

## Country Profile

### ITALY<sup>1</sup>

#### Children in care in Italy

- 28, 449 children are in alternative care (official data at 31.12.2012)
- There are more male children than female in care (15,820 male, 13,518 female)
- 12% (3,414) are recorded as disabled
- 23,5% (6,885) are registered as foreign minors

#### Overview of care arrangements

There are various different models for supporting young people in alternative care. *For example:*

- Financial support to the family of origin (subsidies, transportation, housing, meal allowance)
- Social educational Home Help
- Support sessions with psychologists, psychotherapists, neuropsychiatrists
- Specialised care-giving for people with disabilities, mental health problems, or those suffering from abuse or neglect
- Daily centres
- Residential care – including family-based, educational, therapeutic, health care.

#### Formal inclusion of children's rights

Children's rights in alternative care are mentioned in various laws, policies and national guidelines – for example, the main law regulating alternative care (Law No. 149, introduced in 2001). They are also mentioned in the recent Foster Care Guidelines and the National Action Plans for Childhood. Monitoring of such policies is formal and is judged to be 'not very effective'.

Complaint mechanisms for reporting violations of children's rights in places of alternative care are judged to be (quite effective). There are Ombudsman and State Inspectorate for Protection of Child Rights as well as a Helpline for children. All institutions have information about opportunities to report on violations of children's rights. Nonetheless it is reported that not every child is informed about his or her rights "or they don't know how to report".

#### Child Care Service Workforce

The legal requirement in terms of professional education for social workers, professionals giving specialised support to children and caregivers in family-like care is a university degree (Bachelor or Master of Science). The respondents state that both professions have "occasional exchange" opportunities with colleagues, but that there is "no attention" paid to Child rights in these exchanges. Caregivers in residential care are required to have a university degree or a higher vocational education degree (Bachelor or Master of Arts/Social Work). The different requirement depends on the Region in which they work. Child Rights are stated to be given only "minimal attention" in the educational curricula.

There is also a legal requirement for social workers, professionals giving specialised support to children, caregivers in residential care as well as caregivers in family-like care to follow accredited

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<sup>1</sup> The information in this country profile was drawn from the responses to three surveys that were answered by two national experts.

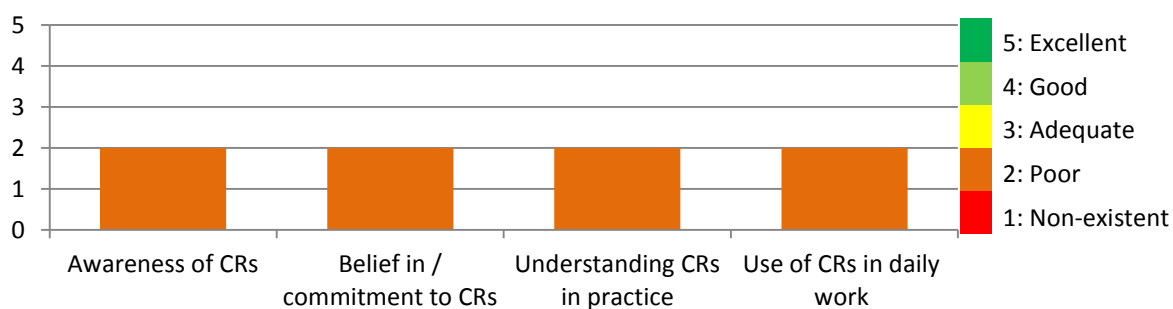
courses/training relevant to their work to keep or renew their licence to practice. This requirement is stated to be upheld in practice and courses are provided regularly by accredited training institutions or individuals. Unfortunately, Child Rights do not make up a substantial part of courses/training.

Professional foster parents are required to follow an accredited/official preparatory course and subsequent follow-up training on a regular basis, but Child Rights are given no attention in the education. Professional foster parents are rare in Italy as 95% of foster parents are volunteers. The latter are not required to follow any accredited/official preparatory course or subsequent follow-up training. Some regions organise regular training sessions while others do not organise any at all. Just as in the case for professional foster parents, Child Rights are given no attention in the education of volunteer parents.

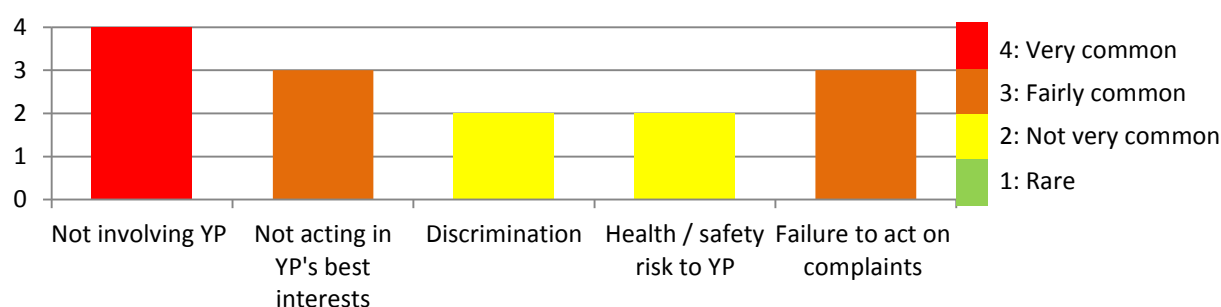
### Assessing the state of children's rights

Respondents were asked to give their personal assessment with regards to care professionals and children's rights. The results are shown in the charts below.

#### Your assessment: care professionals and children's rights



#### Your assessment: how common are the following?



### Key challenges

- Care professionals do not generally receive any training on children's rights
- There is a need to address a common misconception that 'children's rights' may be in conflict with the need for the child to be protected. Children's rights are often taken as something secondary, to be considered once the 'correct' decision on protecting the child has been taken (by the care professional)
- Standard training for care professionals does not have to include reference to children's rights. Alternative care providers do organise trainings on the topic
- There is a need to change the culture and practice of seeing no need to involve children