

POVERTY WATCH 2021

CILAP - EAPN ITALY

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Introduction

By Prof. Luigi Colombini

In this essay, the most crucial issues of poverty are dealt with extensively and with absolute depth, starting from the **current state of the conditions of poverty, and its size (Micaela Valentino)**, to the dramatic representation of the situation in Italy, to the critical **issues still in progress with respect to the objectives, to the legislative instruments in place (Martina Arachi and Vincenzo Maesano)**.

Below, **by Giulia Segna, are the representations of intercepted and appropriately described real situations**, which in any case also highlight the complexity of the conditions and the absolute need to define a territorial reference system, which can only be the Professional Social Service with the necessary in charge and the elaboration of the specific assistance plan. In fact, the contradictions that still exist between the exercise and awareness of rights, and the concrete ways and opportunities to exercise them, are highlighted.

In the context of the perspective of promoting inclusion policies and the fight against poverty aimed at recognizing the value and contribution of the third sector, **Micaela Valentino illustrates the Good Practices to combat poverty in Italy** brought by the

“Salesians for the Social”, with specific testimonies that demonstrate the validity of an intervention model that, outside of bureaucratic processes, tackles the problems of specific conditions of poverty with absolute capacity and effectiveness.

Alessandro Scassellati Sforzolini and Gianluca Falascina deal with depth and accurate documentation the European and national policies to tackle poverty, social exclusion and socio-economic damage of Covid-19, highlighting both the strengths and the critical issues, up to envisage the creation of a single welfare system, a social compact, a social and institutional pact capable of intervening on the most urgent needs of people, starting with a European insurance (non-temporary, such as the SURE) against unemployment and a greater support for female employment, as well as investing in people, their abilities, their autonomy, the ability to self-organize, means producing economic and social wealth essential for development. Particularly important are the specific “BOX” representing the measures adopted in the fight against poverty.

Nicoletta Teodosi, President of Cilap, concludes by illustrating the action carried out, widely documented, addresses the crucial issues of the actions that need to be carried out to make “Social Europe” even more certain and progressive in the actions to fight poverty. In relation to the principle of vertical subsidiarity (relationship between institutions, starting from the closest level for the citizen, the Municipality), the need for institutional governance that sees the fundamental actors (municipalities, local health authorities, employment centers, schools, judicial system) signatories of local development pacts, and in this regard the importance, on a strategic and operational level,

of the Planning Offices is emphasized, identifying concertation as a fundamental tool for programming and implementing programs. In the further dimension of horizontal subsidiarity (relationship between the institutions and civil society in its organized expressions - Article 117 of the Constitution, letter m) - the definition of local partnership agreements with profit and non-profit organizations working in synergy with those responsible for public policies, in the construction of intervention plans capable of responding to the different needs of the territories, understood as a whole. In this context, the role of the Social Observatory is defined, which is already present in regional legislation, at the level of the Planning Office and is linked with the regional and national one. In the particular context of the identification of specific policies aimed at contrasting and combating poverty, the need for the evaluation of RdC (Citizenship Income).

Chapter 2

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY POVERTY

By Micaela Valentino, Salesiani per il Sociale APS

The theme of poverty is characterized by a series of complex and evolving dynamics. Through the Europe 2020 strategy, the European Union had established the indicator of poverty and social exclusion, as an effective tool to monitor and compare the performance of the Member States from a social and employment point of view, with the goal, not fully achieved, to reduce the number of Europeans below the poverty line by 25%.

AROPE (people at risk of poverty or social exclusion) is the official indicator for the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, in order to improve the assessment of poverty and social exclusion from a multidimensional point of view.¹

It is composed of three indicators: the at-risk-of-poverty rate, the severe material deprivation rate (lack of access to essential goods and services) and low work intensity rate.

The survey on the income and living conditions of families comes from the “*Statistics on Income and Living conditions*” (Eu-Silc) project coordinated by Eurostat to specifically respond to the request for statistical information on income, poverty, social exclusion, deprivation, quality of life.

¹ [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROPE\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE))

AROPE is currently also used to monitor the **new EU 2030 strategy**, as part of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). The Action Plan² for the implementation of the Pillar provides that:

- at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 should be in employment in 2023;
- at least 60% of all adults should participate in training courses every year;
- the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be reduced by 15 million, of which at least 5 million should be children.

The **European Pillar of Social Rights** sets out 20 fundamental principles and rights that are essential to ensure a fair and well-functioning labor market and social protection systems.³ With reference to the indicators mentioned above, the main data collected in 2019 from Eurostat are reported below - (*Living condition in Europe - poverty and social inclusion*)⁴: about 21.1% of the

2 [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:The_European_Pillar_of_Social_Rights_Action_Plan_\(EU_2030_targets\)&stable=0&redirect=no](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:The_European_Pillar_of_Social_Rights_Action_Plan_(EU_2030_targets)&stable=0&redirect=no)
<https://www.epr.eu/the-european-pillar-of-social-rights-action-plan-new-ambitions-for-a-strong-eu/>
https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights_en

3 https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

4 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-pillar-of-social-rights/indicators/so->

population of the 27 Member States at risk of poverty and social exclusion and Italy appears to be above the European average with a value of 24.6%.⁵

SOCIAL PROTECTION AND INCLUSION		
Indicators %	EU	ITALY
At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) % of population	21.1	24.6
At-risk-of-poverty-rate (AROP) % of population	16.5	20.1
Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD) % of population	6.6	6.4
Persons living in a household with a very low work intensity % of population <65	8.12	9.6
At-risk-of-poverty rate or exclusion of children % of population 0-17	22.8	27.1
At-risk-of-poverty-rate (AROP) for children % of population 0-17	18.5	24.5
Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD) for children % of population 0-17	7.7	6.2
Children living in a household with a very low work intensity % of population 0-17	6.4	6.2
Impact of social transfers (other than pensions) on poverty reduction % reduction of AROP	32.38	20.24

Source: Eurostat - European Pillar of Social Rights (elaborated by CILAP)

cial-scoreboard-indicators
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions/data/database>
 (see chapter 3)

5 Eurostat Indicators “People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex”
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_peps01n/default/table?lang=en

The risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU-27 is higher for women than for men (22.0% compared to 20.2%) in 2019. In 2019, around two-fifths (40.3%) of the EU-27 population living in households with dependent children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

The last decade has seen an **increase in the poverty of minors and young people**, closely connected with the economic-financial crisis that has hit families since 2007 and more significantly since 2011: it is estimated that 4 families are in absolute poverty out of 10 of foreign origin with minors.⁶ Poverty has widened both in the South (single-income and large families) and in the Center-North (among foreign families) and now affects about 650,000 families with children. Child poverty has transformed from an emergency situation, generated by the economic crisis, to a structural condition in some areas of our country, further aggravated by the health emergency.

ISTAT data⁷ confirm that 1 million and 337 thousand minors (2020 data) living in conditions of absolute poverty, an increase compared to 2019 in the 7-17 age group. About two million families are in absolute poverty (7.7% of the total from 6.4% in 2019), over 5.6 million individuals (9.4% from 7.7%) and **families with minors in absolute poverty** are over 767 thousand, with an incidence of 11.9% (9.7% in 2019). For the families of these children, living in poverty does not only mean having economic difficulties, but also implies the lack of a social network and welfare services to ask for support.

If we investigate, in particular, the phenomenon of **educational poverty**, it is characterized by multidimensional factors, both by

6 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions/data/database>

7 https://www.istat.it/it/files/2021/06/REPORT_POVERTA_2020.pdf

material-economic poverty and by conditions of fragility and deprivation from the relational and educational point of view, about school, family and territorial training system.

Educational poverty is closely linked to the phenomena of early school leaving and dropout, which already showed negative trends before the pandemic crisis. The incidence of early school leaving is 13.3% in the North-West, 10.6% in the North-East, 10.7% in the Center; the South and the Islands averaged 17.3% and 22.3% respectively, making it one of the areas with the highest rate of early school leaving in Europe.

At the European level, the **school dropout rate** is 9.9%, in Italy about 13.1% according to the latest available Eurostat data (2020)⁸. Furthermore, in Italy there is a NEET rate, which is 23.3% higher than the European average of 13.7%.⁹ Italy is the EU country with the highest rate of young people between 15 and 29 years old not engaged in study, work or training, over 20%, or more than two million young people.

These problems are even more strong in the South, where the gap with the richest areas of the country has increased, decreasing the desired convergence process. With the Neets, the problem of educational poverty is extended beyond the minor age and affects adulthood. In some districts of Rome, Naples and Milan, the percentage of NEETs out of the total of young people between the ages of 15-29 is almost double the national average. The **dropout rate for foreign students**¹⁰ is about double that of

8 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TESEM020/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=78e58d58-e4ea-487a-9ccc-7671a991d298>

9 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TESEM020/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=78e58d58-e4ea-487a-9ccc-7671a991d298>

10 <https://www.conibambini.org/osservatorio/abbandono-scolastico-in-italia-colpisce-soprattutto-gli-alunni-stranieri/>

students with Italian citizenship. In general, a quarter of 15-year-old Italian and foreign students do not reach the minimum skills in mathematics, reading and science.¹¹

The European Commission's Education and Training Monitor highlights the following points for Italy:

- the school dropout rate is falling, but is still above the EU average, particularly among those born abroad, while the tertiary education rate remains low;
- during the COVID-19 crisis, most schools managed to introduce distance learning at very short notice, but further efforts are needed to include vulnerable students and improve quality.
- the recent reform of vocational education and training (VET) should improve its relevance for the labor market, especially at the local level.
- the transition from education to the world of work is difficult and leads to a growing exodus of highly qualified young people.

Difficulty in learning, young with special educational needs, school failure and dropout, situations of discontinuous school attendance, low levels of self-esteem/self-efficacy, low levels of citizenship and a sense of belonging to local communities are all elements that worsen educational poverty and are determined often from an inadequacy of the educational-school system and

¹¹ https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2020/countries/italy_it.html

the educational-family system. Furthermore, there is a cultural and educational deprivation of the territory with a scarcity of services and cultural proposals for the population in general and specifically for the adolescent segment.

We could add the presence of quantitatively insufficient educational services (daily centers, after-school services, youth centers), with no guarantees of continuity over time, with difficulty to collaborate and create local synergies, with schools and families.

The health emergency has generated in Italy a worsening of the conditions of life of minors, bringing out social and economic inequalities with difficulties in accessing the computer, electronic devices and the ability to use new technologies, difficulties in accessing the services of the territory.

During the lockdown, many families faced the sudden lack of financial resources by resorting to their savings, or by immediately reducing the cost of purchasing food, even basic necessities. According to a Save The Children survey, among these families, 73.8% lost their jobs or drastically reduced their salary, 17.6% went to layoffs.

The consequences could be significant with an increase of several percentage points in the absolute poverty rate among minors: it is estimated that 1 million more children can fall into absolute poverty, finding themselves deprived of the essentials to lead a dignified life, reaching 2.2 million. The risk is that the child poverty rate could have a dramatic leap, as happened in the previous crisis of 2008.

The educational crisis caused also in Italy by COVID-19 risks further compromising the situation outlined with greater impacts on students from the weakest socio-economic contexts and with a migratory background.

Social isolation in many countries during the lockdown is having

a cost in terms of weakening the learning processes of young people and peer learning, socialization, building personal identity and maintaining emotional bonds.

The **decrease in social interaction** with reference figures in the educational field, both formal, non-formal and informal, such as teachers, educators, social workers and representatives of the world of work, has risked and risks weakening the forms of accompaniment, especially in the delicate transition phase towards the transition to adulthood and in the most disadvantaged contexts.

The health emergency has increased the **fragility of the offer of socio-educational and free time services**: fewer opportunities for access to opportunities for educational support, culture, sport, free time compromise educational and socialization processes and determine conditions of social marginality, increasing the consequent risk of the sense of loneliness and institutional abandonment.

In the **challenge of expanding the skills of young people**, it is fundamental being able to transfer transversal skills to young people, being able to validate, certify and make them expendable within the labor market.

Reducing the dispersion will also be proportional to how much informal and non-formal learning will be valued, and how much it is possible to invest in a civic and solidarity economy, which gives space and voice to young people.¹² As regards the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, as suggested also in Europe in 2000, an ad hoc legislation was issued only in 2013, which has not yet seen its full application.¹³

12 Reflection extracted from the Conference for the Future of Europe organized by CILAP, February 2021, Speech by Cesare Moreno President of “Associazione Maestri di Strada, Onlus”

13 Legislative Decree n. 13/2013 (Definition of general rules and essential levels of performance for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning

The **social and economic crisis has heavy implications on the educational side**: the long closure of schools has alienated many students, especially those who are more fragile and at risk; access to digital education was a great challenge for the school system, families and young people. Very often devices and connections are a privilege that many families cannot afford (lack of computers or tablets, lack of home internet connection, confined living spaces, situations of domestic violence).

In addition, this emergency has affected **young people welcomed in family homes and unaccompanied young foreigners**, especially those outgoing, whose path of autonomy, integration and inclusion is more at risk. During the lockdown, many of these young people, reaching the age of majority, have seen interrupted the job placement process and difficulties of finding an accommodation.

and of the minimum service standards of the national skills certification system) Interministerial Decree, 12 March 2015 (Guidelines for the transition to the new system, Activity plan for the innovation of Adult Education, PAIDEIA) Interministerial Decree, 30 June 2015 (Definition of an operational framework for the national recognition of regional qualifications and related competences, within the national repository of education and training qualifications and professional qualifications)

Chapter 3

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO POVERTY? WHO ARE THE GROUPS MOST AFFECTED?

*By Martina Arachi, Associazione Scarabocchio OdV
and Vincenzo Maesano, Cooperativa Coriss*

3.1 Absolute poverty

In Italy absolute poverty is distinguished from relative poverty. The absolute poverty threshold represents the monetary value, at current prices, of the basket of goods and services considered essential for each family. It varies according to the age of the members, the geographical distribution and the type of municipality of residence. A family is absolutely poor if it incurs a monthly consumption expenditure equal or less than this monetary value. **For example, in 2020, for a person aged 18-64 living in a metropolitan area of Central Italy, the absolute poverty threshold is 761.02 euros.**¹

In 2020, in Italy, more than 2 million of households have been considered to live in absolute poverty conditions, it means more than 5.6 million people in total. The intensity value for absolute poverty, i.e. how much the monthly spending of poor families is, on average, below the poverty threshold in percentage, has decreased from 20.3% to 18.7%. It means that many families who went below the poverty threshold this year have kept their spending near to the threshold value, also thanks to the public social transfers which have helped to avoid a dramatic economic

¹ [Altervista.org, https://grafici.altervista.org/incidenza-di-poverta-assoluta-e-relativa-in-italia/](https://grafici.altervista.org/incidenza-di-poverta-assoluta-e-relativa-in-italia/)

scenario.²The graph below shows the effect COVID-19 crisis had on income inequalities in the EU countries, measured through the percentage variation of the Gini index³ for each country. Italy registered a negative variation of almost 1%, which means that in 2020 the distribution of incomes seems to be more homogeneous than the past, thanks to public redistributive measures (for example, the emergency income REM).⁴

Absolute poverty affected 10.3% of households in which the reference person is between 18 and 34 years old and 5.3% of those with a reference person over 64 years old. For families with at least one foreign member, the incidence of absolute poverty was 25.3% (22% in 2019), and, among these, 26.7% for families composed entirely of foreigners (24.4% in 2019). For Italian-only households, the incidence was at 6% compared to 4.9% in 2019. In particular, to see their condition worsen are single-parent families and couples with one or two children.

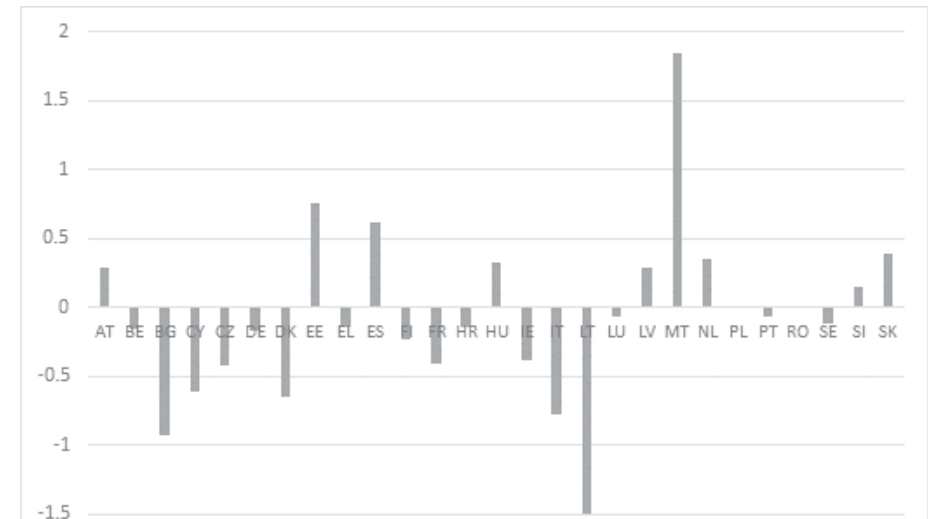
In this regard, more than 1.3 million minors in absolute poverty (13.5% of the total number of minors) and more than 1.1 million in the 18-34 age group are counted for 2020. Almost two-thirds of the latter are not employed and, among the

2 Istat, Il Benessere equo e sostenibile in Italia (BES), 2020 <https://www.istat.it/it/files/2021/03/4.pdf>

3 The Gini index is used to measure inequality in the distribution of income or even wealth. It is a number between 0 and 1. Low values of the coefficient indicate a fairly homogeneous distribution, high values of the coefficient indicate a more unequal distribution, with the value 1 corresponding to maximum concentration, i.e. the situation where one person receives all of the country's income while everyone else has zero income.

4 European Commission, "SPC Annual Review of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) and Developments in Social Protection Policies", 2020

Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on inequality in EU countries, with policy response (absolute changes in the Gini index in pp.)



Source: European Commission Joint Research Center (JRC)

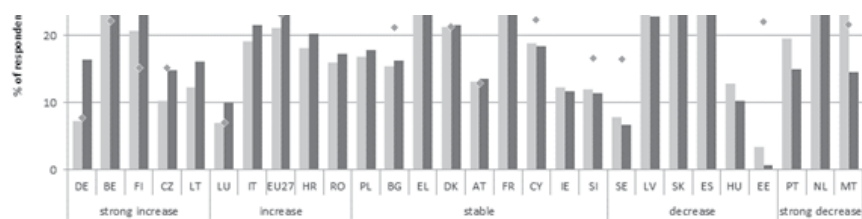
employed, the majority are blue collar workers (a quarter of the population in poverty in this age group). Foreign individuals in poverty are more than 1.5 million, with an incidence of 29.3% (from 26.9% in the previous year), compared to 7.5% of Italian citizens (from 5.9% in 2019).

2020 was a very difficult year for Italian families, 28.8% of which declared a worsening of the family economic situation compared to the previous year, increasing in comparison with 25.8% in 2019. This negative change affected 30.5% of households in the Center, 28.8% in the North and 27.7% in the South.

The consequences of the pandemic can also be seen in the extent to which people reported difficulties in meeting economic obligations such as paying the mortgage, bills, rent, etc. The families of more than 11 million people (22.2% of those over the age of 18) declared themselves to be in this situation, and three

million declared specific difficulties in facing food expenses. The economic effects of the pandemic were widespread throughout the country, but in Southern Italy they accentuated an already difficult situation: 30.7% of citizens in the South, compared with 18.4% in the North and 17% in the Center, had such problems. In the South, the concomitance of more than one problem was also more frequent, with 12.2% of families facing at least four of the economic difficulties considered.⁵

Reported financial distress in lowest income quartile - Member States, 2020



Source: European Commission, Business and Consumer Surveys.3-months moving average (DG EMPL calculations)

3.2 Relative poverty

The estimate of relative poverty, on the other hand, is based on the use of a line known as the International Standard of Poverty Line (Ispl) which defines a two member family as poor with a consumption expenditure equal or lower than the average per capita consumption expenditure⁶. In 2020, for exam-

5 Istat, Rapporto Annuale, 2021 https://www.istat.it/storage/rapporto-annuale/2021/Capitolo_1.pdf

6 To define relative poverty thresholds for larger families, corrective coefficients are used, such as the Carbonaro equivalence scale, which takes into account the different needs and economies/diseconomies of scale that can be achieved when the number of members changes. To calculate it, two indexes are considered: the first is the proportion of poor people (incidence), i.e. the ratio between the number of individuals in a state of poverty and the number of resident individuals; the second is the average

ple, the reference value for a family of two is 1.001,86 euros.⁷ In Italy, in 2020, households found to be in relative poverty amounted to almost 2.6 million (10.1%) for a total of about 8 million individuals (13.5%). Compared to 2019 (11.4%), the incidence of relative household's poverty marks a general decline. The intensity of relative poverty stands at 21.4% in 2020, down from 23.8% in 2019, reaching the highest value in the South (22.7%) and the lowest in the Center (18.1%).

3.3 The impact of Covid-19 on people at risk of poverty

In 2020, public social policies in Italy have been crucial in ensuring that the economic conditions of thousands of people do not become dramatic. Throughout the year, social benefits in Italy increased by 37.6 billion euros, recording an increase of 9.6%. This increase is due above all to income supporting measures, among which those relating to layoff schemes (CIG), which contributed 13.7 billion euros, and those allocating other allowances and subsidies, whose value increased by around 14 billion euros. Among the measures aimed at supporting the purchasing power of families, in 2020 stands out the introduction of the **Emergency Income (REM)**, for almost a billion), an extraordinary support for households in a condition of economic need that have not already received other forms of support, which benefited a total of 425 thousand households. This came in addition to the **Basic Income and Pension (RdC and PdC)**, introduced in the second quarter of 2019 to support the **Inclusion Income (REI)**, until its replacement during 2020. In 2020, the RdC disbursed about 7.2

poverty gap (intensity), which measures “how poor people are”. The relative poverty line, in this case, is unique for the entire country.

7 [Altervista.org, https://grafici.altervista.org/incidenza-di-poverta-assoluta-e-relativa-in-italia/](https://grafici.altervista.org/incidenza-di-poverta-assoluta-e-relativa-in-italia/)

billion euros, about double of the funds attributed to RdC and REI during 2019. According to data from the Osservatorio Statistico dell'Inps, during 2020 the families that received at least one monthly payment of RdC were about 1.6 million (for 3.7 million people involved), distributed throughout the country as follows: 59.8% in the South, 24.6 in the North and 15.6 in the Center.⁸

The evolving health emergency caused by COVID-19 has generated a series of extraordinary events since March 2020 that have caused severe distress in all or most sectors of the economy.

Similarly to its main European partners, **in 2020 Italy's GDP shrank sharply by -8.9%**, mainly due to a reduction in domestic demand, although a partial recovery of +4% is expected in 2021. In the third quarter of 2020 Italian GDP, in line with the trend in other European countries, showed a marked recovery (+15.9% compared with the previous quarter), spread to all the main economic sectors.⁹

Inevitable consequence of the contractions caused by the pandemic on the economy was a negative impact on employment: analyzing the data collected at the level of the European Union, in the second quarter of 2020, the employment rate of the average EU27 was 71.7%, -1.5 percentage points compared to 2019. The latest available data, dating back to May 2020, shows an EU27 unemployment level of 7.3%, while in Italy it is 10.5%, which is equivalent to around 2 million and 620 thousand people. The gap between the European average and Italy gets even worse when considering the under-25 population, for which the unemployment rate in Italy is 31.7%, equal to 483 thousand young pe-

⁸ Istat, Rapporto Annuale, 2021 https://www.istat.it/storage/rapporto-annuale/2021/Capitolo_1.pdf

⁹ Corriere della Sera on Istat data, "Pil Italia 2020: calo dell'8,8%, leggermente meglio delle stime", 2021 https://www.corriere.it/economia/finanza/21_febbraio_02/

ople compared with 17.3% for the EU27 average. **From the point of view of employment**, during 2020 the level of employment in Italy (for the 18-64 age bracket) **registered an initial drop in March (down by 143 thousand units compared with February), reaching a low in June (down by 541 thousand)**. Subsequently, an improvement was observed, with a recovery of 241 thousand employed that brought employment in November to a level 300 thousand units lower than in February (-1.3%). The data by type of employment show different dynamics, with an increase of 124 thousand units for permanent employees and significant decreases for fixed-term employees (-332 thousand) and the self-employed (-92 thousand). This heterogeneity, which reflects the characteristics of the measures taken to contain the epidemic, the subsequent economic trend and the support policies introduced by the authorities, has effects on the welfare levels of the various segments of the population, with negative impacts above all on the young and female components of the labour market, which are more characterized by the types of contracts which have been most penalized by the crisis.¹⁰

It follows that **the employment crisis caused by the COVID-19 health emergency has primarily affected the most vulnerable categories of the labour market (young people, women and foreigners)**, the least protected labour positions and the area of the country that already showed the most worrying employment data, the South. The female employment rate, already particularly low compared with other European countries, fell by 2.3 percentage points (52.1%). Also falling, but to a lesser extent, is the male employment rate (-1.6 points), which stands at 72%. Consequently, the gender gap, which in Italy has always been wider than the Euro-

¹⁰ Istat, Occupati e disoccupati, 2021 <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/257202>

pean average, is growing further: in the EU27 countries the male employment rate is 11.2 percentage points higher than the female rate, while in Italy the gap is equal to 19.9 percentage points. The shock that the health crisis produced in the labour market exacerbated the interdependence that already existed between educational attainment and role in the family. **Employment performance is dramatic for less-educated women** who are also mothers of children under 6, with the rate declining in 2020 for mothers with low education to 26.4%, compared to 76% for college graduates with young children (relatively 13.9% and 66.7% in the South). Women who live with their parents, that is, as daughters, also present a relatively difficult situation, especially if they have low levels of education: among them, the employment rate in 2020 was 29.7% at the national level and 18.1% in the southern regions.¹¹ From the point of view of pay, **employees with low pay (hourly wages of less than 2/3 of the median wage, or about €12.8¹²) are increasing**: in the second quarter of 2020, their share is 12.1% of employees (it was 9.6%). The percentage is higher among women (13.8%, +2.5 points) and younger age groups. The South has the highest incidence (16.4%), but the figure is stable when compared with the second quarter of the previous year, while the Center (13.2%) and the North (9.6%) had a higher increase, thus reducing the territorial distances.¹³

3.4 Poverty and Economic welfare, a contradiction

A fundamental aspect to be taken into consideration when talking

¹¹ Istat, Rapporto Annuale, 2021 https://www.istat.it/storage/rapporto-annuale/2021/Capitolo_3.pdf

¹² Cilap (EAPN Italy) elaboration on Istat data for 2019

¹³ Istat, Il Benessere equo e sostenibile in Italia (BES), 2020 <https://www.istat.it/it/files/2021/03/3.pdf>

about poverty and economic well-being concerns the conditions of material deprivation, defined by Istat as “the availability or lack of certain goods, the conditions of the home in which one resides and the possibility of acquiring certain goods and services, whenever desired”. Having indicators to capture these aspects is important, as they cannot be explained by income or consumption levels alone. In addition, they allow monitoring of one of the main objectives of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which is to fight against poverty without leaving anyone behind. According to the latest available data (2019), in Italy 6.4% of the population is in a situation of severe material deprivation and social exclusion, compared to 6.6% of the EU average.¹⁴

Another indicator of economic well-being not captured by the mere measurements of income and consumption is the Access to housing. In Italy, the more than 866,000 poor renter households represent 43.1% of all poor households, while out of the total number of households, renters represent 18.3%. Renting families in the South are in absolute poverty in 22.1% of cases, compared with 18.1% in the North and 12.3% in the Center. Families with a young reference person (frequently with minors within them) and those with foreigners, live more frequently in rent. If we look at citizenship, 70.7% of poor families with foreigners live in a rented house, while only 15.6% have their own house, compared with 32.2% and 55.7%, respectively of poor households with only Italians. Among families with minors, those who rent are poor in 25.4% of cases, 7.0% are owners and 13.3% are usufructuaries or in free use.¹⁵

In addition, it is estimated that in Italy there are between 49,000

¹⁴ Istat, Il Benessere equo e sostenibile in Italia (BES), 2020 <https://www.istat.it/it/files/2021/03/4.pdf>

¹⁵ Istat, Le statistiche Istat sulla povertà_2020, 2021 https://www.istat.it/it/files/2021/06/REPORT_POVERTA_2020.pdf

and 52,000 homeless people living on the street or in temporary accommodation or overnight facilities. Among these, men represent 85.7%, those living alone 76.5% and foreigners 58.5%. The average age of this population is 44, while the majority (75.8%) are under 54. The homeless are particularly concentrated in large cities such as Milan (12,000), Rome (8,000), Palermo (3,000) and Florence (2,000).¹⁶ The following table shows for each indicator of the European Social Scoreboard the updated value according to the most recent data available. The situation in Italy is compared with the average situation in the European Union.

European Social Scoreboard indicators	EU	ITALY
Equal opportunities		
Early leavers from education and training % of population 18-24	13.1 [2020]	13.1 [2020]
Individuals who have basic or above basic overall digital skills % of population 16-74	56 [2019]	42 [2019]
Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) % of population 15-29	13.7 [2020]	23.3 [2020]
Gender employment gap Percentage points	11.3 [2020]	19.9 [2020]

¹⁶ Alberto Barbieri, Medici per i Diritti Umani, “CoViD-19 in Italia: la popolazione senza dimora ha bisogno di protezione”, 2020 <https://www.recentiproggressi.it/archivio/3366/articoli/33410/>

Income inequality - quintile share ratio (S80/S20) Ratio	4.99 [2019]	6.01 [2019]
Fair working conditions		
Employment rate % of population 20-64	72.4 [2020]	62.6 [2020]
Unemployment rate <i>% of labour force 15-74</i>	7 [2020]	9.2 [2020]
Long term unemployment rate % of labour force 15-74	2.5 [2020]	4.7 [2020]
Real gross disposable income of households Per capita increase (Index = 2008)	107.39 [2020]	91.36 [2020]
Activity rate % of population 15-64	72.9 [2020]	64.1 [2020]
Youth unemployment rate % of labour force 15-24	16.8 [2020]	29.4 [2020]
Employment in current job by duration % of employed 20-64 from 0-11 months	11.6 [2020]	9.9 [2020]
Transition rates from temporary to permanent contracts % (3 year average)	25.6 [2019]	14.4 [2019]
In-work-at-risk-of-poverty rate % population	9 [2019]	11.8 [2019]

Social protection and inclusion		
At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE)	21.1	24.6
% of population	[2019]	[2019]
At-risk-of-poverty-rate (AROP)	16.5	20.1
% of population	[2019]	[2019]
Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD)	6.6	6.4
% of population	[2019]	[2019]
Persons living in a household with a very low work intensity	8.1	9.6
% of population <65	[2019]	[2019]
At-risk-of-poverty rate or exclusion of children	22.8	27.1
% of population 0-17	[2019]	[2019]
At-risk-of-poverty-rate (AROP) for children	18.5	24.5
% of population 0-17	[2019]	[2019]
Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD) for children	7.7	6.2
% of population 0-17	[2019]	[2019]
Children living in a household with a very low work intensity	6.4	6.2
% of population 0-17	[2019]	[2019]

Impact of social transfers (other than pensions) on poverty reduction	32.38	20.24
% reduction of AROP	[2019]	[2019]
Disability employment gap	24.4	16.9
Ratio	[2019]	[2019]
Housing cost overburden	9.4	8.7
% of population	[2019]	[2019]
Children aged less than 3 years in formal childcare	35.3	26.3
% of under 3-years-olds	[2019]	[2019]
Self-reported unmet need for medical care	1.7	1.8
% of population 16+	[2019]	[2019]

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-pillar-of-social-rights/indicators/social-scoreboard-indicators>

As seen in the table, for indicators regarding Social Protection and Inclusion, data for 2020 are not yet available for all EU member countries. However, according to the first estimates available for the period, it is reported that in Italy the quota of persons at risk of poverty (AROP¹⁷) is on an increasing path.

The Europe 2020 Strategy had as one of its goals to reduce poverty in the EU by at least 20 million people by 2020. However, it failed to reduce poverty by more than 8 million. Estimates available

¹⁷ This indicator corresponds to the sum of people who are either at risk of poverty or in situations of severe material deprivation or who live in households with very low labor intensity. People are counted only once even if they are present in different sub-indicators.

At-risk-of-poverty rate in 2020, early estimates (compared with 2019; population aged 18-64)



Fonte: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-pillar-of-social-rights/indicators/social-scoreboard-indicators>

about the situation before the COVID-19 health crisis, report that there were 109 million people at risk of poverty in the EU, more than 1 in 5 people. According to the Commission's 2020 Strategic Foresight Report, poverty is expected to increase by 5% due to the COVID-19 crisis, reaching at least 125 million people, the same as in 2010. This makes us state that COVID-19 not only took away thousands of people in Europe (millions worldwide)

but also blew away the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

If we look at “the light at the end of the tunnel”, **in the first months of 2021 the international scenario has been characterized by a decisive recovery in world trade and a progressive improvement in production**, albeit with heterogeneous timing and rhythms between countries.

For Italy, sustained GDP growth is forecast for both 2021 (+4.7%) and 2022 (+4.4%). These estimates incorporate the effects of the gradual introduction of the measures provided for in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). The risks to be taken into account are linked to the actual capacity to implement the planned measures and the evolution of the COVID-19 health emergency.¹⁸

¹⁸ Istat, Le prospettive per l'economia italiana 2021-2022, 2021 <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/258268>

Chapter 4

WHAT ARE THE KEY CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES? WHAT DO PEOPLE IN POVERTY THINK?

By Giulia Segna, PhD Student of Intercultural Relations

4.1 Exploitation of workers

Camilla, 31 years old

Camilla is 31 years old, she is a pastry chef but does not currently work in catering: after the diploma at the **catering institute in Rome** she attended a **master in pastry**. At the end of her studies she left for **London**, as many young Italians do in search of personal and professional experiences to enrich their CV. She stayed for one year, **working in many restaurants**, then returned to Italy for family matters.

Here she found employment in a bakery that offered an apprenticeship contract of € 1300 per month for 6 months. The boss didn't renew her contract, so she applied for a starred restaurant where she says she worked "for the glory": 61 hours per week for € 1300 per month. Only € 5.40 per hour, with shifts from 9am to 3pm and 5pm to 12pm, standing meals if there was time to do so, otherwise fasting.

"I went away for a month due to severe back pain that prevented me from working" she says, "probably related to the rhythm of life I was living, I slept 4 hours per night, I was up for many hours and I always felt tired".

The owners pressured her to return but it was impossible for Camilla to go back to withstanding that stress, both physically

and mentally. She says **she is angry with the 'labor-system in Italy**, which too often exploits people, but is also angry with workers like her, who continue to support this downward game: "If an employer has arrived to pay that hourly rate it is because so many employees have accepted. Like me". The next worker, if he complains, will be told that 'that was okay with that before', that's why **you should have the courage and strength to say 'no' and stop this mechanism**". "I only realized it now, in fact I have just turned down an offer for a bakery that offered me € 5.60 per hour for 48 hours per week. Unfair for a person with my experience".

When she finally found a decent employment, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, wiping out the entire restaurant industry, forcing many companies to layoff: "I worked in a pastry shop in a hotel in Rome, with an on-call contract for 3 days per week for 8 hours and a salary of € 800. I was good because I felt respected, I could have lunch / dinner break sitting!".

Then, the lockdown, the restrictions, the economic crisis throughout Italy: "**I spent the quarantine looking for a job, every day I sent applications but received no response because my sector was completely stopped, no one was hiring staff**. So I started contacting supermarkets, the only open activity, and only from one I received a contract proposal".

In the summer of 2020, at the end of the quarantine, Camilla starts working as a shelter, never done before. **She misses the pastry but needs to work, so she is satisfied, even if the salary is low**: "I was not hired directly by the supermarket but by an S.r.l.s. (Simplified limited liability company), which recently ended up on the pages of newspapers for exploitation of employees". She earns € 5.80 per hour for 40 hours of weekly work. Overtime is not always recognized and it is always difficult to get a shift that

fits with her commitments. "It's not easy," she says. "I learned to organize expenses by making a weekly program, especially for food shopping and consumption". **With a monthly income of € 928, excluding overtime, she must be able to pay the installment of the car** - a necessary purchase to reach the workplace - **and the rent of the house**, a small flat she has recently moved into. Fortunately, the property owner is a friend: he has turned a blind eye to the financial requirements that are usually asked to obtain a lease. Camilla would not have met them.

4.2 Education, disability and Covid-19

Margherita, Edoardo's mum

Margherita is a working mother who had to play the role of parent, teacher, housewife and therapist during the Covid-19 lockdown. Her children are **Bianca** (12 years old), **Giorgio** (11) and **Edoardo** (8), **suffering from severe bilateral hearing loss**. "Edo has the linguistic competence of a 1 year old child", says Margherita, "because it is only 1 year that he has learned to speak". This major language delay, linked to **premature birth and newborn meningitis**, causes him learning and programming difficulties. One of the most frequent manifestations of the disorder is **visual crowding**, which does not allow him to focus his attention on a specific point when the page is full of words or drawings. Of course, the outbreak of the pandemic and the consequent **distance learning** makes things more difficult: Edoardo has just started first grade, the lights and sounds of the computer confuse him, the virtual dimension makes socialization with new classmates complicated. **Sometimes he hides under the table out of shame or excessive stress**. With the isolation imposed by the new restrictions, the psychological and didactic assistance he normally enjoys are suspended, in particular the support teacher and the

communication assistant. Edoardo was also followed by AIC (assistance with eating and going to the bathroom), no longer confirmed by his parents given the autonomy achieved. In Italy, these scholastic supports are due by right to students protected by **Law 104/92 (Framework law for assistance, social integration and the rights of handicapped people)**. In Edoardo's case, the two assistants alternate the shifts covering 40 hours per week.

"On paper they are all very well prepared", complains Margherita, "but in practice they don't know how to do anything. **Support teachers almost never know how to respond to the specific needs of the children they follow.** The lockdown brought to light what had not been done so far. They told me he was very good and succeeded in everything, only to discover that the activities they proposed did not aim at his independence".

Dysfunctional dynamics that emerge day after day, under her eyes. "I had asked for meetings with Edo every day. Teachers' proposal was to connect every morning at 9.30, assign the activities to be carried out and review them at 12. In that period of time we were not connected, I had to assist him".

Stress, frustration, anger, disappointment. These are the emotions that Margherita experiences in those months. "Anyway", she adds "I was lucky to be able to stay at home and assist Edoardo. I know that other families have had a hard time to manage their children. It often happened that children in pajamas appeared on the screen during the distance learning, sleepy because they hadn't slept or had gone to bed late, some fell asleep during class or had long absences because they were at home with their grandparents, unable to use digital platforms".

The organization of spaces and the management of schedules during the quarantine are not easy: **there are five at home.** Dad Emiliano is working from home and is overworked, even Bianca and

Giorgio are in distance education. "We have 2 PCs and 1 tablet, we were able to take turns and each do their own thing. We could also have asked the school for other devices but there was no need". "Parents always have to seek information, document, dig, contact, report. And only those who have the skills succeed, otherwise you get left out". In fact, continues Margherita, **families with a disabled child are recognized many rights but they ignore.** Many people miss the opportunity for social protection and financial support due to **bad communication and bureaucratic complexity.** "An example of this is the attendance allowance: a small amount of money that the state pays you to support the expenses related to disability. Many would need it but few know it".

Margherita's narrative highlights a further weak point of the Italian social assistance system: weak communication between the figures who assist Edoardo. It therefore emerges that, in general, **therapists, doctors, teachers, physiotherapists and speech therapists have little discussion on the child's path, slowing down its development and burdening the parents.** "We often have to write reports, remember and report everything to the various specialists. And even in this case you must have the skills to do well, otherwise you and your child will be left out".

4.3 Social assistance

Costanza, 25 years old

Costanza is 25 years old, she was born in Ravenna but lives in Rome, in an **Apartment Group for young people (GAG) managed by the local administration.** In her life she moved home 20 times, to follow her parents in the continuous search for a stable job. "This is the place where I have lived the longest. Changing life every time I moved has become normal. For contrast, it is

weird hearing people who have always and only lived in the same house or in the same city”.

The Apartment Group or Social-Rehabilitation Residential Structure (SRSR), welcomes **free of charge young people who come from situations of poverty, social hardship or who need support to live alone**. It is a service managed by the Local Health Authority (ASL), which belongs to the National Health Service (SSN). Youngs between 18 and 25 years, involved in a regional psychotherapy or psychiatric path, have the possibility of access. The apartments are shared by three or four people, with single or double rooms, in private condominiums.

“I arrived in Rome with my mother and my sisters”, she says, “while my father was in prison for administrative problems. It was not easy at that period, I also suffered from eating disorders. My mother suggested some meetings with a social worker who then introduced me to a psychologist”. In those days, Costanza discovers the existence of the GAG. She feels it is **the perfect opportunity and the right time to leave home**. She wants to recover the serenity lost for the familiar economic problems and the hard relationship with her parents.

“I was 20 when I left home,” she specifies. “Applying to join the Apartment Group was easy and I got the job quickly. The basic requirements are age, being an ASL patient and not having severe mental disorders. **Many come from disadvantaged socio-economic situations but there is no real financial requirement**”. The Apartment Group is an important help for young people like Costanza, but it imposes certain precise rules to be respected, inside and out: it is forbidden to introduce food from the outside, it is not possible to cook and there cannot be food in the refrigerator for hygiene reasons. Tenants have access to a tablet through

which they choose the weekly meals delivered every morning. Long-term outings, especially if staying overnight outside, must be reported and authorized. For a few months, due to Covid-19, it has been more difficult to invite guests. You have to be there when the social workers arrive to chat, do activities together or make plans for the future.

“I’m finally going out in a few months!” she explains. **“I found an apartment in a more suburban area than where I am now. The rent will be € 450 per month for a room”**.

The decision to live on one’s own is always agreed with the reference social worker. And in the case of Costanza, the owner of the house works in the social tailor shop where she is currently doing an internship, found through the ASL. “It is an intermediate step between the health facility and complete autonomy. I’m happy but it scares me a little!”.

The internship in which she has been engaged for a few months is in a social tailor’s shop, a sector that she is very passionate about and in which she hopes to continue. For now, her contract is for one year and the salary, being paid by a public body, is 250 € per month. **As soon as she leaves the GAG it will rise to € 750**. She feels satisfaction and gratitude towards the regional service she is involved in but one negative aspect came out: **the continuous relocation of social workers from one apartment to another**. It happens, therefore, to start a path with a specialist who then, suddenly, is transferred to other places. “This is discomfortable”, she admits, “because here, unlike in other medical fields, you need to get to know the person who assists you. You can do the work on yourself when you trust each other and build a relationship. We often felt like pieces of meat moved at will. Every time a new assistant arrives you have to start all over again, and you don’t necessarily feel comfortable with her/him”.

4.4 Poor Workers

Michela, 62 years old

“Before Covid I was sent away from the family where I worked - black - after 24 years of service”. Michela, 62, begins her story. She is angry and disappointed, and would **never have imagined finding herself in the conditions of extreme poverty she lives in today**. She has always worked as a family assistant, specializing in home cleaning. The only ongoing contract is with a family she meets once a week for **€ 180 per month**.

The pandemic and the consequent social restrictions have made things difficult: few let strangers into the house. “This is a job that works by word of mouth” she says, “because people have to trust. I contacted bars and churches but no one ever called me back. The pandemic has made everything worse”.

“Even when I worked a lot with that family,” she continues, “I had the **feeling of surviving, not living**. But even with a thousand inconveniences at least I had my salary. Today, on the other hand, I have a minimal income, **I’m alone and I don’t have a home**”. She admits her worry of staying on the street at any moment and being the victim of some scam. “I’ve always kept away from untrustworthy people, who see you weak and take advantage of it. I feel anxious”.

The small savings that Michela had kept aside, she gave them to the son whom, as soon as he was born, she had given in foster care. **At the time she was a single mother, she had moved from Sicily to Rome for work**. She was alone and could not afford to raise a child. “When we decided to meet, after so many years, **I gave him half of my savings because he told me he was facing some difficulties**”.

Today Michela lives in a rented cottage in a small town outside the city. Until last year she was able to pay the rental, after the dismissal she did not make it anymore and **obtained a free loan agreement** (delivery of a movable or immovable property for a certain period of time, with the return obligation). Now the landlady wants to sell and has urged her to leave the apartment, so she has to hurry up and find another accommodation. “**They can’t kick me out because I’m protected by the law but I don’t like this situation, I would like to find an alternative and stay in peace**”. “**Poverty is a cancer**”, she continues, “**it makes you physically and mentally brutish, you become more vulgar, you do things you never would have thought of, like peeing on the street** because if you want to go to the restroom in the bar you have to pay. Poverty is a terrible evil, it makes you uglier inside and out, more arrogant. **Sometimes I would like to have the courage not to be in this world anymore**”.

She says she has gained a lot of weight lately, because the only food she can afford is pasta. He eats it every day, for lunch and dinner. “The visual impact I give is negative, people think I am not able to work but I feel I have sufficient energy and willpower”. Every day is harder, she admits. “Free time annihilates you because it makes you think, the mind wanders. When I go to work I feel alive, **I need my body and my mind to be reactivated**”. The lockdown for Michela was almost a consolation, “we are all in the same condition”, she said to herself, “it’s ok if I can’t find work. But now that we are leaving it and I still do not see the light I am scared, I feel anguish”. So far, the public economic support she receives is the **Emergency Income (REM)**, a subsidy established during the pandemic to help the most needy families. At the end of the disbursement **she will apply for the Citizenship Income (RdC)**, unable to ask until now because the savings exceeded the

minimum threshold. “I know that there is a chance to find work on the internet but I don’t have a phone and even if I did, I wouldn’t know how to use it.” In fact, **the lack of digital skills is a significant limit to sociability, a great obstacle to the infinite opportunities - even professional ones - that the web offers.**

“I would have loved to continue my studies or learn English”, she concludes, “but the only thing I care about now is to find a house of my own, where I can live in peace.

4.5 Access to essential services

Nikola and Danica, living in a public housing

The family of Nikola and Danica, Bosnians who have lived in Italy for about 30 years, is hard to trace. At the proposal to tell their life as a testimony for this Report they waver, first they accept, then they refuse. It is difficult to contact them and keep constant the communication: **of about ten family members, only Grandpa Nikola has a telephone.** He doesn’t seem too keen on talking about himself and works most of the day, so he doesn’t have much time to spend on it. **Martina Arachi**, founder of the Scarabocchio Association and co-author of Poverty Watch 2021, tells their story, so significant.

Together with the six founding members, **she has been assisting the children of the family** for some time.

We choose this method because it looks like the most suitable: not very invasive and emblematic in witnessing the social marginalization of people like Nikola and Danica, as present in society as they are evanescent. “The communication problem”, Martina begins, “occurs many times with the school. Nikola has custody of the children. He is the only one with income and a mobile phone. He would be the only one who can take his grandchildren to school but he is often busy at work so other

people in the family go there and the school turns a blind eye”.

Today **they live in a council house in the northern suburbs of Rome, obtained after years of waiting in the municipal ranking,** with the help of the Community of Sant’Egidio. This type of housing is built by the State with the specific purpose of fighting the housing emergency in which some people find themselves. It can be accessed by those who submit a regular application and possess the requisites established by law. **“They give you the keys to the council house”,** Martina complains, **“but they don’t give you explanations on how to live in a condominium, how to activate the utilities, pay the bills, call a technician and other necessary things.** We have helped them a lot in this”. Before entering the apartment, the family lived in the Cesarina nomads camp, from which they were evicted and then transferred to a social shelter where, however, there were no windows or the possibility to cook independently. “It was a constant struggle with the migrants hosted there, accusing each other of stealing their places” specifies Martina.

Former warehouses not up to standard, **subject to investigations by the finance, which closed shortly after.** They were part of the criminal projects labeled with the name of **“Mafia Capitale”**. From there they were transferred to the Salaria camp, similar to the previous ones: **poor hygienic conditions, overcrowding, ban on cooking independently, meals distributed by an external company, which too often did not take into account the religious and cultural needs of the guests.** “A lot of things were thrown away, it was an absurd waste of food and money”.

In the neighborhood they live in, they feel good even if “at the beginning they were very stigmatized, some neighbors rebelled because they had and still have ways that are more like a

camp than a condominium, such as the comings and goings of family members entering and leaving the house or grandfather's van parked at the entrance that loads and unloads the materials he uses for work".

Nikola is in the VAT number and takes care of **emptying the cellars**. The items made from them can be sold or kept if needed at home. Danica, on the other hand, is a housewife and occasionally **asks for alms** in the area. Both have a valid residence permit, Italian identity card and health card, which is necessary for medical matters. **They have five minors in foster care: their son Francesco, sixteen years old with Down syndrome and four grandchildren**. They are all legalized except two, the children of a young woman who has problems with the law and makes continuous trips between Rome and Milan, perhaps without a permanent home. "Sometimes she tried to take the children back with her but the grandparents thwarted her, and we were with them. She is unreliable".

Thanks to the **Right to Education**, sanctioned by **Law 107/2015** and guaranteed by the Ministry of Education, all minors in the family, including those without documents, attend school. Certainly **Covid has made everything much more complicated** than it already was: for example, they are not always able to obtain the certificates to return to the classroom after an absence. The only tool they can use is the provisional health card, which must be renewed every three months. Fortunately, even the **right to hospital treatment is never denied** given the free public health in Italy. "The school is a bit lacking", says Martina, "because it works on a logistical and superficial level: all the grandchildren are in **BES (Special Educational Needs)**, an educational program which consists of facilitating homework and simplifying school objectives. In part this penalizes them but it wouldn't be fair

to ask them to reach certain levels without having the right tools. For example, being able to do homework is always difficult: **there is not enough space, focusing is impossible because there are too many people, there is no adult who can assist them every day, they have a lot of absences, sometimes the books disappear**". In fact, the children all live in the same bedroom. In the house there is only **one bathroom**, a kitchen and two other bedrooms where at least ten people alternate.

Social interaction with classmates looks good. They are invited to parties and often paid for trips, yet they do not socialize much outside the classroom because they are ashamed. They feel not to be able to invite anyone to their home.

"**Their lifestyle responds to momentary needs**," concludes Martina. "Social life is rather limited, they shop only when needed and buy the bare minimum; the refrigerator is almost always empty. They also applied for the school canteen but, unfortunately, as there is a permanent adult at home (grandma Danica), they did not get it".

Chapter 5

GOOD PRACTICES IN ITALY

By Micaela Valentino, Salesiani per il Sociale APS

5.1 The response to the Covid-19 emergency

Access to essential services, Education, Training and Lifelong learning, Social Protection

The **Salesian Solidarity with Italy: the Emergency Response to Covid-19** project, funded by UsAID (US Agency for International Development) was the response of VIS (International Volunteering for Development), Salesian Missions, Salesians for Social APS and CNOS- FAP (National Center for Salesian Works / Professional Refresher Training) to the Covid-19 emergency in Italy. The project provided free digital educational resources available by distributing computers and tablets to vulnerable students, distributing personal protective equipment in Salesian homes and family homes, providing support with food kits to needy families and supporting migrants and refugees in the centers of Sicily. The project, launched in August 2020, envisaged a multi-sectoral approach, developed on three main components:¹

- **#restiamoattivi campaign:** digital resources (educational kits, online courses, videos with reading of fairy tales

¹ translation: #stayactivee, #trainingforrecovery, #hereweare campaigns

from “L’orizzonte behind”, the book created by VIS about the stories of migrants) to promote training courses for children, students and families;

- **#formAzioneperlaripresa campaign:** support for vulnerable students who have suffered a suspension from their Salesian vocational training courses, so that they can continue their studies even at a distance;
- **#noicis(t)iamo campaign:** distribution of individual protection and basic necessities to needy families (with a card to shop alone and choose what to buy, accompanied by an action to raise awareness on responsible consumption and recycling) and support for migrants and refugees in the centers of Sicily.

The project, which ends in October 2021, was carried out in 16 regions and reached 24,480 recipients.

The Covid19 emergency hit our entire country, especially the most fragile young people. The reception facilities of the associative network have never closed, guaranteeing in full compliance with health regulations the essential services, addressed at the most fragile children. To meet the new needs raised by the pandemic, the #noicis(t)iamo program was created, to which benefactors and international agencies generously contributed.

Starting from the lockdown of March 2020, several food kits were delivered to the network houses together with the PPE kits (masks, sanitizing gels and gloves) addressed to users, educators and operators. Young people and families in difficulty were also provided with electronic devices such as tablets and computers to be able to follow the DAD (distance learning).

Distribution of pc and connection devices

The project distributed **100 PCs and connection devices** in 7 Regions and in the 17 cities and identified the needs of minors and families, according to specific selection criteria in order to counter the early school leaving, the school dropout and decline in school performance, worsened in some areas due to the pandemic crisis, supporting minors during distance learning activities. Many of the beneficiaries had difficulties attending the lessons or could do so in places where a stable wi-fi connection was rarely available or the children were forced to attend lessons with mobile phones.

In **Cisternino (Brindisi/Apulia Region)** a young student, not always having an adequate device available, accumulated delays in following lessons and consequently suffered a slight decrease in performance or even what was achieved by the Salesian centre in Foggia, which was able to continue the scholastic support of the young people welcomed in the community.

In **Naples (Campania Region)**, the closure of schools in the second part of the emergency was very extensive, depending on regional decisions and schools no longer had the opportunity to guarantee internet connections and tools for minors in difficulty. So from November 2020 a DAD classroom with an Internet connection was established. It was possible to extend the support to 10 other minors, intercepted through the educational services and the oratory. They had the opportunity to connect from their own home, thanks to PCs and connections made available through the project.

This activity has also been extended to **Torre Annunziata**

(**Campania Region**), where children can follow the lessons, do their homework in the afternoon followed by an educator, thanks to computers and tablets.

The project has activated a DAD classroom at the Salesian Institute in **Bari (Apulia Region)**, attended by a dozen young people. In **Foggia (Apulia Region)** we point out the experience of a 17-year-old girl, who, due to economic problems, did not have the adequate means to follow distance learning, but thanks to the project she had the opportunity to receive a PC and internet connection and continue profitably in her studies.

We report the experience of a 16-year-old girl from **Turin (Piedmont Region)**, with a situation of absenteeism from school and with a difficult economic condition. Last year she managed to obtain the middle school diploma, despite having only a personal telephone available to attend the lessons. Afterwards, she started high school and was immediately included among the beneficiaries of the PC and internet connection. Thanks to the project, she was able to attend the lessons and to achieve excellent results, being able to use the appropriate tools for the type of school she is attending.

In **Naples**, during the first period of the pandemic, two Sri Lankan children received from the school a Tablet and internet connection. All returned later in June, at the end of the school year (2020). In fact, schools no longer had the possibility of guaranteeing internet connections to minors in difficulty. The mother told the educators that she only had a smartphone. The presence in DAD was alternated between the two children, attending different classes. It often happened that the monthly availability ran

out and therefore both minors were unable to attend the DAD. Through the project, the two children were guaranteed the possibility of a constant DAD attendance.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The project delivered personal protective equipment (PPE) to the communities and families of the area. The activities carried out in the community centers, daily centers, oratories and family homes were able to continue in safety and with adequate protection.

In **Foggia (Apulia Region)**, the project has guaranteed the use of PPE all the day and allowed the various workshops (carpentry, creative recycling, tailoring) to continue. PPE (gloves, masks and gels) is also used for the protected meetings that take place weekly with relatives. Here minors in situations of deviance and maladjustment are welcomed. Some of them are subject to civil and administrative measures by the judicial authority, which require temporary removal from the family they belong to. During the day, the children are involved in various manual activities, such as carpentry or tailoring workshops. For the safety of all, a massive use of protective equipment is required.

Distribution of food kits

The project delivered food kits to 380 families of the 11 regions involved (Sicily, Calabria, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Tuscany, Abruzzo, Liguria, Marche, Lazio and Piedmont). We report the experience of a 48-year-old woman of Moroccan origin who has lived in Turin for a long time. She has a daughter, she has done various jobs, today she has a precarious job that does not guarantee her economic stability. For her and her daughter, the opportunity to benefit from the food kit card represented a great support.

In **Torre Annunziata**, 24 families received food kits. One of the beneficiaries, a mother of two children, underlined the importance of the support received and the severe economic difficulties in which her family was forced to live even before the pandemic.

5.2 Give more to those who had less

Education, Training and Lifelong learning

The project **Giving more to those who had less**, promoted by Salesians for Social and funded by Impresa Sociale Con i Bambini, within the Fund for combating child educational poverty, is active since 2018.

It involves 14 territories of Calabria, Campania, Apulia, Sicily, Lazio, Liguria and Marche, characterized by situations of dispersion, school dropout, cultural deprivation and poverty.

The goal is to combat educational poverty and social inequalities by increasing the sense of citizenship of adolescents, the knowledge of their rights and duties and improving the use of educational services and opportunities.

Specifically, the project carries out training activities aimed at teachers to enhance their role and function.

Both formal and non-formal laboratory activities are carried out for adolescents at local schools on various topics: self-esteem, linguistic communication, logical mathematical reasoning, cognitive skills, orientation and strengthening of social and relational skills. Parenting support activities are carried out, aimed at sensitizing families on educational issues and childcare, both mapping actions of existing cultural opportunities and activation of theater for students and adults, open libraries, etc.

Finally, the intervention provides for the definition of local educational contracts that identify educational objectives and shared commitments among the various actors in the area as well as mi-

nimum levels of educational services. The initiative aims to reach 3,000 adolescents and about 900 families. 1,840 teachers and 300 operators and educators from the territories will also be involved. The project is carried out in partnership with 60 public and private organizations, concentrates its intervention on 15 municipalities in central and southern Italy with specific interventions in some areas (Ballarò in Palermo, Libertà district in Bari, Doganella district in Naples, ...). The recipients of the activities are minors at risk of dropping out. Specifically, the main areas are: development of educational skills in the school system and in teachers; development of educational skills in parents; creation of a territorial educational community through the elaboration of Local educational contracts; socio-pedagogical and individual didactic support. Activities carried out in 2020:

- teacher training: 21 basic courses (504 h) and 22 consolidation courses (264 h) were carried out with the involvement of 679 teachers;
- extra-curricular didactic support laboratories: 15 laboratories created for a total of 4,832 hours and 469 minors reached;
- individual mentoring: 116 individual interventions activated for 820 hours of psycho-educational support.

Chapter 6

EU AND NATIONAL POLICIES TO HELP PEOPLE IN POVERTY

By Alessandro Scassellati Sforzolini, Casa dei Diritti Sociali and Gianluca Falascina

6.1 The European dimension

The Covid-19 pandemic, with **its dramatic impacts on health, economy, society and politics**, especially evident in the second quarter of 2020¹, has forced the European political establishment to drastically review its positions on EU intervention. in the economic and social field.

Across Europe, public life was halted during the pandemic, but the public debate accelerated, affecting many critical issues: the trade-offs between a ruined economy and public health, the relative virtues of centralized or regionalized/territorialized health systems, the fragility of globalization, the future of the European Union, socio-economic inequalities (between those with jobs and guaranteed income and those without security, at the mercy of

¹ In the second quarter of 2020, the pandemic led, at least temporarily, to the closure of borders, the freezing of economies (with a huge increase in liquidity and a vertical collapse of investments and consumption), the suspension in the digital bubble of daily lives and habits of billions of people (condemning some millions to death from disease and hunger), to the blocking of the pace of growth of economic globalization (trade, value chains, foreign direct investments, financial flows, migration, etc.), to the emergence of a profound anthropological (social, economic, political and cultural) crisis of the middle classes, and perhaps to extinguish forever the hope in modernity and the faith of liberal progress that tomorrow can be designed to be better than today.

the “whims of the market”), universal basic income systems, populism, nationalism, the intrinsic advantage of authoritarianism in the management of the state of emergency.

The spread of the pandemic has created an emergency situation that required prompt public intervention to support the health sector and the economy as a whole. Citizens clung to the state as a lifesaver in a stormy sea. Politicians and states have been forced into a violent twist, to act in ways that just a few weeks earlier seemed unthinkable. As French President Emmanuel Macron said on March 12, 2020, the pandemic has revealed that there are goods and services that need to be placed outside the laws of the market. **Fiscal orthodoxy, the traditional neoliberal policy of austerity, has been abandoned, at least temporarily,** to practice a fiscal activism that has increased the economic role of the state with a sort of “war Keynesianism”. States through emergency deficit spending measures, guarantees, loans, financial aid and grants, freezing of layoffs, nationalizations (aimed at avoiding the bankruptcy of some large companies) and hostile anti-takeover rules of national companies considered strategic, have tried to compensate for the sudden and colossal crisis in economic activity, trying to save and protect businesses and jobs.

Almost everywhere in Europe, the State has tried to keep the economy in a “pharmacological coma” (with monetary and fiscal expedients) **waiting for the health conditions to be recreated to restart it** and has managed to pay up to 90% of wages of workers that companies had suspended zero hours without firing them (it is estimated that these support programs have reached at least 54 million workers in the European Union). The State had to help wage earners, self-employed workers, farmers, families and businesses in order to avoid the implosion

of the system and prevent the pandemic from causing more poverty than deaths, causing a great explosion of popular anger. This even if those who had a well-paid intellectual job (white collar workers) often had to face only the hassles of teleworking from home (defined in Italy as smart-working, rather than home-working), while the least paid and protected workers, who worked in sectors considered “essential”, they have kept their jobs often at the risk of life, such as care providers and health workers, but also warehouse workers (almost 20,000 of those from Amazon were infected), truck drivers, large retailers, workers in the agro-food supply chains, cleaners.

The European Central Bank (ECB) and the States did not show uncertainty (“whatever it takes”) when it came to dispensing unlimited resources for the “salvation of the economy”, while a few days before the pandemic they opposed all requests for increase in the workforce in hospitals and in the number of beds in emergency wards, favoring an obsessive compliance with budgetary constraints and public debt limits. Governments and states, backed by the ECB’s monetary intervention², generously

² On the night of March 18, 2020, the European Central Bank - the only federal supranational institution with real pan-European intervention power, albeit limited to monetary policy - launched a new program for the purchase of public sector securities (including debt Greek) and private with a total endowment of 750 billion euros, strengthening quantitative easing, already in place since September 2019. Purchases under this new Pandemic Emergency Purchase Program (PEPP) were to be conducted at least until June 2021 “And in any case until it judges the coronavirus crisis phase to be over”, and they include all the categories of assets eligible under the existing purchase program, but it allows to exceed 33% of purchases on the emissions of a single country and the clause that provides for purchases for each country proportionate to the stake in the capital of the ECB (the so-called capital key), with the aim of containing spreads between Eurozone countries. A derogation that partially compensates for the fact that the ECB is forbidden to directly purchase the newly issued debt of a member coun-

protected banks, stock market investors and businesses in the blink of an eye, when on the health front, they underfunded and privatized the health system for decades.

With entire large countries - Italy and Spain - locked in quarantine and with the “everyone for themselves” strategy that initially prevailed over solidarity, the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen assured that “we will do everything necessary to support the European economy”. Any expenditure necessary for the response to the pandemic was by definition excluded from the calculation of the structural deficit. In addition, the rules on State aid have been frozen to allow the countries affected by the pandemic to suspend tax payments, support the liquidity of companies, compensate for sectors that are inactive and guarantee social safety nets for workers. The Commission and Ecofin (the coordination of economic mi-

try (it must purchase it from intermediaries on the secondary market). The program aims to counter “the serious risks to the monetary policy transmission mechanism and the prospects for the euro area represented by the epidemic and the growing spread of the coronavirus.” “Extraordinary times require extraordinary action. There are no limits to our commitment to the euro. As part of our mandate, we are determined to use the full potential of our tools.” wrote Christine Lagarde on Twitter. The “there are no limits” was what was requested by market operators and governments, symbolically similar to the “whatever it takes” pronounced by her predecessor Mario Draghi in the 2012 euro crisis. The ECB, through the management of the interest rate, it also decided to pay the banks to withdraw money (in fact a helicopter money for the banks). Given the programs already underway, the ECB pumped □ 1.1 trillion (equivalent to 6% of the Eurozone GDP value) into the financial system in 2020 and continues to pump in 2021 as well. almost 7 trillion (equal to almost 60% of the Eurozone’s GDP), coming to hold about 30% of the Eurozone’s public debt. Lagarde announced that the ECB, like the FED, will also allow inflation to exceed the 2% threshold (set in 2003): “This target was adequate for a period in which the ECB was trying to assert its credibility and a ‘too high inflation was the main concern.”

nisters) have decided to suspend budget constraints tout court, applying the “general escape clause” of the Stability Pact, provided for exceptional cases, allowing governments to “pumping money into the system as long as it is needed”. A historic step that has frozen at least temporarily (at least until January 1, 2023) the true architrave of the neoliberal austerity policies followed in the European Union.

There has been a change in political-economic orientation - characterized by many politicians and observers as a “Hamiltonian moment”³ - which within the European Union has produced the SURE program (see Box 1) and the Next Generation UE (see Box 2), and which has also put the European Pillar of Social Rights back at the center of politics, leading the Commission to draw up numerous directives and an Action Plan that was discussed at the Porto Social Summit on 7 May 2021.

The pandemic has therefore opened a possible process of revision of the rules of economic and social governance and of the role of the European Central Bank, which should be aimed at overcoming the dogma of austerity which, since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, has been the pivot to policies implemented in the European Union in the social and economic fields.

It is in the context of **the new political-cultural scenario** induced by the crisis determined by the CoVid-19 pandemic, that the Commission and the European Parliament have returned to deal intensively with the European Pillar of Social Rights which had been approved by the heads of state and government (in via

³ In connection with the successful effort in 1790 of Alexander Hamilton, US Treasury Secretary from 1789 to 1795, to have the newly formed US federal government assume all the existing debts of the individual 13 States that signed the declaration of independence, thus creating a single fiscal union.

intergovernmental) at the November 2017 summit in Göteborg. The critical aspect of this proclamation was that it did not set the regulatory and economic instruments, nor the financial ones, nor who was required to guarantee it: the Commission or the Member States, as in the logic of competing matters.

The Pillar identifies 20 essential principles and rights for fair and well-functioning labor markets and social protection systems in 21st century Europe. The structure of the pillar revolves around three categories: 1) equal opportunities and access to the labor market (4 principles); 2) fair working conditions (6 principles); 3) social protection and inclusion (10 principles).

Although with some resistance, the idea is gaining acceptance that in order to counter the economic crisis and stagnation, the downgrading of entire sectors of the population and the growing inequalities that are threatening the representative democracies of European countries, it is essential to relaunch at the level of the European Union:

1. inclusive and sustainable economic growth that goes beyond the policies of fiscal consolidation and development based on exports, low wages and trade surpluses followed in the last three decades;
2. to understand a revival of the internal market through the *green economy*, as capitalism that incorporates the environmental limit in its accumulation process, higher wages, more qualified and stable employment;
3. the adaptation and extraordinary maintenance of infrastructures built after the war onwards;

4. the safety and maintenance of the territory, social housing, welfare, modernization and strengthening of health systems;

5. a strengthening of school systems, training and the production and dissemination of culture which remain the most valid tools for promoting employment, restarting the social elevator, “educating the people” and, therefore, preparing responsible, resilient and aware citizens.

The disappointment that has been felt towards the EU by many European citizens in recent years has been given by the great distance between the promises (for example, that of a “social Europe” capable of protecting the weak and building solidarity, promised by Jacques Delors in the ‘90s) and what is being achieved. Going from words to deeds with some concrete actions, means investing in social Europe. This is particularly important in a historical moment in which the pandemic has shown all the weaknesses and inadequacies of the national socio-health systems, of the negative trend on demographic projections (see denatality and aging of the population) which necessarily have to face radical changes in the labor market.

To rise to the challenge, it is necessary to envisage the creation of a single welfare system, a social compact, a social and institutional pact capable of intervening on the most urgent needs of people, starting with European insurance (not temporary, such as SURE) against unemployment and greater support for female employment.

The Lisbon Treaty (see Box 3) places social policy among the competing competences: Member States can legislate independently to the extent that the Union does not exercise its prerogatives. It

is necessary to rebalance the economic dimension and the social dimension, recognizing their equal dignity. It is necessary to get out of that restricted area in which social policies have so far been relegated, since, erroneously, they continue to be considered that set of services and interventions aimed at a “marginal” layer of the population, only in the area of exclusion and discomfort, and therefore qualified merely as an item of expenditure (to which one prefers to put policies of *economic recovery* or productive investments or infrastructures), rather than investment.

Social policies, on the other hand, are investments for development and competitiveness, as they create, like scientific research or educational and training policies, the conditions for the social and civil progress of a country. Like the other policies, in fact, the social ones are generators of economic development, business potential and an increase in the employment base. In particular, social services produce knowledge, they themselves activate the economy and employment, make resources that would otherwise not be usable accessible and are a context and a tool for territorial governance.

Investing in the person, in his abilities, in his autonomy, in the ability to self-organize, means producing economic and social wealth indispensable for development (the “social dimensions of competitiveness”). Not only the economic development of countries and the Union, but also the necessary renewal of the relationship of trust between institutions and citizens and the close bond of solidarity, security and legality, are achieved with the affirmation of fundamental rights and, therefore, of policies aimed at reducing inequalities, guaranteeing rights and protections and increasing social quality, cooperative capacity and the degree of cohesion.

In December 2020, there were **16 million people out of work**

in the European Union and youth unemployment was 17.8%, much higher than general unemployment. Low-skilled, low-paid and fixed-term workers were the first to be laid off as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The participation of migrants in the labor market has also been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. While skills are essential to prepare workers for new green and digital jobs and help protect them from unemployment, fewer than 40% of adults participate in training of any kind annually and there are still too many young people with low or unskilled they reach the level of upper secondary education. Women, who in 2018 still earned on average 14% less than men, continue to take on family care responsibilities and find it difficult to enter and remain in the labor market, with consequences that also affect pensions. Before the pandemic, 91 million people were at risk of poverty or social exclusion and 22.2% of the children lived in poor families. It is estimated that around 700,000 people sleep on the streets across Europe every night.

The European Commission in 2021

The last years of the Juncker Commission and especially the year and a half of the new von der Leyen Commission, on the other hand, have seen a proliferation of legislative initiatives aimed at strengthening the social dimension of the EU, with an explicit reference to the categories and principles defined in the Pillar European Social Rights. In 2019 the process of generalization of the guaranteed minimum income measure (one of the rights enshrined in the Social Pillar and in the Nice Charter) was concluded which today, albeit in very dissimilar and in many cases inadequate forms, is an institution present in all the 27 EU states. Also in 2019, the procedure for receiving the new directive on transnational posting was completed, which regulated the insidious phenomenon

of chain posting in a very incisive way, greatly widening the field of application of the principle of equal treatment between posted and non-posted workers. On this issue, a recent ruling by the EU Court of Justice has enhanced this directive, in light of the principle of the prohibition of all forms of “fraud against community law”: jurisprudence and the EU legislator are demolishing some sanctuaries of *social dumping* between States.

The von der Leyen Commission has already presented a series of actions deriving from the Pillar which may require the commitment of the Nation-States, such as the Skills Agenda for Europe (Principle 1), the Strategy for Gender Equality (Principle 2), a directive on pay transparency (Principle 2), the EU action plan against racism (Principle 3), the package to support youth employment (Principle 4) and the proposal for a directive on wages adequate minimums (Principle 6), a new strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 (Principle 17). Also under the Pillar, several other initiatives have already been approved, including: the directive on work-life balance for parents and care providers, the directive on transparent and predictable working conditions in the EU; the regulation for the establishment of a European Labor Authority; the directive on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work.

Other Commission actions are also expected to be launched in 2021, including the European Child Guarantee (Principle 11), a new strategic framework on health and safety at work (Principle 10), and a proposal for a directive to improving the working conditions of people who work through digital platforms (Principles 5 and 12) presented on 25 February and an Action Plan for the social economy. On January 27, the Green Book on aging was made public.

On March 4, 2021, the Action Plan for the implementation of the

European Pillar of Social Rights was presented by Nicolas Schmit (Luxembourg), Commissioner for Labor and Social Affairs who works under the leadership of the Executive Vice President for an economy at service of the people, Valdis Dombrovskis, and in close contact with the Member States, having to respect the principle of subsidiarity. The effective implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights depends to a large extent on the determination and action of the Member States, which are primarily responsible for employment, skills and social policies. Actions at EU level can complement national actions and this Action Plan constitutes the Commission’s contribution to the implementation of the principles of the Social Pillar, in line with the calls of European leaders and the European Parliament⁴.

In the Action Plan, the Commission proposed three main EU objectives to be achieved by the end of this decade in the fields of employment, skills and social protection, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Together with what is enshrined in the Pillar principles, the financial support of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period 2021-2027 and the Next Generation EU program, the objectives will have to guide joint efforts towards a strong social Europe and the achievement of a sustainable impact. The objectives set are the following:

1. At least 78% of the population aged 20-64 is expected to have a job by 2030. With an employment rate in the EU reaching 73.1%

⁴ The Pillar Action Plan is based on a wide-ranging public consultation, which collected over a thousand written contributions from Member States, EU institutions and bodies, regions, cities, social partners, civil society organizations, international organizations and groups, think tanks and citizens. The Commission also organized ad hoc online seminars with over 1,500 stakeholders.

in 2019, the target for the Europe 2020 employment of 75% has almost been achieved. Despite EU efforts, the Covid-19 crisis has halted the positive employment trend of the past 6 years, with an employment rate of 78.3% for men and 66.6% for women in the third quarter of 2020. By setting a new headline target for 2030, the EU reaffirms its commitment to a high and inclusive employment rate. To achieve this global goal, Europe must aim to:

- halving the gender gap in employment compared to 2019. This will be of key importance for making progress on gender equality and achieving the employment target for the entire working age population;
- increasing the supply of formal early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, thereby contributing to a better reconciliation of professional and private life and fostering greater participation of women in the labor market;
- reducing the rate of young people who do not have a job or are in education or training (NEET) between the ages of 15 and 29 from 12.6% (2019) to 9%, in particular by improving their employment prospects.

2. At least 60% of all adults should participate in training activities each year. In the context of the recovery and the dual green and digital transition, increasing adult participation in training to 60% is key to fostering employability, stimulating innovation, ensuring social equity and bridging the gap in the field of digital skills. However, up to 2016 only 37% of adults participated in learning activities each year. For low-skilled adults, this rate was only 18%. Particularly:

- at least 80% of people aged between 16 and 74 should have basic digital skills, which are a precondition for inclusion and participation in the labor market and society in a digitally transformed Europe;
- early school leaving should be further reduced and participation in upper secondary education should be increased.

3. The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion is expected to be reduced by at least 15 million by 2030. According to official data, poverty and social exclusion in the EU have decreased over the past decade. In 2019, around 91 million people (of which 17.9 million were children aged 0-17) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU, nearly 12 million fewer than in 2008 and around 17 million fewer than the peak reached in 2012. However, the ambitious Europe 2020 social target of a reduction of 20 million people has not been achieved. The Covid-19 pandemic is expected to worsen the situation, increasing financial insecurity, poverty and income inequality in the short term. Of the 15 million people to be lifted out of poverty or social exclusion, at least 5 million should be children. Attention to children will not only offer them access to new opportunities, but will also help break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, preventing them from becoming adults at risk of poverty or social exclusion with consequent long-term systemic effects.

In the intentions of the Commission, the realization of the objectives of the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights is a political commitment and a responsibility shared by the EU institutions, national, regional and local authorities, the social partners and civil society, all

called to play a role in line with their respective competences. The Commission intends to support this effort with all available instruments: financial support through various EU funds to invest in a just recovery and dual green and digital transition; promoting the commitment of all actors; providing guidance and coordination of national economic and social policies through the European Semester; implementing EU legislation; leveraging its role as a global economic leader.

In this regard, according to the Commission, Member States should make full use of the unprecedented funds that the EU has made available to support reforms and investments in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights. The EU's long-term budget for 2021-2027, together with the Next Generation EU Recovery Facility, is the largest incentive package ever funded by the EU budget. A total of 1,800 billion euros (of which 88 for the ESF+) that should help Europe recover from the CoVid-19 crisis and become greener, more digital and socially just.

Simultaneously with the presentation of the Action Plan, Commissioner Schmit presented a Recommendation on Active Employment Support (EASE), as a concrete action under Principle 4 of the Pillar, through which provides Member States with concrete guidance on measures underpinned by EU funding opportunities, to gradually move from emergency measures taken to keep jobs during the ongoing crisis to new measures needed for a job-creating recovery. This recommendation promotes job creation and professional transitions from declining to expanding sectors, especially the green and digital sectors. The new measures of the Nation-States should include three elements: 1) incentives to hire and support for entrepreneurship; 2) opportunities for improving the level of skills and re-training; 3) increased support from employment services, in-

cluding counseling, guidance and mentoring, skills assessment and validation, job search assistance. EU funds, including the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the ESF+, are available to help Member States finance their EASE measures.

The Social Summit in Porto 7 May 2021, organized by the Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa, rotating president of the EU Council in the first half of 2021, and by the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, focused on ways **to strengthen the social dimension of Europe** to face the challenges related to the need for a fair, inclusive and resilient recovery and the green and digital transition. The summit represented an opportunity to mobilize forces - EU heads of state or government, EU institutions, social partners and other stakeholders - in order to renew, at the highest political level, the commitment to implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Pillar Action Plan was the Commission's contribution to the Porto Social Summit.

It is now a question of convincing the skeptics who believe that the Social Pillar will only remain a good intention until the exclusive competences of the Member States and the exclusive ones of the Union are established in the Treaty. Social rights have a cost in terms of public intervention, so it is necessary to clearly establish the policies that must be done at the EU level and with which autonomous resources and what policies the States must do with the resources of their budgets. From this point of view, a reform of the institutional architecture would be necessary to give concrete content to the Pillar of Social Rights.

There are resistances to this type of path. On the eve of the Porto Summit, 11 member countries (some with robust public welfare systems, others rather weak) - Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the

Netherlands and Sweden - issued a statement joint in which they warn Lisbon - and the Brussels Commission - to respect the national authority on policy-making in areas such as work and employment, pensions, education and childcare. "Any EU initiative in these areas should be in line with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and need careful consideration of different national starting points, challenges and institutional arrangements. Setting headline targets at the EU level could help guide debates, policies and reforms". Some of these states are genuinely concerned with safeguarding relatively efficient public welfare systems that have been built over decades of social democratic policies. They fear that a leading role of the Commission can become a sort of Trojan horse used to impose lower standards than those existing at national level, thus contributing to erode legitimacy, political consensus and financial resources to the respective public welfare systems.

6.2 The Italian national dimension

The health, economic and social crisis caused by the CoVid-19 pandemic has made it clear how important it is for a country to have quality public institutions, a robust universalistic territorial public health service capable of covering the entire population, a welfare and a social safety nets system. States have tried to govern the pandemic with the use of social discipline, capillary health monitoring, real-time processing of all data and information digitally available, with a mix of factors that differ from country to country. The countries that have been most successful in containing the spread of the pandemic have shown how important it is to have a government willing to act and able to do so effectively to protect citizens, especially those with low incomes and without job security, including from the

economic fallout of the pandemic. The former president of the ECB, Mario Draghi, in a letter to the Financial Times (25 March 2020) compared the present condition to a situation of war, which therefore required emergency solutions and a change in the role of the state and public debt, urging an increase in public spending regardless of the increase in deficit and debt. **In the medium and long term, instead of being part of the solution, the financial hyperactivity of central banks risks creating greater problems - such as errors in the allocation of resources, excessive dependence on debt and strong financial instability - which could strongly affect the next phase of economic recovery.** President Draghi himself warned that there is debt and debt: we must make "good" debt, that is, debt that goes not into subsidies to workers and the unemployed, or into pensions, but debt that goes to support private investments, that is to say that debt that the financial markets appreciate and that they are willing to finance even at lower interest rates. Thus, while tax revenues have collapsed, **the Italian State has issued new debt, guaranteed loans, granted non-repayable grants and absorbed private debts in the public budget without any substantial conditionality and counterpart** (such as, for example, guaranteeing higher wages and greater decision-making power to workers; limiting dividends, share buybacks and top manager bonuses) and, above all, without clarifying how these new gigantic debts would be managed (who would foot the bill?). Italian public debt rose to 165% of GDP, while it was 135% at the end of 2019.

Poverty in Italy in 2020

The latest report released by Istat in June 2021, relating to estimates of poverty data in Italy, indicates that in 2020, the year of

the pandemic, absolute poverty grew significantly, reaching the highest level since 2005 (beginning of historical series)⁵. According to these estimates, there are over two million families in absolute poverty (with an incidence of 7.7%), for a total of over 5.6 million individuals (incidence of 9.4%), an increase compared to 2019 when the incidence was 6.4% and 7.7% respectively. As for relative poverty, families below the threshold are just over 2.6 million (10.1%, from 11.4% in 2019)⁶.

⁵ The absolute poverty threshold refers to a basket of goods and services that are considered essential for a given family to achieve a minimally acceptable standard of living. It is not therefore a question of a single threshold, but of many thresholds which vary, by construction, according to the size of the family, its composition by age, the geographical distribution and the size of the municipality of residence. The relative poverty threshold, on the other hand, varies from year to year due to changes in household consumption expenditure or, in other words, their consumption behavior. This threshold, in fact, derives from an internal calculation of the distribution of expenses (it is in fact equal to the average per capita consumption expenditure for a family of two people). The measure of relative poverty therefore provides an assessment of the inequality in the distribution of consumer spending and identifies poor families among those who are at a disadvantage compared to the others. In 2020, for a two-member family, the threshold was equal to 1,001.86 euros, i.e. over 93 euros less than the 2019 line. To take into account the changes in spending behavior, a poverty line is also calculated every year of the current year, revaluing that of the previous year with the change in prices. The 2019 threshold, revalued to 2020 based on the consumer price index for the entire community (equal to -0.2%), was equal to 1,092.76 euros (90.90 euros more than the standard threshold). The incidence of relative poverty in 2020, calculated with respect to the revised 2019 threshold, is, consequently, much higher and is equal to 13.4% (3,484 thousand poor families, or about 847 thousand more). The two different estimates make it possible to identify households that in 2020, despite having achieved spending levels lower than those of 2019, are not poor due to the considerable reduction in consumption and average living conditions in the year marked by the restrictive measures for the containment of the pandemic.

⁶ In 2020, the incidence of relative poverty is reduced for single-component

The largest growth in absolute poverty is recorded in the North where in terms of individuals the incidence of absolute poverty goes from 6.8% to 9.3% (with 10.1% in the Northwest). In fact, the absolute poor resident in the Northern regions are estimated to be over 2 million 500 thousand, compared to 2 million 259 thousand in the South and also in the regions of the Center the incidence of absolute poverty is increasing (6.6% compared to 5.6 % of 2019) while remaining smaller in terms of individuals than in other areas of the country. By age group, the incidence of absolute poverty reaches 11.3% (over 1 million 127 thousand individuals) among young people (18-34 years); remains at a high level, at 9.2%, even for the 35-64 age group (over 2 million 394 thousand individuals), while it remains at values below the national average for the over 65s (5.4%, over 742 thousand people). With regard to the characteristics of families, in 2020, the incidence of absolute poverty is higher among families with a greater number of members (11.2% among those with four members). The situation becomes more critical if the cohabiting offsprings, especially if minors, are more than one (incidence of 22.7% among those with more than three) and among single-parent families, for which the most marked deterioration is recorded compared to 2019 (from 8.9% to 11.7%). On the other hand, the incidence of poverty is lower, at 5.6%, in families with at least one elderly person and falls to 3.7% among couples where the age of the family reference person is over 64 years.

families (from 6.7% in 2019 to 4.5% in 2020) in all areas, especially in the South, where it falls from 12.7% to 9.1 % In the case of single people aged 65 or over, the incidence of relative poverty goes from 7.7% in 2019 to 4.4% in 2020, while among families with minor children it falls from 18.5% in 2019 to 17.5% in 2020, especially due to the dynamics recorded in the South (from 31.4% in 2019 to 27.8% in 2020).

In general, family poverty shows a decreasing trend as the age of the reference person increases; generally, in fact, the families of young people have lower spending power because they have lower average incomes and have fewer savings accumulated over the course of their lives or inherited assets. Absolute poverty concerns 10.3% of families with a reference person between 18 and 34 years of age and 5.3% of those with a reference person over 64 years of age. Compared to 2019, the incidence of poverty increases among families with a reference person aged 35-44 (from 8.3% to 10.7%) and among those in which the reference person is between 45 and 54 years old (from 6.9% to 9.9%).

Particular attention deserve families with minors in absolute poverty which in 2020 are over 767,000, with an incidence of 11.9% (9.7% in 2019). The total number of minors in absolute poverty in Italy is estimated at 1 million 337 thousand. It is useful to highlight that the incidence of absolute poverty for this subset of families increases as the number of minor children present in the family increases (6.9% for couples with one minor child, 11.3% for those with two children minors and 19.8% for couples with three or more minor children) and is high among single-parent families with minors (14.0%). The employment status and professional position of the reference person are also relevant in terms of the incidence of poverty among families with minors: 9.4% if employed (15.8% in the case of blue collar workers) and 22.3% if not employed (29.1% if they are looking for a job).

However, the greatest criticality of these families also emerges in terms of poverty intensity, with a value equal to 21.0% against 18.7% of the general figure. In addition to being more often poor, families with minors are also in conditions of more marked hardship. Citizenship also plays an important role in determining the socio-economic condition of the family: the incidence of absolute

poverty of families with minors composed only of foreigners rises to 28.6% compared to 8.6% of families with minors composed only by Italians. With regard to foreigners, the incidence of absolute poverty in 2020 is significantly increasing. Istat estimates that there are over 1.5 million foreigners in absolute poverty in the country with an incidence of 29.3%. Foreign families, while representing only 8.6% of total families, rise to 28.3% if we consider the incidence of absolute poverty.

At the territorial level, the highest incidence of families of only foreigners in poverty is recorded in the South, with shares almost four times higher than those of families of only Italians (respectively 31.9% and 8.4%). In the North, families of only foreigners recorded incidence values of 28.4% while in the Center the values are more contained (19.9%).

As mentioned, compared to 2019, signs of worsening are recorded for families in the North (of Italians only, mixed or with foreigners), while in the South the worsening concerns families of only Italians (from 7.4% to 8.4%), however the value of the intensity of absolute poverty - which measures in percentage terms how much the monthly expenditure of poor families is on average below the poverty line (ie "how poor the poor are") - records a reduction (from 20.3% to 18.7%) in all geographical areas. This dynamic is also the result of the measures put in place to support citizens (citizenship income, emergency income, extension of the redundancy fund, etc.) which have allowed families in economic difficulty - both those who have fallen below the poverty line in the 2020, both those that were already poor - to maintain consumer spending not very far from the poverty line.

Measures to combat poverty and the reorganization of services and the system of interventions and social services

With the precious support of a recent publication by the Study Center of the Chamber of Deputies (June 16, 2021), we intend here to take stock of the measures to combat poverty in Italy.

In Italy social assistance is achieved through a complex of national, regional and municipal interventions, which cover the forms of economic performance and/or service to the person. After the framework law on assistance (law 328/2000) which established that the essential levels of social benefits (LEP) correspond to the set of guaranteed interventions, in the form of goods or services, implemented within the limits of the resources of the National Fund for social policies, and the revision of Title V of the 2001 Constitution, which, in giving greater financial autonomy to local authorities, intended to guarantee a principle of uniformity in services related to the fundamental rights of citizens (LEP), legislation on the system of social services it was significantly innovated by law no. 33 of 2017 laying down rules relating to the fight against poverty, the reorganization of services and the system of interventions and social services.

With this regulatory provision, linked to the 2016 budget law, the Government was delegated to adopt one or more legislative decrees introducing: a national measure to combat poverty and social exclusion, identified as an essential level of benefits to be uniformly guarantee throughout the national territory and the strengthening of the coordination of interventions in the field of social services, in order to guarantee, throughout the national territory, the essential levels of services, within the scope of the principles referred to in law no. 328 of 2000.

What had previously been achieved on these issues at the national level? With the decree-law 112/2008 the ordinary purchase card

was established: an economic benefit, equal to 40 euros per month, loaded bi-monthly on an electronic payment card. The Purchase Card is recognized for the elderly over or equal to 65 and for children under the age of three, if in possession of particular economic requirements that place them in the range of absolute need. First reserved for Italians only, the purchase card was subsequently extended to citizens of other EU States and to foreign citizens holding an EC long-term residence permit, as long as they meet the aforementioned requirements. The card can be used to support food and health expenditure and to pay for energy costs, made at affiliated shops. Currently the Purchase Card can be combined with the Citizenship Income.

After the establishment of the Purchasing Card, the institutional and public discussion on a structural measure to combat poverty continued with the approval of Decree Law 5/2012, which configured an experimental phase of the Purchasing Card, through the use of a new type of card, initially called the Card for Inclusion and then Support for Active Inclusion - SIA (see Box 4). The trial, lasting no more than twelve months, was carried out in municipalities with more than 250,000 inhabitants (Bari, Bologna, Catania, Florence, Genoa, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Turin, Venice, Verona and Rome) and immediately expanded the audience of beneficiaries also to citizens of other EU States and to foreign citizens holding the EC residence permit for long-term residents.

With the 2016 Stability Law (paragraphs 386-390 of Law 208/2015) Italy has provided for one or more legislative measures to reorganize the legislation on the subject, aimed at introducing a single national measure to combat poverty, related the difference between the beneficiary's family income and the absolute poverty threshold. In particular, it was envisaged that, pending the definition of the three-year national plan for the fight against poverty and

exclusion, the Support for Active Inclusion (SIA) was extended to the whole national territory according to the implementation methods indicated by the decree of May 26, 2016 Launch of Support for Active Inclusion (SIA); the same methods of access to the SIA were then extended by the decree of 16 March 2017 Enlargement of the Support for Active Inclusion (SIA), for 2017.

More generally, the 2016 stability law (law 208/2015) was a turning point in the context of national interventions to combat poverty. It briefly provided for:

- the definition of a three-year national plan for the fight against poverty and exclusion;
- the establishment of the Fund for the fight against poverty and social exclusion at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies (Poverty Fund), with the provision of certain resources for the fight against poverty and their quantification for 2016 and following years. In 2016, the allocation of 380 million, to which the 220 million of the ASDI implementation, destined for poor unemployed people who lose their right to unemployment benefits, together with European funds for poverty and inclusion, were added, have been committed to a support program for active inclusion (decree of 26 May 2016). In 2017 and subsequent years, the allocation of one billion per year must instead guarantee the implementation of the National Plan for the fight against poverty and social exclusion as designed by the enabling law approved with Law 15 March 2017, n. 33 and from the legislative decrees deriving from it;
- the launch of a national measure to combat poverty, in-

tended as the strengthening, extension and consolidation of the experimental purchasing card - SIA;

- the reorganization of the legislation on welfare treatments of an assistance nature or in any case subjected to the test of means, also aimed at beneficiaries residing abroad, as well as in the field of access to social benefits;

in implementation of Law 33/2017 “Delegation containing rules relating to the fight against poverty, the reorganization of services and the system of interventions and social services” (GU n. 70 of 24 March 2017), the Government with Legislative Decree 15 September 2017 n. 147 established the Income for Inclusion - ReI (see Box 5), which entered into force from 1 January 2018, as a single measure at national level to combat poverty and social exclusion.

Law 33/2017 delegated the Government to adopt, within six months from 25 March 2017, one or more legislative decrees bearing:

- the introduction of a national measure to combat poverty (understood as the impossibility of having all the goods and services necessary to lead a decent standard of living) and social exclusion, identified as an essential level of benefits to be uniformly guaranteed in the whole national territory;
- the reorganization of welfare services subjected to the test of means aimed at combating poverty, with the exception of services aimed at the elderly population no longer of working age, for services in support of parenthood and for those related to condition of disability and invalidity of the beneficiary;

- the strengthening of the coordination of interventions in the field of social services, in order to guarantee, throughout the national territory, the essential levels of services, within the scope of the principles referred to in law no. 328/2000.

To promote greater territorial homogeneity in the provision of services, a coordination body for interventions and social services has been established, set up at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, called the Network for Social Protection and Inclusion. The same Ministry is also assigned powers in the matter of verification and control of compliance with the essential levels of performance on the national territory. With regard to financial coverage, it is envisaged that the implementation of the delegation for the introduction of a national measure to combat poverty and social exclusion will be carried out within the limits of the resources of the Fund for the fight against poverty and exclusion social policy, established at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies by Article 1, paragraph 386, of stability 2016 and refinanced by Article 1, paragraph 389, of the same law.

The decree law 4/2019 establishing the Income and Citizenship Pension has abrogated, from 1 April 2019, almost entirely Chapter II of Legislative Decree 147/2017, dedicated to the ReI. Therefore, from April 2019 the Citizenship Income - RdC (see Box 6) absorbs the ReI which is no longer recognized or renewed. Of the system originally envisaged for the ReI, some provisions remain in force, albeit modified to make them functional to the implementation of the Citizenship Income. Particularly:

- the Pact for social inclusion, to be signed if the need is complex. In such cases, the services of the competent Municipalities for combating poverty carry out a multidimensional

assessment of the family unit in order to start the process of social and work activation involving, in addition to employment services, other competent territorial bodies;

- the multidimensional assessment, aimed at identifying the needs of the family unit and its components in view of the preparation of the Pact for social inclusion for the beneficiaries of the Citizenship Income (Rdc).

Main interventions in the fight against poverty adopted in the period of the Covid-19 emergency

- The National Fund for the fight against poverty and social exclusion (Poverty Fund), established by the 2016 Stability Law with a structural endowment of 1 billion euros per year, following the introduction of the Citizenship Income - RdC has seen finalizing the so-called “service quota” upon reaching the essential levels of social benefits relating to the RdC, or the personalized project and the support provided therein as well as the multidimensional assessment that may precede it. The chap. 3550 Fund for the fight against poverty and social exclusion provides an allocation of 615 million euros for each year of the three-year period 2021-2023. Within this quota, an amount equal to 20 million is aimed at interventions and services in favor of people in conditions of extreme poverty and homelessness.
- In the emergency period from CoVid-19, the decree law 18/2020 (so-called *Cura Italia*), article 40, paragraph 1-ter, addressed the resources of the “service quota” of the Poverty Fund, not used for the suspension of related activi-

ties to the conditionalities linked to Citizenship Income, to the strengthening of social and socio-welfare interventions functional to the ongoing CoVid-19 emergency situation. The reuse of these resources was carried out, by the Municipalities and by the territorial areas of the Regions, for a period of two months starting from the entry into force of the decree law 18/2020 (March 17, 2020).

- With the law decree n. 34/2020 (Article 89, paragraph 2-bis), given the importance of social and health integration in the emergency period, it was intended to ensure the strengthening of social services with a view to integration between the different levels of government. To this end, by 16 September 2020, the regions and autonomous provinces have been committed to defining, with their own deed, the methods to guarantee, even in emergency situations, the access and continuity of social, social assistance and essential social health. The law also underlines that the social services indicated in article 22, paragraph 4, of the framework law n. 328 of 2020 (more precisely the professional social service and the social secretariat, the social emergency service, home assistance, residential and semi-residential structures for people with social fragility and residential or day reception centers) must be considered essential public services even if carried out under concession, accreditation or by agreement, as they are aimed at guaranteeing the enjoyment of constitutionally protected personal rights.
- The budget law 2021 (Article 1, paragraphs 794-804, of Law No. 178 of 2020) intended to strengthen the system

of municipal social services by simultaneously strengthening the interventions and social services to combat poverty in the perspective of achieving an essential level of benefits and social services defined by a ratio between social workers employed in the territorial social services and the resident population equal to 1 to 5,000 in each territorial area, and by the further service objective of a relationship between social workers employed in social services territorial and resident population of 1 to 4,000. Notwithstanding the constraints of limiting personnel expenditure, the law establishes that, for the enhancement of social services, using the resources of the Poverty Fund (for a maximum quota of 180 million), municipalities can recruit social workers, with permanent employment relationship, subject to compliance with the objectives of the balanced budget.

- The decree-law n. 41/2021 (*Sostegni Decree*) provides for the possibility of stipulating one or more fixed-term contracts without the citizenship income being lost or reduced if the value of the family income is in any case equal to or less than 10,000 euros per year (instead of the 6,000 provided for by general legislation, multiplied by the equivalence scale); in such cases, the benefit is not forfeited, but its suspension for a duration corresponding to that of the fixed-term contracts stipulated by the recipient, up to a maximum of six months.
- The decree-law n. 73/2021 (so-called *Sostegno bis*) renewed the Emergency Income - REM (see Box 7) for a further four installments, relating to the monthly payments of June,

July, August and September 2021. The application must be submitted to INPS by 31st July 2021.

Interventions in support of employment and the labor market

In this paragraph we try to shed some light on the structure of active employment policies, on collective bargaining, on the wage levels of workers, precarious and otherwise, on public welfare interventions.

The pandemic has made the conditions of growing insecurity in people's jobs and lives even more evident. It demonstrated the separation and discrimination between those in public or private employment and the growing share of workers who are outside this system. There has been a sudden drop in income for many, especially in the service sector and in the "non-essential" sectors, and especially in the sectors with the highest intensity of female employment. The government has tried to cope with the loss of income with about twenty different forms of allowance for different categories (see Box 8). When it became clear that many people were staying out, Emergency Income was introduced as a residual measure.

During 2020, the Italian labor market has become highly polarized, assuming a characterization it can be represented as a pyramid that has a very broad base and a very high top, but between one step and another in the hierarchy, the work is reduced in an exponential way. Above, at the highest salary and social level, there are few jobs, apparently stable, but subject to a very violent technological and generational burn-out (especially in sectors such as banking, insurance and consulting professions).

Technological innovations, incorporating remote processing, memory and interaction capabilities, make jobs that were once very well paid, obsolete. Furthermore, companies try to accelerate the

generational turn-over, to save on wages and acquire young workers, more open to forms of wage flexibility increasingly linked to performance results. The fixed part of the salary is increasingly reduced, while the variable part is increased, which is linked on the one hand to individual results, and on the other to the collective ones of the department, of the company and of the group. Intermediate careers, concept and executive careers, have very often been absorbed upwards: the executive is asked to do everything alone, without any secretarial support. There is also an immensity of jobs without specific professional content, for executive tasks especially in the agriculture, construction and services sectors. They are occasional, precarious and part-time jobs, which are offered to highly fungible staff. The labor legislation introduced from the second half of the '90s onwards has favored the proliferation of these forms of flexibility: from the Treu package to the Biagi reform, there has been a flourishing of innovative contractual methods, from Co.co.co to Co.co.pro. Companies have taken advantage of this, outsourcing a series of activities and hiring workers in a precarious way, from project work to services by subjects with VAT numbers.

The labor market system has been organized with a series of agencies that intermediate supply and demand for executive work: on the one hand they select the staff and on the other make them available to companies. In many cases, there is direct and personal negotiation between the entrepreneur and the worker and in many others there is still no collective agreement. The cases of Uber and Deliveroo are emblematic: in the first case, they are drivers without any contract, as they are simply users of the same platform to which those looking for a car to be accompanied turn to; in the second case, they are on-call and piecework deliveries (in the latter case only through the intervention of judges, the

workers were able to gain contractual rights and benefits).

Until now, the trade unions have not been able to extend the traditional paradigm of dependent work to these new forms of employment. Hence, there are millions of workers without a national collective bargaining agreement.

It must be said, then, that in Italy there is no legislative determination regarding the minimum wage level per hour worked: the unions, in fact, have always opposed it, because it would damage their function as a contractual party. This despite the minimum hourly wage is established almost everywhere in advanced countries: both in the United States, where trade unions are very little present, and in Germany where there are powerful ones in the engineering sector (such as AEG-Metal).

The low wage trend, which is generally lower than the even low productivity trend, is accompanied by the spread of underpaid jobs (the case of the working poor) and constitutes a fundamental determinant of inequality in the distribution of income, which in turn constitutes an aspect of the larger problem of inequality (educational, territorial, gender, etc.) that undermines social cohesion and, according to most of the economic literature on the subject, also economic growth. Also in terms of inclusion and social cohesion, it is necessary to adapt social policies in the area, as well as an enhancement of social services and a reduction of the forced “familistic” character of Italian welfare, also with the help of the third sector. In the public debate we are faced with an impasse: companies say they cannot find seasonal workers, especially in the hotel and catering sector, because the beneficiaries of the RdC have no intention of giving them up in exchange for a fixed-term job and a remuneration very little higher than what they already receive from the State. On the other hand, those with a university degree try to go to work abroad, where wages

are higher. The most enterprising ones go away, so Italy trains quality labor on behalf of third parties at its own expense.

Ultimately, the misunderstanding that the RdC has set up is to confuse the question of the protection of the unemployed, in various ways, with that of people who are perfectly capable of working, but do not have stable jobs and wages and decent work conditions⁷. The RdC, with an expenditure of over 8 billion euros in 2020, protected a large segment of the population during the crisis but, according to a recent study by the Italian Caritas⁸, it does not reach all the poor. Only 44% of the needy households use it and therefore more than half of the families remain without it. Not only that, among the families who receive the RdC, 36% are not poor. These are the so-called “false positives” which - net of the existing scams for all welfare measures - are in particular individuals (41%) or couples (21%) not considered poor according to statistical measurements, but

⁷ According to the data as of January 31, 2021, 5.1% of the recipients of the measure were not required to meet the obligations, 48.3% had been directed to social inclusion paths and 46.6% to work activation paths with the Centers for use. The people required to sign the Pact for work are a total of 1 million, but only 327,000 have actually entered into it mainly due to the suspension of conditionalities for the CoVid-19 emergency. For the most part they are people who have not even acquired the qualification required by law, or are young people who do not study or work. They do not know how to draw up a curriculum vitae and, in some cases, they do not speak the Italian language. Therefore, people who are difficult to place immediately in the labor market.

⁸ On July 16, 2021, the Italian Caritas presented the sixth edition of the Report on the fight against poverty entitled “Learning from experience, improving responses”. A “plural monitoring of citizenship income” of 490 pages, developed by Caritas operators, scholars from 5 universities, research centers and the OECD, under the scientific direction of Cristiano Gori, exploiting various sources and above all listening to the people who in these months of crisis have turned to Caritas canteens and listening centers.

which fall within the established parameters for the RdC. The report, on the other hand, highlights how poor families who reside in the North, have minor children, have a foreign applicant or have some savings that exceed the permitted threshold, are excluded from the benefits⁹.

The RdC can certainly be improved, but it is necessary to understand well with what purpose. In short, do we want the public sector to regain centrality in the socio-economic system, to allow everyone to work and live in dignity, or do we want to protect only the interests of those who have businesses that make

⁹ Currently - explains the report - 4 out of 10 foreign families are excluded from the possibility of requesting the RdC (mainly due to the request for 10 years of residence). The economic requirement that most of all restricts access to the measure to families in absolute poverty is instead that of movable assets (from 6 thousand to 10 thousand euros maximum, only two thirds of these satisfy it). And, due to a “flat” equivalence scale that disfavors large families with minor children, the RdC inclusion rate decreases as the number of members within the nucleus increases. Finally, with respect to the geographical dimension, in the North the number of families benefiting from the RdC is 37% of those in absolute poverty, in the Center 69% and in the South 95%. This is because the survey on absolute poverty takes into account (correctly) the difference in the cost of living by geographical area and by size of the municipality of residence, while the thresholds and amounts of the RdC are undifferentiated. The precious longitudinal and qualitative survey on the beneficiaries of Caritas services makes it even more evident how the groups of the absolute poor and those receiving RdC are only partially overlapped. Just 55.2% of them took advantage of the RdC between 2019 and 2020, while in particular couples and couples with minor children were excluded, 90% under the age of 50. The Caritas data show how little is intercepted by the RdC in particular the new profiles of poverty, ie those of families characterized by a young age, the presence of minor children and a non-zero employment rate, but with limited incomes. While the most marginal groups without employment and with zero income are better covered. Furthermore, 51% of families benefiting from the RdC are very vulnerable, that is, at the same time present three or more profiles of difficulty (work, health, social exclusion, etc.).

profits by underpaying and overloading their employees? These are the main issues to be resolved on this vitally important issue. Also because for years Italian companies have decided to compete using wage deflation, even in the most dynamic industrial sectors. It is with this differential to their advantage that Italian companies returned to compete on international markets in 2020, bringing the trade balance back to structural surplus.

To remedy the scarce investment in skills, and the consequent slowdown in the transition to a knowledge-based economy, Italian governments have for years announced investments in upskilling, reskilling and life-long learning activities, which should have restarted growth, productivity and improve the competitiveness of Italian SMEs and micro-enterprises. Rhetorically, each government argued that training and upgrading of skills, especially digital, technical and scientific ones, would improve worker mobility and equip them with the skills to meet future labor market challenges. The introduction of an organic and integrated reform in the field of active policies and training has been announced several times, as well as specific measures to promote youth employment, through dual apprenticeships (which combines training and work) and universal civil service. Affirmations and commitments that are also contained in the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience (PNRR).

The National Plan for Recovery and Resilience - PNRR

Like other EU countries, thanks to the EU Next Generation program, Italy will operate through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), a vast program of reforms - including public administration, justice, simplification of legislation, competition, tax - accompanied by adequate investments. Mission 5 of the PNRR is dedicated to the themes of Inclusion and Cohesion and

foresees the pursuit of the following objectives:

- strengthening of active labor and training policies for the employed and unemployed;
- increase in quality youth employment by strengthening the dual system;
- supporting female entrepreneurship as an instrument of economic autonomy;
- strengthening the universal civil service by stabilizing the annual places available;
- strengthening the role of local social services as a tool of resilience by aiming at the definition of personalized models for the care of families, minors and adolescents;
- improving the protection system and inclusion actions in favor of people in conditions of extreme marginalization (ie homeless people) and housing deprivation through a wider offer of structures and services, including temporary ones;
- integrating national policies and investments to ensure a multiple approach that concerns both the availability of more accessible public and private houses, and urban and territorial regeneration;
- providing special interventions for territorial cohesion aimed at reducing the impact of the crisis and creating the conditions for equitable and resilient development in specific territorial areas (Internal Areas, Southern Italy).

Overall, 17.17 billion euros are foreseen to pursue these objectives, allocated to the items Policies for work (6.66 billion), Social infrastructures, families, communities and the Third sector (8.76), and Special interventions for territorial cohesion (1.75). In the intentions of the Italian government, this mission has a very important role in the pursuit of the objectives (reducing gender gaps, young people and the South), transversal to the entire PNRR, of support for female empowerment and the fight against gender discrimination, increase in the employment prospects of young people, territorial rebalancing and development of the Mezzogiorno and inland areas. It is recognized that in order to accompany the modernization of the country's economic system and the transition towards a sustainable and digital economy, policies to support employment transitions and employment are central: training and retraining of workers, attention to the quality of the jobs created, guarantee of income during employment transitions. The Italian government recognizes that despite the important efforts made in recent years, social and family support policies still need to be considerably strengthened and must be included in an organic and systemic planning that aims to overcome the sensitive territorial gaps that exist, with the aim of improving social equity, intergenerational solidarity and the reconciliation of life and work times. For this reason, the Plan allocates important resources to social infrastructures functional to the implementation of policies in support of families, minors, people with serious disabilities and the elderly who are not self-sufficient. These are interventions that should be designed to promote socialization, support independent life paths, also with the renovation of housing that exploit innovative techno-

logies to overcome the physical, sensory and cognitive barriers that are an impediment to the autonomous development of the acts of daily life. In particular, it is stated that: “Through the recognition of the social value of the care activity, it is possible to achieve the double objective of lightening the burdens of care traditionally managed in the family sphere by women and stimulating their greater participation in the labor market. Increasing personal services also means strengthening a sector in which the presence of female employment is higher.”

In defining and implementing projects with a social and territorial value for this mission, the Italian government is committed to making municipalities and in particular metropolitan areas protagonists, where conditions of social hardship and vulnerability are more widespread. It recognizes that the involvement of local authorities is essential to ensure the full funding of the new services provided, which will have to be appropriately strengthened during the planning of the State Budget for the next few years. In addition, it is reiterated that public action will be able to make use of the contribution of the Third Sector. It is recognized that the co-planning of services by exploiting synergies between the public administration and the Third sector.

6.3 In-depth sheets

Box 1. The SURE program

In an attempt to break the deadlock and forge European solidarity, on April 2, 2020 the European Commission fielded the proposal to establish a pan-European unemployment benefit scheme, which had been under discussion for years, to be financed with 100 billion euros. The EU countries have provided guarantees for a total value of 25 billion so that the Commission has been able to issue a debt of up to 100 billion euros which are loaned to the States which will then have to repay them (albeit with extended maturities). Resources that complement national measures and grants normally provided for these purposes under the European Social Fund (ESF).

The SURE (“Temporary support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency”) program worked similarly to the Italian redundancy fund and German *Kurzarbeit* (short-time work) schemes, in which the government provides at least 60% of the lost wages to workers whose hours have been reduced, mitigating the negative economic and social consequences of the pandemic and avoiding mass unemployment in countries like the United States. The program concerns both employees and self-employed workers and allows the adoption of a very wide range of measures, aimed, however, at the preservation of jobs, especially through training courses and the so-called active policies, while speaking in the resolutions for the adoption of a strengthening also of the mechanisms to combat poverty.

SURE is linked to one of the Commission's initiatives led by Ursula von der Leyen, who talked about it in her program for Europe *A more ambitious Union*, where she says: "For this reason I will propose a European unemployment benefit reinsurance scheme, which will protect our citizens and reduce the pressure on public finances in the presence of external shocks". Also in his program, von der Leyen declared herself in favor of using "all the flexibility granted by the rules", of a greater power of legislative initiative by Parliament, of a commitment on the environmental issue ("I want Europe to be the first continent to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050"), of legislative initiatives to enhance the social dimension of the EU ("I want an economy that works for people") starting from the European minimum wage, to make taxes pay to digital multinationals, to defend the rule of law and the right of asylum ("at sea there is an obligation to save lives"), relaunching the reform of the Dublin agreement.

In the Commission's work program for 2020, this initiative was to be launched in the fourth quarter of 2020 and SURE, in fact, is presented as a temporary instrument for the emergency implementation of a European unemployment benefit reinsurance scheme (consistent with the point 4 of the European Pillar of Social Rights) in the specific context of the crisis due to Covid-19, without prejudice to the possible subsequent creation of a permanent instrument under a different legal basis of the TFEU.

In this regard, the Commissioners for the Economy and for Labor and Social Affairs are working together to design this regime, aimed at protecting citizens and reducing pressure

on public finances in the presence of external shocks. The idea of using a form of EU unemployment benefit has long been the subject of debate at European level. The essential terms of the debate are summarized in the justifications of the European Parliament resolution of 16 February 2017 on the fiscal capacity of the euro area, which illustrated a possible dual approach to unemployment insurance, distinguishing between the following two possibilities:

- 1) a direct unemployment benefit system covering the entire Economic and Monetary Union. In this case, a certain amount of unemployment insurance contributions would be paid into a European fund, which would provide basic insurance for the short-term unemployed. On the one hand, such an approach would ensure a direct link between European institutions and citizens, on the other hand it would imply a high degree of economic and labor market harmonization;
- 2) a system of reinsurance of national unemployment schemes, financed by regular contributions from national schemes, to which the European system would provide assistance in the event that unemployment levels reach pre-determined levels. This option, since it does not require any form of harmonization, would be simpler to implement.

As regards the social dimension, the Commission's work program for the period 2019-2024 also foresees:

- support the activities of the new European Labor Authority;
- promote social dialogue between employers and trade unions;
- to ensure that the potential of the ESF+ is exploited to the full in order to help create employment, improve productivity at work and improve labor mobility. The ESF+, with € 88 billion, will continue to be the main EU tool to support the implementation of the Social Pillar and achieve the three main objectives proposed by the EU. The implementation of the principles of the Social Pillar and the challenges identified in the country-specific recommendations adopted in the context of the European Semester will form the basis for the preparation of the ESF + operational programs by the Member States. With this new tool:

* at least 25% of ESF+ resources at national level should be spent on fighting poverty and social exclusion, of which the Member States most affected by child poverty should invest at least 5% in measures to fight child poverty. All others should equally allocate adequate amounts for the implementation of the future child guarantee. Furthermore, all Member States will have to devote at least 3% of their share of the ESF+ to the fight against material deprivation;

* to combat youth unemployment, Member States will have to allocate at least 12.5% of resources to young people who do not have a job or are in education and training (NEET),

where the relative percentage falling into this group is higher the EU average, while all other Member States will have to allocate an appropriate amount to the implementation of the enhanced Youth Guarantee;

* Member States must allocate an adequate share to the capacity building of the social partners and civil society organizations; where Member States have a country-specific recommendation in this area, 0.25% of the ESF+ resources should be programmed.

- work with Member States to strengthen social protection systems in Europe, in particular using the European Semester to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement;
- Strengthen the Youth Guarantee and develop a European Childhood Guarantee as a tool to combat poverty and guarantee children's access to basic services;
- develop a European action plan for the social economy to improve social innovation;
- directing the work of the European Commission for the implementation and updating of the Skills Agenda.

Box 2. Next Generation UE

It should be remembered that despite the announcements and appeals, for some months a coordinated and cooperative reaction from the Eurozone countries continued to be lacking on a fiscal level. Almost 30 years after the Maastricht Treaty, there was no mechanism that would allow eurozone governments to respond jointly to a crisis which, like the pandemic, hit all countries hard. As a result, political reactions to the pandemic have been national for weeks, accentuating differences rather than bringing Europe together in a time of crisis. Faced with a symmetrical shock, the euro zone continued to respond asymmetrically. The only common institution capable of intervening remained the ECB with its monetary policies. There were considerable differences in the tax conditions of different countries and this was causing strong divergences in policy responses.

The Eurozone needed a joint fiscal response of € 1,000-1,500 billion (in line with those deployed in the US, Japan and Great Britain) to the CoVid-19 crisis so that all countries of the Monetary Union could be able to do whatever it takes to respond to the public health catastrophe and, once the lockdown is over, to rebuild national economies. A new dramatic situation that required new ambitious common responses. For days, three main options were discussed - the joint issuance of bonds guaranteed by the ECB and with long maturities; the use of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and the use of the European Investment Bank (EIB). For weeks there has been a conflict between the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Finland - the so-called

“frugal four” (all with public debts just under or just over 60% of GDP) - and the heads of government of nine countries (Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain, almost all with public debts close to or above 100% of GDP). The latter have asked for the issuance of “a common debt instrument”, a Eurobond defined on the *coronabond* occasion, to raise funds on the market on the same basis and for the benefit of all Member States to fight the pandemic (25 March 2020). “The pandemic knows no borders, the economic and financial response must be powerful, cohesive and timely,” they wrote. But, the former were clearly opposed to the hypothesis of pooling the debt and only in favor of the use of the ESM. They argued that the issuance of a common debt instrument would punish countries that had been saving for troubled times and would encourage further fiscal mismanagement by those who did not. German minister Altmeir said that “the discussion on Eurobonds is a debate on ghosts”. The “frugal” countries wagered on their ability to “go it alone” and get out of the crisis further strengthened, in relative terms, in their economic hegemony.

After several online summits of the European Council (26 March; 23 April; 19 June) and the Eurogroup (7 April), during which different positions clashed (highlighting a North-South split between the countries), at the European Council on 17 -18 July (carried out in presence in Brussels) the Franco-German proposal (also supported by a resolution of the European Parliament of 17 April) of a “Recovery Fund”, linked to the EU budget, to be financed with EU

common bonds issued by the Commission (based on Article 122 of the EU Treaty and already used on other occasions), providing for constraints for grants: “be based on a clear commitment by Member States to follow sound economic policies and an agenda of ambitious reforms “. In particular, it has been foreseen that the money will have to be spent on investments in the transition of the EU and the Member States towards a “greener” and digital economy and to promote research and innovation. In the wake of the Franco-German agreement, on May 27 the European Commission presented to the European Parliament a funding plan on the market with long-term securities of 750 billion euros to be disbursed to EU countries in grants (390 billion) and repayable loans (360 billion) to help them recover from the coronavirus crash. Much of the money goes to Italy and Spain. The Recovery Fund package - called Next Generation EU:

- has been active since the second half of 2021 with the approval and funding of the National Plans for Recovery and Resilience (PNRR). The 750 billion euro will be found on the markets through “European bonds”, guaranteed by the individual states on a pro-quota basis, as a percentage of GDP. In this sense, it is a “debt sharing” that can represent the start of a path that could lead to the creation of a Community Treasury with the function of giving stability to the euro area.

With the EU Next Generation and the new seven-year budget 2021-2027, the Commission is convinced that it can guide the countries of the European Union in the double

green and digital transition and start a new cycle of economic growth, with the aim of making the a zero-carbon continent in 2050. Resources and programs that should also make it possible to finance large-scale social projects. The 4 priority objectives of the NGUE are: 1) to promote the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Union; 2) economic strengthening and social resilience; 3) mitigate the social and economic impact of the crisis; 4) support green and digital transitions.

Box 3. TFEU

Article 3 (TFEU, paragraph 3) establishes that the Union “establishes an internal market” and strives for sustainable development, balanced growth and a highly competitive social market economy, aiming “at full employment and social progress”. Its substantive objectives include the fight against social exclusion and discrimination and the promotion of justice and social protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and the protection of children’s rights. We recall that according to Article 2 (TFEU), the values on which the EU rests are: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, respect for human rights. These values are recognized as shared by all Member States “in a society characterized by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men”. A series of rules and measures have also been envisaged aimed at promo-

ting employment and inclusion and enriching national protection systems with “social investment” policies (policies for children, for reconciliation, for education and training, for employment, etc.).

The problem is that the European Union, as it worked until before the pandemic, with its almost exclusive emphasis on economic and monetary issues resolved in a neoliberal key, did not allow the necessary relaunch of inclusive and sustainable growth, leaving open only the way for policies that go in the opposite direction to the objectives set out in Articles 2 and 3 of the TFEU. But, the pandemic has made it clear that it is no longer possible to continue living in a Union that has a single market and a common currency, but a different access to education, health care and social assistance between one country and another.

Although economic and social policies are of national competence, as confirmed by the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 (art. 5 TFEU), the neoliberal “external constraint” placed by the Union has become an iron cage that has imprisoned all nation states¹⁰, made them powerless and helped to delegitimize them in the eyes of their citizens: it placed fiscal, debt and deficit constraints, which very often were too rigid and precluded states redistributive policies focused on supporting demand, while they offered their few opportunities and support for industrial programs and policies that provide for significant public-private investments.

The homogenization of the various national economies, the

¹⁰ Moro D., *La gabbia dell'euro. Perché uscirne e internazionalista e di sinistra*, Imprimatur, Reggio Emilia, 2018.

reduction of structural imbalances, should be the task of the European Union, but the system of institutional functions and economic rules established by the treaties did not actually allow it. And this has been difficult to achieve even through the residual powers of economic sovereignty that are left to the nation states that theoretically could resort to taxation, but the free movement of capital requires them not to do so, under penalty of further decrease in tax revenues and the cancellation of jobs.

The constraints on budgetary policies and the loss of monetary sovereignty, the cessation of determining the rate of inflation at the national level, have prevented policies to support demand and made it difficult, at the level of the single State, to carry out a new cycle of investments necessary for growth. of the production system and the adaptation of essential services to development and social well-being. Nor, on the other hand, did the European Treaty provide for the EU budget to play a role in contrasting recessions (ie for countercyclical purposes). The European Parliament has no Community economic resources to allocate, while the Eurozone has a common currency, but not a common tax system. The European budget continued to be based for more than 90% on national financial transfers and to be around 1% of EU GDP.

Therefore, investments in the Eurozone have been in free fall for many years. In particular, net investments, that is, those that contribute to the growth of a country's capital: from 2007 to 2013 they fell by 75%, driven by the collapse of investments in the construction sector, in turn frozen by the

fall in real estate values. From 2010 to 2015, the reduction in net public investments accounted for approximately 20% of the total fiscal consolidation maneuvers implemented in the 12 founding countries of the Euro area which entered into austerity, with peaks of 33% in Spain and 27.5% in Portugal. In Spain, public investment fell by almost 11% annually until 2013. In France, the public investment/GDP ratio returned to the level of the 1950s (3.5%) after hitting 5.5% in the 70s. In Italy, total net fixed investments (including public ones) were even negative for three consecutive years, from 2013 to 2015. In almost all Eurozone countries, the ratio of public investment to total investment was much lower in 2013 than it was in 1999, when the single currency was launched. Only starting from 2018 there was a first slight increase.

It was public investment in particular that lost out, because to make ends meet, investment spending can be cut faster than social spending and with lower political costs in the short term. However, these cuts have led to a drastic restriction of public capital, also putting at risk the realization of large transport infrastructure projects that require constant and prolonged spending over time.

The same constraints on budgetary policies have meant that the welfare systems that have characterized Western Europe since the war, constituting a crucial factor of social aggregation, among the most advanced compared to other democracies, have been downsized in recent years, including if in a much less radical way than, for example, what happened in the United States and even if new types of wel-

fare benefits have been extended since the 1990s (in particular with regard to active labor market policy, parental rights and childcare). In particular, the tight fiscal constraints have made social investment policies difficult to implement precisely in the peripheral and weaker economically-productive countries that would most need them. In any case, the cut in social spending has characterized all European countries, as have restrictive wage policies. All this has affected social interests everywhere that seemed consolidated and made inequalities, poverty and growing opposition to the European integration process grow within the various countries. In the new post-pandemic political-cultural climate, the European establishment goes so far as to affirm that it wants a European Union that is capable of assuming social objectives and the so-called “European social model” (able to combine economic growth with security social), understood as a combination of mixed economy (with the market, yes, but regulated and integrated by the public) and the welfare state, as central to its mission, just as fiscal and macroeconomic objectives have been up to now. A European Union that is able to relaunch collaboration and interaction between the public and private sectors to relaunch investments in technological and social innovation, in the general public interest, to create new scenarios and growth expectations. An ecologically compatible economy requires not only renewable energy, but also different materials, modern infrastructures, more respectful of the environment. It means thinking about how to transform all sectors of the economy, including services.

Box 4. Support for Active Inclusion - SIA

The SIA is an economic service subjected to the test of means, and therefore a categorical instrument, as it is aimed exclusively at families with minors in difficult situations (ISEE less than 3,000 euros and assets less than 8,000 euros; social security and assistance not exceeding 600 euros per month; restrictions on the possession of vehicles). Furthermore, the members of the nucleus must be unemployed and at least one of them must have carried out continuous work for a minimum of six months in the three years preceding the request for the SIA. Finally, the presence of more than two minor children or minor children with disabilities in the applicant nucleus constitutes a criterion of precedence in accessing the benefit, just as single-parent families with minors and those with housing difficulties are preferred for granting the benefit. In order to benefit from the monetary transfer, the family unit must stipulate and respect an insertion pact with the social services of the local authorities of reference. The social services, for their part, undertake to favor the process of inclusion and social activation of all members of the nucleus with accompanying services, promoting, among other things, the connection with the employment centers, for the participation in the adult labor market, and the connection with the school and health system for the fulfillment by minors of compulsory schooling and compliance with the protocols of pediatric health visits. The characteristics of the households beneficiaries of the project have been identified in agreement with the cities concerned, while the INPS is the implementing body of the project for the granting of financial contributions and prepares, for this purpose, the digital tools for the exchange of flows information with the municipalities involved.

Box 5. Income for Inclusion - ReI

Income for inclusion (ReI) is divided into an economic benefit and a component of services to the person, ensured by the network of social services through a personalized project that meets the needs of the family benefiting from the measure. The single measure at national level, understood as the strengthening, extension and consolidation of the experimental purchasing card - SIA -, is conditional on proof of means, on the basis of the equivalent economic situation indicator (ISEE), taking into account the effective disposable income and of spending power indicators. The beneficiaries of the measure are identified, providing for a requirement of minimum duration of residence in the national territory in compliance with the European Union, as a matter of priority, among families with minor children or with serious disabilities or with women in a confirmed state of pregnancy or with people over 55 who are unemployed. The extension of the national measure to combat poverty will take place on the basis of the resources that flow to the Fund for the fight against poverty and social exclusion. With a view to the progressive extension of the measure, the 2018 budget law repealed from 1 July 2018 the family requirements (presence of a minor or a disabled person or a pregnant woman) required, in the transitional phase of first application, for access to the measure. The ReI was financed within the limits of the resources of the Fund for the fight against poverty and social exclusion, established by the 2016 Stability Law, of which a portion was allocated to the strengthening and programming of interventions and social services aimed at households beneficiary family members. In the face of certain and

programmed resources, the ReI was recognized as an “essential level of performance” in the context of need and poverty, consequently, the services and interventions that accompanied the family unit from the moment were also considered essential levels of performance. of the ReI request for freedom from the condition of poverty and social exclusion: from access to services, to the assessment of the condition of need, to personalized planning up to the identification of support for the family unit and the commitments undertaken by its members.

Box 6. Citizenship Income

The Citizenship Income is defined as a “fundamental measure of active labor policy to guarantee the right to work, to combat poverty, inequality and social exclusion, as well as to promote the right to information, education, training and culture through policies aimed at economic support and social integration of those at risk of marginalization in society and in the world of work”. This benefit takes the name of Citizenship Pension in the case of families composed exclusively of one or more members aged 67 or over (adjusted to increases in life expectancy).

It is, therefore, a welfare measure that takes the place of a universal unemployment allowance that has never been introduced in Italy, but also of a universal and unconditional basic income, released from the so-called active labor policies, also never introduced in Italy. The RdC was accompanied by the establishment of a national public ap-

paratus, the ANPAL, which was supposed to take charge of the owners of the RdC in order to offer a job as an alternative. The truth is that the Employment Centers depend on the Regions (not on the Ministry of Labor) and that the private temporary employment agencies have continued to carry out their labor intermediation activities. Nothing to do, therefore, neither with the French Pôle emploi, nor with the German public system that manages the mini-jobs and with the public benefits that are provided locally to supplement these incomes which are below the survival level.

To be entitled to the RDC it is necessary to jointly possess certain residency, income and property requirements (among others, to be Italian citizens, European citizens or long-term residents and to have resided in Italy for at least 10 years, of which the last 2 continuously and an ISEE of less than 9,360 euros per year), referring to the family unit. The applicant for the benefit must not be subjected to a personal precautionary measure, also adopted following validation of the arrest or detention, or having received final convictions, occurring in the ten years preceding the request, for certain crimes.

The economic benefit of the RdC consists of an integration of family income, up to a threshold, on an annual basis, of 6,000 euros, multiplied, in the case of households with more than one member, by the corresponding parameter of a given equivalence scale. To this threshold is added, in the event that the household resides in a rented house, a component equal to the amount of the annual rent established in the same lease contract.

The RdC can be enjoyed for a period of eighteen months, renewable provided that it is suspended for one month. The suspension does not operate in the case of Citizenship Pension. The person (and not the entire family unit) unemployed following voluntary resignation, in the twelve months following the date of resignation, is excluded from the right to citizenship income, subject to resignation for just cause. The Guidelines for the definition of the Inclusion Pacts have regulated the interaction with social services within the overall draft of the law decree 4/2019. In fact, the Citizenship Income provides for the provision of an economic benefit conditional on the declaration of immediate availability for work by the adult members of the family unit, as well as adherence to a personalized path of accompaniment to work placement and social inclusion, which includes activities at the service of the community, professional retraining, completion of studies, as well as other commitments aimed at entering the labor market and social inclusion. The path of accompaniment to work is defined by means of a Pact for work, stipulated by the beneficiaries with the Employment Centers (CPI), or a Pact for social inclusion, stipulated with the social services dedicated to combating poverty. Families in which there is at least one member who has recently left the labor market are summoned by the Employment Centers. The remaining nuclei are summoned by the social services responsible for combating poverty, in order to carry out an assessment capable of identifying the needs of the entire family unit. In fact, the definition of the Pact for inclusion, which provides for specific commitments on the part

of the family and support from the local services, requires a multidimensional assessment to be carried out in advance aimed at identifying the needs of the family unit and its members, taking into account the core resources and vulnerability factors, as well as environmental and support factors present. The multidimensional assessment is organized in a Preliminary Analysis, aimed at all the beneficiaries of the Citizenship Income called by the social services, and in an in-depth analysis framework, carried out where necessary, in case the need arises based on the overall conditions of the nucleus. detected through the Preliminary Analysis.

Box 7. Emergency income - REM

The decree-law n. 34/2020 (Relaunch Decree) established the Emergency Income - REM, an extraordinary support aimed at families in conditions of economic need due to the emergency, who had not had access to the support provided for this purpose by the Italian Care Decree (law decree no. 18/2020). The benefit was paid in two installments (i.e. it was paid twice), each of which included between 400 and 800 euros, depending on the size of the family unit and the presence of disabled or non self-sufficient members (in the latter case up to 840 euros). Subsequently, the law decree n. 104/2020 (the so-called August Decree), without prejudice to the disbursements already granted by the Rem, recognized, on request, a further single quota of Rem, disbursed to households - in possession of the legal

requirements - who submit a new application, regardless of 'have already requested, and possibly obtained, the benefit. Lastly, Article 14 of Law Decree 137 of 2020 (so-called Refreshment Decree) recognized the same quota for families already beneficiaries of the REM, also for the months of November and December 2020.

For 2021, the law decree n. 41/2021 provided for the recognition, on request, of three Remuneration quotas (for the months of March, April and May 2021), of an amount equivalent to the quotas recognized in 2020; moreover the law decree n. 41/2021 it then introduced some significant changes with respect to the legislation that regulated the Rem in 2020. The access threshold is increased by one twelfth of the annual value of the rent as declared for ISEE purposes. Another novelty is the recognition of the aforementioned three shares of REM, to the extent envisaged for nuclei composed of a single component (400 euros), also in favor of subjects with valid ISEE not exceeding 30,000 euros, who have terminated the services of NASpI and DIS-COLL between the period between 1 July 2020 and 28 February 2021. The deadlines for submitting Rem applications have been extended to May 31, 2021.

Box 8. Emergency interventions for work

In order to deal with the epidemiological emergency from Covid-19, various regulatory interventions have been implemented and multiple measures have been introduced. From a labor point of view, the aforementioned measures were aimed, among other things, at the protection of workers, with the aim, in particular, of favoring the performance of work in an agile way and of providing income support tools, as a result of the reduction or suspension of work resulting from the emergency. A series of measures have been approved and implemented, contained, in particular, in decree law no. 18 of 2020, which extended the measures initially envisaged only for certain areas (so-called red zones) to the entire national territory, as well as in decree law no. 34 of 2020 (the so-called Relaunch decree), in the decree-law n. 104 of 2020 (so-called August decree), in the decree-law n. 137 of 2020 (so-called Ristori decree), in the decree-law n. 183 of 2020, in the decree-law n. 41 of 2021 (so-called Sostegni decree) and in decree-law no. 73 of 2021 (so-called Sostegni-bis), which further expanded the aforementioned measures.

The so-called Cura Italia decree and then the Relaunch decree and gradually other measures, introduced different forms of social safety nets for the different categories: ordinary and extraordinary redundancy fund¹¹, solidari-

¹¹ With regard to social safety nets, as a consequence of the epidemiological emergency, special provisions have been introduced - such as procedural simplifications, derogations from the limits of overall duration and exemptions, even partial, from the payment of additional contributions - for ordinary salary integration treatments and by way

ty check, ordinary check - wage integration fund, for employees.

Then there was the Covid-19 indemnity, divided into categories of recipients: freelancers with a VAT number, workers with Co.Co.Co. relationships, self-employed workers enrolled in the special management of the compulsory general insurance (AGO), seasonal workers in tourism and spas, temporary workers, employed in the same sectors, workers in the agricultural sector, workers enrolled in the FPLS (Entertainment Workers Fund), in charge of home sales, domestic workers, agricultural workers, intermittent workers, holders of collaboration relationships with national sports federations, sports promotion bodies, amateur sports clubs and associations.

When it became clear that many people were staying out, the government introduced Emergency Income as a residual measure.

of derogation, and ordinary allowance required for suspension or reduction of working activity following the epidemiological emergency from CoVid-19.

Chapter 7

WHAT CILAP EAPN ITALY IS DOING

by *Nicoletta Teodosi, Cilap Eapn Italy*

Between the end of 2020 and the first half of 2021, Cilap's activities focused on information and raising awareness on what happened in Europe and in Italy, after the new Commission and the pandemic.

In September 2020 Cilap was present at the meeting organized by the European Commission on the State of the Union (SOTEU) where President Ursula Von der Layen presented the Commission's line "No Europe first, but Europe for all" and "Every life is matter" (referring to vaccines for all), with the programs to be launched in the short term:

1. **Health:** a Global Health Summit (GHS) to be held in Italy in 2021 to show that what has happened in Europe, particularly in some countries, has served as a lesson. Achieving European health and access to health for all must be a must, since those who give up treatment are people in poverty.
2. **Work:** a fair globalization based on honesty. The relocation of European production activities have shown that in case of need, Europe and Italy are not ready.

3. **Foreign policy:** the firm stance towards Russia and China, Turkey (Belarus, Navalj, Hong Kong) for human rights (the distance increases), but also the distance from Trump's US (that's why "No Europe first").
4. **Africa:** it is considered a key partner for the climate, trade, digital economy. We add that international development cooperation should change pace: not only social, but also productive activities in the agricultural sector, the circular economy, renewable energy. The endemic poverty of poor countries is also defeated with work, but by avoiding exporting "Western" models and instead spreading the good practices that are developing in Africa.
5. **Migrations:** migrations have always existed and will always be there. Saving lives at sea is not an option but a duty. Whoever has the right to remain and be part of the society.
6. **Inequalities:** in Europe there must be no "LGBTQ+ free areas" that will not be tolerated.

Participation in the European activities of the Fead continued. From being a Network (until 2019) it turns into a Community, with both institutional participants and organizations that in Europe deal with food distribution, basic necessities and social inclusion paths, both with organizations such as the national EAPN networks that deal with information and awareness activities, not only towards their members.

The voluntary organizations active in the distribution of basic necessities faced with other problems, other challenges in re-

sponding to the needs of the new beneficiaries and applicants: they must have greater flexibility; improve and strengthen the partnership with local authorities; provide integrated responses with the Fead; reach new beneficiaries, explain them how to access employment, social and training services; identify new beneficiaries; fight against stigmatization, especially of those who have never needed help.

For voluntary organizations, therefore, 2020 and 2021 marked a dividing line: they cannot and have not been able to continue as if nothing had happened.

Participation in the institutional tables of the Ministry of Economy (MEF) continued with regard to the 2021-2027 Programming, and with the **Ministry of Labor and Social Policies** in relation to the Social Protection Network and the 2014-2020 Monitoring Committee.

71. Monitoring Committee: written consultation for the modification of Axes 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Inclusion Plan 2014-2020 (extract of Oct 21, 2020)

When we talk about integrated social policies, these should interact with active labor policies, educational, health and training ones in order to facilitate a positive development of the social fabric, at least of those who can follow certain paths. It has been talked about at European level since the ESF was created (and perhaps even before), but we are still very far from the social matter being considered mainstream.

In Italy (public opinion) there is no visibility of interventions in favor of LGBTQ community, in particular towards Trans people who increase in the suburban streets of the biggest cities. Hence the axiom Trans = prostitution. A greater commit-

ment on the part of the Institutions is necessary because local communities are obviously not able to tackle transversal issues that may be new to social services.

The national project for the **school inclusion of Roma children** is important, but systematic actions to include and integrate families are still missing: from the search for accommodation (no one offers them a rented house, albeit with due public guarantees).

Public social communication should be more efficient and effective: both for access to services and to make public opinion aware of the measures in place. Its invisibility is very evident and the problem has to be solved.

7.2 Input to the Inclusion Plan Monitoring Committee (extract of Nov 26, 2020)

With the reprogramming of the Inclusion Plan (PON) in 2019, “the need to extend the measures possibly financed with the PON, in addition to the beneficiaries of the Citizenship Income, also to those identified in need by social services, regardless of the economic condition or who, for other reasons, cannot access the Citizenship Income”. It is necessary for each area to sign an **Interinstitutional Agreement with the Region, Local Health Service (ASL), Schools, Employment centers (CPI)** to strengthen the integrated territorial system in order to make social policies mainstream as provided for in the guidelines (Feb, 2016). This means that we need acts that deliberate responsible governance.

7.3 Contribution to Policy Objectives for the 2021-2027 Partnership Agreement “strategic choices for informal dialogue with the Commission” (extract of Dec 27, 2020)

In the last 20 years, experiences and practices have been implemented in social policies (national and territorial) that deserve

to be highlighted and become essential levels, such as peer education for minors and adolescents to reduce school dropout and bullying or linguistic-cultural mediation for the social and labor integration of migrants, also in light of recent national and regional regulations against exploitation and illegal hiring.

For a Smarter Europe, in relation to the Research and Innovation theme, reference is made to “innovative procurement also geared to addressing social challenges”. It seems a good indication, but in the tenders and assignments for territorial social services (provided that reference is also made to these sectors) the Procurement Code and all the procedures envisaged dominate, which certainly do not improve the offer of services (rotation of managing bodies in primis) and do not guarantee the maintenance of employment, but in contrast favoring a widespread turnover and precariousness of and in social enterprises.

With reference to **Digitization**, the development of digital technologies is very important, in particular as regards the interoperability of systems (for example: ASL data with data from Municipalities or Schools) and the construction of databases accessible to those who have to do research. and create territorial observatories from which the planning of interventions originates.

Security is also mentioned in this specific objective, so we ask if social security is covered too.

A more social Europe: when will employment services be improved? Almost 7 years have passed since the 2014-2020 Partnership Agreement, which envisaged the strengthening of the Public Administration (PA), also with reference to the labor market. The competences have passed from the Provinces to the Regions, but to date, the process of instrumental and human resources

(and therefore organizational) strengthening of the CPI has not been completed. Access for young people (including Neet), women, psychiatric and psychic patients (despite LG 68/99; LG on reconciling time and hours between family and working life) is connected to the public system of employment services; all the national and regional regulations that in recent years should have favored an increase in employment even for vulnerable subjects). As far as education, training and skills are concerned, educational poverty is also fought by resuming peer education projects and experiences in primary and secondary schools of I and II level, started with Law 285/97 in the 2000s.

As regards the paths of Inclusion and social protection, Cilap's proposal was the consideration of **participatory and integrated planning for the construction of intervention models aimed at social security**. Between the 1990s and early 2000s, there were many experiences and theorizations on this issue that gave important results transformed into good practices.

With regard to the social and labor integration of migrants, linguistic-cultural mediation should be included among the functions of the activities for access to services (Social Secretariat and PUA). In relation to social innovation, Cilap believes that the transition from project to service is already an innovative process that would avoid a proliferation of interventions that are difficult to evaluate and subject to annual tenders with the consequences of increasing administrative procedures, extensions, turnover, dispersion of experience and skills.

A Europe closer to the citizens: the territory is the place where nationally outlined practices can be developed by combining different financial resources and approaches, centered on the needs of citizens. Local development, which is also sustainable today,

must be based on social, health, educational, environmental and cultural investments; to do this it is necessary that the local territorial strategies, before they can be planned, are supported by effective updating and training courses for all the actors involved: politicians, administrators, technicians.

7.4 Meeting with the UN representative on extreme poverty and human rights (extract of Dec 16, 2020)

In Italy there is no shortage of laws, "cohesion" must be strengthened, understood as the harmonization of practices that leave less room for singularities. At the national level, it seems to us that social policies, as set up in recent years, are slowly moving in the direction of building a country system. In 2015, with a budget law, the National Fund for the fight against poverty was established. For the first time, poverty becomes a "structured" issue of national interest. This is followed by the Activation of the PON Inclusion (Operational National Plan for Social Inclusion) for the strengthening of local services, the Inclusion Income (Rei) in 2018, replaced by the Citizenship Income (RdC) in 2019.

In the field of social policies, the strategies addressed and prepared in recent years (starting from 328/2000 to arrive at the measures undertaken in 2015), have given an impetus to social welfare services that are mandatory throughout the country as experimental. Even today, however, there are still strong criticalities in their implementation. The distance between the North and South of the country remains and does not seem to be reducing. Cilap has always expressed his **criticalities both in reference to the ReI and to the RdC** in all public consultations. The two European projects (Emin 1 and Emin 2) have shown that in Italy a measure of income is necessary if it is adequate to the socio-economic and environmental conditions of the person and the family unit.

7.5 Proposals

At the local level

Governance is required, an institutional architecture that works with the local institutional bodies (municipalities, local health authorities, employment centers, schools, judicial system) signatories of local development agreements (e.g. Social Agency Unit) with specific objectives in agreement; a local partnership agreement between profit and non-profit organizations that work in synergy with those responsible for public policies; with intervention plans capable of responding to the different needs of the territories, understood as a whole.

A Social Observatory starting from the Planning Offices (Social Agency Unit) that brings information and data to the regional Observatories and from these to the national ones.

At the national level

Evaluation of the RdC, three years after its activation, based on certain data: beneficiaries, units, needs met, etc. To do this, it is necessary to activate a data set capable of “capturing” all the social, demographic, economic and environmental variables.

Chapter 8

KEY 2020/2021 MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

by Nicoletta Teodosi, Cilap Eapn Italy

There are several inputs that emerge from Poverty Watch 2021. Both at the institutional level, with the strengthening of governance and the acknowledgment of the effort of those who work with people in poverty, facing solutions that go beyond bureaucratic procedures which can lead to European measures or guidelines.

Recommendations at a National level:

1. Overcoming the contradictions between access to rights and awareness of their exercise through better and qualified information
2. Consider the Social Service as the territorial system of reference for assistance of citizens in conditions of poverty and social exclusion
3. Acknowledge the contribution of the third sector and the voluntary sector, which tackle situations of poverty with efficiency and effectiveness
4. Strengthen vertical subsidiarity, through governance agreements between territorial actors who have signed pacts for local and sustainable development

5. Implement horizontal subsidiarity by promoting partnership between the third sector, trade unions and local institutions for the construction of intervention plans able to respond to the local needs
6. Evaluate measures to fight poverty every three years from their inception.

Recommendations at a European level:

7. Create a social compact, a social pact, able to address the most urgent needs
8. Go beyond the SURE by establishing a European unemployment insurance
9. Establish a European Social Observatory where national data can be collected.

In thinking of absolute or relative poverty, we have taken into account all the aspects that we consider necessary for a broad consensus to be activated at all institutional and territorial levels. However, the implementation of the measures must not be confined between civil society organizations and local authorities only because they are directly in contact with people in need of assistance.

Chapter 9

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