



Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Plan for an Integrated Early Childhood Education and Care

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Italy

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Italian Ministry of Education

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

- Access
- Universality
- Educational services
- 0-6 years
- Inclusion

6. What makes it a best practice? *

This intervention may be considered a “best practice” because in order to reduce structural gaps between the North and the South of Italy, thus fostering universal access to children educational services, the central government has adopted not only a new legislative framework but has also financed specific supporting measures, such as the adoption of pedagogical Guidelines, the establishment the National Continuous Professional Training Plan for teachers, the implementation of an information system of educational services and schools; the building of new kindergartens and schools, the implementation of supporting measures for parents, the definition of monitoring and evaluation criteria.

Description of the best practice

7.

Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

i)

This priority program is aimed at increasing the educational offer of the integrated system of Early Childhood Education and Care from birth to 6 years, both with the national budget and with the funds of the Recovery and Resilience Plan, in order to both expand the access to educational services in every region, with a special effort on Southern Italy, and progressively reach complete universal access to pre-primary education.

In addition to combating educational poverty, the program is also supporting parents and women's work, especially in areas of the country where educational services are most lacking. While the national budget contributes to the implementation of system actions, such as the development of a national reference framework and training actions for educators, the investments of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan are aimed at increasing the offer of services through the construction of more than 1,800 new kindergartens and pre-primary schools and the restoration of existing ones.

All this in order to reach the European target of 33% of children that have access to early childhood services, bridging the existing gap for both the 0-3 and the 3-6 years, and thus recognizing to girls and boys the right to education and quality educational pathway, in line with the European Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation? *

The construction of the National system includes: the definition of "National Educational Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and care Services"; actions of dissemination in favor of educators and families to support the participation in education and care activities; the implementation of a National Register of Educational Services 0-3 years; monitoring of the interventions and the experimentation of self-assessment activities; support for the spring sections (24-36 months), also with a view to encouraging an increase in the number of places available for children under 3 years of age.

In addition, the program is also implemented through infrastructure interventions that make school buildings more innovative, sustainable, safe and inclusive.

The priority program will be developed over a period of 6 years.

Timing: From 2021 to 2026

The program provides for a multilevel governance that involves the State, the Regions and local authorities, each with specific competences. The Ministry of Education carries out functions of guiding, coordinating and promoting the Integrated System through specific measures, such as the National Action Plan and its funding, the National Continuous Professional Training Plan for teachers, the information system of the educational services and schools, the criteria for monitoring and evaluation. The Regions have a partnership role in planning and monitoring and a specific role in regulating and defining quality standards at local level. Local authorities (municipalities) have a specific role in the planning and management, as well as in the monitoring and supervision of educational services 0-3; in addition, they provide territorial pedagogical coordination, in interaction with both the Region and the Regional School Office.

Resources:

- 359 million euro of the national budget
- 4.6 billion euro of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

Up to 2017, in Italy Early Childhood Education and Care was split into educational services for children from 0 to 36 months, managed by Local Authorities and private providers, under regional regulation, and pre-primary schools managed by the State, Municipalities or private providers (charter school equal to State), with regulation at State level. The legislative decree 13 April 2017, n. 65 established the integrated education system from birth to six years with the aims to expand the access to educational services at territorial level to achieve the target of at least 33% coverage at the national level; to make educational services widespread in order to reach at least 75% of the municipalities; to progressively make possible universal access to pre-primary schools.

In order to reach these goals, giving further implementation to the legislative decree 13 April 2017, n. 65, through the Plan for an integrated Early Childhood Education and Care System, the Italian Ministry of Education has improved the functioning of the National Integrated system effective, through:

- the establishment of a National Commission which has contributed to the elaboration of the pedagogical guidelines for the integrated system (forthcoming) and the pedagogical guidelines for educational services;
- actions of dissemination in favor of educators and families;
- the implementation of a National Register of Educational Services 0-3 years;
- support for the spring sections (24-36 months);
- the construction of 0-6 childcare centers (Poli per l'infanzia);
- the monitoring of the interventions and the experimentation of self-assessment activities;
- the implementation of infrastructure interventions, making school buildings more innovative, sustainable, safe and inclusive.

The implementation of interventions funded through the European Recovery and Resilience Facility is monitored and evaluated by the European Commission through the Central Service for the National Recovery and Resilience Plan placed in the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Target 1: construction of more than 1800 new kindergartens and pre-primary schools and the restoration of existing ones

Target 2: 264.480 new places for 0-6 years children

The targets must be achieved by 31.12.2025.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

The key triggers for transformation have been: the adoption of a new legislative framework, which included university level qualification for 0-3 educators; the promotion of in-service training of educators and teachers and territorial pedagogical coordination; the adoption of a multilevel governance, involving the central authority (the Ministry of Education), the Regions and local authorities (Municipalities), each one with specific competences. Moreover, with the aim of ensuring the exchange of data and information between the Ministry, the Regions and the local authorities, the program has provided for the activation of a National Information System of children educational services. The National Register of the Integrated System of Education and Care 0-6 years is composed of the National Information System of Children Educational Services, the National Register of Students, in the part concerning kindergartens, and the Registry of State and accredited Kindergartens, which are subject to the compulsory survey provided for by the National Statistical Plan.

The continuous monitoring also highlighted the need to make a special effort in the Southern Regions of Italy, where services are most lacking and family incomes are lower.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”.

What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

This intervention may be considered a “best practice” because in order to reduce structural gaps between the North and the South of Italy, thus fostering universal access to children educational services, the central government has adopted not only a new legislative framework but has also financed specific supporting measures, such as the adoption of pedagogical Guidelines, the establishment the National Continuous Professional Training Plan for teachers, the implementation of an information system of educational services and schools; the building of new kindergartens and schools, the implementation of supporting measures for parents, the definition of monitoring and evaluation criteria.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

Link to the webpage:

www.istruzione.it/sistema-integrato-06/

Link to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan website:

www.pnrr.istruzione.it