

Italy

Each year, the ESN European Semester Group follows the European Commission's cycle of policy coordination with EU Member States known as the European Semester and produces a report based on a questionnaire completed by public social services authorities on the social situation in European countries with a particular focus on social services. This country profile identifies the most important common challenges facing social services as reported by ESN members in Austria, related to three principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and makes recommendations for the 2023 European Semester. The full report, with cross-country analysis of all the participating countries is available [here](#).

1. Children's services

1.1 Key issues

The pandemic has left a lasting impact on children and young people in Italy, exacerbating the structural problems this population was already facing and creating new challenges. The National plan for Children and Adolescents and the National Plan for the Fight against Poverty, which are operationally integrated with the Plan for the implementation of the Child Guarantee aim to improve the situation of Italian children and provide for preventive and corrective interventions from early childhood to adolescence. The plan reaffirms the importance of investing in the 0-6 age group as key to overcoming inequalities.

Respondents emphasised that currently both the legal and organisational structure of services is extremely fragmented, with different ministries (Justice; Labour and Social Policies; Interior; Health; Education, Equal Opportunities and Disability) and different levels of governance and management (regions, local authorities, third sector) having different, often overlapping competences.

1.2. Recommendations

Implementing the National Plan for Children and Adolescents and mitigating the negative consequences of the pandemic on children and youth requires improving coordination of various support sectors for children, including social services, health, education, and justice.

2. Long-term care

2.1. Key issues

The Italian Parliament is currently developing a comprehensive reform of care for dependent people over 65. New guidelines will be established to identify the needs of this group and plan appropriate services for them. Health and social services will work more closely together to provide complex care for older persons. The "Case di Comunità" (Community Home), public hub for local social and health services will serve as a one-stop shop to provide support not only for non-self-sufficient citizens, but also for their families and informal carers (especially those dealing with acute situations, like cognitive and behavioural disorders and terminal illness).

The position of a specialist social worker responsible for developing a personalised care plan and monitoring its implementation will be set up. The 2021 budget already introduced a new essential level of social services, which provides for one social worker for every 5,000 inhabitants and includes a further target of one social worker for every 4,000 inhabitants. This will make it possible to tackle years of neglect in social services staffing, ensuring that citizens are able to benefit from professionals and services capable of meeting their increasingly complex needs.

2.2. Recommendations

Italy should adopt a framework law that defines homogeneous rights and assistance chains throughout the country. There must be a clear definition of tasks, duties and responsibilities of all sectors in the area of long-term care. It is equally necessary to have an equal distribution of care professionals throughout the country, particularly within the most vulnerable and exposed territories, such as rural areas and small islands.

3. Support for homeless people

3.1. Key issues

The homeless population in Italy is growing at an alarming rate. The number of homeless people has quadrupled in the last 10 years reaching 500,000. A significant proportion of homeless people are foreigners (58.2%), under 54 years of age (75.8%) with low level of education. The main causes of homelessness are loss of stable employment and family crises.¹ These events are most often the tipping point, followed by a steady deterioration of the psychosocial situation of people deprived of their homes. In recent years, declining health has also joined the main risk factors for homelessness. The impact of the Covid-19

pandemic has also significantly increased the possibility of falling below the poverty line to the point of homelessness. An order of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on 9 May 2022 granted funding, linked to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, to promote social inclusion measures for vulnerable populations. This includes temporary housing and centres where homeless people can be supported by professionals to improve their physical and mental health, and their close relationships. In addition, a guide on addressing severe adult marginalisation was issued by the national government to promote a transition from temporary to structural forms of support. This includes the Housing First approach, which uses rapid re-housing as a starting point so that homeless people can begin a path of social inclusion, supported by appropriate services.

3.2. Recommendations

Set up a single, unified system to support homeless people, with special attention to 'low threshold' projects i.e. services provided close to them, on the streets and in temporary accommodation.



Read the report online

Putting People First

Investing in Social Services. Promoting Social Inclusion.

¹ <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/poverta-ed-esclusione-sociale/focus-on/Poverta-estreme/Documents/Linee-di-indirizzo-per-il-contrasto-alla-grave-emarginazione-adulta.pdf>; https://www.caritas.it/caritasitaliana/allegati/9651/Rapporto_Caritas_poverta_2021_oltre_ostacolo.pdf; <http://lexbrowser.provinz.bz.it/all/all.ashx?path=Allegato%20A%20-%20175888.pdf&mimetype=application/pdf>.