

ITALY

Key Contextual Data

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Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk*, both in the table and in the sources.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC system type and auspices

The system of early childhood education and care in Italy is currently organised in two separate sectors, although a recent law reform (*La Buona Scuola*, approved on 13 July 2015) envisages establishing an integrated/unitary 0-6 system*.

Kindergartens (*scuole dell'infanzia*) for 3- to 6-year olds and also so-called 'bridge classes' for 2- to 3-year olds come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (*Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca*, MIUR) and constitute the first stage of the national education system. Responsibility for the organisation and management of ECEC provision at the local level lies with the various providers (state or municipal or private).

Provision for the under-threes is highly decentralised. Currently, infant-toddler centres (*nidi d'infanzia*) are not part of the education system, although they were first seen as having an educational mandate in the 1970s. Local authority social policy departments are directly responsible for the regulation and organisation at the local level.

Sources: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
Eurydice 2015.
*Law 107/2015.

General objectives and legislative framework

Key legislative frameworks and declarations regarding children's right to education and care in a kindergarten are the Italian Constitution (*Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana*), which emphasises the principles of cultural and institutional pluralism; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; and relevant European Union documents. Overarching goals of early childhood education are to support the children's identity building, autonomy and competence development, as well as laying the foundations for an understanding of citizenship.

Recent legislation (Law 107/2015: "Reform of the national education and training system and the mandate to reorganise existing legislation") and its implementation decree no. 65/2017: "Institution of an integrated system of education from birth to six years"; (see Italian ECEC Workforce Profile, *Section 6*, for a detailed description of the law) provide the framework for a fundamental reform of the Italian education system. As mentioned above, it is planned to integrate the two previously separated sectors of early childhood education and care into a unitary system.

Sources: Eurydice 2015.
IEA 2016.
Law 107/2015.
Law Decree 65/2017.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Attendance in any kind of ECEC provision for 0- to 6-year olds is voluntary. There is no legal entitlement to a place in an ECEC setting.

Statutory schooling begins at age 6.

Sources: European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
IEA 2016.

Main types of provision

Infant-toddler centres/nurseries (*nidi d'infanzia*) provide care and education for children under age 3. The Emilia Romagna region has the highest number of infant-toddler centres in Italy (619).

Integrated centres/services (*servizi integrativi*) are also available for this age-group. They were initiated in the 1980s within a family policy framework (*Tempo per le Famiglie*). In Milan, for example, there are currently nine such settings for children and families; across the country there are 423 centres for children and families**. They also provide part-time or home-based care arrangements.

'**Bridge classes**' (*sezioni primavera*) for 2- to 3-year olds are aimed to smooth the transition between infant-toddler centre and kindergarten. They are located in nursery settings as well as in kindergartens, depending on the local circumstances. Bridge classes were first established in 2007 as an experimental form to support parents in employment. So-called '**Pre-groups**' (*anticipi*) for 2½- to 3-year olds are also available, particularly in the southern part of the country and in disadvantaged areas. Attendance is usually free of charge.

Kindergartens/Pre-primary education settings (*scuole dell'infanzia*) are provided for 3- to 6-year olds. Particularly in the larger cities with well-developed municipal structures the children generally attend a municipal setting, otherwise mostly state-maintained kindergartens. Children must usually be at least 3 years old by the 31st December in any one year to attend. If places are available, younger children can in exceptional cases also be taken in. Kindergartens are open for eight hours daily. Municipal and private settings often offer longer opening hours if there is a need. Kindergartens are closed in July and August for the summer break.

According to national statistics (ISTAT)*, in 2014 there were 1,647,702 children attending 23,515 *scuole dell'infanzia* in Italy. Among them were 165,506 children (10%) with a background of migration.

Sources: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
Eurydice 2015, 2016.
IEA 2016.
*ISTAT 2017.
**Musatti, T. and S. Mantovani 2013.

Provider structures

Infant-toddler centres for the under-threes are usually run by municipal or private providers. Local authorities can also commission private agencies to provide nursery settings, or they may be provided by companies for their employees. Overall, approximately 70% of all services for under 3-year olds (*nidi*, integrated services, bridge classes) are publicly run. Regional variations are considerable and may range from 1% to 40%. Particularly in the larger cities, the proportion of publicly run settings is significantly higher, whereas in the southern parts of the country, some municipalities do not offer any kind of service. In 2014***, publicly run infant-toddler centres comprised

43.4% of the total number of *nidi*. Almost three quarters (73%) of the integrated services (*servizi integrativi*) for under 3-year olds were private; 27% are run by municipalities.

Kindergartens/Pre-primary education settings may be run by the state, the municipalities or private (mostly church-affiliated) providers. Regional disparities in the distribution of providers are considerable. In the northern parts of the country there are more state-run kindergartens than in the south. Overall, the majority of kindergartens are state run (roughly 60%), roughly 30% are private and 10% are run by municipalities. According to ISTAT data published in 2014* (see *Table 1*), participation rates show that nearly 57% of children attending a *scuola dell'infanzia* are enrolled in a state-run kindergarten and just over one quarter (26.4%) in a privately run kindergarten/infant school.

Table 1

Italy: Participation rates in *scuole dell'infanzia* according to provider type*

Provider	Participation rate in %
State	56.8
Municipal	8.3
Private	26.4
Bridge groups in <i>scuole dell'infanzia</i>	2.0

Table 2

Italy: Number of kindergartens/infant schools and children according to provider type, 2014**

Träger	Number of settings	Number of children
State	13,424	1,013,079
Municipal	1,954	153,772
Private	8,137	480,851
Total	23,515	1,647,702

Sources:: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
 CARE 2015.
 *ISTAT 2014.
 **ISTAT 2017.
 ***Istituto degli Innocenti, Dec. 2014.

Participation rates in regulated provision

Whereas 25% of under 3-year olds participated in centre-based provision in 2005, ten years later this proportion had changed only slightly (27.3%). The larger majority of children between 3 years of age and school entry attend some form of ECEC provision, although overall participation dropped from 91% in 2005 to 85.9% in 2015.

Table 3

Italy: Participation rates according to duration of attendance in centre-based settings 2005-2015*

Year	Weekly attendance	0 to under 3 years in %	3 years up to school entry in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	9	21
	Over 30 hours	16	70
	No attendance	79	9
2010	1 to 29 hours	6	17
	Over 30 hours	16	70

	No attendance	78	13
2015	1 to 29 hours	10.4	23.3
	Over 30 hours	16.9	62.6
	No attendance	72.7	14.1

In general, it can be noted (for 2012) that the participation rates of children below age 3 were much lower in the South (5%) than in Central Italy (18.8%) or the North (north-west: 16.4%; north-east: 19.1%)***.

National data for 2014**** suggest that roughly 19 to 20% of under 3-year olds were enrolled in some form of provision (infant-toddler centres/nurseries, integrative services, bridge groups), whereas again, there were considerable regional differences: Emilia Romagna: 27%, Lombardy: 16,9%, Campania: 2,8%, Calabria: 2,1%. The proportions of children attending nurseries (*nidi*) in the North and the South varied significantly. 4-5% of under-threes were enrolled in an integrated setting.

The participation rates for 3- to 6-year olds are much higher, whereas statistical sources vary: 93.5% according to national statistics, 85.9% according to Eurostat data (see *Table 3*) and 97% according to own calculations on the basis of Eurostat data for 2015 (see *Table 4*). Again, regional differences can be noted, particularly with regard to the provider type. In Milan, for example, 70% of under-threes were enrolled in a municipal kindergarten and 22% in a state-run kindergarten, whereas in Turin the respective shares were 40% and 45%. Overall, around 57% attended a state-run *scuola dell'infanzia* (in the South only 10%), and approximately 35% a municipal or private kindergarten/infant school.

Tabelle 4

Italy: Number of children and enrolment rates in ECEC provision according to age-groups, 2015**

Age-groups	Number	Enrolment ratio, in %
Under 2 years	n.d.	
2-year olds	83,749	15.6
3-year olds	503,531	92.1
4-year olds	538,049	95.8
5-year olds	504,538	88.4
6-year olds	7,243	1.3
3- to under 6-year olds	1,629,867	97.0[†]

[†] Own calculations based on Eurostat data from 2015.

Sources: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
****Jensen, B. R., L. Iannone, S. Mantovani, C. Bove, M. Karwowska-Struczyk and O. Wysłowska 2015.
*Eurostat 2017f.
**Eurostat 2017h, 2017i.
***Noi Italia 2016.

Financing and costs for parents

State-maintained kindergartens/infant schools are fully state-funded; municipal ECEC settings working according to the national guidelines receive part-funding. In general, the buildings are financed by the municipality and staff salaries by the State.

Infant-toddler centres are always fee-paying, but there are no available data on the level of parental fees. However, the recent Law Decree 65/2017 introduced an 'upper limit' to the contribution of families for covering the costs of running ECEC services. Apart from a small sum for meals and transport, public kindergartens are free of charge. Low-income families do not have to pay for

subsistence and transport. There are no available data regarding the fee levels of private kindergartens/infant schools.

Sources: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.
Law Decree 65/2017, Article 9(1)

Staff-child ratios

In **infant-toddler centres/nurseries**, children are mostly allocated to same-age groups, sometimes to mixed-age groups. The municipality decides on the required group size and staff-child ratios.

In **kindergartens/pre-primary education settings**, groups are usually organised according to the children's age. However, for some activities children of different ages are brought together in order to strengthen relationships between the older and younger children. In state-run provision, group size varies between a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 26 (under some circumstances this may be 29). If children with special educational needs are enrolled, the group size is reduced accordingly.

Staff in kindergartens are nowadays required to have completed a five-year initial professional studies course at university at ISCED level 7 (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria* – Primary and pre-primary university degree). The minimum requirement for work with under 3-year olds is an upper secondary vocational qualification at ISCED level 3. However, the Law Decree 65/2017 states the need to enhance the quality of educational services by ensuring adequate initial professional training/education (specialist university-level training will be a minimum entry requirement both for ECEC Teachers and Educators). From 2019/2020 onwards, either a Bachelor's degree in Educational Science with a focus on early childhood education, or a five-year degree in primary and pre-primary education, supplemented by a 60-ECTS points module in early childhood education, will become mandatory requirements for working in 0-3 years ECEC-settings [see the *Italy – ECEC Workforce Profile Report, Table 1 and Table 3* for a detailed description].

In 2014, just one qualified member of staff was responsible for an average of 12.2 children* in kindergartens across the country.

Sources: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2016.
Eurydice 2016.
*ISTAT 2016.

Curricular Frameworks

There is no national curricular framework for children **under 3 years** of age. Only local guidelines currently exist. However, the recent Law Decree envisages the drafting of National Guidelines for the 0-6 years integrated system. These guidelines will be drawn up by a committee of experts appointed by the Ministry of Education, University and Research. At present, each municipality develops a general framework which infant-toddler centres adapt to their specific local needs. Centre programmes include various activities (e.g. times for play and rest, mealtimes, health care); sometimes families are involved in parts of the everyday programme. Activities aim to foster the children's socialisation and learning at the individual and group level.

Since 2013/14, **kindergartens** are required to work according to "National Curriculum Guidelines for Pre-primary Institutions and the First Cycle of Education" (*Indicazioni nazionali per il curricolo della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo ciclo di istruzione 2012*) issued by the Ministry of Education in

line with key competencies for lifelong learning adopted by the European Parliament. Competencies are formulated for five key areas of experience: (1) The self and others, (2) Body and movement, (3) Pictures, sounds and colours, (4) Language and words, (5) Knowledge of the world. Catholic kindergartens develop their own area of learning regarding religious education. The guidelines include competencies which children are expected to have acquired by the end of their time in kindergarten, e.g. to be able to express their feelings, to enter into relationships with others, to convey experiences through language, to think about different meanings, or to show an understanding of rules.

Although staff are free to choose their preferred didactic approaches, they are expected to ensure that the children experience a balanced curriculum between routine procedures and new learning; to be aware of the importance of active and discovery-oriented approaches; to organise the rooms in an aesthetically stimulating way; to feel responsible for the children's overall spatial experiences; and to offer them support when needed.

Source: Eurydice 2015.

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

In Italy, legislation (*Legge-quadro per l'assistenza, l'integrazione sociale e i diritti delle persone handicappate*, 104/1992) requires that children with disabilities and other special educational needs are included as far as possible in mainstream provision, both in nurseries and in kindergartens. Relevant guidance was issued by the Ministry of Education in 2009. Individual educational plans are developed for these children and they receive special support measures which may include additional specialist staff. Segregated ECEC provision is unusual and is provided only for children with visual and auditory impairments. The proportion of children with special educational needs in ECEC settings has been estimated at roughly 2%.**

Children with a background of migration

The estimated proportion of children in ECEC settings with a background of migration is 10%.**

In 2016, 8.3% of the population in Italy were of non-Italian origin. More than two-thirds (69.8%) came from countries outside the EU-28. In the group of children under 5 years, 14.1% came from families with a background of migration and three-quarters (75.3%) were from non-EU countries*.

Sources: **Jensen, B., R.S. Iannone, S. Mantovani, C. Bove, M. Karwowska-Struczyk, and O. Wysłowska 2015.
*Eurostat 2017g.
Eurydice 2012.

Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

In Italy, there is still no nationally regulated or mandated system of evaluation of the ECEC sector, neither in terms of assessing provision nor of detailing children's individual achievements. Inspections are not conducted according to a standardised instrument. However, relevant changes are expected during the coming years. In 2016/2017, the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) and the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (INVALSI) promoted a first draft of the Self-Evaluation Report (RAV), introduced through Law 107/2015 for ECEC provisions. The idea, for the future, is that each kindergarten/pre-primary setting, as well as

each school, will be required to submit a Self-Evaluation Report following a set format developed by INVALSI**.

In the near future, a system for monitoring quality and the impact of CPD initiatives on self-evaluation will be developed at the national level. The underlying assumption is the need to promote 'process evaluation' and the development of a system for the self-evaluation of professional development (Rapporto di Auto-Valutazione, RAV).

In terms of external evaluation, this does currently take place in **kindergartens**, although not necessarily on a regular basis. The responsible authority is the "Regional Education Office" (*Ufficio scolastico regionale*) of the Ministry of Education. Beyond inspecting the rooms, equipment and compliance with safety regulations, staffing quality, curriculum implementation and the children's progress are also the focus of such evaluations.

Children's skills – language and literacy, numeracy, creative and physical competencies – are usually assessed at the beginning and end of their time in kindergarten, and parents receive a written report. The survey techniques and checklists used for this kind of evaluation are usually developed on a regional basis. Self-evaluation procedures consist of critical reflection on the daily work and over time and writing reports. However, such documents remain within the kindergarten and are not published in any way.

Regional and municipal (health) authorities are responsible for inspections in **infant-toddler centres**. These focus on the structural quality of provision and compliance with safety and hygiene regulations. Individual children are not assessed formally; however, the staff observe their development and always include the parents in any kind of informal assessment.

There are no substantial government or institutions-funded research projects on Early Childhood Education and Care in Italy. Generally, research funds come from autonomous calls. In addition, local authorities provide some funding for promoting the ECEC and school staff's CPD (and sometimes these funds are used for conducting action-research interventions or research-based professional development). In the past, the Italian government raised funds for special/'pilot' projects (e.g. A.S.C.A.N.I.O *Attività Sperimentale Coordinata Avvio Nuovi Indirizzi Organizzativi*, a project on innovative organisational models in pre-school*), but currently the only research projects funded by the government relate to the evaluation of schools.**

Sources: *Annali della Pubblica Istruzione 2000.
Eurydice 2015.
IEA 2016.
**INVALSI 2015.
OECD 2015.

Parental leave arrangements

Compulsory **maternity leave** (*congedo di maternità*) lasts 20 weeks. At least four of these must be taken before the expected birth date. During this period, monthly payments are based on 80% of previous earnings.

Since 2013, fathers are eligible for two fully paid days of **paternity leave** (*congedo di paternità*). These have to be taken during the five months following the child's birth. If the mother agrees, the father may take a further two days which are then deducted from the mother's maternity leave. Under certain circumstances (e.g. if the mother is self-employed or for other compelling reasons) the maternity leave period can be transferred to the father.

Each (employed) parent can be granted up to six months of **parental leave** (*congedo parentale*) which may be taken in different time blocks and also simultaneously at any time up to the child's 12th birthday. A maximum of 10 months is the limit allowed per family; if the father takes at least three months, parental leave is extended to 11 months. While the children are still under 6 years

of age, parents receive 30% of their earnings; once the child is older, leave is unpaid. An experimental measure is being piloted up to 2018: mothers can exchange their parental leave entitlement for a childcare voucher worth 300€ per month. However, it seems that only around one third of the funding reserved for this measure is being allocated.

In 2015, 85% of employees making use of parental leave were women and 15% men (data from the Istituto Nazionale Previdenza Sociale - INPS).

Sources: Addabbo, T., V. Cardinali, D. Giovannini, and S. Mazzucchelli 2017.

Historical highlights and shifts

1829	First pedagogically oriented childcare institution established
1869	First kindergarten working according to Froebelian principles
Early 20th C.	The Agazzi sisters establish institutions with a family-like atmosphere
1907	Opening of first Montessori kindergarten
1920s	Law 2277/1925: Establishment of ONMI [<i>National organisation for the protection of mother and Child</i>], public services for destitute families, located within the Ministry of Interior)
1928	Kindergartens recognised as educational institutions
1968	Integration of kindergartens into State education system (law 444/1968)
1969	Publication of the first National Guidelines for Educational Activities in the State Kindergarten/Infant School (<i>Orientamenti per l'attività educativa nella scuola materna statale – Decree n. 647, 10th September 1969</i>)
1970s	Law 1044/1971: Institution of nurseries, childcare services for infant and toddlers of working mothers. Nursery is defined not as a universal provision, but as an individual service on demand. Municipalities, and private organisations are responsible for this provision.
1980s	The project <i>Tempo per le Famiglie</i> is initiated in Milan by the city council and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation – a precursor to the later integrated services for under-threes and their families. [Data collected in 2011 in Italy and published in 2013** - show a significant expansion of “Centres for parents and young children”. Today, 423 such centres are in operation, the majority in central and northern Italy].
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1991: Publication of new pedagogical guidelines for preschool (<i>Nuovi Orientamenti dell'attività educativa per la scuola materna – Decree 3rd June 1991</i>). – Services for the under-threes start expanding and developments are characterised by an increasing collaboration between research agencies and ECEC services. A culture of Early Education begins and important educational organisations are established, such as the <i>Gruppo Nazionale Nidi Infanzia</i> (founded by Loris Malaguzzi). – A growing number of studies, most of them collaborative action research projects, are conducted by researchers, <i>educatrici</i> and <i>coordinatori</i> and are closely related to practice and methodological innovation.*
2004	Publication of National Guidelines for “Individualised Educational Activities” in kindergartens/infant schools (<i>Indicazioni per i piani personalizzati delle attività educative alla scuola dell'infanzia – Decree n. 59, 19th February 2004</i>).
2007	National Guidelines for the curriculum of pre-primary education and the first cycle of learning (<i>Indicazioni Nazionali per il curriculum della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo ciclo di istruzione – Decree 31st July 2007</i>).
2012	National Guidelines for the curriculum of pre-primary education and the first cycle of learning (<i>Indicazioni Nazionali per il curriculum della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo ciclo di istruzione- Decree n. 254, 16th November 2012</i>).
2015	Approval of the Law 107/2015 <i>Riforma del sistema nazionale di istruzione e formazione e delega per il riordino delle disposizioni legislative vigenti</i> (“Reform of the national educa-

	tion and training system and mandate to reorganise the existing legislative provisions” GU n.162, July 15 th 2015, also known as <i>La Buona Scuola</i> – “The Good School”): a set of guidelines for a comprehensive reform of the Italian school education system at all levels. Key points for the ECEC system are: a driving process of integration between the two main sectors of ECEC services; new national guidelines for the CPD of ECEC teachers (CPD is defined as “a duty and a right”) and the allocation of new funding for CPD in all schools. [See <i>Italy ECEC Workforce Profile, Section 6</i> , for a detailed description]
2017	Approval of the Law Decree 65/2017, named <i>Istituzione del Sistema integrato di educazione e istruzione dalla nascita sino ai 6 anni</i> (“Establishing of the integrated system of education from birth to six years” published in the Government Gazette on 16th May 2017), which introduces a set of changes/implementation measures for the “Integrated system of education and training from birth to six years”. [See <i>Italy ECEC Workforce Profile, Section 6</i> , for a detailed description];

Sources: Bove, C. and S. Cescato 2017.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.
*Musatti, T. and M. Picchio 2010.
**Musatti, T. and S. Mantovani 2013.
OECD 2017.

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Italy

Country expert assessment by Chiara Bove, Silvia Cescato and Susanna Mantovani

As already described in the Italian *ECEC Workforce Profile*, an important reform of the Early Childhood Education and Care system is in progress in Italy. In relation to the approval of the national law 107/2015 and, more importantly, as a consequence of the recent approval of the Law implementation Decree 65/2017 which legislates the “institution of the integrated system from birth to six years”, a process of gradually establishing a new unified ECEC system is in progress - a process that will take some years to achieve full translation into practice.

Main challenges and changes both in the near future and in a longer-term perspective are:

- I. Redefining and implementing regular State financing or co-financing of ECEC services through one source, namely the Ministry of Education (MIUR);
- II. Earmarking State funding for local services according to minimal standards;
- III. Progressively redefining through a negotiation with the State-Region Standing Committee (*Conferenza Stato-Regioni*), ECEC governance to guarantee greater homogeneity and basic requirements;
- IV. Ensuring more accessible services for all families, especially for the most vulnerable ones; increasing provision for children up to the age of three (overcoming inequalities and cultural barriers – Decree 65/2017, Article 4 (h));
- V. Developing high quality integrated centres for the education of children aged 0-6 (*Polì per l’infanzia*); ensuring full access for all children and encouraging training programmes that involve 0-3 educators and 3-6 teachers. One to three *Polì* will be identified and supported in each region;
- VI. Progressively reconceptualising the 0-3 services as no longer being services provided according to individual demand. This process will include reduced fees for families;
- VII. Establishing educational continuity across the ECEC sector, integrating ECEC services both horizontally (among different providers, i.e. State, Municipalities, Associations, private providers) and vertically (0-3/3-6);

- VIII. Defining broad National Guidelines for the 0-6 integrated system (coherent with the 3-6 *Indicazioni per il curricolo, 2012*). A Committee will be appointed in 2017 to draw up the Guidelines and to monitor the first phase of the new process;
- IX. Clarifying the various possible professional profiles, qualifications, functions, roles and in-service training of the Pedagogical Coordinators to ensure that they can act as a *key figure* in the local integration of the 0-3 and 3-6 sectors, according to the specificities of the region;
- X. Developing a national system for monitoring ECE quality, for sustaining the expansion and the organisation of ECEC services within the integrated system, and for reducing disparities and differences between regions. (Up to date, quality in 0-3 education is locally defined and legal minimum quality requirements are in place in various regions);
- XI. Developing an *updated* professional profile for ECEC Educators and Teachers, capable to work within a more flexible and integrated 0–6 system.
- XII. Reviewing the University curricula required for working in a 0-3 service: Bachelor degree L19 and specific addresses, the additional course of 60 ECTS points following a five-year degree in primary and pre-primary education required for teachers of *Scuola dell’Infanzia* to enter the 0-3 profession;
- XIII. Designing new integrated opportunities for CPD (as envisaged in Law 107/2015 and Law Decree 65/2017), by encouraging a strong commitment through Universities and local agencies.

Demographic data

Total population

In 2016, the population in Italy totalled 60,665,551. This represents a steady growth over the past 20 years (1995: 56,844,408; 2005: 57,874,753).

Children under 6 years of age

In 2016, children under age 3 accounted for 2.5% and children under 6 years of age for 5.2% of the total population. Since 2005, these percentage rates have been consistently lower than the EU average.

Table 3

Italy: Children under 6 years of age, 2016.

Age of children	Number of children
Under age 1	4,796,11
1-year olds	5,006,79
2-year olds	5,117,60
Under age 3 total	14,920,50
3-year olds	5,348,90
4-year olds	5,460,08
5-year olds	5,609,84
Total 3- to under 6-year olds	16,418,82
Total 0- to under 6-year olds	31,339,32

Table 4

Italy: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %*

Age	1995	Ø EU15 ¹	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
Under 3-year olds	2.9	3.3	2.8	3.1	2.5	3.0
3- to under 6-year olds	2.8	3.5	2.8	3.1	2.7	3.1
0- to under 6-year olds	5.7	6.9	5.6	6.2	5.2	6.2

* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

Source: Eurostat 2017a.

Single households with children under age 6

In 2015, 82.3% of households with children under age 6 were couple households. Single parent households accounted for 2.7%, whereby these were almost exclusively single mother households (2.5%).

Table 5

Italy: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent ⁺
Households – total	5,487,500	
Couple households	4,515,900	82.3
Other types of households	822,300	15.0
Single households, total	149,300	2.7
Single households, women	137,000	2.5
Single households, men	12,300	0.2

* Own calculations, ** data computed

Source: Eurostat 2017e.

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men (aged 15 to 64) in Italy was 65.5% and that of women 47.2%. Of the women with children under 6 years of age, 53.2% were employed, whereas 85.4% of men with children of the same age were in the labour market. The employment rates in particular of the mothers with under 6-year olds are lower than the EU-28 average.

Table 5

Italy: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015⁺

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Italy	2005	50.9	91.8

¹ The 1995 data are for the EU15 countries at the time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK); the 2005 data (EU25) also include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2014 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR.

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
	2010	51.8	88.8
	2015	53.2	85.4
European Union	EU15 – 2005	56.2	90.0
	EU27 – 2010	58.2	86.6
	EU28 – 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

*own calculations

Sources: Eurostat 2017b.
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion²

In 2015, 29.65% of children under age 6 in Italy were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is above the average rate in the EU-28 (24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion within the overall population totalled 28.7%.

Source: Eurostat 2017d.

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² 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

(<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdsc100&plugin=1>)

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