

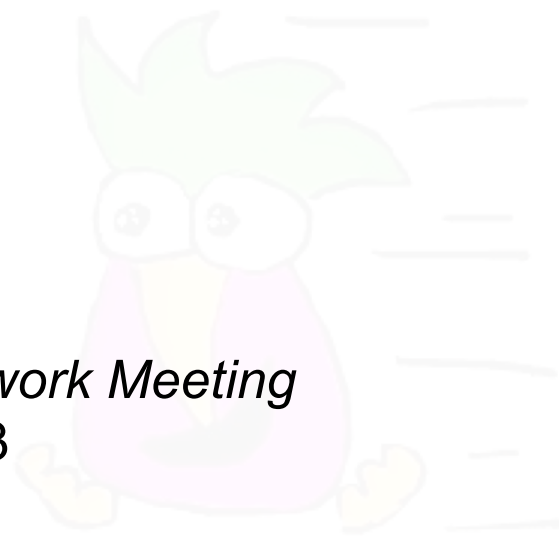
# **Foster care in Italy: challenges and perspectives**

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*7° International Foster Care Research Network Meeting*  
Padova, September 9-11, 2013

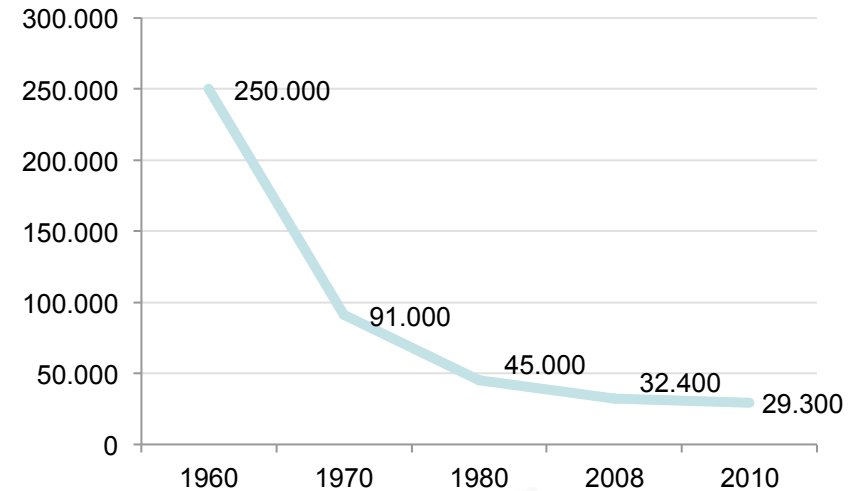


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# Entrusting or Caring? - 1

- Development of interventions for children and adolescents in Italy: a difficult path ...
- ... however many efforts have been made for providing more human and comprehensive interventions
- Law n. 184 in 1983: foster care regarded as the solution for children in need
- “Foster care” means “trusting and entrusting”



## Entrusting or Caring? - 2

- Is however the point of view of children adequately taken into account?
- To meet children's needs, effective choices and not only rationalizations are required: how effective have been placements planned since the 1983 Law?
- There is a need to:
  - match professional and non-professional capabilities, working in terms of both formal and informal services
  - explore different and new forms of foster care, particularly more flexible and temporary ones



# The choices of the last 50 years

- Years 1960-1970: first boost towards “de-institutionalization”
- Years 1971-1980: transition from institutions to the community level, background debate on possible innovations
- Years 1981-1990: responsibilities are mainly attributed to the local community level, professions gain importance
- Years 1991-2000: independent bodies for child protection are developed
- Years 2001-present: institutions for children are closed, and The national Ombudsman for children is established



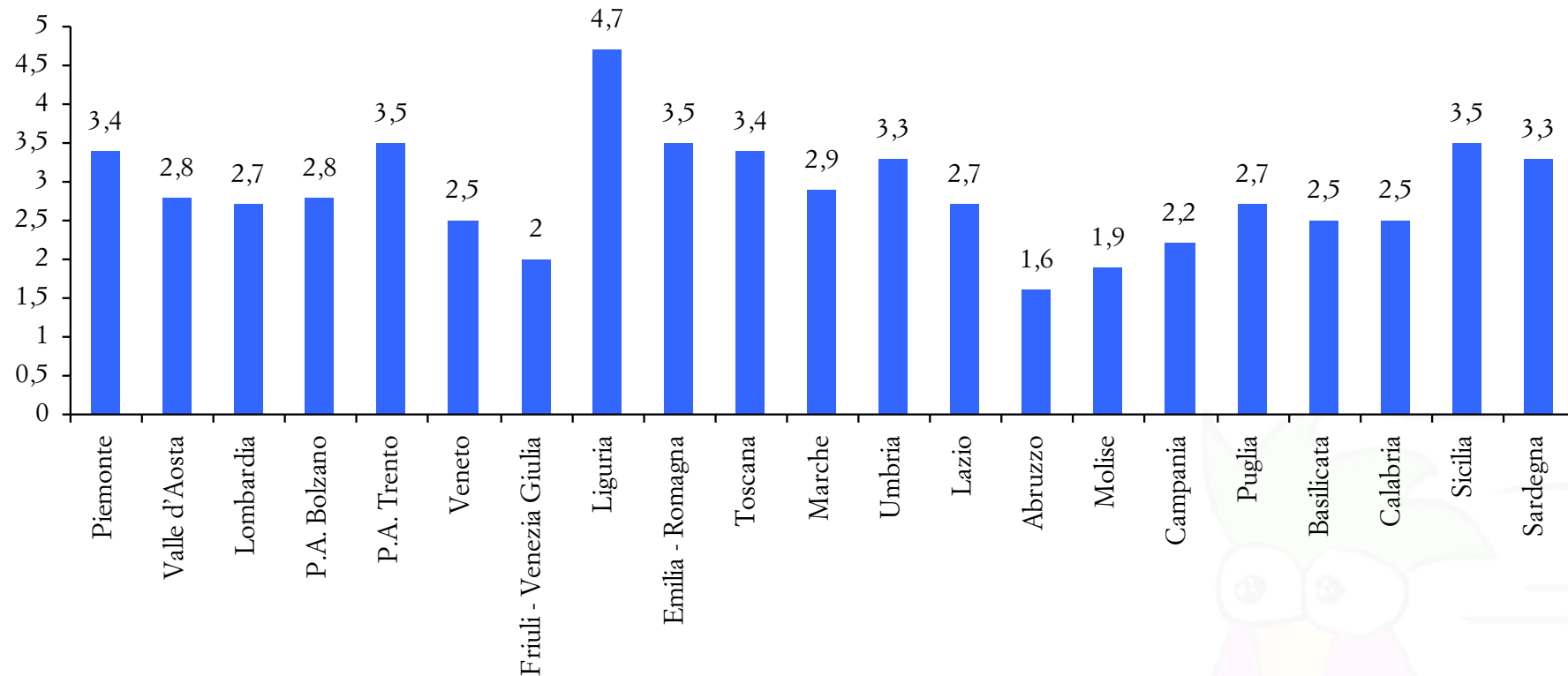
# The figures of a difficult pathway - 1

- Children out of their families were around:
  - 250,000 in 1962
  - 91,000 at the end of the seventies
  - 45,000 at the end of the eighties
  - 32,400 in 2008 (52% in foster care, 48% in residential facilities )
  - 29,300 at the end of 2010, equalling 2,9 per 1,000 residents 0-17 y.o.



# The figures of a difficult pathway - 2

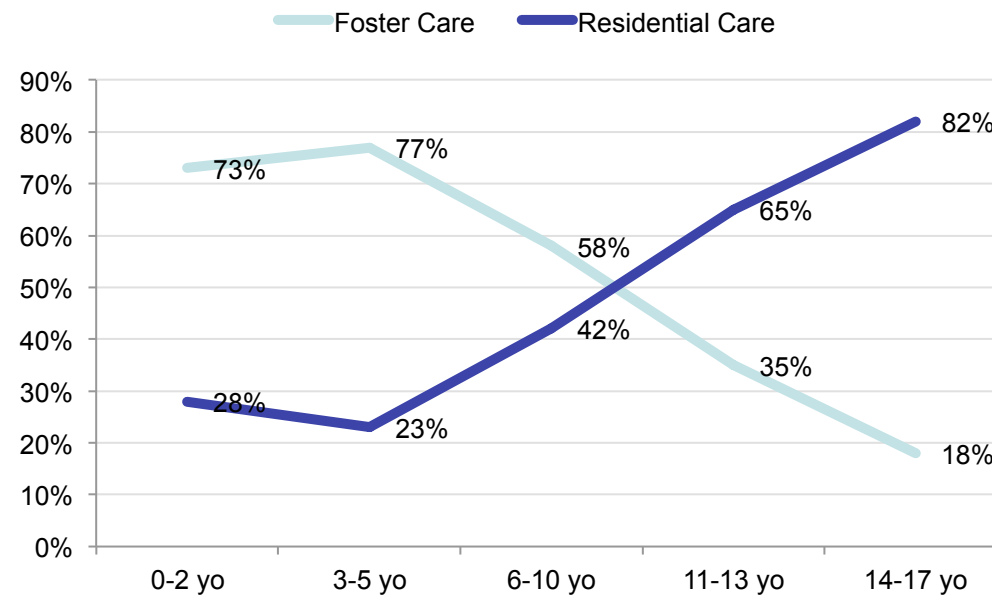
- Marked cross-regional differences



- Presence/absence of a professional infrastructure and availability of local services may play an important role

# Trajectories and care pathways - 1

- For the 40% of children and adolescents in foster care, this is not the **first experience**
- On average only 1/3 go back to their **birth family**
- About half in foster family, half in residential community, but markedly **age-dependent pattern**



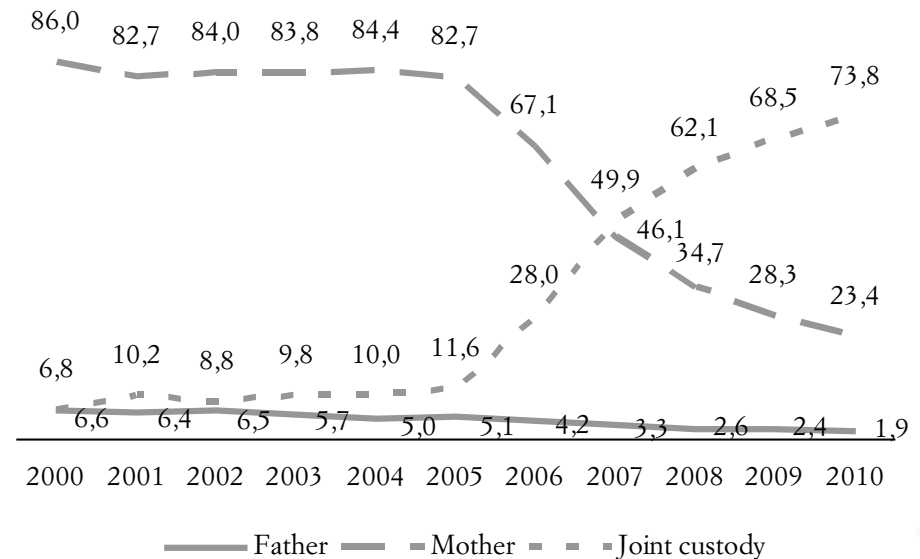
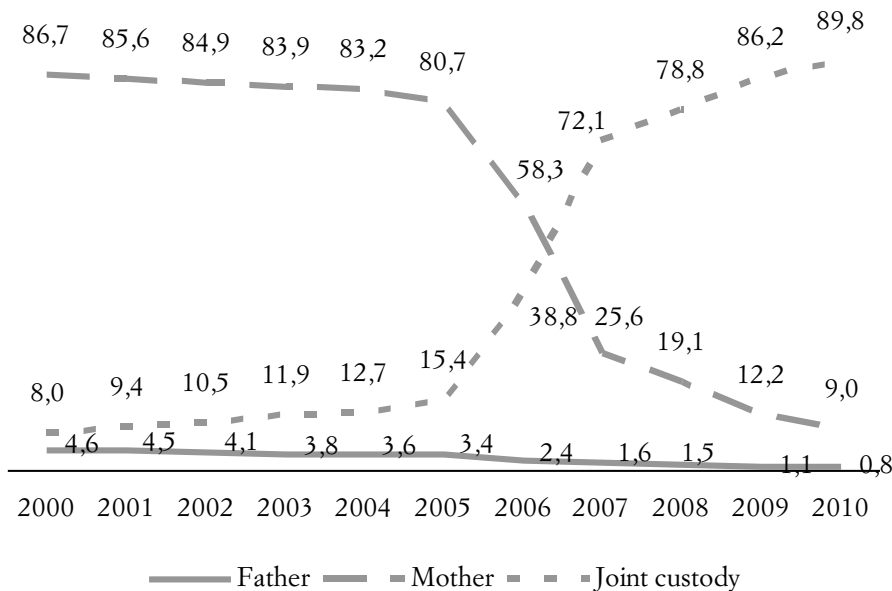
## Trajectories and care pathways - 2

- Most of the foster families are at their **first foster care experience** (78%)
- Approximately one in four families (23%) has more than one foster child, often **siblings**
- 24% of the foreign foster children are in **homocultural foster care**, mostly (64%) within their extended families
- An important role is played by the juvenile justice system: almost three quarters of foster care placements (76%) stem from a **judicial decree**



# New issues

- Increase in separations and divorces over last 15 years
- Minors placed with either parent (or both) in 2010: 65,427 in separations (57% younger than 11 y.o.) and 23,545 (34% younger than 11 y.o.) in divorces

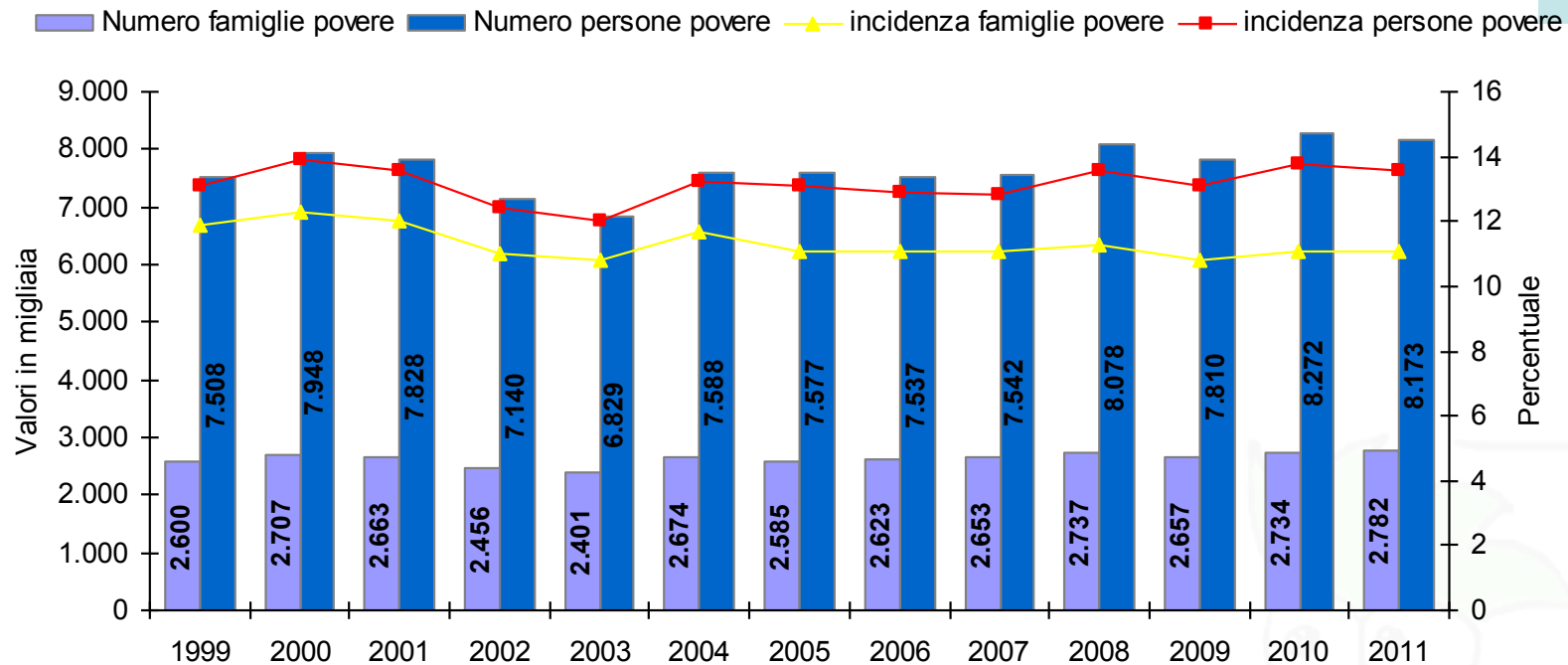


# Poverty is a worsening factor ...

- Absolute poverty among children under 18 y.o. is a growing phenomenon: 4.7% of children and adolescents in 2005, 7% in 2011
  - The most affected age group is 4 to 6: poor children amount to 7.8% of child population
- The poverty incidence equals 4% among couples with one child (5.7% if children are under 18 y.o.), 10.4% among those with at least three children (10.9% if the children are under 18 y.o.)



# Poverty: same level as 10 years ago

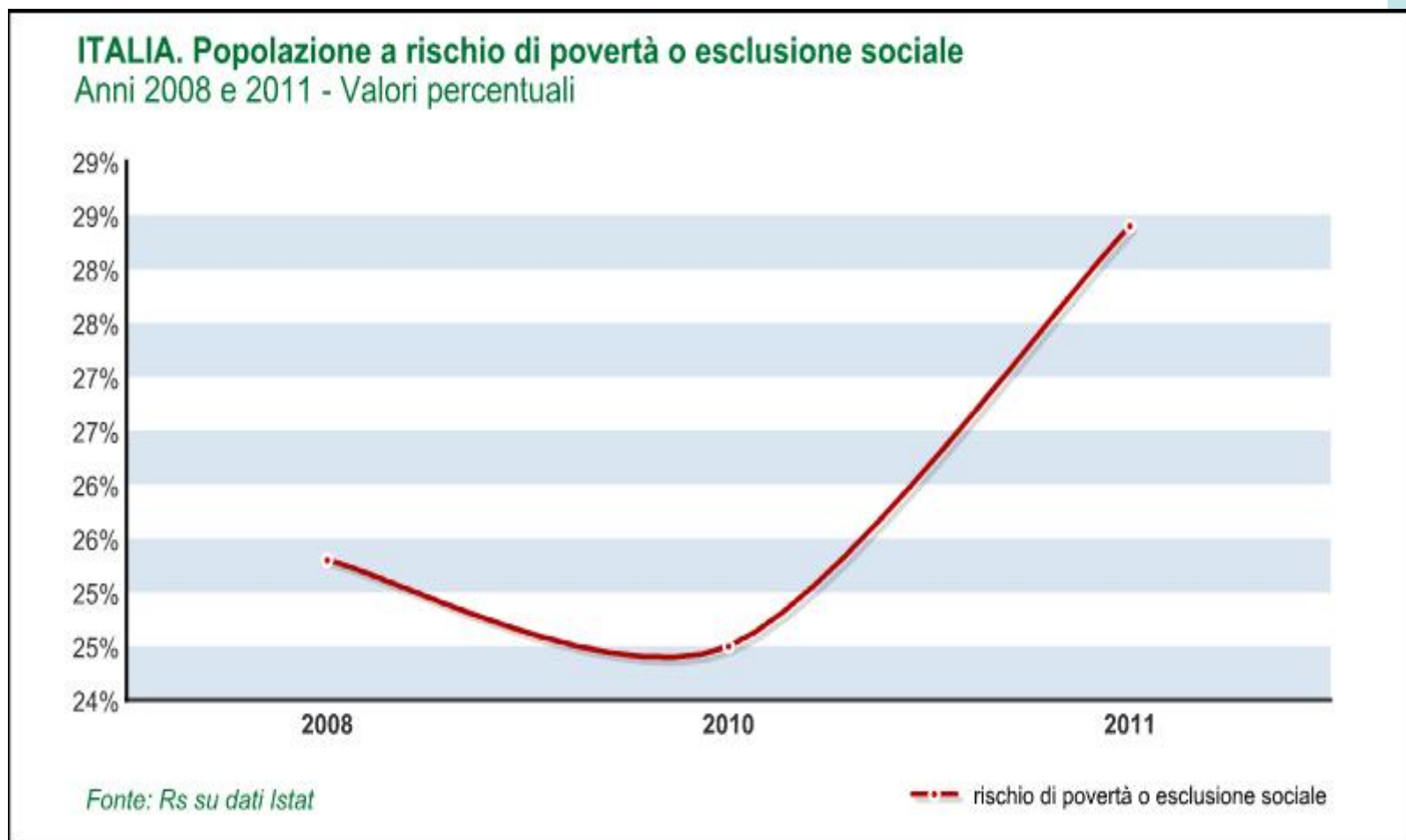


Fonte: Istat



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# But the risk for poverty is increasing



## Impact of the tax benefit of children poverty

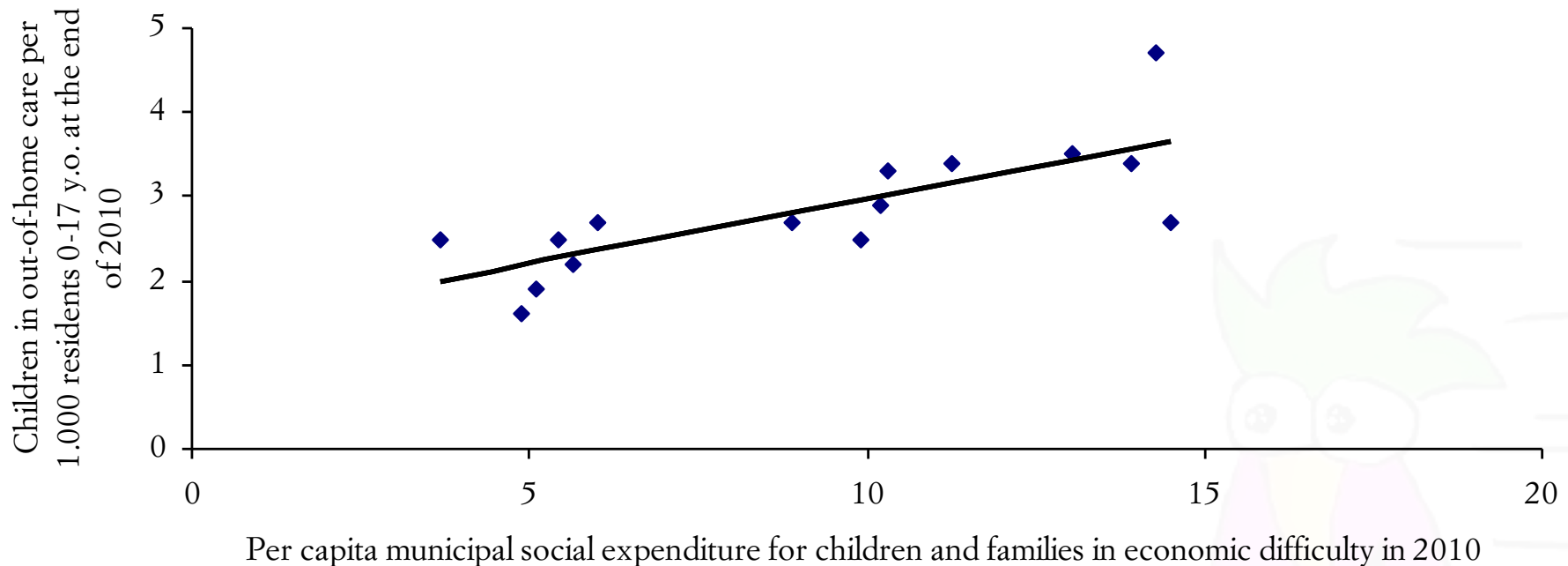
		Adulto singolo		Coppia di adulti			Tutte le famiglie con minori
		Lavora	Non lavora	Entrambi lavorano	Uno solo lavora	Entrambi non lavorano	
Belgio	Prima	27,2	95,4	1,6	14,3	99,2	13,1
	Dopo	11,4	22,8	0,6	2,8	16,1	3,3
	<i>Differenza (%)</i>	58,1	76,1	62,5	80,2	83,8	74,7
Canada	Prima	43,6	97,3	7,3	36,5	95,6	18,1
	Dopo	27,7	89,7	3,5	22,9	75,3	11,5
	<i>Differenza (%)</i>	36,3	7,8	52,4	37,2	21,2	36,7
Danimarca	Prima	22,1	91,3	5,0	27,0	83,7	10,9
	Dopo	4,0	22,2	0,7	6,4	19,0	2,1
	<i>Differenza (%)</i>	82,0	75,7	85,3	76,1	77,2	80,4
Francia	Prima	31,8	95,6	7,4	38,6	96,6	24,6
	Dopo	9,6	61,7	1,6	6,3	37,9	6,7
	<i>Differenza (%)</i>	70,0	35,4	78,4	83,6	60,8	72,7
Germania	Prima	25,3	91,9	3,3	10,4	79,1	17,9
	Dopo	15,3	49,3	0,2	5,5	47,2	9,5
	<i>Differenza (%)</i>	39,6	46,3	94,3	46,7	40,3	46,9
Italia	Prima	17,8	94,0	1,4	22,1	88,2	14,6
	Dopo	13,4	76,8	1,6	23,9	61,1	14,3
	<i>Differenza (%)</i>	24,7	18,3	-14,3	-8,1	30,7	1,7
Portogallo	Prima	21,2	87,3	3,8	34,3	91,4	13,4
	Dopo	20,3	84,8	4,8	32,4	50,6	13,1
	<i>Differenza (%)</i>	4,2	2,9	-25,7	5,3	44,6	2,8
Svezia	Prima	33,7	98,2	3,5	33,3	96,6	13,8
	Dopo	5,6	34,2	1,1	8,2	13,7	3,2
	<i>Differenza (%)</i>	83,3	65,1	68,8	75,4	85,8	76,7

## ... but is it adequately addressed?

- In the face of these challenges, expenditure for transfers and services to children and families in Italy (1.3% of Gdp in 2010) is lower than the European average (2.3%)
- Moreover, differences and inequalities among Italian regions are very large: municipal spending for poor children and families in economic difficulty ranges from around 3 to 18 euro per capita (12 euro national average)
- The implementation, not only the definition, of the “essential levels of care” for children and families still seems to be unaccomplished

# Poverty and foster care

- Poorer regions, where needs are plausibly greater, may offer less opportunities of foster care provision



# Future perspectives

- Is “foster care” *genus* or *species*? Specific foster care solutions (moving from *genus* to *species*) are necessarily different in terms of *context, length, competences, intensity, formalization, ... (criteria for classifying)*
- Classifying the **forms of foster care** experienced in Italy and other countries is a necessary step and a source of potential strength

This effort should not be self-referential, it should be rather focused on **matching needs and problems**, with a better capacity to care and reach effectiveness

- In this perspective, international experiences can fruitfully contribute to building a **common platform** to innovative solutions





# Thank you for your attention!

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