

# Caritas Cares

POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION  
AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

Italy Report  
NOVEMBER 2017

## What this report is about

This report describes the main challenges related to poverty and social inclusion of young people in Italy and provides recommendations for policy makers to address these challenges. The recommendations are based on an analysis of the grass-roots experience of Caritas Italiana which is compared to official data.

# About Caritas Italiana

Caritas Italiana is a pastoral organisation of the Italian Bishops Conference. It connects 218 diocesan Caritas, committed in their daily activities to supporting the most vulnerable people. Caritas Italiana is engaged in many areas including: peace, old and new forms of poverty, volunteering, civil service, immigration, mental health and homelessness. Caritas Italiana works as part of the Church to raise awareness on issues around charity, care for those in need, and promotes the importance of concrete actions for the poor. It contributes to development by awakening public awareness, offering services and financial help as well as by coordinating the initiatives of the various groups and movements inspired by Christian values.

## Programmes we carry out aimed at families with children:

- ♦ Income support
- ♦ Food support and other basic needs (e.g. FEAD)
- ♦ Family counselling and mediation
- ♦ Access to education and training (VET, informal education, early school leaving, dropping-out, etc.)
- ♦ Community, volunteering and cultural activities

## Programmes we carry out aimed at young people:

- ♦ Income support
- ♦ Food support and other basic needs
- ♦ Access to employment
- ♦ Access to education and training (e.g. VET, informal education, early school leaving, dropping-out, etc.)
- ♦ Community, volunteering and cultural activities
- ♦ Youth Guarantee

64,4 %  
of Caritas clients  
are families with children

23,4 %  
of Caritas clients are young people  
(under 34)  
(women: 11.5%; men: 11.9%)

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# 9,1 million

Youth population

# 15,1%

Young people  
(EU average: 17,4%)

# 36,5%

Young immigrants

# 25,3%

Young emigrants

# 13,8%

Early school leavers  
(EU average: 10,7%)

# 28,4%

Youth Unemployment  
(EU average: 14,7%)

# 32,2%

At-risk-of-poverty or  
exclusion  
(EU average: 28,1%)

# 31,4%

Housing cost  
overburden  
(EU average: 40,4%)

Definition "Young people", age 15-29; in Young people, Migration, Unemployment & School leavers: 2016; Housing cost, 2013. Latest available data - accessed 18/05/2017

## Italy's main challenges related to poverty and social exclusion of young people:

- ♦ **YOUTH POVERTY AND INTERGENERATIONAL SOCIAL MOBILITY:** In recent decades, the opportunities for youth have sharply declined. Today, youth unemployment and poverty is widespread. In addition, children belonging to a more disadvantaged class have little chance of emerging from such a vulnerable situation.
- ♦ **PROTRACTED ADOLESCENCE:** Economic and social conditions place serious barriers before youths to successfully manage the transition from youth to adulthood. No access to affordable housing, poor links between the education system and employment, rigid education pathways without permeability between systems and between work and training, precarious labour and low pay all work to trap many youth in a situation where emancipation and independence is out of reach. In some cases, addictions are becoming an issue.
- ♦ **MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES:** young people of foreign origin keep being disadvantaged. The humanitarian crisis of the refugees represents a new dimension of tackling poverty among those recently arrived. Furthermore, Italian society faces significant issues in integrating youth of foreign origins. The young "second generation" of migrants, who are not entitled to Italian citizenship, show increasing rates of poverty, social exclusion, unemployment and early school leaving.

### Policy recommendations:

1. Improve the implementation of the new minimum income measure, in order to target the most vulnerable.
2. Streamline active labour market policies. Devise targeted programmes that facilitate the school-to-work transition.
3. Define a new National Public Housing Plan, including an integrated strategy for social housing, urban regeneration, rehabilitation subsidies, regulating levels of rent and social benefits for rents.
4. Revise the Italian citizenship law in order to facilitate the naturalisation of young foreigners.
5. Strengthen the reception system dedicated to unaccompanied minors, in order to guarantee their rights and integration process.

# 1 • Poverty and social exclusion of young people in Italy: the reality behind the data

# The problems of most concern in Italy

- ◆ Intergenerational social mobility
- ◆ Inadequate or poor quality education (early school-leaving or school drop-out)

## Intergenerational social mobility

In Italy, 4,742,000 people, or 7.9% of the population lived in absolute poverty in 2016. Of these, 2,309,000 are younger than 34 years old – 48.7% of the total<sup>1</sup>. Poverty today in Italy is inversely proportional to age: the risk of poverty is far higher at younger age groups and decreases at older strata. Therefore, minors and young adults are the most vulnerable groups at risk of poverty. Since the start of the crisis in 2007 up until today, the incidence of poverty among young people 18-34 years old has risen from 1.9% to 10.0%.<sup>2</sup> During the last ten years, figures of the National Bank of Italy show an increasing wealth gap between young and elderly people. In real terms, the average wealth of households, whose heads are aged between 18-34 years old, is less than half of the 1995 values. Meanwhile, the average wealth of households, whose head is aged older than 65 years, has increased by about 60%. Put in other terms, the relation of wealth between the older and the younger households has shifted from more or less par, to now three times greater wealth in older households, in the last twenty years<sup>3</sup>.

Further evidence of this seminal shift is derived from a recent study conducted by the Bruno Visentini Foundation<sup>4</sup>.

## Testimony

*My name is Giada, I am 22, I am Italian, and I live in Rome. I go to Caritas seeking some material help for my family, on behalf of my mother. For 3 years she has had an illness that prevents her from moving. She is separated from my father. We live with my younger brother, he is 14 years old. I have had no news from my father for 2 years now, he left from home because he and my mother didn't get along very well. He used to phone me, just once in a while, but now I think he has moved abroad, I'm not sure. In the meantime, I stopped studying two years ago. I changed schools twice, without any concrete results. The problem was that I couldn't concentrate on my studies, maybe because my family has needed my help through work. But, unfortunately, I couldn't find a good job either. My younger brother goes to school, he studies and next year he will go to Secondary School. We hope. All our efforts are focused on him now. Our life has changed a little bit since we got some help in parish Caritas. They have found me a small job: taking care of an old woman. It was just a three-month job, but was better than nothing, a chance to start again. I hope to go back to school some day, but at the moment we cannot afford those kinds of expenses. If only they could lower the school fees and provide free books, maybe with some help for the after-school period too, then I could start attending some professional courses.*

1 Cf. Istat, 2017, *La povertà in Italia* - Anno 2016; [www.istat.it](http://www.istat.it).

2 *Ibid.*

3 Banca d'Italia, 2015, *Supplementi al bollettino statistico, I bilanci delle famiglie italiane nell'anno 2014*, p. II.

4 Cf. [www.fondazionebrunovisentini.eu](http://www.fondazionebrunovisentini.eu).

Their research designed a new *Generational Divide Index (GDI)*. Through several indicators (income, occupation, education, and health), the GDI index measures the economic obstacles that prevent young people from achieving autonomy (data estimations go up to 2030). To illustrate, if in 2004, it took 10 years for a 20 year old youth to build up an independent life, in 2020 it will take 18 and in 2030 it will take 28 years to do so. For the first time since the end of the Second World War, the prospect of achieving a better life than their parents has begun to vanish for young Italians<sup>5</sup>.

Youth problems are quite visible also in Caritas services. In Caritas counselling centres, for instance, the number of beneficiaries aged 18-34 years old has been constantly increasing, both for Italian and foreign nationals, with an increase of eight percentage points between 2014 and 2016 (first semesters). Because of this rising trend, the projects and activities carried out by Caritas and aimed at young people (training, orientation, requalification, etc.) are increasing sharply<sup>6</sup>.

### Inadequate or poor quality education (early school-leaving or school drop-outs)

The EU measurement of early leavers from education and training is defined as persons aged 18 to 24 with poor levels of attained education (equal to ISCED 0, I, or 2) or persons with no education or training received in the four weeks preceding the survey. In Europe, according to measurements of the EU Labour Force Survey in 2015, 11% of the target population were early school leavers. The Europe 2020 strategy sets out a target of reducing the share of early school leavers to less than 10% by 2020<sup>7</sup>.

Starting from 2000, the share of early school leavers in Italy has been constantly decreasing: from 25.1% of people aged 18-24 in 2000, to 14.7% in 2015. As a result, Italy has reached its national target of 16%<sup>8</sup>. While this is positive, the proportion of early school leavers in Italy is influenced by gender and it is not uniformly distributed across the country; in Southern regions, it is almost double than that in the centre-northern area.<sup>9</sup>

According to studies carried out by the National Bank of Italy, differences in family characteristics (e.g. education, financial conditions) account for a large share of the stark differences in education between individuals born in the centre-north vs. the south, as well as between natives and second-generation migrants. Young migrants show the highest rates of early school leaving. In 2015, 31.3% of the total number of foreign-born youths were early school leavers, compared to 12.7% rate for young natives of Italy (a gap of 18.6 for foreign youth)<sup>10</sup>.

5 Fondazione Bruno Visentini, *Il divario generazionale tra confitti e solidarietà. Rapporto 2017*, Edizioni Dialoghi.

6 Caritas Italiana, 2016, *Vasi comunicanti*, Edizioni Palumbi, Teramo; [www.caritas.it](http://www.caritas.it).

7 European Semester Thematic Factsheet 2016: Early School Leavers.

8 <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-semester-thematic-factsheet-early-school-leavers-en.pdf>.

9 C. Aina, G. Casalone, P. Ghinetti, 2015, *Family Origin and Early School Leaving in Italy: The Long-Term Effects of Internal Migration*. Cf. [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net).

10 <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-semester-thematic-factsheet-early-school-leavers-en.pdf>.

In Caritas counselling centres, 69,7% of young customers, aged 18-24, have a poor level of education attained, less than Upper secondary. In Caritas, the highest rates of early school leavers are present amongst young foreign-born (70.5%) than within Italians (66.7%). The difference between Italians and foreigners is much smaller than we would expect, as the data are affected by the presence of a large number of young refugees and asylum seekers, that have lower school qualifications than traditional “migrant workers”.

### Access to minimum income schemes

Currently, minimum income schemes or other related benefits that are available to young people are:

- ♦ Minimum income
- ♦ Unemployment benefit
- ♦ Scholarship support
- ♦ Housing benefit
- ♦ Disability benefit
- ♦ Child allowance
- ♦ Alimony

Young people have limited access to these schemes and benefits. Young people, as with any other social categories, have free access to the social protection benefits system, but only if they fall within the restricted access criteria of the various measures. In addition, generally, these minimum income schemes are inadequate to elevate youth to a threshold of decent living.

### Access to employment

The major problems related to the access of young people to employment are:

- ♦ Limited employment opportunities

### Current services to fight poverty and social exclusion of young people

The following services that could lift young people out of poverty and social exclusion are generally not available:

- ♦ Access to affordable housing
- ♦ Access to education and training (formal, non-formal or informal)
- ♦ Access to physical and mental health
- ♦ Universal Minimum Income

## Transmission of poverty

The transmission of poverty from childhood to young adulthood is a problem. Intergenerational mobility in Italy is among the lowest in Europe, below that recorded in Great Britain<sup>II</sup>. One of the reasons for the lack of social mobility – and of the negative mobility affecting young Italians – is the halt of economic growth, starting from 2008 onwards, following the economic and financial crisis.

This leads to the following consequences: for a child, living in a poor family it means material deprivation, such as not being able to eat a proper meal, nor buying books or toys suitable for the child's age, neither having access to sporting and leisure activities, etc. There is also educational deprivation, with negative effects on future opportunities. It means deprivation of life prospects, closure of horizons, and an impossibility to reach and set one's own goals. All this creates vicious circles of poverty, from which it is very difficult to escape.

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<sup>II</sup> Intergenerational mobility is the relationship between the socio-economic status of the parents and that of their children once adults. Cf. *A family Affair: Intergenerational Social Mobility across Oecd Countries Ocse*, 2010; M. Franzini, M. Raitano, F. Vona, 2013, *The channels of intergenerational trasmission of inequality: a cross-country comparison*.

## Young people at higher risk of poverty

- ◆ Young unemployed
- ◆ Young immigrants

In Italy, unemployment represents a most critical issue for young people, causing economic, social, cultural and psychological consequences. In 2016, the unemployment rate for people aged 15-24 was at 37.8% (38% of Italian youth and 36.1% among foreign young people). This figure, although declining compared to the previous year, differs considerably from the European average (18.7%).

Since 2007, the year before the outbreak of the economic crisis, the situation has been ever worsening: the youth unemployment rate rose by 17.4 percentage points, from 20.4% to 37.8%, which is an 85.3% increase, surpassing the European increased average rate that rose from 15.9% to 18.7%. The increase in the rate of youth unemployment in Italy is one of the highest in Europe.

### Testimony

*My name is Abdulhai, I am 26, I am Afghan, of Tajik ethnicity. I have been living in Italy for 4 years. I came to Rome to study, sent by my family and relatives, in order to get a degree in nursing. The plan was to get the degree and afterwards to go back to Afghanistan to search for work, with some public or private clinics, often sponsored or ruled by NGOs or international organizations. The study programme had been funded for one year by a grant sponsored by an NGO, and it allowed me to pay for my travel expenses and school related expenses (books, university fees, etc.). I decided to go to Rome because some other relatives were already living here. Before coming to Rome, I also studied some Italian. I had some very good times at the beginning, in Rome, as I had the opportunity to meet some good friends and people, all very welcoming. At University, it was not so easy because my Italian was quite poor at that time, even though some of the books we used were written in English and we did a lot of practice. Unfortunately, because of the war and poverty in my own country, my family could not support me anymore and they stopped sending me money. After some time, I had to choose, whether to go back home or to stay in Italy. I decided to stay, but I had no money for university. So I looked for some work and also started coming to Caritas. When I was eating in a Caritas soup kitchen, an operator realized that I was very young and pushed me to go to a Caritas counselling centre, in order to try to find some solution to my problems. I was able to receive some help and could find some work, also thanks to a Salesian young professional centre here in the neighbourhood. Now that I am saving some money, I will probably start studying again next year, even though I stopped attending university lessons 3 years ago. I hope this is possible.*

Girls recorded a higher rate of unemployment compared to boys (39.6% vs. 36.4%). However, a comparison from 2007 to today shows the greatest disadvantage among men who, in nine years, have seen a doubling of the unemployment rate (98.6%) against a 69.9% increase among women.

The unemployment rate for young adults aged from 25-34 is also very high, equal to 17.7% (2016). Most vulnerable employment patterns occur in the southern and island regions, where the highest levels of absolute poverty are also recorded<sup>12</sup>.

The factors that had a marked impact on youth unemployment were undoubtedly the economic crisis, the pension reforms (which abruptly raised the retirement age), the aging population, and also the weakness and the poor linkage between school and work.

In 2016 (first semester of the year), young people aged 18-30 years old represented 22.7% of the total number of Caritas counselling centre' clients, 9.5% were Italians and 32.3% foreign beneficiaries. And 79% of the total clients aged between 18-30 years old are searching for a first job or new employment.<sup>13</sup>

## Young immigrants

According to Caritas social workers and other sources of information, young immigrants represent one of the social groups at highest risk of poverty, mainly because they suffer from social migration and integration problems that they share with their parents and families.

Since the economic crisis broke out, in 2007, a rising number of young immigrants have started suffering from unemployment, from dropping out of school and the experience of forced migrations, within Italy and from their native countries. Because of these rising problems and the social isolation of many immigrant families, a number of foreign people returned to Caritas services, even after years since their last visit.

Disaggregated data on poverty among young immigrants is not provided by the public statistics system. Nevertheless, the overall figure on migration and poverty shows that, in 2016 (the last available year), 25.7% of the total number of entirely-foreign families were living below the absolute poverty line, whilst the same situation affected 4.4% of entirely-Italian families. From 2014 to 2016, absolute poverty among foreign families increased by 2.3 percentage points<sup>14</sup>.

Under-representation of young people (22.7%)<sup>15</sup> among Caritas clients is due to the fact that, in the case of family-based poverty, parents or adults address Caritas for help. Young foreign Caritas clients mainly originate from Sudan (12.6%), Morocco (8.4%) and Romania (8.1%). Because of the international humanitarian crisis, one third of foreign young people, welcomed by Caritas services, come from countries involved in war or armed conflicts. An important topic is the situation, referred to as "immigrant-NEETs": young people neither in employment, education or training. According to Istat figures (2016), there are 555,000 foreign "NEETs", who represent 16,8% of the total number of "NEETs" aged 15-34 in Italy (3,277,000), while only 12.4% of the total youth popula-

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12 Data from Istat and Eurostat.

13 Data from a stable and selected sample of Caritas Listening Centres adhering to the Ospoweb platform (in total 120 Caritas Counselling Centres located in 87 Diocese of Italy). Time frame: January-June 2016.

14 Cf. Istat, 2017, *La povertà in Italia - Anno 2016*; [www.istat.it](http://www.istat.it).

15 Data time frame: January-June 2016.

tion are migrants. This indicates that young immigrants are more exposed than Italian peers to risks of poverty and social exclusion.<sup>16</sup>

## Alcohol and Substance abuse

Young people with old/new addictions are an ongoing matter of assistance in the Caritas services. In Italy - according to ISTAT data - 6.8% of young people aged 14 to 17 are smokers, with an average daily consumption of 6.7 cigarettes<sup>17</sup>. In the age group 18-34 years, the percentage rises to 23.1%, with a daily average of more than 9 cigarettes. The National Institute of Statistics points out that 19.4% of young Italians, aged 11-17 years, are shown to be at risk in terms of alcohol consumption behaviour. For males, the percentage rises to 21.5%<sup>18</sup>. Data on drug consumption is also alarming. According to a 2015 ESPAD Italia study, 34% of Italian students, aged 15-19, took at least one illicit psychoactive substance during their lifetime (males: 39%, females: 28%)<sup>19</sup>.

In recent years, in Italy, although traditional addictions are still present, a public debate about new addictions among young people is rising, with special concern for those types of addiction not related to substance use, such as pathological gambling, compulsive shopping, addiction to the internet, sex, work, relational dependencies, etc. Currently, one of the most insidious and growing type of dependence among young people is Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD), the psychological dependence on the web that manifests itself with specific behaviours, such as the need to stay “connected” as long as possible, alongside the presence of symptoms of abstinence (depression, anxiety, insomnia, anxiety, anger). A survey, conducted by EURISPES and Blue Phone, on a representative sample of teenagers, aged 12 to 18, shows that 50% of boys are likely to enter the category of “web addicts”<sup>20</sup>. In particular, 34.3% of teenagers claim to use the Internet in order to not think – or to feel better – and almost one boy in five (19.5%) admits to feeling restless, nervous and sad when unable to access the net. Only a scarce 17.2% attempted to reduce their use of the internet, but without success. Even more alarming is the fact that very young people, 12 to 15 years, are the ones who experience the most serious hardships, such as restlessness, nervousness, sadness, if they find themselves unable to use the internet (8.2% of the 12-15 age group vs 5% of the 16-18 age group). In Italy, according to the latest Eurostat data, 89% of boys between 16 and 24 use the Internet daily (2016). This percentage, although very high in itself, is slightly below the European average (92%). However, both in Italy and in Europe, the proportion of “connected” people has been steadily rising since 2011 (+ 11.2% and + 13.6% in Italy and Europe respectively).

<sup>16</sup> Table NEET “young people neither in employment nor in education and training”.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Istat, 2016, *Indagine multiscopo sulle famiglie “Aspetti della vita quotidiana”* - Anno 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Istat, 2015, *L'uso e l'abuso di alcol in Italia*; [www.istat.it](http://www.istat.it).

<sup>19</sup> Anti-Drug Policy Department of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers: Annual Report to the Parliament on the status of drug addiction in Italy (2016); ESPAD: report on illicit drug use in Italy, 2015; Among illicit substances, the most commonly used is cannabis, followed by cocaine, stimulants and hallucinogens, while heroin is the least commonly used substance.

<sup>20</sup> EURISPES/Telefono Azzurro 2011: *Indagine conoscitiva sulla condizione dell'infanzia e dell'adolescenza in Italia*, 2011.

Because of this rising trend, the number of care and prevention centres dedicated to new youth addictions is growing. The Catholic Hospital "*Policlinico Gemelli*" has established a first public ambulatory for young people suffering Internet and social media addictions in Rome<sup>21</sup>. Also in Caritas, there is growing attention to this topic, and we can highlight a remarkable number of events, awareness raising initiatives, information and orientation activities, and training courses, targeted at the general public and at social workers of Caritas services.

## Young refugees and asylum seekers

According to Ministry of Interior figures, in 2016, 181,436 migrants landed on Italian shores. This is 18% more than the previous year (153,842). Recent data of April 2017, show 37,034 migrant arrivals, which again is a 33% increase compared to the same period of 2016. In 2016, 123,600 landed persons applied for asylum, which is a 47% increase compared to 2015. In 2016, amongst the asylum seekers, 11,623 minors landed on Italian shores. Among them, 51.5% were unaccompanied; and 48.5% arrived with at least one relative. The principal migrant nationalities include the following countries: Nigeria, Pakistan, Gambia, Senegal, Eritrea, and the Ivory Coast<sup>22</sup>.

The Italian Church has given a concrete response to this challenge. Some 20,000 people have been welcomed by Italian dioceses, by structures operating within prefectures, CAS (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria), SPRAR (Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati), parishes or even families. A total number of 164 dioceses joined the welcome programmes. In 2015, 7,700 refugees/asylum seekers, mostly fleeing from war, approached Caritas Counselling Centres (Centri di Ascolto). Most of them are young males, between 18 and 34 years old. They come from African countries (Sudan, Mali, Nigeria, Eritrea, and Gambia). 35% of this total have no fixed abode (roofless, homeless). They have poor social and educational capital. Economic poverty (no income; absolute poverty) is suffered by 61.2% of the total. Various housing problems hit more than half of asylum seekers (55.8%). In Caritas centres, refugees ask for basic goods (food, clothes, and products for personal hygiene) and housing (first, emergency shelters). 20.7% request medicines and medical visits. 12.7% seek orientation. 10% ask for school places and training. Facing these requests, available figures about interventions show a prevalence of emergency actions, through distribution of primary goods (79.1%). Among these types of interventions, the following stand out the supply of clothing (42.3%), of meals in soup kitchens (34.1%), personal cleaning products (19.8%), and health interventions (13.4%)<sup>23</sup>.

21 See the web site of the intervention programme at Policlinico Gemelli.

22 Italian Ministry of Interior: Immigration figures, 2016.

23 Caritas Italiana, 2016, *Vasi comunicanti*, Palumbi Editore, Teramo; [www.caritas.it](http://www.caritas.it).

# Rights that young people have more difficulties in actualising

- ◆ Right to work
- ◆ Right to housing

## Right to work

Poor occupational opportunities in Italy are preventing young people from building up their own futures. Because of widespread unemployment, together with precariousness and low pay, young people are forced to postpone the stages that mark their maturity, as defined by economic autonomy, leaving their home of origin, buying a home, creating a new family, parenting, etc. In many cases, even though these people are on the threshold of turning thirty years old, they can define themselves neither as “young” nor as “adults”, because they are far from professional autonomy and economic independence of their families. In a recent study, carried out by Istituto Toniolo, the twenty-year-old “NEETs” (Not in Employment, Education and Training) are turning into thirty-year-old “NYNAs” (Not Young and Not Adult), wasting time and opportunities, losing vitality, and above all, confining themselves to an indefinite limbo<sup>24</sup>.

Italy is the country with the highest number of young NEETs aged 15-24 in the European Union: 21.4%. This is well over the European average (12%)<sup>25</sup>. From 2007 to 2015, in the EU28, we observe a stable and growing presence of NEETs, a one percentage point increase in eight years. In Italy, during the same time frame, a higher rate of increase, more than five percentage points, can be observed.

National Statistical Agency (Istat) figures, updated to 2016, show the presence of 3,277,000 young NEETs (26.0% of the total population between 15-34)<sup>26</sup>. Foreign NEETs are equal to 16.9% of the total. The highest presence of NEETs is located in the southern regions of Italy (more than 1,820,000 people). Nevertheless, the phenomenon doesn't concern only the southern and poorest regions: for instance, the north-west regions have a higher presence of NEETs than the central regions. Besides, since 2004, the highest increase in the number of NEETs has been found in the northern regions, and not in the southern regions.

The group of NEETs is largely composed of women (56.5%, 1,853,000 people). This feminine prevalence is connected to cultural factors: according to traditional patterns, feminine social roles develop mainly within the family dimension; as a consequence, female school dropouts and job inactivity are more widespread and socially tolerated than male ones.

24 Istituto Giuseppe Toniolo, 2017, *La condizione giovanile in Italia. Rapporto Giovani 2017*, Bologna, Il Mulino; Istituto Toniolo: From NEET to NYNA, 2016.

25 <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edatlfse20&lang=en>.

26 [http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCCV\\_NEET](http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCCV_NEET).

According to a research carried out in 2016 by Caritas centres, the majority of NEETs that apply to Caritas are male (56.2%) and foreign (77.4%)<sup>27</sup>. A significant number of NEETs still live with their parents (27.7% of the foreign NEETs; 28.2% of the Italian NEETs). Training and educational levels are quite poor: almost half of the people have only a lower secondary school certificate and 8.6% are even illiterate or without any degree of study. Graduates are rather rare (4.9%).

## Right to housing

More and more families are experiencing housing problems in Italy. Increasingly, housing costs have a heavy impact on the household budget, especially for those with low-income. The problem of housing shortages has been aggravated by the lack of resources for public social housing and the failure of various legislative measures on the rental-market and social housing. According to a "Housing Europe" report (2015), the situation today shows an increase in housing demand from medium and low-income households unable to find affordable dwellings, with an estimated 2.5 million households considered to have a housing need<sup>28</sup>. About 650 000 families have applied for public housing but have not received it, mainly because there are not enough homes available. The average production of new social housing since 2000 has been held steady at 6 000 dwellings per year, and the neighbourhoods and the buildings managed therein are old and in need of repairs<sup>29</sup>. In the public housing-estate stock, managed by local authorities, there are about 2 million people living in situations of social vulnerability: 140 000 people with disabilities; 600 000 tenants over 65; 130 000 non-EU immigrants; and 34% of households with an income below €10 000 per year<sup>30</sup>. More and more housing affordability problems are reflected in the increasing number of evictions (14.6% between 2013 and 2014). According to research carried out by Caritas Italiana in 2016, 9.1% of the total number of Caritas beneficiaries with severe housing problems are between 18 and 29 years of age<sup>31</sup>. Among them, 82.9% cannot afford rent and mortgages payments; 18.7% are under threat of eviction; and 33.3% have no access to housing welfare measures. Italy is one of the countries in the EU with the highest share of young people still living at home with their parents, almost 66% of the population who are between 18 and 34 years old.

## BOX 1. Ratification and implementation of the European Social Charter related to young people

ITALY has ratified the vast majority of articles of the 1996 Revised European Social Charter.

Italy has ratified the *Additional Protocol* providing for a System of Collective Complaints. This allows parliament and civil society to monitor effectively the obligations in fulfilling and providing basic social rights.

*For more information see the accepted provisions by Italy.*

*FACTSHEET: Italy and the European Social Charter*

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.caritasitaliana.it/pls/caritasitaliana/v3\\_s2ew\\_consultazione.mostra\\_pagina?id\\_pagina=6660](http://www.caritasitaliana.it/pls/caritasitaliana/v3_s2ew_consultazione.mostra_pagina?id_pagina=6660).

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.housingeurope.eu/resource-468/the-state-of-housing-in-the-eu-2015>.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Ufficio Statistica Federcasa (2011) [http://www.federcasa.it/news/luna\\_casa\\_per\\_tutti/FEDERCASA\\_alloggio\\_sociale.pdf](http://www.federcasa.it/news/luna_casa_per_tutti/FEDERCASA_alloggio_sociale.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> M. Auriemma; W. Nanni; M. Petterlin, 2016, *Un difficile abitare. Rapporto 2015 sul problema casa in Italia*, Roma, Edizioni lavoro.

# How effective are Italy's policies to fight poverty and social exclusion among young people?

## Policies that are having a positive impact

Policies	Reasons why they are being effective
Education policies combatting early school-leaving and early drop-outs	Great efforts have been made over the years, with several programmes and actions to tackle early school-leaving and early drop-outs. Some critical aspects still affect the southern regions, newly arrived young migrants, and minority groups (e.g. the Roma).
Access to affordable childcare	Public childcare for early ages (0-5 years) are a priority for families in need, and offer high quality services. In big cities and the southern regions, kindergarten access (for 0-3 years) is operated via a waiting list, as available places cannot cover all needed situations, but poor families have priority access.

## Policies that have a limited impact

The following policies are having a limited impact in fighting poverty and social exclusion among young people:

Policies	Gaps or reasons why they are not being effective
Youth Guarantee	The Youth Guarantee programme has failed to create new opportunities for job placement in the poorest regions of Italy, where it would be most needed.
Access to affordable housing	There are no policies in Italy that would effectively ensure access to affordable housing.
Refugee and Migration policies	The new Migration and Refugee Act (Law no. 46, 13/04/2017) focuses very much on security aspects and neglects people's social integration needs. The new law doesn't include humanitarian protection permits and pays insufficient attention to the most fragile, unaccompanied minors and victims of trafficking. Besides, the new law does not provide solutions for greater involvement by local authorities in the reception of refugees, in order to ensure their wider incorporation.
Social inclusion for migrant youth	The current law for the acquisition of Italian nationality (Law no. 91/1992), is excessively narrow in its requirements. Citizenship by residence is a concession and not an eligible right. A new law on acquisition of Italian nationality was approved by Parliament in 2015 but it is still blocked, pending further changes and final ratification.

## An example of an effective policy or programme related to young people

**National Civil Service:** Voluntary Civil Service was created in 1975 as an alternative to mandatory national military service. According to present legislation (Law 64/2001), the new Civil Service gives young people (aged 18 to 28) the possibility to dedicate a year of their lives to various social commitments, in both public service and private social organisations. It is managed by the National Civil Service Office through the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. In order to participate in this civil service it is necessary to apply, according to the criteria indicated in the Public Notices published each time. Since 2014, following the Council of State's opinion, public notices for civil service must also be open to migrant citizens.

Thanks to voluntary civil service, young Italians are guaranteed a strong educational and training path and education towards active citizenship. Whoever chooses to undertake the twelve-month commitment in voluntary civil service, chooses to add qualifying experience to personal knowledge useful for job experience – if not for an actual work position – while guaranteeing a little financial autonomy. Some regions have strengthened the system by introducing regional civil service schemes, also by using Youth Guarantee Programme funds.

## Example of an ineffective policy or programme related to young people

**Youth Guarantee:** The Legislative Decree of 21 April 2000, N. 181 (current version after amendments) enacts the Youth Guarantee Scheme in Italy. It provides the guarantee of an offer concerning “the proposal to join an initiative for work inclusion/training/professional re-qualification, or other measures favouring professional integration”, with regard to young people (up to 25 years old, or if in possession of a university degree, up to 29 years old) within four months from the start of their unemployment.

The “Youth Guarantee” scheme is not allowed to involve young people who are out of the formal education system and do not register with the employment services. That is why only 18% of NEETs have enrolled in the Youth Guarantee platform. Statistics confirm a poor take-up response and difficulties in offering specific jobs or training. In other words, many young people enrolled on the Youth Guarantee programme a long time ago, but nobody has thus far contacted them or looked into their case. Out of a total of 1,367,430 young people who have joined the portal, only 36.8% have received a job/training offer, but the vast majority of offers are related to internships and not to permanent work<sup>32</sup>. Only 11.8% of the apprenticeship contracts offered have become contracts for an indefinite period. There have also been one-year delays in internship payments. In many regions, especially those with the highest rates of unemployment and school-leaving, the Youth Guarantee has not even been implemented.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.garanziaiovani.gov.it/Report%20Monitoraggio/Documento-Monitoraggio-Garanzia-Giovani-9giugno2017.pdf>.

# The use of EU funds in Italy to combat youth poverty and social exclusion

The European Social Fund (ESF) is contributing to reducing the poverty and social exclusion of young people. The ESF regional operational programmes of different regions of Italy do plan specific actions for young people, such as the Youth Guarantee or Support programmes for young unemployed, both Italian and migrants. Three projects of Caritas Italiana have been financed: two in Lazio, in the Diocese of Frosinone-Vero-li-Ferentino, and one in Sicily, in Caltagirone, for a total of 18 young people. In addition to these, several regional public authorities have launched a regional civil service, under the Youth Guarantee programme. It is hard, however, to estimate the exact number of diocesan Caritas that cooperate with regional public authorities in regional civil service, outside the coordination of Caritas Italiana.

The overall coordination of the national and regional programmes seems not especially effective. Moreover, it is difficult to measure the overall impact of these programmes. Within the regions themselves, the different programmes are not integrated, or do not manage to integrate the different institutional actors that “have jurisdiction” over young people, such as local employment centres, schools, and social services.

The European Social Fund is contributing towards reducing the transmission of poverty to young people, through the approval and implementation of a National Social Inclusion Operational Programme, which has a focus on poor families with children, where specific guidelines plan and yield an innovative approach among the different institutional actors.

The management of ESF must be improved to ensure it better promotes the social inclusion of young people and/or prevents the transmission of poverty. Specifically, the increasing lack of resources requires more and more integration of the different programmes funded by the ESF, as well as local institutions’ actions, both among themselves and at national level. This would allow increasing the opportunities to be offered to youth.

**Example of an effective programme financed by the ESF that has had a positive impact on the reduction of poverty and social exclusion or the prevention of the transmission of poverty to young people.**

Erasmus+ (Youth): The Erasmus+ programme is managed by the National Civil Service Office. In 2016, the budget available in Italy to fund mobility and cooperation projects was over €104 million. The funds were broken down as follows: approximately €72 million for the Universities, about €27 million for the Schools and €5 million for Adult Education. About 2,000 applications for mobility and cooperation projects were received in that year. The Agency spent 95.6% of the budget available. In 2016, funds for the mobility of 29,780 school students, teachers and administrative staff were allocated. Some 30,000 university students left Italy for a period of study abroad;<sup>33</sup>

Focussed on education and training, the Erasmus+ programme allows young students, and youth in general, to gain experience in other European countries. According to available figures, thus far the programme has reached only 1.2% of all young people in Italy. Even though the programme provides for an additional monthly allowance for students from disadvantaged socio-economic conditions, Erasmus is still a pipe-dream for young people from families with low incomes, primarily because most of the local expenditure abroad is borne by the student. The Italian Minister of Education has proposed to increase funds for the programme in the future, multiplying resources by at least 10 times, in order to allow the participation of young people from lower socioeconomic groups.

Other EU funding schemes that are contributing positively to reducing poverty and social exclusion in Italy of young people, particularly if social innovation and social economy is considered, include the Horizon 2020 programme. However, the competition is so fierce that it is very difficult to secure participation access.

<sup>33</sup> [http://www.erasmusplus.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Comunicato\\_2016\\_11\\_03\\_datiErasmus.pdf](http://www.erasmusplus.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Comunicato_2016_11_03_datiErasmus.pdf).

## 2. The response of Caritas: promising practices that combat poverty and social exclusion among youth

## National Civil Service (implemented by Caritas)

Webpage:  
<http://www.esseciblog.it/>

### DESCRIPTION

Targeted at young people from 18 to 28 years old (both Italians and legally resident foreigners); and offering involvement in social assistance and social protection activities. Supported by a public fund and extra Caritas funds.

### PROBLEM ADDRESSED

Tackling youth unemployment and lack of prospects for young people, through the promotion of relationships and citizenship awareness; by helping on projects that support people and local communities experiencing states of distress.

### RESULTS

Results include participation in training courses; getting a little monetary assistance; enriching one's curriculum with fieldwork experience. Since 2001, over 6,000 young people have served in the voluntary civil service at Caritas, in all Italian regions. Volunteers are entitled to a daily fee of €14.46 net, a total €433.80 net per month.

### INNOVATIVE FEATURES & SUCCESS FACTORS

A deep-rooted and widespread programme, easy to join, that offers a year of civic participation to all young people (not only reserved for poor people).

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## Progetto Policoro

Webpage:  
<http://www.progettopolicoro.it/home/00000002 Home.html>

### DESCRIPTION

The National Bishops Conference of Italy (CEI) promotes the Policoro Project. It is active in 13 Italian regions (Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Apulia, Molise, Sardinia, Sicily, Umbria, Tuscany, Emilia Romagna and Marche).

### PROBLEM ADDRESSED

Its purpose is to help young people from southern Italy, unemployed or under-employed, to improve their working conditions and prospects through both training and personal information, and the creation of cooperatives or small businesses.

### RESULTS

Across 15 years of activity, Progetto Policoro has promoted 500 cooperatives and small enterprises, creating some 4 000 new jobs. In addition, twinning between northern and southern dioceses includes training activities, job insertion and apprenticeships in companies of the better-off North. These are identified by the local churches of northern Italy.

### INNOVATIVE FEATURES & SUCCESS FACTORS

Offering an innovative approach to tackling unemployment and under-occupation of young people, fostering twinning between richest and poorest territories, and between social and private business systems.

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## 8xmille Projects

Webpage:  
[www.chiediloaloro.it](http://www.chiediloaloro.it)

### DESCRIPTION

Since 2001 Caritas Italiana has organised and coordinated diocesan projects against poverty and social exclusion on behalf of the Italian Bishops Conference (CEI), using funds derived from public taxation<sup>34</sup>.

### PROBLEM ADDRESSED

School drop-out prevention; social involvement in scattered neighbourhoods; professional retraining; volunteer and civil participation; inclusion activities aimed at young refugees and asylum seekers; job placement in social economy enterprises, apprenticeships, internships, job grants and vouchers, etc.; family support to young people with mental illness, etc.

### RESULTS

In 2016, diocesan Caritas developed 245 projects. Of these, 37 projects were addressed at young people and children in need. 5 758 young people have thus far benefited from such projects.

### INNOVATIVE FEATURES & SUCCESS FACTORS

Fostering local networking and community empowerment.

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<sup>34</sup> Since 1986, Italian taxpayers have been able to choose to whom to allocate a compulsory 0.8% ('eight per thousand') of their annual income tax; deciding between an organised religion recognised by Italy, or, alternatively, a social assistance scheme run by the Italian State.

# 3. Recommendations to address the described problems

## Recommendation 1:

Improve the implementation of the new minimum income measure in order to target the most vulnerable

### Problem addressed if implemented:

A new minimum income scheme (REI – *Reddito di Inclusione Sociale*), addressed at families below the absolute poverty line, will be introduced. It succeeds the SIA (*Sostegno Inclusione Attiva*) which was tested for one year.

The current shift in the policy ensures that the benefits target the poorest and that it is compatible with other policies, in order to generate decent employment.

### Governmental department or responsible institution that could lead this measure:

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

### Main arguments supporting this measure:

In September 2016 a new provisional minimum income measure (entitled SIA – *Active Inclusion Support*), was introduced in Italy. It is a national measure against poverty, addressed at families in severe financial conditions, where at least one member is a child, or a son/daughter with disability, or a pregnant woman.

On the basis of 9 months of SIA implementation, and thanks to monitoring and assessment research carried out by Caritas Italiana and some other 30 national organisations, joined together in the *Alliance against Poverty*, it has been possible to highlight some precautions, that should be useful also for the new and forthcoming REI measure. Unlike the SIA, the new REI will include, among its beneficiaries, unemployed people older than 55. Compared to the present minimum income (SIA), Caritas Italiana hopes that the new REI measure will be:

- ◆ More flexible in its administrative procedures and means-testing, in order to ensure full coverage;
- ◆ Better funded;
- ◆ Able to also include young families without minors, in order to promote the constitution of new families, taking into consideration the fact that one of the reasons for low birth and marriage rates in Italy is the lack of stable employment and regular financial resources;
- ◆ Tighter linkage with active job policies and national/European programmes on job insertion, such as the Youth Guarantee;

- ♦ More effective, with personal activation projects aimed at a better connection with real labour market needs.

### Policy framework:

The SIA is actually based on the resources of the National Operational Programme (funded by the EU), that allocates funds only for activation measures, while the financial support to beneficiaries is financed through national funds<sup>35</sup>. The forthcoming REI will follow the same procedure and will be inserted within the same legislative and financial framework.

This measure corresponds to the following targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), set to be accomplished by 2030: 1.2 *“reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions”*; and 1.3 *“Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems [...]”*.

### How the European Commission could support this measure:

The EC could define priority funds for activation measures linked to the SIA/REI, addressed at some critical and rising situations (e.g. young NEETS, housing, etc.)

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/europa-e-fondi-europei/focus-on/pon-Inclusione/Documents/Sintesi-Pon-Inclusione-inglese.pdf>.

## Recommendation 2:

Streamline active labour market policies and devise targeted programmes that facilitate the school-to-work transition

### Problem addressed if implemented:

Italy has high rates of youth unemployment and suffers some of the highest school dropout rates in Europe: many youth are neither in education nor in employment (NEET).

### Governmental department or responsible institution that could lead this measure:

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; Ministry of Education.

### Main arguments supporting this measure:

Italian youth, and particularly the most vulnerable among them, need targeted programmes that facilitate the school to work transition. Amongst the measures needed are:

- ♦ activating - also through financial incentives - work placements, start-ups of new enterprises and opportunities for training and work experience abroad;
- ♦ reconfiguring the apprenticeship system, in accordance with the business system and the Vocational Training Centres;
- ♦ fostering a better connection between social services of municipalities and job agencies at the grassroots level, in order to guarantee a better coordinated intervention to the same family/beneficiary;
- ♦ ensuring that the school system is more responsive to the needs of business, while also transmitting a positive culture of work and supporting the new “school-job alternation” model;
- ♦ building educational, formal and informal pathways, upgrading and tutoring, focusing on the needs of young people in a state of poverty or social hardship;
- ♦ setting up orientation actions, starting from the primary levels of formal education, through active methodologies and strategies of professional orientation;
- ♦ developing personalised guidance, based on a balance between skills development and psychological support;
- ♦ developing territorial networks between the educational system and the labour market/economic system, integrating education, training and work policies;
- ♦ orienting young NEETs to the opportunities, measures and welfare resources currently available, including the Youth Guarantee Programme and other local/national projects;
- ♦ promoting experiences of independent living in order to support the emancipation and the exit of young people from the family of origin, including housing allowances and forms of alliance among young people;

- ♦ introducing income support to encourage school attendance by children in situations of financial poverty;
- ♦ enhancing family-friendly taxation policies, including tax deductions, scholarships and subsidies for the purchase of textbooks or other educational tools.

### Policy framework:

National programmes and policies on training, education, school drop-outs, job orientation, social economy.

This measure corresponds to the following targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Target 4.3 “*Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university*”; and Target 4.4: “*Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship*”.

### How the European Commission could support this measure:

The EC could allow and facilitate access to funds and promote networks for school, training and work exchange experiences through the European Union.

## Recommendation 3:

Define a new National Public Housing Plan, including an integrated strategy for social housing, urban regeneration, rehabilitation subsidies, regulating levels of rent and social benefits for rents

### Problem addressed if implemented:

Restricted access of young people to affordable housing.

### Governmental department or responsible institution that could lead this measure:

The Ministry of Infrastructure; Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

### Main arguments supporting this measure:

Access to affordable housing is a prime challenge in Italy, particularly for young people. A National Public Housing Plan could mitigate this. The plan should be implemented through the construction and/or recovery of public housing stock or the provision of affordable social housing at an affordable rent. A strong priority for housing should be given to young couples, in order to enhance the constitution of new households and an increase in fertility rates in Italy. The rent system to away-from-home students deserves more public oversight, as we record high rates of tax evasion and widespread illegality. A "National Housing Fund" is to be established, in order to guarantee a stable flow of expenditure is devoted to public housing and urban regeneration. The Plan should foresee the setting-up of local expertise to improve access to Community funds (related to projects of social cohesion, energy efficiency, energy poverty, etc.). A "National Observatory on Housing Issues" is to be established with the purpose of monitoring the level of housing requirements and emergencies. A reform of the present rental law (No 431/98) is urgently needed, aimed at a decisive reduction in rental fees, while also providing taxation advantages. These measures could enhance the use of the large amount of unsold and empty properties in Italy.

### Policy framework:

New National Housing Plan.

This measure corresponds to the following targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), set to be accomplished in 2030: 11.1 "*ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing (...)*".

## How the European Commission could support this measure:

Support real estate modernisation and restore degraded neighbourhoods; make effective binding legislation to ensure the EU energy targets by the year 2020 (a 20% improvement in energy efficiency), also through support to poor home-owning families that cannot afford renovation expenses.

## Recommendation 4:

Revise the Italian citizenship law in order to facilitate the naturalisation of young foreigners

### Problem addressed if implemented:

The formal exclusion of young immigrants leads to economic and social segregation and impedes full integration.

### Governmental department or responsible institution that could lead this measure:

The Ministry of Home Affairs.

### Main arguments supporting this measure:

The revision of Italian citizenship law is urgent. This could facilitate the naturalisation of young foreigners through: (a) recognition of the *ius soli* system for those who were born in Italy, (b) recognition of Italian citizenship for those who were not born in Italy, but can demonstrate their definitive integration into Italy.

### Policy framework:

National immigration policy.

### How the European Commission could support this measure:

Coordinate national policies of integration of young immigrants within a European framework.

## Recommendation 5:

Strengthen the reception system dedicated to unaccompanied minors in order to guarantee their rights and the integration process

### Problem addressed if implemented:

The lack of targeted reception and integration measures for unaccompanied minors leads to economic and social separation and impedes full integration.

### Governmental department or responsible institution that could lead this measure:

The Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, at local and regional level.

### Main arguments supporting this measure:

The main difficulty that Italy is facing with regards unaccompanied minors is the lack of structures that are able to support them. For this reason, the answer should be the strengthening of the role of voluntary tutors who could help them to better integrate into our society. We are already experiencing this kind of positive approach, which is giving good results in terms of integration. At the same time we believe that all institutional actors should be more involved in the process in order to guarantee a holistic approach, starting from the role of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education. They should guarantee not only basic needs but also reinforce all integration instruments, such as job training and language courses. This is the only useful way to move from a reception approach to an integration approach.

### Policy framework:

National immigration policy.

### How the European Commission could support this measure:

We are using several European funds in order to support the reception and integration system of unaccompanied minors. Due to the increasing number of unaccompanied minors during the last year, we need more resources and even more coherence in the strategy of intervention. Furthermore, the EU Commission should invest more resources to facilitate integration into the labour market.





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