



# **FOSTER CARE FOR UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR YOUNG MIGRANTS IN ITALY**

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## Background situation

In February 2019, the **Committee on the Rights of the Child** reviewed Italy's 5th and 6th combined reports. The Committee urged Italy to:

- **Invest** in a Child Rights-Based System
- **Harmonize** Care Standards Across Regions
- **Apply** the Principle of Necessity based on the best interests of the child
- **Promote** Foster Care



Italy has made significant **strides in deinstitutionalizing child care, moving from large-scale institutions to a system focused on family-based** and small-scale residential care. By the early 2000s, the country had fully transitioned to this model, with about 30,000 children currently in alternative care settings, including 19,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).

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## Data

**Before the Ukraine conflict, only 4% of over 23,000** unaccompanied minors in Italy were in foster care.

**By May 31, 2023, this rose to 20%**, driven mainly by Ukrainian minors, 65% of whom were placed with relatives already in Italy.

The increase largely reflects kinship placements, with the broader foster care system for unaccompanied minors in Italy seeing little change.

**Nota bene:** ISTAT and Transmonee

Infografica 4.1 – Minori per tipologia di collocamento e caratteristiche principali delle strutture di accoglienza – Dati al 31 dicembre 2023



Tabella 7.1 – Distribuzione per tipologia di collocamento dei MSNA presenti sul territorio nazionale al 31/12/2021.

TIPOLOGIA DI ACCOGLIENZA	N° MSNA (v.a. e %)	
	N° MSNA PRESENTI	%
STRUTTURE DI SECONDA ACCOGLIENZA	7.953	64,7
STRUTTURE DI PRIMA ACCOGLIENZA	3.843	31,3
PRIVATO	488	4,0
<b>TOTALE</b>	<b>12.284</b>	<b>100</b>

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## Legislative Background

- Guidelines of Foster Care - MLPS [2012](#), recently renewed in 2024
- The Zampa Law
- EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027



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## Good practices

Italy is a pilot country for the Child Guarantee. As part of the European Child Guarantee Programme in Italy, UNICEF has thrived analysis and mapping of good practices in Alternative Care.

**Equity-Inspired Interventions** for particularly vulnerable children, such as those with severe disabilities or complex vulnerabilities (e.g., UASC adolescents).

**Successful integration of social and health services** within care plans and **Co-Programming Between Public and Private Sectors.**

**Inclusion-Oriented Municipal Programs** merging the needs of children over 16 and young adults, supporting the transition from care to independent living.

**Municipal Specialized Social Care Teams** that oversee both preventative and protection measures and **Voluntary Guardianship for UASC.**

**Careleavers' Advocacy and Policy Platform and Care-Leaver Support.**



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## Terreferme Model

In Italy, [the CNCA Terreferme model](#) plays a significant role in this initiative.

CNCA (Coordinamento Nazionale Comunità di Accoglienza) is a network of organizations committed to social inclusion and support for vulnerable groups, including migrants and refugees. The Terreferme model specifically focuses on:

- **Foster care implementation**
- **Training and Support Programs**
- **Development of Support Tools**
- **Strengthening Local Authority Capacities**

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## Key areas of improvement

- **Strengthen the Social Workforce, case planning, and children participation.**
- **GBV and CSF mainstreaming and enhancement of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)**
- **Expand Prevention Programs** balancing Necessity and family unit.
- **Support Independent Living for Adolescents and increase Foster Care Resources in the South**
- **Enhance Multi-Sectoral Collaboration and Specialized Services** by institutional endorsement and regular coordination.
- **Expand Foster Care for UASC through Advocacy and promote Monitoring and Inclusion,** especially for Kinship.





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## UNICEF in Italy

**Mapping of Alternative Care Practices (2021-2023):** UNICEF, with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, mapped alternative care practices across Italy, identifying 11 best practices and recommending improvements in gender mainstreaming, data collection, and child safeguarding.

**Foster Care Initiatives:** UNICEF enhanced institutional coordination through relevant MoUs and developed models like Terreferme and Altri Legami to integrate unaccompanied and separated children into the foster care system, focusing on standard procedures, identifying foster families, and caregiver training.

**Modelling Innovative Practices:** UNICEF foster capacity on the [Child Protection system](#) and expanded guardianship and mentorship programs in regions like Sicily and Calabria, offering training and support to volunteer guardians and social workers to strengthen foster care practices.

**Costing Tool:** UNICEF created a costing tool for CNCA Terreferme to help with budgeting and resource optimization for programs supporting unaccompanied minors and vulnerable groups.

# Thank you!

For any additional question please reach out to

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