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Across Borders, Across Budgets: Financing Foster Care for Unaccompanied Minors from Africa and Beyond in Italy

Giovanni Santoro, Adjunct Professor
University of Turin, Italy
giovanni.santoro@unito.it

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Abstract

In November 2024, Italy's Authority for Children and Adolescents invited local reception authorities to seek assistance with foster care for unaccompanied minors. The AFFIDO project financed specialist work within a system in which local social services and judicial authorities retained responsibility for placements. This documentary study reads child-protection rules and project accounts alongside recruitment records and local service instruments in Salerno and Montesilvano. Both municipalities appear in the same recruitment notice, and public outreach on foster care can be traced in each. Montesilvano separately awarded 990 hours of cultural mediation through December 2027 for beneficiaries in residential reception. In Salerno, a procurement that included a foster-care center remained open on November 8, 2026. A service instrument can extend beyond AFFIDO's scheduled closure and still leave unresolved whether a young person who has moved into foster care can obtain assistance. The analysis specifies collaborative capacity by the function a child needs, the instrument under which the child can receive it, and the period in which it is available. It distinguishes the authorization of support from its delivery and from the young person's ability to obtain help across a transition.

Keywords: Unaccompanied Minors, Family Foster Care, Collaborative Governance, Public Finance, Child Protection Law

Introduction

On November 7, 2024, Italy's Authority for Children and Adolescents (Autorità garante per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza [AGIA]) invited local authorities responsible for projects in the Reception and Integration System (Sistema di accoglienza e integrazione [SAI]) to apply for assistance with family foster care for unaccompanied minors (AGIA, 2024). The authority published its ranking in April 2025 (AGIA, 2025a). At the closing conference, Marelli (2026, slide 6) reported 42 applicants. In its report to Parliament, AGIA (2026e, p. 122) counted 38 admissible applications and 15 selected authorities. The numbers describe successive stages of selection. What the selected authorities gained was help with work that began before a placement and could continue while the child lived with the foster family.

Parliament had already made family fostering a priority in the reception of unaccompanied minors. In 2017 it authorized local authorities to inform the public and prepare prospective carers within their available budgets (Law No. 47, 2017, art. 7). An individual placement still depended on a separate procedure. Once a child entered foster care, supervision and assistance belonged to institutions whose responsibilities were set by child-protection law. A project could pay for some of the work those institutions needed without acquiring their powers or covering the full period of care. The distinction had particular force for adolescents close to adulthood. The labor ministry counted 17,011 unaccompanied minors on December 31, 2025, approximately four in five aged sixteen or seventeen (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali [MLPS], 2026). That national figure describes the population in which the policy operated. By contrast, AFFIDO, Italy's family foster-care programme for unaccompanied minors, reported support through a far narrower set of categories.

Foster-care scholarship increasingly treats continuity as a relational achievement. O'Higgins, Ott, and Shea (2018) found suggestive benefits of family placements but also heterogeneous measures and selection problems that weaken causal inference. Jarlby, Tonheim, and Fylkesnes (2025) trace security, familiarity and autonomy longitudinally among eight young people in Norway; their established placements inform lived continuity without establishing the conditions of provision in Italy. Agostinetto, Bugno, and El Bouhali's (2025) scoping review likewise identifies limited evidence on transitions to adulthood. Disagreement between children, carers and guardians about placement success further challenges any single administrative indicator of effective care (Rip et al., 2021). These findings require separating placement status, available assistance and young people's experience of support.

Financing is already an explicit concern in the current debate. Alongside the multilevel perspective of Campomori and Ambrosini (2020), Ponzo and Milazzo (2026) examine unaccompanied-minor integration in two Italian localities and identify project-driven governance shaped by funding opportunities, project entrepreneurs and temporal instability. UNICEF's (2025) investment case models foster-care costs through Terreferme. Its residential comparator is an eligible-expenditure ceiling, rather than a matched observed cost; the figures therefore do not establish AFFIDO's relative cost-effectiveness. These contributions address governance dependence and affordability, respectively; neither aggregate project resources nor estimated placement costs establish the authorization and delivery of continuing assistance to an eligible child.

Collaborative-governance theory provides the connecting mechanism: resources contribute to capacity for joint action through institutional arrangements (Emerson et al., 2012). Yet formally collaborative procedures can retain contractual logics, as Castelnovo, Sorrentino, and Basile (2026) show. Löfström's (2025) Swedish nonprofit case further demonstrates that project collaboration can bring resources while imposing short time horizons and administrative demands. Resource acquisition therefore cannot alone establish durable capacity. For foster care, the analysis therefore specifies capacity by service function, eligible population and period, because statutory responsibility can continue after a partner's funded assignment ends.

This distinction also sharpens the accountability problem identified by Ebrahim (2003). Compliance with a funder's reporting rules and responsiveness to beneficiaries concern

different relationships. A grant can be correctly accounted for while the public record leaves continuity of assistance unresolved. Conversely, continued support may draw on ordinary services outside that grant. The analytical expectation is therefore that continuity depends on how instruments cover necessary functions across a transition, rather than on the survival of a particular project or partnership.

The gap addressed here is the insufficiently specified connection between project-level capacity and the institutional basis of continuing care. Building on projectification research, the article shifts the analytical unit to a care function required for a particular child and period. It distinguishes legal responsibility, authorized expenditure and documented delivery, then identifies the records needed to connect them. This offers an operational refinement of collaborative capacity and a framework for evaluating handovers between temporary and ordinary provision. Its originality lies in tracing these connections across AFFIDO and municipal instruments, rather than claiming to discover funding instability or demonstrate improved outcomes. The sources describe the participating reception systems and give no basis for comparing support by minors' place of origin.

Accordingly, the study asks: How did AFFIDO allocate resources and specialist tasks alongside statutory placement responsibilities? Which records establish a basis for continuing assistance beyond a temporary assignment? The objectives are to reconstruct the allocation of authority and resources, compare the scope and timing of local instruments, and specify evidence requirements for subsequent case-level evaluation.

The timing makes this inquiry necessary. AFFIDO's announced closure and the deadlines for specialist assignments lay ahead at the November 8, 2026, cutoff (Istituto Psicoanalitico per le Ricerche Sociali ETS, n.d.; Fondazione Don Calabria per il Sociale ETS, 2025a). The transition coincided with the June 2026 transposition deadline for the recast Reception Conditions Directive and Italy's new foster-care register legislation (Directive (EU) 2024/1346, 2024; Law No. 37, 2026). Municipalities therefore faced immediate questions about sustaining assistance and documenting it. New placement registers make the distinction between recording a legal measure and observing access to support particularly consequential: evaluation requires links to service and financial records, subject to data minimization. Examining authorizations at this juncture establishes a baseline for later continuity research and informs handover planning before project completion can be mistaken for either sustained provision or its interruption.

Research Design

The documentary case study follows AFFIDO under project number PROG-1055 and public investment project code (CUP) H59G24000140007. Salerno and Montesilvano were included in the comparison because the same recruitment notice offered specialist assignments in both cities under equivalent terms. Their local records differ in date and scope, and the comparison concerns what each instrument authorized. The inquiry follows the relation between the document's purpose and the claim it can support, in keeping with Bowen's (2009) approach to documentary analysis. The paired assignments provide a common point of entry into different local arrangements. Public outreach on fostering is the task followed in both places. They do not constitute matched municipalities or a counterfactual comparison. The design can locate differences in authorized functions, eligibility and expenditure stages,

while leaving actual service exposure and its effects to subsequent longitudinal inquiry. Missing public records are treated as limits on inference, not evidence that assistance was absent.

The corpus was assembled through institutional links and searches combining AFFIDO, its project number and CUP, the two municipalities, and the Italian terms for protocols, agreements and operating plans. It draws on the authority's budgets and parliamentary reporting, staffing documents, a partner's disclosure of receipts, and the project's training and outreach records, including event programs and local reporting. Local service descriptions, a regional determination on fostering teams, a municipal award and a separate procurement notice extend the record beyond AFFIDO. Legal texts were checked against the Gazzetta Ufficiale, Normattiva, EUR-Lex and court sources. The European procurement database Tenders Electronic Daily and the SAI documentation site supply records for the respective procurement and financing arrangements. Selection was purposive. Each document was read for the responsible institution, the population and function covered, the dates, the stage of expenditure and any record of delivery or review. A different CUP identifies a surrounding service instrument whose expenditure belongs to its own project.

The project's participants reported activities for their own institutional audiences. The analysis retains the categories and periods given in those reports, particularly where the closing presentation offers two figures for the same kind of activity. Signed acts take precedence for the matters they determine. The retrieved corpus ends short of the signed national grant convention, the current partner-selection file, signed local protocols and operating plans, and the individual records needed to connect service delivery with placements and outcomes. The evidence traces authorizations, public outreach and selected cash receipts. Mayne (2001) treats evidence about implementation as one part of establishing what a program contributed to an outcome. Here the traceable steps delimit what can be claimed about contribution.

The project website maintained by the Istituto Psicoanalitico per le Ricerche Sociali ETS (IPRS, n.d.) gives May 20, 2024, to November 20, 2026, as AFFIDO's project dates. The recruitment notice gives November 30, 2026, as the end of the advertised assignments, subject to extension (Fondazione Don Calabria per il Sociale ETS, 2025a, art. 3.4). The September closing conference supplies a record of reported activity, and the question of support after closure remains prospective at the November 8, 2026, cutoff.

The Legal Responsibilities of Foster Care

The 2017 reform inserted the promotion of foster care for unaccompanied minors into Law No. 184 of 1983, which already governed a child's right to family care. Article 7 of Law No. 47 added two paragraphs to Article 2. The first permits local authorities to raise awareness and train prospective carers so that a family placement can take priority over reception in a facility. The second attaches a spending condition to those activities. Authorities are to carry them out within existing budgets, without new or increased public expenditure (Law No. 47, 2017, art. 7). Read alongside Article 2(1) and (2) of Law No. 184 (1983), the amendment leaves the suitability of a particular placement to individual assessment. The financing condition concerns promotion and preparation. The duties that arise from a placement have their own legal basis.

Article 4 gives the local social service responsibility for making a consensual placement after obtaining the required consent and hearing the child as provided by law. The guardianship judge makes the decision enforceable. Where the required consent is absent, the juvenile court decides (Law No. 184, 1983, art. 4). The placement measure sets out the grounds, expected duration, arrangements for contact and the service charged with supervision. That service reports at least every six months. Beyond twenty-four months, an extension depends on the conditions in Article 4(4), including the risk of serious prejudice to the child if fostering is interrupted. Article 5 assigns responsibilities to the carer and to social services. These provisions make the dates and terms of the placement, as reviewed by the competent authorities, central to the duration of care.

Law No. 47 (2017, arts. 1–2) locates the protection of unaccompanied minors within the general system of child protection on terms of equal treatment. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, arts. 3, 12, 20), the child's best interests and views inform the choice of care. Legislative Decree No. 142 (2015, arts. 18(2-ter), 19(5)) addresses participation and guardianship for unaccompanied children. The updated national guidance calls for a plan suited to the young person, with attention to the resources and professional assistance available, including mediation where appropriate (Conferenza Unificata, 2024; MLPS, 2024a, rec. 224.e). Lundy (2007) distinguishes an opportunity to speak from the influence a child's views have on a decision. A hearing record establishes one step in the procedure. The case plan and its subsequent review are where the effects of participation would become visible.

The work around a placement has a history within the household as well. Rania, Migliorini, and Fagnini (2018) compared three Italian reception models through interviews with practitioners, guardians and foster mothers. In the United Kingdom, Wade (2019) followed the preparation for fostering and the adjustments young people and carers made during placements. Where Ní Raghallaigh and Sirriyeh (2015) draw on accounts from England and Ireland, young people describe several ways of sustaining ties to their cultures of origin, including in households where carers had a different background. Their findings give a reason to examine what carers and young people can call on after a match, when mediation may concern daily life and relationships as much as an initial conversation. De Graeve and Cawayu (2017) approach care and belonging through relationships in Belgium. Those studies make the relationship between a placement and the child's experience an empirical question.

The evidence on outcomes calls for similar care. O'Higgins, Ott, and Shea (2018) reviewed studies linking placement type to education and health. Rip et al. (2021) found that children, carers and guardians can assess placement success differently. This matters for the use of institutional counts in Italy. A household reached through an information campaign, a family preparing to foster and a child receiving assistance while placed each enter the record through a different procedure. UNICEF and CNCA (2026) report concerns about support among 61 families involved in the separate Terreferme project. Those accounts identify questions to ask about access to assistance after a family agrees to foster. Therefore, the inquiry into AFFIDO requires evidence from its own participants and services.

For a young person nearing eighteen, the legal basis of support may itself change. Article 13(2) of Law No. 47 (2017) permits the juvenile court to issue a reasoned decision assigning a young person to social services up to age twenty-one when extended help towards autonomy is

needed. The prosieguo amministrativo is a further measure whose terms govern the support available. De Michiel (2020) connects the reforms of 2017 to the work of voluntary guardians and to the problem of social and labor-market inclusion as young people enter adulthood. Allsopp and Chase (2019) examine the different policy accounts of durable solutions for young people coming of age in Europe. Sirriyeh and Ní Raghallaigh (2018) place recognition and relationships within that transition in England and Ireland, while Agostinetto, Bugno, and El Bouhali (2025) review the literature on young adults who arrived in Italy unaccompanied. In the cases examined here, the support available at eighteen turns in part on whether the new or continuing measure has an organization and financial instrument capable of giving it effect. European reception law applies a further set of rules to children seeking international protection. Article 27 of Directive (EU) 2024/1346 (2024) addresses representation, suitable accommodation, family tracing and continuity. Paragraph 9 includes a foster family among the specified accommodation arrangements. The deadline for transposition was June 12, 2026 (art. 35). Italy's Decree-Law No. 100 (2026), converted by Law No. 145, implemented specified provisions on matters including documentation, movement, detention, work and remedies. Article 10 lists the provisions addressed, omitting Article 27. At the study cutoff, the EUR-Lex register listed Italy's notification of the June measure and expressly distinguished notification from a determination of complete or correct transposition (EUR-Lex, n.d.). The obligations that govern a placement for an asylum applicant thus include questions specific to reception law. Domestic child-protection provisions apply to the wider group addressed by AFFIDO.

The AFFIDO Partnership and Its Accounts

The November 2024 call brought a European grant into this distribution of responsibilities. AFFIDO drew on Specific Objective 2 of the 2021–2027 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF, or FAMI in Italy), whose integration objective includes social inclusion (Regulation (EU) 2021/1147, 2021, art. 3). AGIA led the partnership with the Coordinamento Nazionale Comunità Accoglienti (CNCA), Fondazione Don Calabria per il Sociale ETS, and Istituto Psicoanalitico per le Ricerche Sociali ETS. Public descriptions identify co-design as the procedure through which the partnership was formed and record the subsequent selection of authorities to receive assistance (AGIA, n.d., 2026e; MLPS, 2024b). The services remained within the remit of the public bodies already responsible for children and reception.

Article 55 of the Third Sector Code gives public authorities procedures for identifying needs and resources jointly with Third Sector entities, designing responses and, where appropriate, involving those entities in delivery. The authority defines the objectives, duration and essential features and observes the rules on transparency, impartiality, participation and equal treatment (Legislative Decree No. 117, 2017, art. 55). In Judgment No. 131 (2020, reasons, § 2.1), the Constitutional Court related the procedure to shared administration and horizontal subsidiarity. Gori (2022) places the definition of Third Sector entities and their activities within that constitutional history. The labor ministry's guidance follows the relationship from a public notice to the agreement and subsequent oversight (MLPS, 2021). Article 6 of the Public Contracts Code distinguishes qualifying shared administration from arrangements based on reciprocal exchange (Legislative Decree No. 36, 2023, art. 6).

The declared procedure gives the national partnership a legal setting. To assess how the partners participated in decisions, the terms of the signed agreement and the selection file

would be needed. Their importance becomes clearer in light of research on local welfare. Borzaga, Fazzi, and Rosignoli (2024) examine Italian co-design under constraints on expenditure. In their study of 26 calls, Castelnovo, Sorrentino, and Basile (2026) identify contractual practices alongside shared-administration procedures. Fazzi and Rosignoli (2025) find different understandings of co-design among the participants in six initiatives. Smith and Lipsky (1993), writing about publicly funded nonprofit service provision in the United States, describe the organizational consequences of making nonprofit agencies responsible for delivery through public contracts. That history concerns a different legal setting. It helps frame a question for the Italian case about what the terms of an agreement allow each participant to decide and do. The authority's choice of a partner, the selection of local authorities and the partner's purchase of professional time take place through separate decisions.

For Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2012), a collaborative arrangement develops the capacity for joint action through the people and resources that the participating organizations can bring to it. Ansell and Gash (2008) make institutional design part of the explanation for how participants deliberate. Provan and Kenis (2008) distinguish the arrangements through which organizations coordinate a network. In AFFIDO, these distinctions separate the declared national arrangement from the resources available to the territorial teams and the competence of the social service or court in an individual case. AGIA (2026e, p. 122) reported approximately 41 professionals in 15 territorial units. Marelli (2026, slides 5–8) reported 43 at a later point. The figures describe staffing at project scale. To establish the assistance a particular service could draw on would require the relevant assignments and records of hours. The budget published for 2026 traces the movement of the grant. Against the allocation of €1.2 million for PROG-1055, AGIA recorded an advance of €240,000 in 2024 and two reimbursements recognized in 2025 totaling €178,816.58. Receipts had reached €418,816.58 by the preparation of the budget. Its timetable allowed for further interim claims and a balance after closure (AGIA, 2025b, pp. 81–82). In the financial account for 2025, AGIA (2026a, pp. 54, 80, 97, 99–100) identified the two interim receipts as €99,834.04 and €78,982.54. On the line for transfers to project partners it recorded commitments and payment orders of €167,220.44 against a revised provision of €437,257.77. It carried €27,297.07 in restricted surplus for indirect costs into 2026. These entries record expenditure stages at the level of the authority.

CNCA's disclosure, signed on March 25, 2026, traces two receipts from AGIA to a named partner (CNCA, 2026b, p. 2). It records €93,303 on February 25, 2025, and €73,918 on August 14, a total of €167,221 at the precision reported. This is €0.56 above the €167,220.44 recorded to the cent on AGIA's project-wide partner-transfer line. Reconciling receipts at one partner with the authority's payment orders requires matching individual transactions. Tracing expenditure into either locality would require the partner's records of commitments, payments and the work for which it paid.

Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (2021, art. 74) assigns the managing authority responsibility for verifying delivery and compliance. The Ministry of the Interior's AMIF manual gives the rules for documenting external professional services, from the terms of an assignment to the evidence of performance and payment (Ministero dell'Interno, 2024, sec. A.3). In July 2024, CNCA (2024) advertised for a financial reporting coordinator under three grants, with

separate professional contracts for each. AFFIDO required labor to account for the grant alongside the labor it financed in the territories. Ebrahim (2003) distinguishes mechanisms by which nonprofit organizations account to funders from those through which they answer to the people they serve. The CNCA declaration provides evidence of the former. For the latter, an account of a foster placement would need the history of the assistance the family and the child received.

The outreach guidance and the participatory account document what project participants sought to do in their communities (AGIA, 2026b, 2026c). The closing presentation gives two different totals for that work on the same slide. Marelli (2026, slide 10) reports 20 outreach events in the text and 23 in the graphic. AGIA (2026g) gives the first figure and CNCA (2026a) the second, leaving the total number of events unresolved.

The training figures raise a question about which activities and participants each source counted. AGIA's report on three national online sessions records 270 registrations and 255 participants (AGIA, 2026f, p. 1). Its news account describes the latter figure as attendances (AGIA, 2026d). Marelli (2026, slides 17–18) gives 255 for the national sessions and 285 for training activities in the project's summary of recipients. CNCA (2026a) reports 319 practitioners from 92 organizations for on-the-job training. Comparing the totals would require a list of the sessions included in each and a rule for counting people who attended more than once.

The closing presentation counts 34 unaccompanied minors supported in foster services (Marelli, 2026, slide 18). AGIA (2026g) separately records 174 recipients of assistance in fostering proceedings. A count of formal placements, a rate of entry into foster care or a cost per placement would need a defined cohort and records identifying which children entered a foster household.

Foster Care and Municipal Finance in Salerno and Montesilvano

In June 2025 Fondazione Don Calabria advertised a specialist assignment in each of the two territories. Both offered 600 hours at €27 gross per hour, a planned amount of €16,200 for each assignment. The foundation made payment conditional on invoicing and verification of the work, with a proportional reduction if the activities were reduced (Fondazione Don Calabria per il Sociale ETS, 2025a, pp. 5–6, arts. 3.3–3.6).

AGIA (2026g) reports that protocols and operating plans were agreed with the 15 selected authorities. Its report to Parliament describes the plans as specifying the terms of those protocols and dates outreach planning to the period after their preparation (AGIA, 2026e, p. 122). Marelli (2026, slides 7–9) lists Salerno and Montesilvano among the selected territories and reports that the authorities and territorial units signed the plans. Article 2 of the foundation's notice refers to each local operating plan and assigns outreach on foster care to the specialist it sought for each territorial unit (Fondazione Don Calabria per il Sociale ETS, 2025a, pp. 3–5). The signed local texts could not be retrieved. The commission's June 25 minutes name a successful candidate for Salerno and record no selection for Montesilvano (Fondazione Don Calabria per il Sociale ETS, 2025b, pp. 3–4). A separate appointment record would be needed to establish that either advertised assignment began.

Montesilvano already had a structure through which fostering work could be organized. In a determination dated April 12, 2024, the Abruzzo regional administration listed Montesilvano among the territorial fostering and adoption teams, before the start date that IPRS gives for AFFIDO (Regione Abruzzo, 2024, pp. 2–3). The Pescara health authority describes teams established by an agreement with Pescara, Montesilvano and Spoltore, which brought a municipal social worker and a psychologist from the family counseling service into the same arrangement (Azienda USL di Pescara, n.d.). The district regulation specifies roles for the municipality, its special agency and specialists (Comune di Montesilvano, n.d., art. 35). The regional determination establishes that an integrated team existed. The staff time available to it in April 2024 and the number of cases it supported would have to be recovered from service records.

In Montesilvano the municipal agency's award for catering at the June 9, 2026, conference identifies the local community, associations and service practitioners among the intended audience. It charges the expense to the municipality's SAI project, CUP H79F19000020001 (Azienda Speciale per i Servizi Sociali del Comune di Montesilvano, 2026a, pp. 1–3). The municipality's program identifies the conference as an AFFIDO event (Comune di Montesilvano, 2026). Perantuono (2026) reports that the agency held the conference and that a Fondazione Don Calabria practitioner spoke about family foster care. The records identify the organizers and a person who delivered this part of the outreach. They leave the outcome of the advertised specialist assignment unresolved.

The records in Salerno establish the organization of the service at a later date. The Ambito Territoriale Sociale S5 describes how the fostering and adoption service (S.A.A.T.) and territorial social-service access points provide information, assess and train carers, and arrange matching and support. Its description applies from January 2025 and was updated in February 2026 (Ambito Territoriale Sociale S5, 2026). The municipality also describes joint social and health provision, insurance and possible assistance to households (Comune di Salerno, n.d.). These descriptions establish the functions that local authorities assigned to the service. They leave its staffing and expenditure before AFFIDO outside the comparison.

For Salerno, the program for June 10, 2026, records an invitation to a public information session on fostering unaccompanied minors. Interested members of the public could register in advance. The program credits Fondazione Don Calabria with organizing the session with the municipality and lists the fostering and adoption service and the cooperative La Tavola Rotonda as collaborators (Fondazione Don Calabria per il Sociale ETS, 2026). This is the latest local record of AFFIDO outreach retrieved for Salerno by the cutoff. It identifies who was to organize the session. The records leave open whether it took place and whether the candidate selected in 2025 took part.

By September 2026 Montesilvano's special agency had authorized a component of reception support under a separate project. On September 29 it awarded Fondazione Caritas 990 hours of cultural mediation for October 2026 through December 2027, for €30,000. The determination gives annual SAI financing of €1,300,860 for 2025–2027 and requires timesheets and activity reports among the records supporting payment (Azienda Speciale per i Servizi Sociali del Comune di Montesilvano, 2026b, pp. 2–3). The award carries CUP H79F19000020001 and concerns beneficiaries in residential SAI services. It establishes that

the agency authorized mediation beyond AFFIDO's advertised dates. Access to those hours for a particular child living with a foster family would require evidence that the child fell within the award's scope and that the service took place.

On October 21, Salerno published the procurement notice for C.E.R.C.A. casa. The notice describes a thirty-six-month service that includes a foster-care center and support for guardianship, fostering and adoption. It gives an estimated value of €1,227,763.16 excluding value-added tax, identifies the procurement as outside European Union funding and sets November 19 as the deadline for tenders (Comune di Salerno, 2026, pp. 1–3). The procurement remained open at the November 8, 2026, cutoff, with the provider and delivery still to be established. The award in Montesilvano had already named a provider, set a quantity of service and specified the records required for payment. The stages differ, and each instrument covers a different population or set of functions.

Hjern and Porter (1981) locate implementation in the structures that organizations form around a program. Hill and Hupe (2022) follow the decisions made across the institutions charged with putting a policy into effect. In Montesilvano the AFFIDO conference drew on a separately authorized SAI purchase for event costs. The purchasing record leaves the professional hours used for the event unaccounted for. In Salerno the program identifies the foundation and the municipality as organizers, with the cost and delivery of the session still undocumented. Those records trace a function shared by the two local units. The mediation award and the proposed foster-care center raise a different question about what a child can obtain after placement.

Continuing Support and Its Documentation

In April 2025 the SAI's accounting manual specified how municipalities could finance parts of foster care through the ordinary reception system. Section G2 treats fostering as a service. It provides for contributions to households and insurance, including relevant continuation arrangements. The documentation connects a municipal expenditure commitment to a placement measure identifying the household, period and amount, followed by liquidation and payment. The manual also distinguishes professional support from personnel already contracted within the SAI team (Servizio Centrale SAI, 2025, sec. G2, pp. 52–54). The rule gives a municipality a means of bringing some of the costs of a placement within its ordinary accounts. The documents examined here do not follow an individual contribution through that sequence in either municipality.

Following the ordinary accounts also changes the definition of cost. Assessment, household payments, supervision and mediation can draw on different budgets and employers. Shared coordination and reporting consume staff time even where that time does not appear as a line associated with an individual case. Gallo, Pastore, and Comite (2026) identify negotiation costs that escape stated budgets in a different Italian collaborative setting. Amelio, Gazzola, Biancone, and Brescia (2025) examine the relation between financial and social reporting in the Turin Fast Track City partnership. AFFIDO's public documents allow a more limited reconstruction. The advertised €27 hourly rate prices eligible work under a specific assignment. The service's own staff time, the household contribution and the resources needed to coordinate the placement belong to a wider resource account. An additional cost

attributed to the SAI requires records that distinguish it from the same work already financed by AFFIDO.

The comparison starts with the placement measure. It names the service responsible for the child and gives the period for which the arrangement is intended. From that decision, it is possible to ask which organization undertakes a particular task, such as an assessment, mediation or the supervision of the placement. A service agreement can make a provider responsible for carrying out that task. The social service's responsibility for the child persists under the placement measure if a provider's assignment ends. Determining whether another instrument can support the task depends on whom it covers and when it takes effect. In Montesilvano, the residential scope of the mediation award is therefore as consequential as its date. In Salerno, the scope of the proposed center becomes relevant to continuity only as procurement and delivery proceed.

An award or an expenditure commitment identifies a financial authorization. The next evidence depends on the kind of support. For professional work, verification links the invoice to the service documented in timesheets and activity reports. For a household contribution, liquidation and payment records establish different steps after the municipality commits funds. CNCA's disclosure identifies receipts at partner level. The Montesilvano award identifies what its provider would document to be paid. Connecting such records to a particular placement requires a way to establish which tasks were carried out for the child during the period under review. The sequence can be examined by function without assigning a score or inferring a break in care from a gap in publication.

A test of continuity can follow one young person with an ongoing need for cultural mediation from residential reception into a foster household. The placement measure dates the move. The case file and service records can identify the last mediation session before it and the first one afterward, along with the provider responsible at each point. In the interval, the young person's and carer's accounts can establish whether they knew whom to contact, whether they tried to obtain help and how the service responded. A gap between sessions has a different meaning when mediation was available on request and no need arose. Comparing the response with the timing specified in the care plan or recorded at referral would distinguish a scheduled interval from an unmet need.

The expectation is that a handover that gives the child access to a named provider with resources for mediation should preserve timely help. If the municipality uses its ordinary staff to provide mediation after a temporary assignment ends, timely access would establish continuity without a new grant. If a young person falls within the remit of a funded provider and the family seeks help but waits months beyond the time the case requires, the observation would disconfirm the expectation that the documented handover secured timely access in that case. The project's recommendations for stable teams and public resources thus concern conditions whose effects can be examined at the level of a placement (AGIA, 2026b, pp. 4, 6).

Law No. 37 (2026), in force from April 11, changes the records available for this inquiry in principle. It inserted Article 5-ter into Law No. 184 to establish a national register of foster families and residential providers, with provincial counts of children placed and of available

providers. Article 9-bis establishes court registers for placement measures and later changes, and Article 2 of the new law establishes a national observatory. The statute set a six-month period for the decrees governing the two registers. On November 8 the government's implementation list still recorded both decrees as unadopted (Ufficio per il programma di Governo, n.d.). The registers could establish the date and legal basis of a placement and changes ordered by a court. A service record would still be needed to establish what assistance the child and household received. Article 5-ter's requirement of data minimization also matters for any proposal to link records across institutions.

A placement record and a service account address different aspects of continuity. In Milan, Terzera and Bonomi (2024) examined social workers' assessments against information on individual reception pathways, including participation in education and progress in language learning. Their study gives an example of the detail that a case-level design can bring to an assessment. Young people's and carers' accounts would add evidence about the accessibility of support that provider records alone seldom capture. Brodkin (2011) shows how performance systems can register some parts of frontline work while leaving the exercise of discretion outside the reported measures. This distinction is relevant to AFFIDO's published training and outreach counts. The figures describe activity under particular reporting categories, with limited information on what happened between a referral, a placement and its later review.

Page, Stone, Bryson, and Crosby (2015) distinguish the work of assessing public value from the account of how a collaboration was organized. For AFFIDO, linking a payment to the assistance it financed would establish whether a part of the arrangement operated. An assessment of additional placements or changes in children's welfare would still require evidence about the timing and content of provision, the trajectory of comparable cases and the young people's own experience. The purposive corpus contains neither the full set of signed agreements nor linked delivery, payment and placement records. Its contribution is to establish where the documents permit an inference about the resources available for care and where a further record is needed.

Conclusions

The In June 2025, Fondazione Don Calabria advertised 600 hours of specialist work at €27 an hour in each of two municipalities, Salerno and Montesilvano. The selection commission identified a successful candidate in Salerno. For Montesilvano, the minutes document the assessment stage. The records of public outreach carry the comparison further. In Salerno, the program for the June 10 session names the foundation and the municipality as organizers. In Montesilvano, the municipal agency authorized catering for an AFFIDO conference under its SAI budget, and a contemporary account records that a practitioner from the foundation spoke about foster care. The award identifies the budget assigned to one expense. The operating plans, signed assignments and records of hours would help establish how the foundation and municipal services divided the work and paid for it. Later staffing records could show whether either municipality continued the work after the project ended. The instruments governing individual assistance followed a different timetable. In September 2026, Montesilvano awarded 990 hours of cultural mediation through December 2027 for young people in residential SAI reception. Salerno's procurement for a broader service, which included a foster-care center, was still open on November 8, 2026. The Montesilvano award

establishes how far an authorization can extend in time while leaving a child's access to that assistance unresolved after a move into foster care.

Emerson et al. (2012) identify the resources that organizations bring to a collaboration as a condition of joint action. In foster care, the placement measure assigns responsibility to a local service for a period that can outlast a project appointment. The capacity of that service depends on who can undertake a particular task, whether the child is eligible to receive the service and whether it is available when needed. These conditions also shape the cost of continuing care. A municipality can charge a household contribution or insurance to the ordinary SAI budget. The time a social worker spends arranging mediation may remain in a general personnel account, where it cannot readily be attributed to the placement. Research on the project-driven governance described by Ponzo and Milazzo (2026) could follow these costs through the end of a grant. A new purchase would leave a contract and a payment record. A municipality that assigned the same work to its employees might incur little new expenditure, even as it changed the staff time available for other cases. Comparing assignments and caseloads before and after a grant ended would help establish what the funded specialists added and which parts of their work ordinary services subsequently absorbed.

A test of continuity would follow the same young person from residential reception into a foster household. The last mediation session before the move and the first one afterward would date the assistance received. The interval requires its own evidence. Case notes and interviews with the young person and carer could establish whether they knew whom to contact, whether they sought help and what happened when they did. Timely assistance from ordinary municipal staff after the project assignment ended would show how continuity can be sustained without a successor grant. A wait of several months after a request, despite a funded handover to a provider whose remit covered the child, would disconfirm the expectation that such a handover secured timely access. The 2026 registers could help establish when a placement began or changed. The inquiry would link those dates to the service records needed to reconstruct the transition and seek out requests that never became appointments. The same procedure could be applied at eighteen, when a young person may need a further measure for support to continue. Following requests across comparable transitions in Salerno and Montesilvano would help establish where delays arose. A referral might reach a provider late, or it might reach a provider who interpreted the eligibility rules differently or had no mediator available. The end of a grant would enter this history at the point where it changed who could answer a request or how long a young person had to wait.

AI statement

Grammarly was used for language assistance.

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