomfort among Italian students linked to the school context;
- Systemically fight all forms of discrimination, including through the inclusion in school curricula of education courses on affectivity, respect for differences, gender equality and LGBTQIA+ rights;
- Ensure timely and inclusive access to education for all, strengthening linguistic and cultural mediation services for new migrants and rethinking the school model to also protect the emotional and relational well-being of students;
- Institutionalize physical and symbolic spaces of youth participation, recognizing the educational value of the relationship with adult reference figures, even beyond the age of majority, and supporting experiences such as that of U-Report in their function as a civic and democratic tool;
- Furthermore, it is requested to know what actions the Government intends to promote to integrate data and analyses from youth participation instruments such as U-Report in a systematic manner into the processes for evaluating public policies aimed at children and adolescents

The issue of emotional and psychological fragility that concerns children is of great actuality, not only for the extent consequences it produces along people's life, but also because promoting and protecting the psychological well-being and mental health of girls, boys and adolescents constitutes an essential right and as such it is mandatory to implement all possible action to guarantee it.

In particular, in the latest Concluding Observations in 2019, Italy has been urged to face the “... *absence of a comprehensive system for monitoring the mental health status of juveniles, limited access to adequate healthcare for juveniles with neuropsychiatric disorders, the increase in the number of juveniles with behavioural problems and diagnosed with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, as well as the increase in the prescription of psychotropic or psychostimulant drugs and antidepressants.*”

Mental disorders in EU

The World Health Organization states that mental health is not only the absence of mental disorders, but a state of well-being characterized by happiness, life satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment.

It is estimated that more than 11 million children and young people aged 19 years old and under (13%) in the EU suffer of a condition of mental health. Rates increase with age from around 2% of children aged under 5 years old to around 19% of young people aged between 15 and 19 years old⁷.

Mental health, how are the children doing, some data from the AGIA consultation⁸

The public consultation sponsored by the Children and Adolescents Authority (AGIA) involved 7,470 young people who were heard regarding their mental health and possible persistent habits since the pandemic period.

Regarding the current mental health, 35% of children say they are calm, 24% anxious and 16% cannot define their mental health, 8% consider themselves happy and 6% alone.

It should be noted that almost one in four boys, having to indicate a preponderant state of mind, replied that he is anxious.

It is of concern that some habits that emerged during the pandemic were maintained even subsequently such as studying less or discontinuously (40.4%), sleeping little or late (33.3%), doing little physical activity (31.8 %) and eating too much or too little (31.7%).

Compared to persistent disorders from the pandemic onwards, 51.4% of children recurrently suffer from prolonged states of anxiety or sadness. 49.8% of them complain of excess tiredness. 46.5% say they feel nervous. And again: 29% have frequent headaches and 25.4% say they don't sleep well.

The children are aware of the problems that have arisen and feel the need to manage them in some way. It is significant that 62.7% would like to use the services of a psychologist, 29.3% would like to have the help of a coach, 16% seek support in a teacher and 12.9% would like to be able to see a doctor.

It should also be highlighted that, although the possibility of indicating more than one option has

⁷ [UNICEF The state of child in the European Union, February 2024](#)

⁸ [Report “Mental Health: How Boys Are” published by the Child and Adolescent Authority, October 2024](#)

been given, almost two out of three young people would like to be able to talk to a psychologist⁹.

Mental health in the 2024 UNICEF investigation and in the Report Card 19 *The well-being of girls, boys and adolescent in an unpredictable world*.

According to the 2024 UNICEF investigation “*The children condition in the European Union*” suicide has been the second cause of death (after road accidents) among the young people aged between 15 and 19 years old (around 1 in 6 deaths)¹⁰.

An estimated 11.2 million (13%) children and young people aged 19 and over in the EU suffer from mental disorders. Rates increase with age, rising from about 2% of children under the age of 5 to about 19% of young people between the ages of 15 and 19. In total, approximately 5.9 million males and 5.3 million females up to the age of 19 suffer from mental disorders.

Among young people aged between 15 and 19 years old, about 8% suffer from anxiety and 4% from depression. Rates for both conditions are higher in this age group for females (9.6% and 4.6% respectively) than for males (5.5%). Several studies suggest that mental health problems among young Europeans have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. The long-term impact of the pandemic on the mental health of children and adolescents has yet to be determined.

It has been recently published the Report Card 19 – “*The well-being of girls, boys and adolescents in an unpredictable world*”¹¹ - the UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight document, which since 2000 has monitored the rights and well-being of children in countries of the European Union and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in high-income countries.

In particular, the Report Card 19 offers a perspective on how the COVID-19 pandemic and global closure have affected children in 43 OECD and EU countries.

The suicide rate appears to have remained generally stable in recent years in the group of countries surveyed, including Italy.

On the contrary, adolescent satisfaction with life is declining. The shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with global trends, such as climate change and conflict, represented a particularly difficult time in the growth of girls, boys and adolescents. The rapid evolution of digital technologies also simultaneously presents risks and benefits for the mental health of children.

A more thorough investigation of several mental health problems reveals a worsening of it that began as early as the early years ‘90. Clearly, recent factors cannot exhaustively explain this trend. Mental health is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon and protecting and promoting it involves challenges that often do not have a single solution.

Diversified response interventions are needed, which include targeted and universal promotional, prevention and specialist services, as well as timely coordinated interventions between the various services (for girls, boys and adolescents of any age, when discomfort occurs). All these components require more investment, since mental health still receives very little funding compared to other sectors, such as physical health and education¹².

In the face of the urgency brought to light by the reality of the data and despite the need for greater investments, the attention in favour of the prevention and support of the mental health of children and young people in recent years has increased. A first intervention to respond to the need expressed by children and young people on the topic of

⁹ Ibidem

¹⁰ [UNICEF The state of child in the European Union, February 2024](#)

¹¹ [UNICEF Innocenti, Report card 19, May 2025](#)

¹² Ibidem

mental health is represented by the psychologist bonus. The 2025 Budget Law has in fact confirmed the psychologist bonus for 2025 with 9.5 million euros, 8.5 million for 2026 and 9 million for 2027. Furthermore, starting from 2028, an annual allocation of 8 million euros is foreseen which should stabilize the measure. The upper per capita limit has been raised to a maximum of 1,500 euros per beneficiary based on the ISEE.

Furthermore, after years of legislative gap compensated in some cases by ad hoc regional provisions, as in the case of Piemonte, Lombardia, Abruzzo, Marche, Campania and Calabria, the 2025 Budget Law has finally provided for the creation of a Fund for the support service psychological in favour of students, the so-called “school psychologist”, with a budget of 10 million euros for 2025 and 18.5 million euros per year starting from 2026.

Finally, there is an important measure related to the mental wellbeing waiting to be examined in the Parliament: the introduction of the professional figure of “basic psychologist”. The legislative proposal C. 814 Ciocchetti regulates, in particular the “Establishment of the primary care psychology service within the National Health Service”, while the legislative proposal C. 1034 Lupi provides for the “Establishment of the professional figure of the basic psychologist”.

In November 2023, a unified basic text of these and previous legislative proposals with a similar theme was adopted, but the provision is pending in the Social Affairs Commission, and, above all, the necessary funds have not been established. As a result, some Regional Councils have anticipated the Parliament: Toscana, Abruzzo, Campania, Puglia, Piemonte, Lombardia and Sicilia were the first regions to regulate the presence of the basic psychologist.

It should also be remembered that the school psychologist was one of the measures envisaged in the Fifth National Children's Plan, as the establishment of a school psychology service for children and adolescents in schools of all levels. The service – according to the Plan - must be an integral part of the training offer in addition to the services already existing in schools (eg listening desk), but the measure has not yet been realised.

UNICEF recommends the adoption of greater investments in the mental health of children and adolescents that can lead to diversified response interventions, which include targeted and universal promotion, prevention and specialist services, as well as timely coordinated interventions between the various services (for girls, boys and adolescents of any age, when disorders occur).

Regarding mental health and psychosocial wellbeing UNICEF Italy recommends:

- Significantly increase long-term investments in Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing services (in Italy public spending on this sector is among the lowest in Europe);
- Ensure a uniform and integrated system of child and adolescent neuropsychiatric care services throughout the State, provided with sufficient human, technical and financial resources;
- Establish an effective monitoring system for the mental health of children and adolescents;
- Ensure that diagnoses of juveniles with ADD/ADHD are thoroughly examined and that prescription medication is used as a last resort and only after an individual assessment of which is the best interest of the child;
- Promote interventions throughout the national territory to support conscious parenting with respect to the issue of mental well-being, with particular attention to the most vulnerable contexts;
- Ensure that children and their parents are adequately informed about possible side effects resulting from prescription of drugs and regarding alternative medicine;

- Allow all girls, boys and adolescents to benefit from mental health support in schools and communities, without any discrimination, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable groups;
- Promote public debate to counter mental health stigma;
- Ensure, by consolidating its diffusion, prevention and psychological support services in educational and community contexts for all girls, boys and adolescents who need them, with particular attention to the most vulnerable contexts.

4. CLIMATE CHANGE– artt. 2, 3, 6, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 24 e 26-31

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly addresses environmental issues in article 24 on the right to health and article 29 on the purposes of education. In line with General Comment No. 2613 published in August 2023, regarding the right to a clean environment for every child and adolescent, it is underlined that States are responsible not only for protecting children's rights from immediate harm, but also from foreseeable violations of their rights in the future. Furthermore, it is necessary to highlight the right of children and adolescents to be protagonists of climate decisions.

Nearly half the world's 2,4 billion of children and adolescents in the world are exposed to a dangerous combination of climate and environmental shock and almost 90% of the global burden of diseases associated with climate change, environmental degradation and pollution falls on children under 5 years of age: girls and boys affected by climate-related disasters also suffer negative consequences for their mental health. According to survey data from UNICEF Italy and Youtrend, 32% of adult respondents under 45 say that the fear of the climate crisis discourages them from having children. When asked what the world's biggest problems are facing, climate change appears to be the fourth answer (23%) - the most frequent after wars, world hunger and rising prices.

Accelerating the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is the only long-term solution to protect children from the climate crisis. In addition, there is a need for a drastic increase in investment for the adaptation of social services on which the health and well-being of children depends. Moreover, children and young people must have their right to participate in climate decisions guaranteed through the establishment of an institutional mechanism through which they can discuss and express their opinion on environmental laws, policies and plans.

The Minister of Environment and Energy Security, by Decree No. 434 of 21 December 2023, approved the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan. An important step for planning and implementing climate change adaptation actions in Italy and entered into force (2024). However, even in the budget law for 2025 the necessary resources for financing the implementation measures of the Plan have not been allocated.

In 2023, the proposal to update the PNIEC (Piano Nazionale Integrato Energia e Clima), National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan, was formally sent to the European Commission. The Italian PNIEC sets national targets for 2030 on energy efficiency, innovative sources and reduction of CO2 emissions, as well as those on energy security, interconnections, the single energy market and competitiveness, development and sustainable mobility. The PNIEC represents a very important tool for achieving the European objectives (Fit for 55) and the statement of the Paris Agreement. Even though a public consultation on the Plan has been planned at a governance level, the tools for meaningful participation of younger people are lacking.

The Draft Framework Law on Climate (2023) was presented to the Senate which would allow the country to have an organic framework for climate interventions and policies and in which there is a hope for specific attention both to the participation of boys and girls in the definition of the Law, and its specific attention to the disproportionate impact of climate change on childhood and adolescence.

Regarding environmental education, a necessary prerequisite for the real participation of young people in climate issues, in 2024 the new Guidelines for the teaching of civic education are updated

¹³ [UNICEF - On the rights of persons who are minors and the environment, with particular emphasis on climate change](#)

and approved which clarify the topics that must be covered. Environmental education is placed in the broader context of economic development and sustainability which loses its centrality compared to the previous version of the Guidelines.

Concerning the creation of an institutional mechanism for the participation of younger people in the definition of climate policies and decisions, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in January 2025 between the Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, the Ministry of Sports and Youth and the National Youth Council. The Protocol provides for the establishment of a permanent consultation table, open to representatives of youth organizations active on sustainable development issues.

During the COP29 new goal of 300 billion dollars to climate was announced. It is desirable that every country does its own part to reach its achievement and that the announcement is followed by a concrete action. Furthermore, in the Global Goal on Adaptation the unique and disproportionate impact of climate change on children and adolescents was highlighted. In this regard, it is necessary that the new national climate plans, (NDCs 3.0) and the national adaptation plans give priority to children and young people's rights.

UNICEF recommends to:

- Increase investments for climate adaptation and to the resilience in key services for children. To protect children, communities and the most vulnerable people from the worst impacts caused by an already changing climate, key services need to be repurposed, including water and sanitation services, health and education services.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emission. To avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis, an urgent action is necessary. Countries must reduce their emission by almost 45% (compared to the levels of 2010) by 2030 to keep warming at no more than 1,5 Celsius degrees.
- Provide children with climate training and “green skills”, which are crucial for their adaption and their preparation to the climate change's effects. Children and young people will face all the devastating consequences of climate crisis and water insecurity and yet, they are the least responsible. We have a duty toward the young people and the future generations.
- Include young people in all national, regional and international negotiations and decisions on climate, also in COP30. Children and young people must be included in all climate-related decision-making processes.
- Sign the Intergovernmental Declaration Children, Youth and Climate Action, adopted during COP25.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION -artt. 27, 28, e 29

Poverty of education is one of the dimensions that qualify child poverty intended as absence of equal opportunities during the learning path that, from early childhood, can lead children towards an economic, social and cultural gap that is difficult to bridge later. In 2023, public spending on education represents 3.9% of GDP, compared to an EU average of 4.7%¹⁴.

The latest ISTAT data indicates that absolute poverty continues to hit children in particular¹⁵.

Even the VI National Plan for Children and Adolescents -recently adopted- in the area of intervention dedicated to Education (Action 8-12), underline how it is “...*increasingly necessary to speak, today, about an educational need. A need to which answers must be given in the immediate, in the medium and long term*”.

The Plan pays a great attention to youth socialisation theme, to the concretisation of their needs. A series of interventions is identified that aims to strengthen aggregation spaces and promote protagonism to enhance children and young people participation and face educational poverty, school abandonment, loneliness and the risk of social retirement, isolation, forms of marginalization. Phenomena and dangers that experiences such as the pandemic and the rarefaction of familiar structures -also a consequence of drop in the birth rate – have contributed to accentuating¹⁶.

In that framework, the contrast of child educational poverty is a necessary investment in the demographic, economic and social future of the country to be pursued through a multidisciplinary approach in which community educational pacts can also find some space, a tool to be valorised, that can represent a significant step forward to educational development of territories.

Childcare education services

Strong territorial inequalities persist in access to educational services for children. Against a national average coverage rate that reached 30% in the 2022/2023 educational year – up from 27.1% in 2019/2020 also concerning the continuous decrease of children in this age group – some areas of the country still remain very distant from the Essential Level of Benefits (LEP), set at 33 places per 100 children by 2027. The differences are particularly noticeable in the Mezzogiorno, where coverage is well below the national average: Campania 13.2%, Sicily 13.9%, Calabria 15.7%. Instead, the Centre-North has already reached and exceeded the LEP parameter. These inequalities make the service system deeply asymmetrical, affecting the equity of educational opportunities for children from the earliest years of life. Compared to the new European target of 45% coverage by 2030, Italy still appears far away, despite the signs of improvement recorded at the national level¹⁷.

INVALSI disclosure of 2025

The following emerges from national learning survey of 2024-2025¹⁸:

¹⁴ [Us Italia 2025, ISTAT](#)

¹⁵ [Report ISTAT Poverty, October 2024](#)

¹⁶ [Outline of the VI National Plan of Action](#)

¹⁷ [Report Educational services for children in Italy, educational year 2023/2024](#)

¹⁸ [INVALSI test reports 2024](#)

- Fifth class Primary School: the 75% of male and female students reach at least the basic level in Italian; almost 66% reach at least the basic level in maths (it was 68% in 2024). In English 91% (it was the 95% in 2024) of the students reach the prescribed level A1 of the CEFR reading test, while in the listening test it is 86% of students (unchanged compared to 2024) who reach the prescribed A1 level of the CEFR.
- Lower secondary school: at a national level, students who achieve at least adequate results, i.e. in line with what is established by the national indications, are: Italian: 59% (-1 percentage point compared to 2024); Mathematics: 56% (unchanged compared to 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024; English-reading (A2): 83% (+1 percentage point compared to 2024); English-listening (A2): 70% (+2 percentage points compared to 2024). Territorial gaps remain very wide. In some regions of the South there is a greater number of students with very low achievement levels.
- Secondary school: in Italian 62% of male and female students reach at least the basic level (unchanged compared to 2024). The differences between north-central and southern Italy remain consistent; in Mathematics, 54% reach at least the basic level (- 1 percentage point compared to 2024) The weight of territorial gaps is also very strong for mathematics.

UNICEF recommends to:

- Promote the knowledge and consciousness of child and adolescent's rights within the educational system and at public institutional level (locals and nationals), to the purpose of guarantee the wellbeing of children;
- Improve evidence-based planning and monitoring, including planning that takes into account gender issues, disability, backgrounds and risk-informed planning in response to conflict, climate change and other key issues;
- Support policies for juveniles at a disadvantage and public spending using analytical tools, political dialogue and technical support;
- Improve skills, both at central and decentralised level, regarding data collection, service delivery, promoting an approach geared towards achieving results and protecting the education system;
- Ensure coordination between resources, policies and actors in the education system to ensure that education is equitable and targeted to overcome the learning crisis;
- Refine the alignment of the education system with other sectors, such as social protection, health, culture and work;
- Enhance linkages with social protection systems that address, inter alia, household environmental, financial and cultural barriers to equitable access and learning;
- Ensure the listening and participation of children and young people in all phases of school life, ensuring accessible environments and enhancing the key role that the school has in the educating community;
- Take concrete and structural action to combat child educational poverty, guaranteeing equal educational opportunities from early childhood and bridging the territorial, social and economic gaps that continue to penalize millions of girls, boys and adolescents in our

country;

- Strengthen coordination between education, social protection, health and culture, with an integrated and multidisciplinary perspective, as indicated in the VI National Plan for Children and Adolescents;
- Ensure that Essential Performance Levels (LEPs) in 0-6 education are truly guaranteed across the country by 2027;
- Increase public spending on education, consistent with European objectives and national evidence, to strengthen educational provision in the most fragile contexts;
- Enhance and make operational on a national scale the community education pacts, in order to promote the active participation of territories and families in building a solid and inclusive educating community.

6. SPECIAL PROTECTION – artt. 2, 8, 17, 12, 20, 22, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37 b e d, 42 e OPAC
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Situation analysis

Between 2019 and 2025, Italy experienced a series of major legislative reforms in migration and asylum, reflecting shifting national and European priorities. Decree-Law No. 113/2018 significantly restricted protections by abolishing humanitarian protection and limiting access to reception for asylum seekers. Partial reversals followed with Decree-Law No. 130/2020, which restored some safeguards, including a form of humanitarian protection (“special protection”) and re-extended decentralized reception to vulnerable groups such as families with children. However, subsequent legislation—particularly the 2023 “Cutro Decree” (Decree-Law No. 20/2023) and Legislative Decree No. 133/2023—reintroduced restrictive measures, such as prolonged detention, reduced access to special protection, and derogations from procedural safeguards for unaccompanied minors. Notably, the 2023 reforms allowed minors aged 16 and over to be placed in adult reception centres and facilitated rapid age assessments with reduced protections. Despite this, in 2024, two regulatory instruments (Presidential Decree No. 231/2023 and Prime Ministerial Decree No. 98/2024) were adopted to better implement existing child protection legislation (Law No. 47/2017), including clearer responsibilities for the Ministry of Labour and procedures for initial interviews with unaccompanied minors. While some efforts were made to reinforce legal protections, recent measures risk undermining the rights of asylum-seeking children, particularly regarding family unity, non-detention, and access to child-appropriate reception and protection services.

Methodology

The list of issues and recommended priority actions presents an analysis of developments and persisting challenges regarding unaccompanied children in relation to both CRC general principles, some CRC special protection measures and the relevant General Comments.

This report includes also the voices of UASC and young migrants and refugees through the digital platform *U-Report On The Move (UROT M)*, launched by UNICEF in Italy in 2017 to explore – via regular polls – the perceptions of its participants regarding the care, protection, and social inclusion measures implemented for them in the country.

The priority concerns and actions UNICEF would like to highlight are listed below:

Prevention of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance (article 2 of the Convention)

Despite Italy’s adoption of the 2022–2024 National Integration Plan, which includes measures to combat racism, xenophobia, and discrimination, and the National Plan to Combat Racism,

Xenophobia and Intolerance 2021–2025, approved after significant delays, still not publicly available, and lacking any specific mention of UASC, young people, particularly unaccompanied minors, refugees, and migrants, continue to face significant barriers to inclusion. Recent UNICEF research and U-Report polls reveal that an increased number of youths with migratory backgrounds have experienced or witnessed discrimination, often based on skin colour, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and migrant status. These challenges are intensified by negative public attitudes, persistent stereotypes, and limited media representation.

UNICEF recommends the establishment of an independent equality body in line with EU standards; ensure the full and transparent implementation of the National Plan to Combat Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance 2021–2025 by making the document publicly accessible and operationalizing its measures through coordinated actions at national and local levels using an intersectional approach; to ensure ongoing training for frontline and public service workers, including first-and-second line reception centres staff; to regulate media portrayals of migrants and prevent hate speech through training and accountability. As well as to introduce *ius soli* and *ius scholae* to guarantee citizenship rights for children born or raised in Italy.

The respect of the views of the child (articles 12, 20 and 22 of the Convention)

While Italy's *Zampa Law* (Law No. 47/2017) marked a major step forward in recognizing the rights of UASC, especially the right to be heard, its implementation has been uneven and delayed. Despite children's participation being a core principle of the CRC, young people, particularly UASC and young migrants and refugees, still face limited and inconsistent opportunities to influence decisions that affect their lives. There is currently no systematic, youth-friendly mechanism for consulting children in policymaking or in the management of reception services. In judicial settings where hearings of UASC are conducted, child-friendly interview techniques are yet to be consistently adopted, while professional cultural and linguistic mediation is not systematically ensured. As a result, the possibility for UASC to express their views and preferences in proceedings informed to the best interests of the child principle risks to be jeopardized. Delays in guardian appointments, limited access to social and educational opportunities, and inconsistent reception conditions further hinder meaningful participation and well-being. UNICEF's *U-Report On The Move* polls consistently highlight the absence of formal processes to ensure UASC and young migrants and refugees' views are considered.

While some youth-led initiatives and participation efforts such as U-Report On The Move and U-Report steering group, have empowered individual voices, these remain the exception rather than the norm.

UNICEF recommends establishing systematic, anonymous, and adolescent-friendly participation mechanisms across all levels, including within reception centres; ensuring child-friendly approach to hearings in judicial settings; and to institutionalize the role of qualified cultural and linguistic

mediators to ensure inclusive, reliable communication and support meaningful participation and the right of UASC to be heard in all decision-making processes.

The right to information and knowledge of rights (articles 17, 20 and 22 and 42 of the Convention)

Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and young migrants and refugees in Italy face significant barriers to accessing timely, accurate, and age-appropriate information about their rights, asylum procedures, and available services. Recent U-Report polls (2024) show that over 60% of young people are uninformed or only partially informed about support services, with many highlighting the urgent need for clearer information to support their mental health and well-being. Indeed, access to information is closely linked to mental health and meaningful participation. Without reliable information, UASC experience anxiety, stress, and disempowerment, limiting their ability to engage in decisions affecting their lives. However, systemic gaps such as insufficient training of staff and lack of cultural and linguistic mediators, undermine the right to information and protection.

UNICEF recommends providing continuous, age-appropriate information throughout all reception stages; enhancing civic education on rights and institutions; ensuring systematic guidance for UASC and young migrants and refugees; and expanding localized information services with linguistic and cultural mediation and social media outreach. Empowering UASC through information and participation for their protection, recovery, and inclusion paths.

Right to an adequate standard of living (article 20, 22 and 27 of the Convention)

To date, emergency-focused approach to UASC reception prevails, with poor attention to appropriate placement for vulnerable children. The number of second-line reception places remains grossly insufficient, with just over 6,000 spots available for more than 16,000 UAMs registered in the reception system.¹⁹ Furthermore, the absence of a national oversight mechanism for monitoring compliance with reception standards limits accountability and quality assurance. Multisectoral coordination among health, social, protection, educational institutions and reception systems remains limited, with frontline workers often lacking sufficient training and knowledge on child protection (CP), gender-based violence (GBV), mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), skills building and job orientation. In addition, the reception system for families with children remains under-qualified and insufficiently equipped to meet basic protection standards. Asylum-seeking families are often placed in Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria (CAS), where, by law, essential services such as cultural and linguistic mediation, Italian language classes, skills building and job orientation, psychosocial support, and legal assistance are not guaranteed.

UNICEF recommends embracing sustainable care solutions (especially for vulnerable children and families), strengthening multisectoral coordination across relevant domains to provide integrated,

¹⁹ Source https://globalcompactrefugees.org/good-practices/unaccompanied-and-separated-children-italy-right-be-heard-and-participate?utm_source=chatgpt.com

child-centred support for UAMs, and enhancing capacity building of reception staff on CP, GBV, MHPSS, skills development and job orientation and children's rights.

Right to identity and legal status (article 8, 20 and 22 of the Convention)

Procedures to ensure legal pathways for UASC are fragmented across administrative, bureaucratic, and legal sectors, resulting in time-consuming and restrictive practices. Restrictive citizenship laws further hinder access to essential rights and services—including education, health care, and long-term integration. Delays in the appointment of voluntary guardians—essential for initiating legal and protection procedures as appropriate following a case-by-case assessment—remain frequent, leaving children without adequate support at critical stages. Limited capacity and training among frontline legal and social workers result in inconsistent legal assistance and weak referral systems.

UNICEF recommends harmonizing bureaucratic procedures to ensure timely and child-sensitive processing for UAMs (including by timely appointing guardians) and reviewing restrictive citizenship laws to facilitate access to rights and services for children growing up in Italy.

Right to education (articles 28 and 29 of the Convention)

Migrant and refugee children in Italy, including UASC, are entitled by law (art. 27, 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 34 of the Italian Constitution, Law Decree 296/2006, Law Decree 47/2017) to education and development regardless of their legal status. However, actual access remains limited: only 21% of UASC are enrolled in school and 18% in adult learning centers (CPIA), which are not always the best option for children in terms of socialization with peers, skills development and inclusion opportunities. Barriers to access school include long waiting times, misinterpretation of law and territorial disparities, illegitimate requests by schools of documents for enrolment, and limited school places. On the other hand, schools need to be better equipped to welcome UASC and other students with a migrant background: language acquisition is crucial for inclusion, yet recent legislation (Law n. 106 of 29th July 2024) limits language support to classes with high concentrations of students with a migration background, making such assistance hardly accessible. Many UASC feel pressured to work early due to family or economic constraints and are faced with the challenge that their qualifications are often not recognized. Frontline workers often lack the training to guide them through Italy's educational and vocational system and this contributes to frustration, early school leaving, and vulnerability to exploitation or criminal networks.

UNICEF recommends that the State Party clarify and harmonize the implementation of the right to education for UASC and young refugees and migrants until age 18, addressing territorial disparities and misinterpretations by professionals. It urges the recognition of foreign educational qualifications and calls for greater accessibility to the language support measures outlined in Law n. 106/2024 by lowering activation thresholds. UNICEF also recommends providing schools with trained personnel for both Italian language teaching and psychosocial support. Lastly, it stresses the need to train

frontline workers in skills development and job orientation for UASC and young refugees and migrants.

Right to special care and protection (article 18, 20 and 22 of the Convention)

The Italian guardianship model remains fragmented, lacking continuous training on UASC specific needs and delayed in appointments, with a disproportionate UAC–guardian ratio across and within local districts. According to the most recent available data¹, 5,986 out of 20,206 unaccompanied children only are supported by an appointed voluntary guardian. Even when appointed, guardians are often left aside in key decision-making processes that concern the life and protection of the child. On a similar note, the foster care system remains underdeveloped: only 4% of unaccompanied children are placed in foster care², with significant territorial disparities concerning available funds, institutional coordination mechanisms and technical competencies of professionals involved.

UNICEF recommends ensuring the timely appointment of qualified guardians for all unaccompanied children and strengthening their involvement in best interests assessment; and developing coordination mechanisms in foster care at national and local levels, while ensuring social services are properly skilled to widely implement foster care for UAC and equipped with adequate budget and human resources to provide support to the foster families.

Continued support until age of 21 (articles 20, 22, 28, 29 and 39 of the Convention)

Practices among Juvenile Courts responsible for the decision on extending support to UASC upon turning 18 (so called “*prosieguo amministrativo*”, art. 13 Law 47/17) vary significantly, due to different criteria applied to the assessment across territorial districts. This results in inconsistent access to extended protection, to uncertainty and difficulty in planning any educational, skills development or social inclusion path, and creates discrimination among unaccompanied children. For the beneficiaries of the “*prosieguo amministrativo*”, a clear definition concerning the very content of the extended support is still missing – i.e. minimum social, healthcare, education and integration services to be guaranteed, while placement in inappropriate reception premises challenges social inclusion and perspectives of autonomy already achieved.

UNICEF recommends standardizing the application of Article 13 of Law 47/2017 and identifying by law the essential levels in social services, while ensuring that young adults continuing protection pathways are not transferred to inappropriate adult reception centres.

Right to life, survival, and Development, Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health, Refugee children, Right to recovery and reintegration (articles 6, 20, 22, 24, 39 of the Convention)

Italy welcomes Italy’s recognition of the importance of integrated mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services for adolescents and commends its collaboration with UNICEF through the

EU Technical Support Instrument. While this marks progress, significant barriers remain for migrant and refugee children in accessing quality MHPSS services, including inadequate coordination across sectors, lack of minimum standards in reception centres, under-resourced public services, and widespread stigma. Frontline workers often lack the training and tools to respond effectively, and schools are ill-equipped to support children's mental health. Additionally, the absence of national disaggregated data systems hampers effective planning and monitoring.

UNICEF recommends that Italy adopt a multisectoral national MHPSS strategy with clear coordination mechanisms and standards; establish robust, disaggregated data systems; invest in community-based and specialized services; strengthen frontline capacity; and launch targeted anti-stigma campaigns, particularly for refugee and migrant communities.

Right to protection from all forms of violence (articles 19, 24, 27, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37 of the Convention)

Despite Italy's notable progress, including through the Handbook on specific needs and the Technical Note on GBV risk mitigation and child safeguarding in reception centers, children remain at high risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse. Implementation of GBV and violence against children (VAC) plans is limited, and CP and GBV systems lack adequate resources and coordination, particularly between asylum, reception, and protection services. Key gaps include the absence of PSEA policies, child safeguarding frameworks, complaints mechanisms, and comprehensive data on VAC and GBV. Training for frontline workers is often insufficient, especially in identifying unaccompanied girls, increasing their vulnerability to violence, trafficking and abuse. Access to timely, reliable information on rights and services remains inadequate, and reception systems lack sensitivity to sexual orientation and gender diversity. Substandard living conditions and persistent harmful gender norms further exacerbate risks, while high rates of abscondment increase their exposure to harm.

UNICEF recommends that the State Party strengthens implementation and coordination of GBV and VAC plans with adequate resources; improves multisectoral data collection and use for evidence-based interventions; ensure inclusive, accessible child-friendly information on rights and available services; establishes PSEA policies, safeguarding frameworks, and complaint mechanisms; and trains frontline workers on CP, GBV, and identifying and protecting unaccompanied girls.