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ERADICATING POVERTY THROUGH LOCAL & NATIONAL STRATEGIES

ITALY

**POVERTY WATCH
2025**



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK



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EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK

POVERTY WATCH

2025

Poverty and social exclusion in Italy
Europe



POVERTY WATCH 2025 - ITALY

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1. Poverty and social exclusion: introductory reflections

[Cilap-Eapn Italy](#) has been dealing with poverty since its establishment in 1990. In those years, there was little talk about poverty at the level of generalist media; public opinion sensitive to this issue had not yet been formed. Poverty was a concept used only by those working with the elderly, people with disabilities, immigrants, the homeless, large families, and single mothers. But the words “**poverty**” or “**poor**” were not even uttered by those working in the field. They began to be used with the first European Poverty Programs. However, **they were (and still are) stigmatizing words**. Moreover, if it has not yet been effectively eliminated or reduced, it is because the complexity of poverty has never been addressed by a real European Strategy, despite programs, preparatory actions, projects, and targets since the mid-1970s. The EU has approached poverty from a socio-economic and individual perspective, without ever really considering its root causes.

2. National and local anti-poverty strategies (NAPS and LAPS) in Italy: mapping and description

The fallout in Italy, over the course of several years, of the European Anti-Poverty Plans and, most recently, the European Pillar, has resulted in an uneven planning and administrative path by the Regions, with a **disparity of actions and interventions** that, in any case, are based on the issuance of calls addressed to the Third Sector for the implementation of interventions.

With the “Towards the European Anti-Poverty Strategy” meeting held on February 24 2025, **we wanted to initiate a collective discussion and confrontation that would lead us to a Recommendation to be presented to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy**, where we would indicate the challenges and priorities that, according to us, who work with and for people in poverty, a National Anti-Poverty Strategy should contain, and not an anti-poor one.

In view of the submission of the proposal for the new post-2027 [Multiannual Financial Framework](#) (MFF) that will be made in July, we want to take into account what is contained in the Political Guidelines (July 2024) of President von der Leyen, where in the chapter “Social fairness in the modern economy” it is recited that there will be increased funding for a just transition in the next

long-term post-2027 budget and this will be part of the work to help people get access to essential protections, services they need, as well as addressing the causes of poverty through an initial “EU Anti-Poverty Strategy.”

Therefore, it is necessary for the Anti-Poverty Strategy that we activists and stakeholders, as well as institutions that deal with poverty and social exclusion, assume a broad knowledge of what is happening because it is evident in the Commission’s documents “an absence of the social part,” although in its work program there is a reference to an action plan to the European Pillar of Social Rights, “but in concrete there is really little.”

[Istat in 2023](#) quantified households in absolute poverty at “just over” 2.2 million, or 8.4 percent of the total number of households residing in Italy. This is nearly 5.7 million people, 9.7 percent of residents of whom there are 1.3 million minors, 23 percent. For every 5 people in absolute poverty, 1 is a minor.

Southern regions are home to 38.7% of absolute poor households, more than 850,000 families (down from 2022 by almost 3%); in central regions, absolute poor households account for 16.2%, or 356,400 (up slightly from 2022’s figure of 15.6%; but the figure for northern regions is 45% (990,00) up, albeit by slightly more than 2% from 2022.

In one year, between 2022 and 2023, households in absolute poverty in Italy increased by about 30 thousand. Considering an average of 3 people per family, this is almost 100 thousand more individuals in one year. Few if we stop to look only at the numbers, but many if we think that families are composed of people: adults, children, women and in many cases lonely elderly people who cannot meet the minimum essential needs, in a country that is among the richest in the world.

In 2022, the relative family poverty line in Italy was 1,150 euros for a family of two; in 2023 it was around 1,210.89 euros. These thresholds vary from region to region, from “metropolitan area periphery and municipalities with 50,001 inhabitants and more” and “Other municipalities up to 50,000 inhabitants (other than metropolitan area periphery municipalities).” If we take a northern region (Piedmont) as an example, with one from the Center (Abruzzo) and one from the South (Calabria) we can better understand what it means for a household of 2 people to live below the poverty line.

The table below is an example and shows suburban areas of cities.

Region, two members (age 30–59)	Metropolita n area suburbs and municipaliti es with a population of 50,001 or more (2021)	Other municipalities up to 50,000 inhabitants (other than municipalities periphery metropolitan area) 2021	Metropolitan area suburbs and municipalities with a population of 50,001 or more 2022	Other municipalities up to 50,000 inhabitants (other than municipalities periphery metropolitan area) 2022
Piedmont	1.022,68	995,19	1.148,14	1.133,38
Abruzzo	983,35	984,53	1.080,23	1.095,49
Calabria	907,23	874,72	1.001,83	979,96

In 2021, a 2-person household between the ages of 30 and 59 (the core of working age) in a city in **Piedmont** with more than 50,000 inhabitants, living in a suburban neighborhood is considered at risk of poverty and social exclusion if it spends (and thus has at its disposal) a little more than 1,000 euros (all inclusive); if we go down southward, we see that the same household in **Abruzzo** has a threshold of 983.35 euros below which it risks falling into absolute poverty. So on to **Calabria**.

These data also make us understand **how different the economic situation in Italy is in the three regional areas**. The further north one goes, the higher the poverty line. And it is not necessarily the case that the members of these households are unemployed or unemployable. Independent research such as that presented by [BIN Italy](#) shows that the risk of poverty and social exclusion can be just around the corner especially for young people who are working. All it takes is an unexpected setback to plunge into poverty.

Let's have **young Europeans**, including Italians, talk. The Italian ones are **precarious young people, not necessarily as poor as we are used to seeing**. Recent independent research finds that young people while working, living in different cities and neighborhoods are able to pay an unplanned expense of 200 euros; when faced with an expense of 500 euros the response is "it's a problem";

of 2,000 euros “I can’t make it”; of 5,000 euros “I’m going into poverty.” These are young people who feel the risk of exclusion and poverty in their condition, accentuated by the fact that the accepted job was already poor in itself.

2.1 REI (Income of Inclusion), 2017-2019

With Legislative Decree no. 147/2017, the [REI \(Reddito di Inclusione\)](#) was introduced, identified as an essential level, and therefore mandatory and widespread throughout the country, overcoming previous experiments, which was followed by two National Plans for the fight against poverty, prefiguring a system framework based on the ATSS, and a first system action was launched, aimed at establishing “The Network of Social Protection and Inclusion,” as responsible, among other things, for the development of a Plan for social interventions and services to combat poverty, as a programmatic tool for the use of resources from the share of the Fund for Combating Poverty and Exclusion.

In this regard, it is emphasized that the REI was intended as an organic reference for the conduct of concerted policies to combat and counter poverty, and connected to the European strategy to promote significant programs aimed not only at monetizing income support interventions, but above all to encourage and support processes of social inclusion.

2.2 The First National Plan to Combat Poverty, 2018

The Decree of May 18, 2018 approved the “Criteria for the Allocation of the Fund for the Fight against Poverty’ and Social Exclusion” and adopted the [Plan for interventions and social services to combat poverty](#). The Plan constituted the national planning act of the resources pertaining to the Service Share of the Poverty Fund and identified, within the limit of these resources, the development of interventions and services necessary for the implementation of REI as an essential level of services to be guaranteed throughout the country. Within the framework of the aforementioned Plan, priorities for the use of the Poverty Fund have been defined, and as the first priority, Professional Social Service is identified.

2.3 The Citizenship Income (RdC) and the Citizenship Pension (PdC), 2019 - 2023

With Decree-Law No. 4 of January 28, 2019, the [Citizenship Income \(RdC\) and Citizenship Pension \(PdC\)](#) was established, which is connected to a social protection policy that indicates, according to an orientation that is present in

various studies and analyses conducted both at the European level (France, the Netherlands, Germany) and at the national level (in particular the studies of Prof. [Domenico De Masi](#)) the desirability of overcoming outdated models of combating poverty (among which the measures that refer to the use of food scraps to be allocated to the “overt” poor are particularly questionable), in order to start, with the help and guidance of competent professionals (the Social Workers), to overcome the condition of “welfare stagnation” in order to build their own project of inclusion and achievement, as indicated above. In this context, the “Pact for Work and Pact for Social Inclusion” was envisaged, which takes on the characteristics of the personalized project articulated on the social interventions and services under the competence of the municipalities. Provision was also made for the employment of RdC users in the [Community Useful Projects \(PUC\)](#). After the three-year period from April 2019 to December 2023, the termination of the Citizenship Income has been arranged.

2.4 The Second National Plan to Combat Poverty, 2023

The first National Plan to Combat Poverty 2018-2020 was followed by an interministerial decree of December 30, 2021, the National Plan for Social Interventions and Services to Combat Poverty for the three-year period 2021-2023 and the allocation of fund resources. In this regard, it is emphasized that the aforementioned plan intervened during the full force of the Citizenship Income, as part of the definition of the Pact for Social Inclusion, and confirmed the orientation to build a structured system of support and support to the path of emancipation and contrast to poverty. identifying multidimensional assessment and personalized projects as essential levels of services. Therefore, with regard to services for access and assessment and supports to be identified in the personalized project pertaining to the integrated system of interventions and social services, what was already indicated by Law 328 of 2000 was taken up with greater vigor and updated:

- (a) social secretariat;
- (b) professional social service for taking charge, including the social component of multidimensional assessment;
- (c) internships aimed at social inclusion, autonomy of people and rehabilitation;
- (d) home-based or territorial socio-educational support;
- (e) home-based social welfare assistance and outreach services;
- (f) parenting support and family mediation service;
- (g) cultural mediation service;
- (h) emergency social intervention service.

In this context, within the National Fund for the fight against poverty, specific indications have been arranged, already initiated by Legislative Decree 147/2017, about the progressive strengthening of the professional social service and financial commitments for the permanent hiring of social workers, until reaching in relation to the population, of one social worker for every 4,000 inhabitants. Of particular note is the establishment of the [Service Center for Poverty Alleviation](#).

2.5 The data analysis

In the period from 2019 to 2023, the number of households receiving the Citizenship Income (RdC) and the Citizenship Pension (PdC) increased considerably. Initially, there were about 1.1 million recipient households in 2019, and then reached a peak of 1.4 million between April 2019 and July 2021. Of particular significance is the fact that, [according to ISTAT](#), the coverage of the resident population with the RdC/PdC has significantly increased compared to that of previous measures: in 2019 and 2020, recipients accounted for 7 and 8 percent of the population, respectively, where in 2017 income support measures covered only 1.7 percent of the population. In addition, ISTAT estimated that 400,000 households in 2020 and 450,000 households in 2021 came out of absolute poverty, totaling 900,000 individuals in 2020 and more than one million in 2021. As for the weight of the incidence of absolute poverty at the individual level, this would be 11.1 percent instead of 9.6 percent in 2020 and 11.5 percent instead of 9.8 percent in 2021.

Subsequently, the number of beneficiaries declined, standing at just over one million as of July 2023. In December 2023, there were 602,407 households benefiting from RdC, while those benefiting from PdC were 124,715.

The role of social service, in this context, is remarkably significant: between 2020 and 2022, about half of the beneficiary households were referred to municipal social services because economic difficulties were compounded by a protracted absence from the labor market of all members. From ISTAT's analysis regarding the intake of families by social services, a fluctuating trend was also found in relation to the Covid 19 pandemic, which brought an unexpected increase in the number of beneficiaries along with the suspension of intake during the months of 'forced isolation (lockdown), and from the second half of 2021, intake activities by social services stabilized at a maximum of 30 thousand applications per month for initiations and 20 thousand applications per month for the completion of preliminary analysis. In 2023, intake activities by social services increased to 60 thousand applications per

month for initiations and 48 thousand applications per month for completion of preliminary analysis.

2.6 The Inclusion Allowance (ADI) and the Support Employment Training (SFL), 2021-2023

The reform in the area of poverty alleviation and active inclusion was introduced by Decree Law 48/2023, which established the [Inclusion Allowance](#) (ADI) and the [Support for Job Training](#) (SFL) and the subsequent implementing decrees provided for in the law. With regard to the implementation of the Inclusion Allowance, Decree of the Minister of Labor and Social Policy No. 154 of December 13, 2023 (so-called implementation of the ADI, clarified the essential and implementing elements of the Inclusion Allowance, such as the modalities of access and operation of the measure, obligations, controls and sanctions, and detailed the categories of individuals to be considered in a disadvantaged condition. In particular, the regulatory provision aimed at recognizing the Inclusion Allowance to households with members in disadvantaged conditions and included in care and assistance programs of territorial social-health services certified by the public administration was implemented. The following categories were defined as disadvantaged:

Persons with mental disorders, in charge of social and health services, including former inpatients of psychiatric hospitals; Persons in charge of social or health services and persons with certified physical, mental and sensory disabilities, not less than 46 percent, who require integrated home care and assistance, semi-residential, family support or inserted in integrated care pathways People with pathological addictions placed in non-residential rehabilitation and treatment programs; People who are victims of trafficking in the care of social or socio-medical services; People who are victims of gender-based violence in the care of social or socio-medical services, in the presence of a measure of the Judicial Authority or placement in anti-violence centers or shelters; Persons formerly detained in the first year following “the end of the sentence” and persons admitted to alternative measures to detention and work outside in the charge of the Offices for External Criminal Execution; Persons identified as bearers of specific social fragility and placed in reception facilities or emergency housing intervention programs, in the charge of social services; Registered homeless persons in a state of poverty, in the care of territorial social services; i.e., registered persons in a state of extreme poverty and homelessness; Newly homeless persons (18-21 years old) living outside their family of origin on the basis of a court order.

2.7 The Third National Poverty Alleviation Plan, 2024-2026

With the Decree of April 2, 2025, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy adopted the National Social Plan 2024-26 and the National Plan for Combating Poverty. In a nutshell, the following represents the priorities and lines of intervention arranged, which echo what has already been indicated by Legislative Decree 147/2017, by the National Plans for Combating Poverty 2018-2020 and 2021-2023.

Preliminarily, the Poverty Plan has the specific function of identifying the development of interventions with a view to a gradual progression, within the limits of available resources, in the achievement of Essential Levels of welfare benefits (LEPS) to be guaranteed throughout the country. Therefore, the recognition of LEPS in their universalistic character is confirmed, specifying that the resources of the Poverty Fund (516,734,439.08 euros for 2024, 492,781,920.64 euros for 2025 and 437,000. 000.00 euros for 2026) will be used in accordance with the articulation of the Plan's priorities as updated in light of current regulatory interventions that have concerned: the establishment of the Inclusion Allowance; the definition of new LEPS in the context of combating extreme marginality and emergency social intervention; and the elimination from the Fund of the share of funding dedicated to the experimentation of interventions in favor of those who, upon reaching the age of majority, live outside their family of origin on the basis of a court order.

In the objective of building specific system actions, the Plan highlights the role of the Regions, as far as programming is concerned, and the decisive role of the Ambiti Territoriali Sociali, to strengthen the interventions and services related to the definition of personalized paths of social inclusion and the supports provided therein, referring to the beneficiaries of ADI, as well as to family units and individuals in similar conditions of economic hardship.

In the context of the Plan, the lines of intervention and provisions related to the objective of strengthening system actions aimed at giving continuity to interventions with reference to:

- Strengthening of the Professional Social Service;
- Strengthening of inclusion interventions (multidimensional assessment and activation of services and supports in the Social Inclusion Pact, including the Pronto Intervento sociale; strengthening of multiprofessional teams);
- Social Secretariat/access services;

- Information systems;
- Projects Useful to the Community (PUC).

The role of voluntary work and Third Sector Entities (ETS), defined in agreement with municipalities, is also indicated.

2.8 The data analysis

According to what is explained in the Plan, with regard to the measure that replaced the RdC, the Assegno di Inclusione (ADI), based on the data reported at the end of September 2024, it is recorded that about 600,000 households in Italy (equal to about 1.4 million individuals) have a successful application for ADI, representing approximately 2.4 percent of the households residing in Italy. The incidence reaches 6.8 percent of resident households in Campania, followed by Sicily with 6.4 percent and Calabria with 5.6 percent. More than 94 percent of ADI beneficiary households with a successful application were taken over by municipal social services (first meeting with social services occurred). Also as of September 2024, about 90% have completed a preliminary analysis and about 57% have defined and signed a social inclusion pact with services. For about 5% of the households, the social service has identified “complex” needs. It is also emphasized that comparison between RdC and ADI on annual intake rates will be possible in 2025, but currently available indicators already show a marked improvement over RdC. In fact, while the average rate of preliminary analysis completed within 6 months for applications entered into RdC in January-June 2023 reached 46 percent, for ADI the same rate for applications entered in the first two months of 2024 exceeded 85 percent.

Resuming what was already indicated in the Second National Poverty Alleviation Plan 2021-2023, the provision for the 'establishment of Service Centers for Poverty Alleviation (provided moreover by the EU-funded National Recovery and Resilience Plan – Next Generation Eu the Measure [M5C2](#) – Inclusion and Cohesion, the sub-investment) close to places of city life, well recognizable and easily accessible was confirmed. It is planned to establish at least one Service Center in 250 ATSS, providing funding of about 1.1 million per center, for a total of about 270 million euros.

2.9 The other interventions

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry by Ministerial Decree July 26, 2021, approved the annual food distribution program for the year 2021, amounting to 46.9 million euros for the year 2021. Similarly, with DM May 17, 2022, Program for Distribution of Foodstuffs to Indigent Persons – Year 2022,

adopted the annual program for distribution of foodstuffs to indigent persons for the year 2022, using resources from the Fund for Distribution of Foodstuffs to Indigent Persons. The Interministerial Committee for Economic Planning and Sustainable Development by resolution June 9, 2021 approved the Complementary Operational Program (POC) of Action and Cohesion “Inclusion 2014-2020” in the context of which the Axis 1 program “support for people in poverty and extreme marginality” is included.

In 2023, a decisive action was carried out to redefine the parameters for the fight against poverty, which were articulated on several levels: a first level consisted of the clear separation between families in a proven condition of hardship with elderly and disabled people within it, with an ISEE of less than € 9.360.00 for which the Inclusion Allowance is provided as of January 1, 2024, established, pursuant to Article 1, Paragraph 1, of Decree-Law No. 48 of 2023, as a national measure to combat poverty, fragility and social exclusion of vulnerable groups through paths of social inclusion, as well as training, employment and active labor policy.

For households in absolute destitution with an ISEE of less than €15,000 and with at least three members, the [“Social Card”](#) was introduced in 2023, i.e., the “dedicated to you” card made operational as of July 2023, with an amount of €382.50, disbursed through the Postepay network. Since September 2004, the “card” has been financed by a €500 million ad hoc fund and a second allocation of €100 million, reaching 1.2 million households in 2023, and 1.3 million in 2024, with an allocation per household of €500.00 usable until February 28, 2025.

Law No. 176 of November 18, 2024, “Provisions on health care for the homeless,” established a fund, with an endowment of €1 million for each of the years 2025 and 2026, to finance an experimental program, to be implemented in metropolitan cities, to progressively ensure the right to ‘health care for homeless people without registered residence in the national territory or abroad, who regularly reside in the Italian territory.

By Prime Minister’s Decree No. 24 of January 21, 2025, the principles and criteria for tariff concessions in favor of users of the integrated municipal waste management service who are in economically and socially disadvantaged conditions were identified, to whom the “social bonus for waste” with ISEE not exceeding 9,530.00 euros, raised to 20,000.00 euros for households with at least four dependent children.

Law No. 60 of April 24, 2025, Conversion into law, with amendments, of Decree-Law No. 19 of February 28, 2025, provided for the year 2025, the recognition of an extraordinary contribution worth € 200.00 on electricity supplies of domestic customers with values of the indicator of the equivalent economic situation (ISEE) up to € 25,000.00.

3. Testimonies from Italian associations and people in poverty: the social intervention of ACF Italy

[Azione Contro la Fame](#) (ACF) is an international humanitarian organization that works to mitigate the causes of hunger and malnutrition by supporting the most vulnerable communities: feeding therapeutic food to children, providing clean water, medical and psychological assistance, cooperating with farmers in various countries around the world, and much more.

The network, established in 1979, has offices in Italy, France, Canada, the United Kingdom, Spain, the United States, Germany and India.

3.1 “Mai più fame,” ACF’s project told by Ilaria Adinolfi

For ACF Italy we met Ilaria Adinolfi, coordinator of domestic projects. She tells us about “**Mai più fame: dall’emergenza all’autonomia**” (Never Hunger Again: from Emergency to Empowerment), a program that combines several social interventions in order to respond to crises in a holistic way that is sustainable in the long term. Specifically:

- 1) **Financial support** to local solidarity markets to purchase fresh food and distribution of grocery cards to needy households;
- 2) **Nutrition Education**, which includes a listening desk and meetings with nutrition professionals but also sharing cookbooks of healthy and inexpensive meals. “Ours is a holistic conception of poverty,” Ilaria specifies, “so we prefer a qualitative approach: I offer you economic resources but I combine it with training and guidance on quality groceries, since those living in poverty tend to choose junk food, ready-to-use foods but with very low nutritional values;
- 3) **Support for employment inclusion** in favor of the head of household seeking employment through group training courses. Twice a week, for 6 months, selected teachers train 25 people who are very different in age, background, social extraction and nationality but who share a desire to find employment. “We work a lot on the group,” Ilaria points out, “with

the goal of creating a real network of mutual support, mutual help among the participants, because cohesion has a huge positive impact on the functioning of the whole project. During the course there is no shortage of involvement of companies, which work alongside the teachers and present concrete possibilities for employment.

“If you eat well, you feel better, you gain security and confidence, so you are more proactive in looking for work as well”—reflects Ilaria—confirming what Cilap and Eapn have always advocated: poverty is not merely economic deprivation but also social, cultural, educational, psychological. To solve it, we need to identify and counter its root causes, not limit ourselves to an emergency welfare approach.

ACF is engaged throughout the country with various initiatives, but the project “Mai più fame: dall'emergenza all'autonomia” is present only in the cities of Milan (Gallaratese and Ticinese) and Naples (Quartieri Spagnoli and Forcella).

“Milan is a work-focused city,” Ilaria continues, **“so those who come to us need not only to work but also, and above all, to get out of invisibility,** to be part of the community. There, unemployment inevitably leads to stigma and social exclusion, while **in Naples there is a completely different setting: family communities are very strong, so the individual is never really isolated.** In addition, there is a cultural core related to unemployment that leads people to consider it normal or at least acceptable not to have a job, to resort to more or less legal expedients to survive, or to seek public assistance. In short, if you do not work, you are not stigmatized. Work is not a stated goal,” he concludes, “on the contrary, for many of our beneficiaries regular, permanent employment is a distant, sometimes unthinkable concept. The target group of participants in the training courses is also different: while in Milan, a multiethnic metropolis, the groups are heterogeneous in terms of age, nationality and professional background, in Naples almost all are women from the area, aged between 40 and 50.

In two years (2022-2024) the project has reached **410 households - 150 in Naples and 260 in Milan - for a total of more than 1,200 total beneficiaries¹**, considering the composition of their respective households. Positive numbers and encouraging results, as confirmed by the monitoring report that Ilaria shares with us: in Milan, for example, shortly after the end of the training courses, 65 percent of the participants say they drink more water; 61 percent

¹ Complete data can be found in ACF's annual report, at <https://azionecontrolafame.it/trasparenza-e-bilancio/>

have reduced the amount of sugar consumed daily; 61 percent eat more varied meals; 50 percent buy less ultra-processed food; and 47 percent read food labels when buying. In Naples, on the other hand, 72 percent confirm drinking more water; 61 percent reading food labels before buying; 58 percent reducing the amount of sugar consumed daily. Relative to work, in Milan—at the end of the project—68 percent say they have found employment or have sought new training. In Naples, on the other hand, 52% found employment or re-entered a course of study.

3.2 The stories of Seringhe, Amelie, Carmen and Margherita²

Many voices were collected during the project “Mai più fame: dall'emergenza all'autonomia”. Here we report the testimonies of Seringhe, Amelie (Milan), Carmen and Margherita (Naples).

Seringhe: When you live in difficulty and you realize it but you can't do anything to solve it, it's a mess. Things got better when I learned about the ACF course, thanks to my mother who discovered it by accident, passing through the neighborhood. Today I know that eating healthy is part of life. I also learned how to behave during a job interview, how to best tell one's story. I got a job shortly after finishing the course. Today I am a night cashier in a supermarket. I am happy because I can help my parents.

Amelie: Before, my life was beautiful, then a difficult time started, and the more time passed, the more I went downhill. I didn't know how to get out of it, I was ashamed first of all as a mother towards my son, because I had nothing to put on the table. Then I got a call from the social worker who pointed me to this course. I never thought I could change things, even a nutritionist following me and giving me advice! I learned how to make a serious resume and got a job. Within a month I got a permanent contract. I have a lot more confidence in myself, I am sure it will get better and better and soon I will reach the top. The ACF meetings made me aware that in the world there was not only me in that situation but millions of other people, I felt less alone.

Carmen: I was born and raised in these areas, always lived here. I got married, had a child, then at a certain point in life I found myself in a difficult period, I was on my knees. I didn't know how to get out of it until I discovered the course. There I realized that there are many women who, like me, went through critical times but got back up, so I found the strength and said to myself, “why

² The stories were extrapolated from ACF's video “[Testimonianze dal progetto Mai più fame: dall'emergenza all'autonomia a Milano e Napoli](#)” and adapted to the journalistic needs of this report

can't I succeed too?" – After sending several CVs I got a job, it is a replacement contract but it could turn into something more. During the course they also helped me with nutrition, I learned how to eat healthy while spending little. Basically, they gave me the opportunity to be more visible. Through the course I met wonderful people who made me important when I was no longer important. It was incredible growth for me; they made me reborn. I mean, now I think "if it goes, it goes, but if it doesn't go at least I tried. I am now flying, my wings are no longer broken."

Margherita: I had catapulted myself onto daughters and grandchildren. I was turned off, maybe depressed. Then I heard about the course by word of mouth. I asked myself, "Does this make sense at my age?" I had doubts but I decided to try, and I did well. Today I work in a B&B, I had a temporary contract and now I have an indefinite one instead. I think life is beautiful and worth living, I feel good, I know I can do so much more.

4. Recommendations to the Italian and European politicians

While recognizing the efforts of recent years (in 2010 the European population at risk of poverty was 122 million), recent EU policies, such as the Council Recommendation on the Minimum Adequate Income, the Child Guarantee, and the European Pillar of Social Rights, still do not appear to be implemented or whose results are not visible. What is still missing is a comprehensive view of what poverty is in Europe, because the official reading of what it means to be poor is reduced to economic terms.

From the overall picture of social protection policies that have intervened over the years, and in any case with reference to the current situation, the following is noted:

- The pursuit of specific actions and interventions for specific areas of intervention (the elderly, families, minors, people with disabilities, and the non-self-sufficient, are hinted at and in any case not fully defined and concretized;
- There has been a regulatory overkill against poverty, breaking the poor into categories and subcategories in relation to the "wealth" possessed according to the ISEE "limes" that varies from 15. 000.00 to 9,360.00 to 6,000.00 euros to which to allocate the granting of benefits, no longer indicated as essential levels, but rather as paternalistic and provisional disbursements, moreover varying from year to year, and entrusted to a

single disbursing agency, INPS, with the role of the municipalities in charge of the list of the poor (of venerable memory) to be transmitted to INPS itself.

- There has been a similar regulatory doggedness towards immigrant people, who, moreover, are still partly protected by Legislative Decree 289/98, and who are subjected to limitations, obstacles, very costly measures of internment and deportation (such as the case of Albania), very costly measures of a kind of surety to be paid in order not to be interned, lack of authentic reception policies, while human lives continue to die with an agonizing trickle.
- Moreover, social protection policies initiated by previous governments have been inherited (universal child allowance, children's education system 0-6 years, family caregiver, gender-based violence, people with disabilities, as well as financial interventions to local authorities through the Solidarity Fund for the development of specific social services (kindergartens) and the Poverty Fund for the hiring of Social Workers, based on funds already reserved by previous governments.
- We are witnessing a direct state-citizen thread, of Napoleonic memory, aimed at emphasizing the measures implemented, and the 'use of central institutions suited to the purpose, which mortifies the principle of vertical subsidiarity and the more immediate citizen-community service relationship.

In order to strengthen the fight against poverty, it is necessary to counterpose an idea of welfare and social protection adapted to our contemporary times. We need to get in tune with the present, have the curiosity and strength to understand the rapid social and economic transformations of this era and the courage to put forward lofty proposals capable of solidifying those socio-economic pillars necessary for our age. Despite such difficult times, in which we do not know whether Europe is a dream or a nightmare for everyone, it is necessary to reread what has happened in recent years, especially for us third sector entities. Start by studying the post-2027 multi-year financial framework given the risk we run is that we no longer talk about poverty. Resume and improve the model of taking the floor of people in poverty: as Cilap and EAPN we already promote it (European meetings of PEPs - People Experiencing Poverty, since 2001) but it needs to be strengthened, perhaps by creating at national and regional levels Committees of people in poverty who can directly express their needs and solutions.

In conclusion, our recommendations to the Italian and European politicians are:

- Include hidden poverty in the poverty dimension.
- Eradicate poverty, not just alleviate the conditions of people in poverty.
- Consider the complex and multidimensional aspects of poverty.
- Address the structural and systemic causes of poverty.
- Encourage authentic participation of people in poverty, but let it be an authentic participation, not a farce: provide means for them to be able to develop their capacity for experiences, their opinion. Ensuring this participation requires necessary means, including financial means.
- Ensure support for third-sector entities that are alongside people in poverty so that they can play their role in the voice of the poorest.
- Establish a link between the European Anti-Poverty Strategy and National Plans, creating coordination between the European, national and local levels.

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