

# POVERTY WATCH 2020

ABC of poverty in Europe and Italy

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Collegamento Italiano Lotta alla Povertà – CILAP EAPN Italy

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## 1. Introduction

**Collegamento Italiano Lotta alla Povertà** (Cilap) is a network of non-profit organizations founded in **1992** in Rome, aimed at contrasting poverty and social exclusion. It is the Italian representative of the **European Anti Poverty Network** (Eapn), founded in 1990. The full name, in fact, is Cilap-Eapn Italy.

Cilap-Eapn Italy activities are educational and informative: online and offline **awareness campaigns**, **appeals to local, national and European institutions**, telling of stories of poverty, **training courses for students, volunteers and public authorities**, organization of **conferences**, meetings with political representatives and exponents of civil society.

Among the most effective information and awareness tools is the **Poverty Watch**, an annual publication financed by the **European Commission** through Eapn. Each member country of the network draws up one, with the aim of shedding light on the internal conditions of poverty and social exclusion, through the collection of statistical data and direct testimonies. This edition is edited by **Giulia Segna**, member of **EUISG** (EU Inclusion Strategies Group) and **PhD candidate** in intercultural relations at Unint University of Rome.

Since 2013 Cilap-Eapn Italy has been a member of the **Monitoring Committee of PON Inclusion** at the Ministry of Social Policies; since 2016 it is part of the **Fead Network** (Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived); since 2001 it has participated in the **People Experiencing Poverty** (PeP) working group.

The operational headquarters of Cilap-Eapn Italy is in **Rome**. Its President and legal representative is **Nicoletta Teodosi**. More information on [www.cilap.it](http://www.cilap.it) and on **Facebook** “[Collegamento Italiano Lotta alla Povertà - Eapn Italia](#)”.

## 2. Poverty: numbers, definitions and data

Poverty is a complex phenomenon depending on numerous factors; it is not linked only to the **lack of income** but is strictly connected with **access to opportunities** and, therefore, with the possibility of fully **participating in the economic and social life** of the country.

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 2019, **for a core of four people living in a**

**metropolitan area** of Central Italy, **the absolute poverty threshold** is **1,620.50 euros**<sup>1</sup>. The calculation can be done on the Istat website.

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 expenditure. To calculate it, two indicators are considered: the first is the proportion of the poor (**incidence**), ie the ratio between the number of individuals in a condition of poverty and the number of resident individuals; the second is the average poverty gap (**intensity**), which measures “how poor the poor are”. The poverty threshold, in this case, is unique for the whole country. In 2019, for example, the reference value for a **family of two** is **1,094.95 euros**<sup>2</sup>.

In mid-2020, the **Italian economic and social picture** is exceptionally **complex and uncertain**. The disruptive impact of the Covid-19 was superimposed on the economic slowdown of 2019, also linked to international factors. **The pandemic has hit the world economy hard** and, therefore, the Italian one: the partial blocking of activities connected to the containment measures has caused GDP to drop by 5.3%<sup>3</sup>. It also led to a **drop in employment**, a marked **decrease in the workforce** and a **drop in the activity rate** (to a minimum since April 2011). Budgetary actions aimed at countering the crisis will have a very **significant impact on public finance balances and debt** this year. In fact, from the recent Istat survey "Situation and prospects of companies in the Covid-19 health emergency" it emerges that among the factors of greatest fragility there is the **question of finding cash**.

However, the same document points out some **positive elements** that have characterized Italy in lockdown: **the feeling of strong cohesion** manifested through trust in the institutions committed to fighting the pandemic; a **strong civic sense** in compliance with the indications on the behavior to be adopted; the **rethinking of a richer and more heterogeneous everyday life**; more time devoted to **family relationships**.

With reference to the condition of poverty prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, Istat reveals that in Italy there are almost **1.7 million families in absolute poverty**, with an incidence of 6.4% (7.0% in 2018), for a total number of almost **4.6 million individuals** (7.7% of the total, 8.4% in 2018). For the first time after four years of increase, the share of families in absolute poverty is reduced, but still remains at levels significantly higher than those before the economic crisis (2008-2009).

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1 Istat, calculation of absolute poverty <https://www.istat.it/it/dati-analisi-e-prodotti/contenuti-interattivi/soglia-di-poverta>

2 Altvista, <https://grafici.altvista.org/incidenza-di-poverta-assoluta-e-relativa-in-italia/>

3 Istat, Annual Report, 2020 <https://www.istat.it/storage/rapporto-annuale/2020/capitolo1.pdf>



The number of **families in relative poverty** remains stable: in 2019 they are just under **3 million** (11.4%) which correspond to **8.8 million people** (14.7% of the total).

Poverty, as mentioned above, is not only synonymous with **lack of income** but also with **social exclusion and weak involvement in the political-cultural life** of the country. It therefore seems right to report the following Istat data<sup>4</sup>: in Italy the share of the population with **tertiary qualifications** continues to be very low: **19.6% against 33.2% in the EU**. The **Europe2020 strategy** had among the targets for education the raising of the share of 30-34 year-olds in possession of a tertiary qualification, considered a fundamental objective for a "knowledge society". In 2019, the share of young graduates in Italy does not grow, placing it in the **penultimate place in the EU ranking** (the last is Romania).

In the **South** (Basilicata, Campania, Calabria, Sicily and Puglia, so-called "**less developed**" regions<sup>5</sup> because they have a per capita GDP below 75% of the EU average) both education levels remain significantly lower (54% have at least a diploma, 65.7% in the North) and the employment rates, even of the most educated (71.2% among graduates, 86.4% in the North).

Despite the higher education levels of women, **the female employment rate is much lower than mens' one** (56.1% versus 76.8%), highlighting a more marked gender gap than the EU average. However, the disadvantage of women is reduced as the level of education increases: women with a diploma have an employment rate of 25 points higher than that of their peers with a low level of education (a double advantage compared to men) and difference between degree and diploma is 16.6 points (difference of over three times higher than the male one).

From the analysis of the latest **OECD Economic Report**<sup>6</sup> we learn that the employment rate in Italy is still among the lowest in the OECD countries. **The quality of work is poor** and the discrepancy between jobs and workers' qualifications is high when compared on an international scale. Productivity growth has been weak or negative for the past 25 years. **Absolute poverty rates for young people have risen** sharply following the crisis and remain high. The document confirms the age-old problem of the Italian territorial economic gap, to the detriment of the southern regions. The **shortage of professional opportunities pushes many young people (especially from the South) to emigrate**, aggravating the already rapid process of aging of the population. The already significant regional variations in GDP per capita and in the employment rate have widened further in recent decades. **Regional disparities** in employment rates largely explain the difference in the standard of living between one region and another.

4 Istat, Level of education and employment returns, 2019 <https://www.istat.it/it/files/2020/07/Livelli-di-istruzione-e-ritorni-occupazionali.pdf>

5 EU Funds 2014-2020 [https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1106241.pdf?\\_1591172473770](https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1106241.pdf?_1591172473770)

6 OECD, Economic Report, Italy, 2019 <http://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/Rapporto-Economico-OCSE-Italia-2019-sintesi.pdf>

With a look to the environment, the OECD report states that **renewable energy** sources developed rapidly from 2000 to 2015, but **have stalled** ever since. Air pollution is dangerously dense in some areas, resulting in high mortality and general damage to psychophysical and financial well-being. With regard to the administrative structure of Italy, the OECD denounces serious **shortcomings in the public administration** which constitute, among other things, an obstacle to the full social, political and cultural participation of citizens.

### **3. Poverty and Covid-19: the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable people**

Italy was among the first European nations to be struck by **Coronavirus**. The data provided by the **Department of Civil Protection**<sup>7</sup>, updated to **August 2020**, show that the total **positive cases are 256,118, the deaths 35,418**. The greatest concentration of cases is in the north of the country, particularly in Lombardy.

#### **3.1. An overview of the Italian economy**

The crisis caused by the impact of the health emergency has hit the Italian economy in a phase already characterized by a prolonged weakness of the production cycle. In the first quarter of 2020, the **partial lockdown of activities and social life** caused by the pandemic **resulted in widespread and profound effects in both supply and demand**<sup>8</sup>. The sectors most affected are those of construction, commerce, transport, catering, tourism. The increase in uncertainty and the considerable worsening of expectations on economic activity have led to a sharp **decline in investments**. The Italian production system has been hit by the health emergency with times and methods that prevent any immediate countermeasure, so that companies have reacted with differentiated behaviors. In the first phase of the health emergency (which ended on May 4), 45% of companies suspended their activities. In that same phase, 22.5% of the production units managed to reopen after an initial closure. The companies that have always remained active are less than a third in terms of number, but they constitute the most significant component in terms of weight on employment and the economy: 62.7% of employees and 68.6% of national turnover. The containment measures of the epidemic have caused a significant reduction in economic activity for a large part of the production system: over 70% of companies declared a reduction in turnover in the two months of March-April 2020 compared to the same period of the previous year.

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<sup>7</sup> Civil Protection Department, Covid-19 Italy

<http://opendatadpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/b0c68bce2cce478eaac82fe38d4138b1>

<sup>8</sup> Istat, Annual Report, 2020 <https://www.istat.it/storage/rapporto-annuale/2020/capitolo1.pdf>

### 3.2. Some data on the labor market

The onset of the epidemic hit the labor market hard, causing a **reduction of 124,000<sup>9</sup> in employment** in March, more than doubling in April (-274,000, or -1.2%). The decline in the last month is the largest since 2004. The employment rate of the 15-64 age group, at 58.9% in the first two months of the year, dropped to 58.6% in March and 57.9% in April. In March, the decrease in employed mainly concerned temporary employees and partly self-employed, while in April it involved all components. **The reduction is more pronounced for women** (-0.8% in March and -1.5% in April), due to their greater concentration in the tertiary sector.

The results of the qualitative survey conducted by Istat in May 2020 indicate that for small and medium-sized enterprises the most critical aspect concerns the risk of insufficient cash to face the next expenses, with the **consequent possibility of employee dismissal**.

### 3.3. Forced quarantine and domestic violence

Although in general there is a serene and positive family climate, the fragility of some situations in the face of the restrictions imposed by the lockdown should not be underestimated. For 9.1% of the Italian population<sup>10</sup>, equal to **about 3 million people, the family climate is difficult** to the point of generating fear of saying or doing something. During the quarantine, **physical and social isolation, economic difficulties, intra-family tensions**, as well as the reduced accessibility to prevention and protection services, **increased the risk of violence** growing within the home. The data show a strong increase in requests for help, also linked to the intensification of the campaign of the Ministry for Equal Opportunities, and a decrease in complaints and murders. **This does not necessarily have to be read as an increase in violence against women during the lockdown**. In Italy, the information collected by the toll-free number against violence and stalking, made available by the Department for Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, provides some interesting evidence: starting from March 22, the growth in calls has shown an increase exponential to then decrease coinciding with Phase 2 (May 2020). A consistent number of **users turned to this service also to ask for social and psychological support** (19.3% of the total).

### 3.4. “Stay home”. But who doesn't have a house?

According to the estimates of the Abbé Pierre and FEANTSA Foundation<sup>11</sup>, there are about **700,000 homeless people in the European Union**, with an increase of 70% in the last ten years. However, during the recent health crisis, **this number has fallen sharply thanks to emergency measures aimed at providing shelter** to the most vulnerable.

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<sup>9</sup> Istat, Annual Report, 2020 <https://www.istat.it/storage/rapporto-annuale/2020/capitolo1.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Istat, Annual Report, 2020 <https://www.istat.it/storage/rapporto-annuale/2020/capitolo1.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Housing Exclusion in Europe <https://www.fiopd.org/v-panoramica-su-housing-exclusion-in-europe/>

The fact has shown that it is possible to solve the problem of homeless people if you really want to and if you have the means to do so.

In its fifth publication on the subject, the Abbé Pierre Foundation and FEANTSA have once again joined forces and highlighted that **by mobilizing less than 3% of the grants foreseen in the budget of the post-Covid recovery plan (Recovery Fund), the European Union and the members are able to immediately house all homeless people** across Europe in decent conditions for a full year.

Although the general European framework gives positive signals, the Italian Federation fio.PSD<sup>12</sup> states that, in this period, in Italy, the situation within the services aimed at homeless people is problematic and fraught with difficulties: **clear indications** about the management of infection risk or, even worse, of Covid-19 positivity **are lacking**; the quantity of **protection devices for both operators and users is scarce**; the **economic resources** to set up new emergency structures or equip existing ones with adequate equipment **are not enough**.

Despite the difficulties, **non profit organizations** have put their maximum effort into action, **working 24 hours a day and taking extraordinary measures to deal with "an emergency in the emergency"**.

In Italy there are over **55,000 homeless people**, for whom "staying at home" is not a plausible option. These are people with health problems and mental disorders, relational fragility, language barriers and very precarious living conditions that require a complex and coordinated intervention approach between the different territorial realities.

### **3.5. Digital school: 12.3% of pupils and students do not own a PC or tablet**

9.6 million minors live in Italy. During the long lockdown, **8,5 million children and young people remained at home**. A scenario that has exacerbated a series of pre-existing inconveniences. From the recent report of the Con i Bambini Foundation<sup>13</sup>, we learn that **41.9% of minors live in an overcrowded home and 7% also face housing problems** (structural problems). Poverty increases with decreasing age (the range 0-17 years is the one where the incidence of absolute poverty remains greater) and, at the same time, it increases as the number of children increases: the more a family is numerous (3+ children), the more likely it is to be in absolute poverty.

To the already known factors of inequality, we must add those linked to the digital divide: **12.3% of children between the ages of 6 and 17 do not have a PC or tablet at home**, a share that increases considerably in the South (20%). These numbers therefore attest that not all students have had the opportunity to virtually participate in teaching. While Europe is preparing for the gigabit society challenge, starting precisely from the places where the knowledge of children and young people is formed to create an increasingly interconnected society, **Italy is at the bottom of**

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<sup>12</sup> Fio.PSD Federation [www.fiopsd.org](http://www.fiopsd.org)

<sup>13</sup> Con i Bambini Monitoring centre, Report "Digital inequalities", 2020 <https://www.conibambini.org/disuguaglianze-digitali-il-report-dellosservatorio-conibambini/>



**the European rankings.** We are in 25th place out of 28 in the DESI 2020 ranking (Digital Economy and Society Index), followed only by Romania, Greece and Bulgaria. Our country ranks **22 out of 28 in the share of households with internet access at home** in 2019, while 2% of families with children do not have internet at home for cost reasons. Twice as the EU average.

#### 4. Stories of poverty

We met Teresa and Ciro, two of the Italian **representatives of “People Experiencing Poverty (PeP)”**, with whom Cilap-Eapn Italy has been collaborating for some time. They told us how they experienced the lockdown, both from an economic and psychological point of view.

**Teresa, 61 years old:** “My lockdown has not undergone major changes from an economic point of view, indeed perhaps it has worsened because that period coincided with the **non-use of the Reddito di Cittadinanza (Citizenship Income), suspended due to a bureaucratic problem** relating to my Family Status. I have not received state aid, on the contrary I have activated myself at the Municipality of Cerveteri to request financial support. After a long and painful pilgrimage, since the **offices are still closed**, on May 12th I managed to submit the application and on August 27th I still don't have news: I don't know if it was accepted or if it was rejected.

Now I re-perceive the Reddito di Cittadinanza. **My daughter**, a university student, was given an **economic bonus for the purchase of a computer** that we have already used. To **my son**, however, who is a **football referee**, the Ministry of Sports and Health paid a **cash share** for the activity he was unable to carry out.

From a psychological point of view it was not easy because I was not used, like everyone else, to being closed in the house and making huge queues at the supermarket. In the last period I could not understand if this thing came out of it and what weighed on me the most was the fact that neither my daughter was able to attend university, nor my son was able to go to school. **I hope for something different from what I have experienced so far”.**

**Ciro, 44 years old:** “Melissa and I have **four children**: two in middle school, one in primary school and another in kindergarten. Melissa runs a small children's clothing store on her own in the district of Marsciano (Perugia), where we have been living as internal emigrants for 12 years. I am an educator in a protected residence for minors located in the town of Compignano. As soon as we heard the news that the schools were going to be closed, we took steps to get our **grandmother from Naples to help us manage the children and the house**. In the first days we both worked, then shortly after there was the decree that ordered the closure of the shops and **Melissa was forced to stay home** with her children. I worked regularly for three months, in the community, with all the necessary safety measures. Melissa was very worried because a week **before closing all the goods for the summer season had arrived**,

**for a value of 26,000 euros.**

In my association there were 120 workers on layoffs because they had also closed the nursery school activities and home assistance. I am among the privileged few who worked in the community for minors, which is always open.

The first month we managed to pay off the mortgage and other loans in progress.

**From April onwards we began to worry: we did not know how to cover the checks of the goods** and we started calling all the suppliers asking to postpone the payments. Most accepted the offer to wait. Only one supplier demanded payment of a check that was due. We made up for it with my monthly.

The salary for April I took three / four times as soon as it arrived, leaving **only 200 euros in the bank account.**

We have a mortgage of 720 euros and I was hoping the bank would not collect the 200 on the account. I spent more than a month filling out the loan suspension application, trying many times to call the bank that didn't respond. In the meantime, they had collected the month of April and the missing part of March. We were stranded, the money ran out for food.

Then **I managed to contact the bank director explaining that I had no money to pay** and it wasn't polite not to answer the phone, so I agreed to send the mortgage suspension application directly to him, pledging to pay only the missing part of March and get me back the April installment already collected, given that the decree to block the mortgage had entered into force on 17 March. It is now stuck for 18 months.

The loans with the financial companies, on the other hand, I could not suspend: I have been told that they were in my name and my working condition had remained unchanged.

Then the **digital school started** and we had to gear up to **buy another PC and a printer**. The domestic organization had completely changed with **four children in four different virtual classrooms**. The bureaucracy to manage from home and many other commitments have put us to the test.

Even in the community all our work was upset, we had to help the children follow school and family relationships at a distance.

Melissa spent her time contacting suppliers to negotiate payment times. Eventually she was forced to take out a 20,000 euros loan to pay for unsold goods and keep the shop open. She made the **secured loan for Covid**, which will be paid off in two years. **We had just finished paying a 25,000 euro loan that we needed to open the business.** It was like starting all over again.

My cooperative is suffering the signs of the crisis and the interruption of services, with many operators on layoffs. We learned to do many things with the PC because it was the only tool that allowed us to remotely manage relationships with suppliers,

banks and institutions. The local institutions had all retreated to quarantine and it was difficult to ask for help and assistance, so we forwarded the questions ourselves to Inps for VAT and for the Babysitter bonus. This was the only aid received.

The only institutional presence was that of the Civil Protection who went around the streets, to ensure compliance with the rules.

**Now Melissa's shop is doing well, I continue to work and I feel privileged”.**

## **5. Virtuous examples and good practices in Italy**

### **5.1. Residence for the homeless: fio.PSD proposals to simplify the process**

The Italian Federation of Organisms for Homeless People (fio.PSD) is an association that pursues purposes of social solidarity in the context of serious adult marginalization and homeless people. It is the national branch of FEANTSA, European organization of Eapn. In collaboration with the association Avvocato di Strada, it has made available to all Italian municipalities a **vademecum to decide on the assignment of the fictitious place of residence, a necessary tool to guarantee residence for homeless people.**

In a recent interview with **Cristina Avonto**<sup>14</sup>, fio.PSD president, we read: “The registered residence is the main gateway to a series of fundamental rights but for many homeless people it remains an inaccessible right. **Without residence, you do not have access to the national health system except for first aid care**, you cannot choose a doctor who is all the more necessary in this period of Coronavirus emergency, **you cannot receive a pension, you are not entitled to assistance from social services**, in many cases you can not work. In fact, not having a registered residence represents a huge obstacle for those who already live in a very difficult situation”.

“That of the registry residence - says **Antonio Mumolo**, president of Avvocato di Strada - is one of our historical battles. The law recognizes the importance of registered residence and that is why all municipalities are obliged to recognize it to those who live in a given area. If they do not have a permanent residence, people can take up residence by electing **domicile in an association, a canteen where they are known, a dormitory or in a fictitious street** which, as Istat has recommended for years to all Italian municipalities, must be established precisely for this purpose”. With this initiative, in addition to **raising awareness among the institutions**, the two organizations wanted to create a **real guide made available to all the municipalities** that have not yet established the fictitious residence.

“**Giving residence** - they conclude - **is not a concession, but a human right**. Without it, a person is condemned to live in invisibility. With residency a person can more easily embark on a path of recovery and hope to return to live a dignified life. We hope that thanks to our vademecum all the municipalities decide to establish the

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<sup>14</sup>Interview with Cristina Avonto and Antonio Mumolo <https://www.fiopsd.org/vademecum-vie-fittizie/>

fictitious residence allowing many people to regain possession of their rights as citizens”.

## 5.2. Cucine Popolari by CiviBo Association

At Cucine Popolari (Popular Kitchens) in **Bologna** you can eat, but they are not (only) canteens. These are **open places where people who don't have a meal go but also those who are alone and need companionship**.

The project is promoted by the non-profit organization CiviBo<sup>15</sup> and was born five years ago, with **initial funding** obtained in a really **curious way**: its founder, **Roberto Morgantini, got married and asked for money as a gift**.

Now Cucine Popolari has three offices in the city, a fourth one will be open in October 2020.

“Cucine Popolari - Morgantini explains to B-hop magazine<sup>16</sup> - is not a canteen where the poor are. It is a **place for socializing**, it is open. A place where **you eat and talk**. Here the plates are in ceramic, the glasses are in glass, the cutlery in metal.

People meet and relationships are born, even life opportunities. Two hundred volunteers active in Cucine Popolari who provide an average of **500 meals a day**, a figure that has **doubled with the arrival of Covid-19**.

**Only take-away meals at the moment** for the health emergency, but no longer guaranteed in the future due to the economic crisis.

Morgantini then **launched a “Mayday” to politics** for a concrete commitment that “builds a community from below, social even before economic and political”. “More and more people arrive in the canteens looking for help. **We are witnessing how society has weakened. To the homeless, to the economically disadvantaged users, to the lonely hidden in the apartment buildings, other new realities have been added**”. These are the so-called 'VAT numbers', tourism and culture workers, fixed-term and project-based contracts but also, alarming data, entire families struck by the freezing of work due to the pandemic.

“They are invisible people. **Poverty cannot be considered a fault**”.

## 5.3. Medicines at home for the seriously ill: the activism of Angeli in Moto

There are 600 bikers of the Angeli in Moto association<sup>17</sup> who, throughout Italy, in the health emergency of recent months, are collaborating with **Aism (Italian Multiple Sclerosis Association)** by delivering medicines directly to the homes of the sick.

The association was born in 2015 on the initiative of **Maria Sara Feliciangeli**, the president, awarded the honor of **Knight of the Italian Republic** by the Head of State Sergio Mattarella, precisely for the action carried out during the Coronavirus

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<sup>15</sup> CiviBo [www.civibo.it](http://www.civibo.it)

<sup>16</sup> B-hop magazine [www.b-hop.it](http://www.b-hop.it)

<sup>17</sup> Angeli in Moto [www.angeliinmoto.it](http://www.angeliinmoto.it)



emergency. A priceless service for multiple sclerosis patients, **doubly affected by isolation and the increased risk of infection**. The activity of these volunteers is precious: riding the saddle of their motorbike and touring the cities, they arrive at places where help and support is really needed. At this time, at the request of Aism, their task is to collect the drugs from hospitals or pharmacies and deliver them directly to the homes of people with the disease; **a way to allow them not to interrupt their therapies**. In five years of activity, Angeli in Moto has spared support for families in difficulty throughout the territory of Rome city. On the occasion of the earthquake in Central Italy, for example, they were involved to give first aid to the struck population, not easily reachable by the usual transports.

## **6. Institutional support: what Europe and Italy are doing**

### **6.1. Europe**

#### **6.1.2. European funds: Italy makes a bad use of them**

The relationship between Italy and European funds has always been problematic. On one hand there is **few publicity of their use** by the public authorities (State and Regions), on the other hand **the use of European resources is actually low**. From 2014 to 2020, the EU distributed 643 billion euros to its members through various development programs.

From Linkiesta website we learn that **Italy (after Poland) is the second country to have received the highest amount**<sup>18</sup>: 75 billion, distributed as follows: 33 billion (44.6%) for the European Regional Development Fund; 21 billion (27.8%) for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development; 17 billion (23.1%) for the European Social Fund; 2 billion (3.1%) for the operational program for youth employment and, finally, almost 1 billion (1.3%) for the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. **At the end of 2019, Italy had spent 35% of the funds (26 billion)**, while 73% (54.6 billion) had been allocated. The European average is 85%.

The sector in which **European funds have been used at best is the youth employment program**: 57% of resources spent, 86% allocated. But lagging behind Europe: in fact, throughout the Union, 60% of the fund has been allocated, with an allocation close to 100%.

Also as regards the Regional Development Fund, another situation in which Italian results are good, the comparison with other countries is inglorious; with **31% of the resources spent in our country compared to 36% of all EU countries**, and the allocation at the European level that separates us by 5 percentage points (from 86% to 91%).

### **6.2. Italy**

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<sup>18</sup> Linkiesta, <https://www.linkiesta.it/2020/06/coronavirus-recovery-fund-italia-fondi-europei/>

### 6.2.1. Law Decree 34 of May 19, 2020

The Law Decree n.34 of May 19, 2020<sup>19</sup>, entitled “Urgent measures in the field of health, support for work and the economy, as well as social policies related to the epidemiological emergency from Covid-19”, provides for a series of measures on the subject social and socio-health policies. In particular:

**Art. 1 c.5 - Urgent provisions on territorial assistance - Strengthening of nursing services:** Until December 31 2020 the Health Trusts can hire up to 8 nurses per 50 thousand inhabitants in freelance mode or with a coordinated and continuous contract, as long as they are not employees of accredited public or private health structures. From 1/1/2021 the Health Trusts can hire up to 8 nurses for every 50 thousand inhabitants on an indefinite basis. This means an increase in employment of 10 thousand people.

**Art. 1 c.7 - Urgent provisions on territorial assistance:** Until December 2020, the Health Trusts can hire social workers in "freelance" mode for the multidimensional assessment of patients' needs and integration with social services and territorial social health care.

With respect to this, Cilap-Eapn Italy has been reporting the following criticality for some time: the requirement to be met is 1 social worker for every 5000 inhabitants, while the current ratio is 1/7000. Numbers confirmed by the Plan for Combating Poverty 2018-2020 of the Social Protection and Social Inclusion Network<sup>20</sup>, at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, which also includes Cilap-Eapn Italy.

**Art. 82 - Emergency income:** Families in conditions of economic need as a result of the epidemiological emergency from Covid-19 are granted extraordinary income support called Emergency income (hereinafter "Rem"). Applications for the Rem had to be submitted to administrative offices by June 2020 - now August 2020 - and the benefit is paid in two installments, equal to the amount recognized.

The shares of the Rem are 400.00 and 800.00 euros based on the size of the family unit. Those who have an annual income of up to 15.000 euros and movable assets between 10.000 and 20.000 euros can use it, depending on the composition of the family.

**Art. 104 - Assistance and services for disability:** The National Fund for the non self-sufficient is increased by 90 million for 2020, of which 20 million for projects for independent living. The “after us” (Lg 112/2016) has increased by 20 million for 2020. For semi-residential, socio-welfare, socio-educational, multifunctional, socio-occupational, health and social-health facilities for people with disabilities, which have to face the burdens deriving from the adoption of personnel and user protection

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<sup>19</sup> Law Decree n.34 of May 19, 2020 [https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/static/20200519\\_128\\_SO\\_021.pdf](https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/static/20200519_128_SO_021.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Action Plan against Poverty 2018-2020 <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/poverta-ed-esclusione-sociale/focus-on/Reddito-di-Inclusione-Rel/Documents/Piano-interventi-servizi-poverta.pdf>

systems, the “Support Fund for semi-residential structures for people with disabilities” has been established, which guarantees the recognition of an allowance to the managing bodies. The Prime Minister Decree defines the priority criteria and the methods of awarding the allowance.

**Art. 105 - Financing of 2020 summer camps and contrasting educational poverty:**

For the year 2020, from the Fund for family policies, a portion of resources is allocated to municipalities to: finance initiatives, also in collaboration with public bodies and private, aimed at introducing: interventions for the strengthening of daytime summer centers, territorial socio-educational services and centers with an educational and recreational function intended for the activities of boys and girls aged between 3 and 14 years, for the months from June to September 2020; projects aimed at combating educational poverty and implementing the cultural and educational opportunities of minors.

**Art. 109 - Public administration services:** During the suspension of educational and school services and during the suspension of social, health and social assistance activities in day care centers for the elderly and for people with disabilities, day and semi-residential centers for minors, for mental health, for dependencies and for homeless people, deferred health services, public administrations provide, also on the proposal of the bodies managing specific projects, services in individual forms at home, remotely or provided in compliance with health directives. These services can be carried out through co-planning with non-profit management bodies, using the same operators, adopting specific protocols that define all the measures necessary to ensure maximum protection of the health of operators and users.

**Art. 226 - Food emergency fund:** An amount of 250 million euros to supplement the initiatives for the distribution of foodstuffs on the availability of the Rotation Fund (national resources).

### **6.2.2. Directorial Decree 287 of August 14, 2020**

With the Directorial Decree n.287 of August 14, 2020<sup>21</sup> the procedure of refinancing the interventions to contrast serious adult marginalization is started, using in a complementary way the resources of the PON Inclusion 2014-2020 and of the Fead (European Aid for the Most Deprived). The notice, addressed to local authorities with certain characteristics, provides for a total financial endowment of 50 million euros.

### **6.2.3. Covid-19 allowance applications for the tourism sector**

The National Insurance Institute (Inps) has announced the activation of the Covid-19 allowance service<sup>22</sup> reserved for temporary employees in the tourism sector. The support measure is one of the most recent among those adopted on the

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21 Directorial Decree of August 14, 2020 <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/documenti-e-norme/normative/Documents/2020/DD-287-del-14082020-Rifinanziamento-Avviso-4.pdf>

22 Covid-19 allowance for temporary employees and self-employed persons [www.inps.it](http://www.inps.it)

recommendation of the Minister of Labor and Social Policies. Workers who, as a consequence of the epidemiological emergency from Covid-19, have ceased, reduced or suspended their activity or their employment relationship, will be paid an indemnity of 600 euros per month (March, April and May 2020).

## **7. The commitment of Cilap-Eapn Italy**

### **7.1. Letter to the newspaper La Repubblica: still too much disparity between citizens (April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020)**

Cilap-Eapn Italy, in collaboration with Cipsi Onlus, wrote a letter to **Carlo Verdelli**, former director of the newspaper La Repubblica. In the days of maximum alert for the Covid-19 pandemic, the two entities **wanted to reflect on the fact that the economy and solidarity must walk together**, and that each Member State gathered under the European flag has the duty to decide how to reduce the disparity among the citizens of Europe, without distinction.

“(...) in these days of strong responses to the emergencies caused by Covid-19, the networks we represent are committed to giving active support to member organizations operating on the ground at local, regional and national level. We are two Networks, branches of European non-profit organizations: CILAP is the Italian section of the European Anti Poverty Network, CIPSI is the coordination of 37 solidarity and international cooperation associations. We read with great interest what is reported in his newspaper. We read detailed opinions and proposals on how to face the present challenges and those that lie ahead. However, **we would like not to forget that in Europe the living conditions of citizens are very different and there is still a lot of inequality**. Crises like this one widen the gap between Member States even further. For these reasons we would like to say that, in deciding on how the expenses of the resources that will be made available will be made, **it will be essential to recognize all the needs and requirements of all citizens in Europe** who, while united in diversity, live in very different local contexts. Each member state can decide how and to whom to allocate its resources, but each member state united under the European flag will have to decide how to reduce the disparities between citizens in Europe, without distinction. As for us, Networks of non-profit organizations, we will continue to work also and above all to build shared and integrated policies, for a Europe and Italy without inequalities among people living there (...)”.

### **7.2. The annual report on the implementation of PON Inclusionione 2019 (July 2020)**

Cilap-Eapn Italy is a member of the monitoring committee for the implementation of PON Inclusionione<sup>23</sup> (National Operational Plan for Social Inclusion). The program is co-funded by the EU and managed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies.

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23 PON Inclusionione <http://poninclusionione.lavoro.gov.it/>



Given the direct experience with people in poverty, **Cilap-Eapn Italy was called to draft the 2019 annual report on the implementation of the PON.**

According to the research conducted by Istat, mentioned above, in Italy there are almost 1.7 million families in conditions of absolute poverty, almost 4.6 million individuals. Compared to the 2016 data, the number of people in absolute poverty is lower but the levels are higher than those of 2008 (beginning of the economic crisis). The number of families in relative poverty is (unfortunately) stable: in 2019 there were 3 million, which corresponds to 8.8 million people.

Despite some of those numbers showing a slight improvement, **the problems highlighted in the 2016 annual report still persist:** the request to expand the reference target was accepted but not the stability of the personnel employed in the PON area. Due to the reduction in funds, the contracts expiring in December 2020 risk not being extended. Without dedicated staff, many social services cannot be activated.

In consideration of the social and economic damage caused by Covid-19, Cilap-Eapn Italy has asked some crucial questions: **from 2021 onwards, how will the actions already started in the territories be managed? The pandemic has given rise to new types of poverty and social exclusion. How will they be addressed?**

The document received a reply from the **PON Managing Authority**, which expressed **great appreciation for the contribution provided.** The entity, thanking for the points of reflection, guaranteed that **the report will be taken into consideration to improve the implementation of the measures in place and the definition of the next actions**, not only to strengthen social interventions in favor of people in poverty, but to support the entire system of social services in Italy.

Cilap-Eapn Italy will soon be invited by the PON Managing Authority to personally discuss the issues.

### **7.3. Letter to EU leaders: vulnerable people at the center of every policy**

The European network Eapn, of which Cilap is the Italian section, in March 2020 wrote to the EU leaders gathered in the European Council, asking them to **take into consideration the most vulnerable people in a moment of health emergency** like the one in progress.

**Nicoletta Teodosi**, Cilap president: “we are concerned about the social and economic consequences produced by Covid-19 on people at risk of poverty and social exclusion. We ask EU leaders to **undertake coordinated actions** to protect the most fragile categories at this time”.

According to Eapn, the groups at risk the most are: precarious and underpaid workers, the unemployed, families with minors, the elderly, the chronically ill, people with disabilities, the homeless, migrants, Roma who live in slums.

The **recommendations** sent to the EU, to protect the most vulnerable, are:

1. A coordinated action at European level for the protection of the health of the most vulnerable;
2. Protection of workers through adequate income for all, including financial support where needed;
3. Aid to people in poverty: suspension of rent or mortgage payments, support for the payment of bills;
4. Mitigation of the social impact of containment measures on loneliness and isolation, also through support for non-profit organizations, at the forefront of the care of vulnerable people and the provision of services.

#### **7.4. Letter to the President of ANCI - National Association of Italian Municipalities (August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020)**

Cilap-Eapn Italy contacted the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) to share a reflection on the next necessary actions to be taken in favor of the most vulnerable social groups.

Below is the response of the **President Antonio Decaro**:

“(...) I would like first of all to thank you for your letter. As Municipalities, bodies closest to the needs of citizens, we are at the forefront of implementing policies to combat poverty, which unfortunately affects large sections of our population, made even more vulnerable by the consequences of this unexpected and unprecedented pandemic that has hit us. **“Poverty”** which, as you have rightly mentioned, **is not only material but is characterized by multiple vulnerabilities and needs** (work, social, socio-health, educational...) that coexist and therefore must be addressed according to an integrated network approach various territorial services, through a broad and cohesive local governance that already exists in some territories but which should be guaranteed throughout the national territory. To face this challenge, it is necessary to **support and consolidate local social inclusion policies through the strengthening of the staff of the administrative social services** (a path already started in recent years, first with the resources of the PON Inclusion and then with the Poverty Fund), both in terms of training and skills enhancement, both through new hires, towards a stabilization perspective to guarantee continuity in taking charge. While thanking you again for the interest shown and for sharing ideas and reflections, we renew ANCI's commitment to support the Municipalities in the paths of organizational and skills strengthening so that they can increasingly guarantee their most fragile citizens effective answers and give support in the paths of emancipation to escape from the state of poverty (...).”

### **8. Recommendations for a future without poverty and social exclusion**

For Eapn network the essential factor for a socially fair and sustainable future is the **Adequate Minimum Income (MI)**. This instrument can guarantee dignity to all in

the short and long term if the political approach is comprehensive and coherent. National social policies must be virtuously intertwined with European ones, to the point of establishing a single community reference framework. Whether they are unemployed or workers, people have **the right to live every stage of their existence with dignity**.

The Adequate Minimum Income proposal, closely linked to the **Fair Minimum Wages (MW)**, represents one of the **historic battles of the European network**. This position, in fact, is confirmed in the recent “Position Paper<sup>24</sup>” (May 2020), drawn up by Eapn with the contribution of all national associations. The analysis is based on the joint work of the Emin Network (European Minimum Income Network) and the Eapn Social Inclusion Group, in the period 2013-2018. The recommendations are not the result of a cold analytical study of data but of a direct, serious and constant comparison with people living in poverty.

The document states that a **“European soft law” is not sufficient to reduce poverty or to guarantee decent living and working conditions**. Eapn asks the European institutions for a Framework Directive on the Adequate Minimum Income and a framework standard on the Fair Minimum Wages, obliging member countries to make a **legally binding commitment**.

The Covid-19 pandemic has accentuated the vulnerability of unemployed and precarious workers, making the need for an adequate minimum income even more urgent. To enrich the reflection, we point out the **latest OECD economic report on Italy<sup>25</sup>**, in which we read a series of interesting suggestions for a socially fair and sustainable future. Among them: **a comprehensive reform package aimed at increasing productivity and employment growth** would be essential for stronger social inclusion. The benefits related to the exercise of a professional activity and a moderate guaranteed income scheme should increase employment and reduce poverty, provided that these tools are supported by **better job search and training programs**. Action aimed at improving coordination between the institutions involved by regional development policies and strengthening the capacity of local administrations would help promote growth and social inclusion in less developed regions.

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