

## SUPPLY OF SERVICES FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION | SCHOOL YEAR 2017/2018

# Not enough the provision of services for the early childhood education

→ In the school year 2017/2018 there were 13,145 places for early childhood education operating on the national territory. The authorized facilities - 51% of which were public - covered 24.7% of the potential users, i.e. children under 3 years of age.

This endowment, although slightly increasing, was still below the 33% parameter set in 2002 by the EU for 2010. There was a wide heterogeneity among territories: 47 out of 100 children in Valle d'Aosta had education services, while in Campania they were less than 9 out of 100 children.

Supply consisted by 79% of traditional nurseries, 2% of company crèches and 10% of availability in the "sezioni primavera" that receive children aged 24-36 months.

## +0.3%

The increase of availability in the authorized facilities to the previous year

## +1.9%

The increase in users of education services funded by municipalities to 2016/2017

## -0.9%

The decrease in the expenditure of municipalities for nursery schools to 2016

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## Wide gap between the Center-North and the South

In the school year 2017/2018 there were 13,145 services for the early childhood education operating on the national territory. The authorized places - 51% of which were public - covered 24.7% of the potential users, i.e. children under 3 years of age. This endowment, although slightly increasing, was still below 33% that is the parameter set in 2002 by the EU for 2010.

Compared to the previous year, there was a slight increase in coverage (+ 0.7%), both due to the drop in the number of children living in Italy and to a slight increase in availability (+ 0.3%).

The heterogeneity on the territory was very wide: in Valle d'Aosta 47 out of 100 children had a place available in the education facilities, while in Campania there were less than 9 out of 100 children. Some Italian regions achieved the target of 33% some years ago (Valle d'Aosta, the Autonomous Province of Trento, Emilia Romagna, Toscana and Umbria). In the North-East and in the Center the availability was very close to the European target, and the remaining regions of the Center-North showed values below but not far from 30%.

The South of Italy was still far from the goal, despite some signs of improvement. The only exception was Sardegna, which had a supply of services comparable to the central-northern regions (27.9%). In Abruzzo and Molise private and public facilities in socio-educational services slightly exceeded by 21%; Puglia exceeded by 15%, Basilicata stood at 14.3% and other regions had values below 10%, with the minimum of 8.6% in Campania (Table 1).

In many regions private facilities were crucial to achieve coverage values close to the European target, while only in a few cases the public sector significantly contributed to reach the threshold of 33%.

## Different types of services in the Italian regions

As for the type of service, the supply of services for early childhood education was for about 80% of traditional nurseries, 2% of company crèches and 10% of places in the "sezioni primavera", which are usually located in kindergartens, and are organized to host children from 24 to 36 months of age.

There were also the so-called "supplementary" services, structured in flexible forms as for schedule and organization, and that meet regional quality standards. These services, which have very different degree of presence at local level, include "play areas", where children can stay for a short portion of the day, with no meal supply nor rest (5% of the overall accommodation), the "centers children-parents" (2%), who accept children together with the presence of a parent or a reference person, "home education services" (1%), carried out in a home with educational staff.

The mix of available services varied among regions; for example, the "sezioni primavera" were concentrated in Molise and in other regions of the South, and "home education services" are in Trentino - Alto Adige.

## AVAILABILITY IN SERVICES FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION - SCHOOL YEAR 2017/2018

GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS	Places in the public sector for 100 children aged 0-2	Places in the private sector for 100 children aged 0-2	Total places for 100 children aged 0-2
NORTH WEST	14.3	14.9	29.2
NORTH EAST	18.3	14.2	32.5
CENTRE	16.4	16.0	32.4
SOUTH	5.6	6.7	12.3
ISLANDS	7.3	6.1	13.5
ITALIY	12.6	12.1	24.7

## Early childhood formal education was below the European average

In Italy, children under 3 years who attend any type of formal education are 28.6%, less than the average of the European Union (34.2%)<sup>i</sup>.

This figure includes a small percentage of children who attend playrooms, and children earlier enrolled in kindergarten<sup>ii</sup>.

Children earlier enrolled in kindergarten were 5.2%<sup>iii</sup> of the children residing in Italy and aged between 0 and 2 years, therefore the share of children attending a specific education service for the age group under 3 years did not exceed 23.4% of the target population.

13.5% of children between 0 and 2 years of age were enrolled in education services supplied by municipalities or in facilities funded by the municipalities. It can therefore be estimated that the remaining 9.9% of children between 0 and 2 years of age attended private education services not funded by municipalities<sup>iv</sup>.

Early access to kindergarten, which involved the insertion of 2-year-old children in structures organized for the next age group, mainly happened in the regions of the South, while it was less relevant in the Center-North of the country.

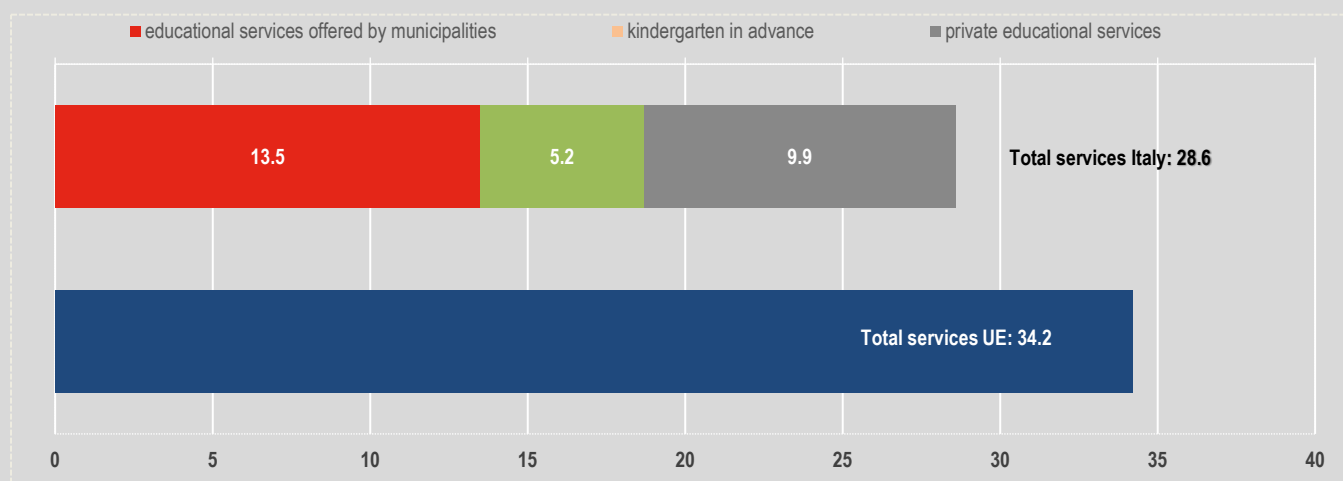
The Territorial differences can be partly explained by economic reasons. The lack of services for early childhood - specific in some areas - can lead parents to enroll children in kindergartens where the service, except for the quota referred to the canteen, is free.

In the regions with the lowest endowments of services for early childhood higher percentages of children have earlier access to kindergarten<sup>v</sup>.

Services for the early childhood education have a significant impact on the household budget: In 2018 about 348,200 households reported having had expenses for public or private nurseries over the past 12 months, for an amount of almost 624 million euros<sup>vi</sup>.

The average burden that a household should stand for the nursery service, was about 1,570 Euros in 2015, and increased to 1,996 Euros in 2017<sup>vii</sup>. This figure is consistent with the indications provided by municipalities on public nurseries: the average amount per user in the case of directly managed municipal nursery was equal to € 2,009 per year.

**FIGURE 1. CHILDREN UNDER 3 YEARS ATTENDING EDUCATION SERVICES, BY TYPE OF OFFER**



The economic constraints partially explain the lack of use of nurseries: in 2018, 12.4% of parents of children aged 0-2 years and not enrolled in the nursery declared that the costs were excessively high<sup>viii</sup>. Territorial differences were wide: this percentage was 17% in the North, 11.3% in the Center and 7.2% in the South. The minor use of nurseries is explained both by the limited supply and by elements which are more related to households' options, among them the economic aspect. The first constraint was more important in the South and the Islands, while the second prevailed in the North where the supply was wider.

### Slight increase of children in the services offered by municipalities

From 2016/2017 to 2017/2018 children enrolled in municipal education services increased from 13% to 13.5%. The slight increase was mainly due to kindergarten students, while users of supplementary services remained almost unchanged. This increase indicates a recovery after the decline that began in 2011 and the subsequent stabilization.

In absolute terms 194,567 children were enrolled in the school year 2017/2018 in the education services managed or funded by municipalities, i.e. 2% more than the previous year.

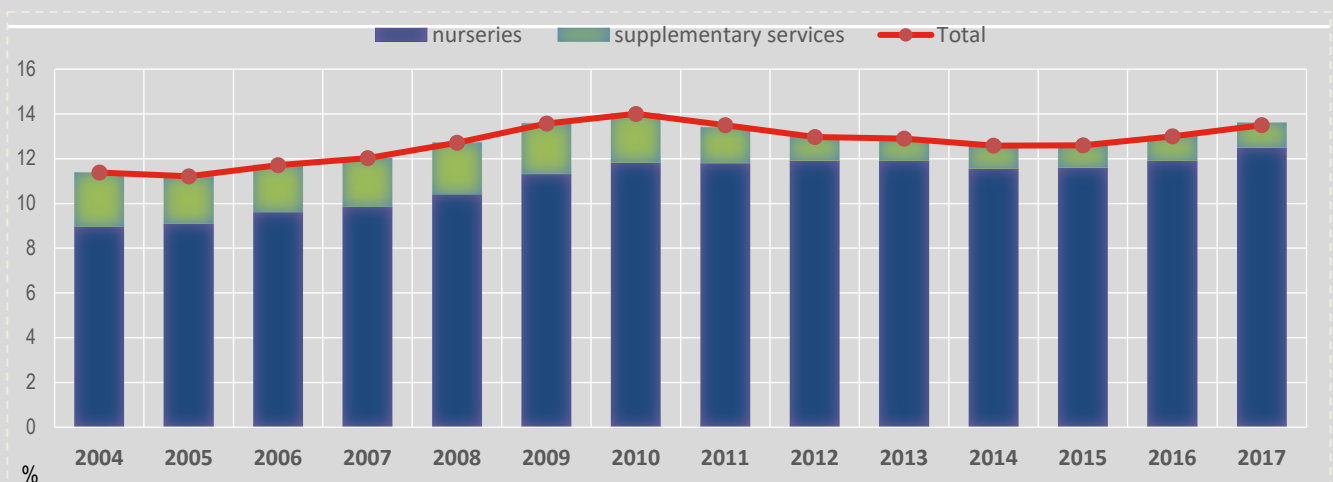
### Spending by municipalities on educational services was stable

In 2017, the current expenditure by municipalities for educational services amounted to approximately 1.461 billion Euros, of which 19.6% reimbursed by households in the form of users sharing.

For many years, until 2012, the expenditure of the municipalities registered a positive trend, also encouraged by policies aimed at developing services for early childhood education. Children enrolled in municipal facilities increased. Since 2011, the worsening of households' economic and working conditions, as well as the increase in the rates requested by the Municipalities for the services led to a demand drop, which brought the enrollment rate of children from 14% in 2010 to 12.6% of 2014. The expenditure of the municipalities (-9% from 2012 to 2014), showed a greater resistance to recovery than demand, and remained slightly below the 2009 level.

Since 2017, state contributions have been introduced in order to help households to meet costs for public and private nurseries<sup>ix</sup>. In 2017, 24,990 users benefited from the Government contribution, for a total amount of 8,579,750 Euros. More than 60% of the resources provided by the State in 2017 flowed to the North, 19.7% to the Center and only 20% to the South of Italy. The per capita contribution varied from 9 Euros per child living in the Northeast to 3 Euros in the islands.

**FIGURE 2. USERS OF SERVICES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION OFFERED BY MUNICIPALITIES FOR 100 CHILDREN BETWEEN 0 AND 2 YEARS. Years 2004-2017**



This measure had a wider use in 2018, with 121,500 users and 75,887,879 euros of expenditure. The distribution of resources was still uneven: 56% to the North, 26% to the Center and 18% to the South. The per capita contribution varied from 78 Euros in the Northeast to 28 Euros in the South. It is clear that the contributions have been used to a greater extent where the services are most present.

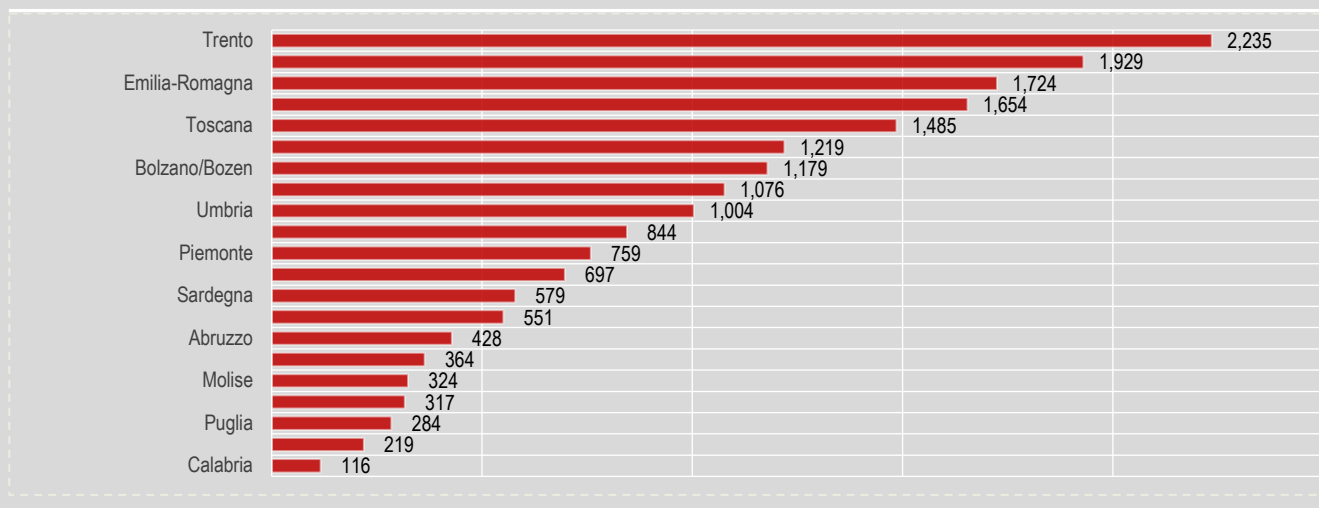
### Still wide differences between North and South

Children enrolled in public education services varied from a minimum of 2.1% in Calabria to a maximum of 25.5% in Valle d'Aosta.

Similar differences were recorded in the per capita expenditure: there was a gap of 2,119 Euros per year in the average spending per child between the Autonomous Province of Trento and Calabria (Figure 3).

Within the regional borders, the provincial capitals and the centers of the metropolitan areas showed higher levels of the per capita expenditure compared with the rest of the area. In some regions, however, high spending levels were accompanied by a relative uniformity between the municipalities that were at the center of the metropolitan areas (or provincial capitals) and the neighboring municipalities: Valle d'Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige, Emilia Romagna, Toscana and Umbria.

**FIGURE 3. EXPENDITURE OF MUNICIPALITIES FOR EDUCATION SERVICES (EURO PER RESIDENT CHILD 0-2 YEARS). School year 2017/2018**



# Glossary

**Nursery:** Service aimed at early childhood (0-36 months). It promotes the psycho-physical, cognitive, affective and social development of the child, and it offers support to families in their educational task. The service is open for at least 5 days a week and at least 6 hours per day for a period of at least 10 months a year..

**Supplementary services:** services structured in flexible forms for schedules and for organization, in the respect of regional quality standards. These services include “play areas”, where children can stay for a short part of the day, without the supply of meals and rest, the “centers children-parents”, who accept children in the presence of a parent or a reference person, “home education services”, carried out in a home with educational staff.

**Sezione primavera:** service usually located in kindergartens, it is organized to host children aged 24 to 36 months. It is governed by art. 1 paragraph 630 of the law of 27 December 2006, n. 296

**Expenditure of single or associated municipalities:** current account expenditure committed in the reference year for the provision of services, net of user sharing.

**Total committed expenditure:** current account expenditure committed in the reference year for the provision of services, gross of user sharing.

## Methodological note

### The survey on nurseries and supplementary services on early childhood

#### Introduction and regulatory framework

The survey was started by Istat in 2011, with the aim of investigating the data on this type of services with a specific questionnaire. In the previous years data on this subject are been collected as part of the statistical survey on the interventions and social services of Municipalities.

Both surveys are included in the 2017-2019 National Statistical Plan, approved with Presidential Decree 31 January 2018.

The survey is carried out in collaboration with the State General Accounting Office, then the Ministry of Economy and Finance, with most of the regions (Piedmont, Liguria, Veneto, Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Tuscany, Umbria, Marche, Basilicata, Puglia, Sicily) and with the Autonomous Province of Trento.

The planning of socio-educational services for early childhood is the responsibility of the regions while the Municipalities, individually or in associated form, have the functions of managing nurseries and social services in general. The supply of services, while remaining municipal property, is often entrusted to private bodies or associations.

Some changes in the institutional reference framework occur with Legislative Decree no. 65, of 13 April 2017 (“Establishment of the integrated education system from birth up to six years”). This decree lay the foundations to bring out educational services for children from the care sector and bring them fully into the educational sphere, thus ensuring the continuity of the educational and school path from birth to six years of age. The new integrated system of education has among its main objectives that of guaranteeing equal education opportunities, thus promoting the overcoming of territorial, economic, ethnic and cultural inequalities.

#### The survey and the analysis unit

The survey unit is the Municipality and the associations of Municipalities, for a total of about 9,000 respondents.

The analysis unit is the Municipality and it's association forms, to which the data refer: the number of users served and the costs incurred to guarantee this offer according to the various forms of management.

## Data collection

The data are collected annually via the web, through a platform accessible to all municipalities and associations of municipalities that contribute to the public offer of social services.

For the 2017/2018 school year, the response rate to the survey by respondents was 82.5% nationally.

## Data processing

The data collected via the web are processed and validated by Istat on the basis of a check plan on the consistency of the information.

The estimates for total non-responses are based on the validated data of the previous year.

From the reference year 2013, to further enrich the information made available in this sector, all the data collected is also disseminated at the individual municipality level, through the I.stat data warehouse.

Due to the associative nature of the phenomenon, an estimate component had to be introduced to reach the level of municipal breakdown. The data referring to the early childhood services managed by the associations are divided among the individual municipalities that are part of it in proportion to the population of 0-2 years residing in each municipality.

## Data dissemination

The data collected with the survey are disseminated annually by Istat through the I.stat data warehouse. The data are available by single municipality, by social territorial area (ATS), by province, by region and by geographical distribution.

I.STAT: the ISTAT data warehouse: <http://dati.istat.it/>

# For technical and methodological information

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<sup>i</sup> Source: the European Union Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) survey.

<sup>ii</sup> In this case the children, although they are not yet 3 years old, attend the nursery school without the possibility of taking advantage of the adaptations of the service offered in the so-called "sezioni primavera".

<sup>iii</sup> Source: Ministry of Education, University and Research (Miur) - school year 2017/2018.

<sup>iv</sup> This fee also includes children who attend playrooms.

<sup>v</sup> The places available in early childhood education services and the number of anticipatory children, both compared to 100 resident children aged 0-2 years, show a correlation coefficient at the regional level equal to -0.9.

<sup>vi</sup> Source: Istat - survey on household expenditures, latest available year.

<sup>vii</sup> The average includes only families who have incurred an expense for nurseries, both public and private, in the last 12 months at the time of the interview.

<sup>viii</sup> Source: Istat - survey on daily life aspects.

<sup>ix</sup> Law no. 232/2016, art. 1 paragraph 355 establishes the provision, starting from 2017, of an annual voucher of 1,000 euros - raised to 1,500 from 2019 - to cover expenditures for public and private nurseries or for the purchase of home care services for children suffering from serious chronic diseases. There are no income limits to access the benefit.