



Overview of employer-provided childcare practices in Italy

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HIGH QUALITY CHILDCARE FACILITIES AS AN EUROPEAN GOAL

The availability, accessibility and affordability of high quality childcare facilities are crucial for enabling women, and men, with caring responsibilities, to participate in the labour market.

As far back as 2002, the Barcelona European Council recognised this situation and set objectives with regard to the availability of high quality and affordable childcare facilities for pre-school children

"Member states should remove disincentives to female labour force participation and strive, taking into account the demand for childcare facilities and in line with national patterns of provision, to provide childcare by 2010 to 90 % of children from age 3 until mandatory school age; and to 33 % of children under 3 years of age.

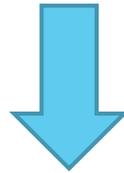
All in all the Barcelona target for childcare for children from 0 to 3 has generally been reached in the EU, even if important differences persist among Member States. Focused not only on the availability of childcare, but also on accessibility, affordability and quality of available childcare.

Early childhood education and care in Italy (1)

- ▶ Early childhood education and care is organised in the **‘integrated system 0-6’** that was introduced by law 107/2017 and is regulated by the D.Lgs 65/2017 (from assistance to education). The integrated system is part of the education system and is organised into two separate levels that welcome children according to their age:
 - ❖ the **‘educational services for childhood’** (*servizi educativi per l’infanzia*), from now on referred to as **‘educational services’**, for children aged between 0 and 3 years both centre-based and home-based;
 - ❖ **‘childhood school’** (*scuola dell’infanzia*), from now on referred to as **pre-primary school**, for children from 3 to 6 years of age.
- ▶ **Attendance is not compulsory and families pay fees.**
- ▶ **ECEC services for children aged 0-3 are run directly by the municipalities or indirectly by private and public subjects**, based on the criteria defined by regional and central regulations. The Regions are in charge of the organisation of this ECEC level in their own territories. The Ministry of education has a general responsibility for the allocation of financial resources to local authorities, for the provision of educational guidelines, for the promotion of the integrated system at local level.
- ▶ **Coverage rate is strongly increased** in the last 10 years moving from 17.7% in 2008 to 25.6% in 2019 (below the Barcellona target and below the EU average rate). This rate is **very variable** between different regions (30 vs 10), urban and rural areas, household characteristics in terms of education and labour status.

Employer-provided childcare in Italy

- ▶ A **growing reality** but still not so developed.
- ▶ Usually created by **big companies** in more economically developed urban areas.
- ▶ **SMEs still struggle** to offer such services for the high costs and the risk of not adequate children turnover over time.



- ▶ **Challenge** of increasing the number of companies involved in such services also including SMEs:
 - A) increasing **incentives** (moving from 2000 euro to 3000 euro for each children to be fiscally deducted)
 - B) Increasing **awareness**
 - C) Developing **partnerships** among companies, among public and private stakeholders (territorial welfare)

REFLEX - *Reconciliation and flexibility: reconciling new work and care needs*

- ▶ Coordinated by the Department for Family Policies of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers (DPF).
- ▶ PARTNERS: IRS - Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale and University ROMA 3

MAIN FOCUS OF THE PROJECT

Development of a **set of initiatives to support companies**, with a **specific view to promoting work-life balance** through the implementation of study and research, capacity building, training, monitoring and evaluation activities, as well as through the **exchange of good practices** among the **different stakeholders and awareness-raising campaigns**.

MAIN RESULTS to date:

- ▶ Mapping of nearly 600 practices and initiatives in place in the Italian Companies participating within the project activities
- ▶ Artificial Intelligence System to interact within the Companies, easy to join
- ▶ Creation of a Community for the assessment and exchange of information and experiences among Italian companies

REFLEX PROJECT

Catalogue on work life balance measures

- ▶ It is structured around **main thematic areas** that cover all different and possible actions/measures on the work-life balance related issues such as, for example:
 - ❑ initiatives for the well-being of workers;
 - ❑ smart working;
 - ❑ part time;
 - ❑ time-saving services;
 - ❑ initiatives to support the family and the birth rate and motherhood;
 - ❑ **company nurseries and / or childcare support;**
 - ❑ support in the management of disabled and/or elderly subjects in the family;
 - ❑ leaves.

- ▶ The Catalogue of Work life balance measures can be accessed by the project digital application (to be formally launched on the 20th of July 2021)

EXAMPLES OF MAPPED PRACTICES

The «Filonido experience»

MAIN FEATURES

- ▶ **Public-private partnerships**

Starting in 2011 from an agreement between the Emilia-Romagna Region and the Municipality of Bologna allowing the creation of a **public childcare facility**;

- ▶ **Inter-companies**

Three companies based in the local area (Hera, Unipol, Legacoop Bologna) signed the agreement and bear part of the costs.

- ▶ **Territorial openness**

The nursery (3-36 months) is also open to the local area citizens.

- ▶ **Pedagogical project and innovation**

Shared project among key stakeholders

EXAMPLES OF MAPPED PRACTICES

Artsana

The Company pays particular attention to the needs of parents' and children's wellbeing. Dedicated benefits for parents or prospective parents to simplify work-life balance have implemented. Examples include flexible work schedules and smart working, company kindergarten and counselling services on important topics from birth to adolescence.

The **Children's Village** is the company nursery of Artsana active since 2004 and based in Grandate (CO), accessible both to the children of Artsana employees (aged between 3 months and 3 years) and to children from private users from the local area.

FEATURES

- An educational path and a personalized method;
- respect for the times, characteristics and freedom of each child;
- the teaching of English as a daily constant;
- gardens and courtyards for exclusive use;
- support for parenting and family counseling;
- team and individual training customized for each educator.

EXAMPLES OF MAPPED PRACTICES

BPER

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTENERSHIP

Based on an **agreement with the Municipality of Modena**, the company nursery of Banca Popolare dell'Emilia Romagna was inaugurated in 2009 in the Modena headquarters.

It represented one of the first examples of corporate welfare in the territory

FEATURES

The structure hold children of BPER employees, children assigned through municipal rankings and other children from private users, each bearing different costs for the attending according to specific rules.

The Company opened this children facility in order to specifically contribute to the well-being of families.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS (1)

MAIN REASON FOR EMPLOYER-PROVIDED CHILDCARE

- ▶ Strong social impact on the local territory
- ▶ Improvement of corporate identity and social image
- ▶ Increasing in workers trust and fidelity
- ▶ Better work-life balance for employees
- ▶ Increasing productivity
- ▶ Support to female leadership and carrer pathways

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS (2)

MAIN BARRIERS

- ▶ High costs
- ▶ low children turnover along the years
- ▶ space

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS - ROADMAP

- ▶ Investigating employee's needs (n° of employers with children; commuters; smart working/teleworking, etc..)
- ▶ Design ad hoc solutions based on needs (no one solution fits all)
- ▶ «Invest» in dialogue with local communities and stakeholders promoting public/private partnership and forms of territorial welfare