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Probation across Borders: Financing Juvenile Reintegration in Italy

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Abstract

This article examines what public records can establish about the financing of juvenile reintegration in Italy. It reads the 2024 national probation statistics alongside the financing plan, reporting rules, and two local spending commitments of the Action for the Active Inclusion of Minors and Young Adults (AMA MI), an Italian initiative funded through the European Social Fund Plus to support young people approaching exit from juvenile justice. Of the 4,799 probation orders issued in 2024, concerning 4,340 people, 890 included a residential placement prescription. The April 2025 plan allocated EUR 29 million to the action. The July decree assigned EUR 26.49 million to the procedure for selecting nonprofit delivery partners. The documents issued through June 2026 establish how public bodies authorize commitments, report eligible staff time, and record a result at program exit. The study identifies the additional records needed to connect those events to the resources used in individual episodes and to assess reintegration after exit.

Keywords: Juvenile Probation, Public Financial Management, European Social Fund Plus, Unit-Cost Accounting, Italy

Introduction

Under the reform of 1988, Italy's specialized juvenile courts could suspend criminal proceedings while the accused undertook an individual educational project. In Italian law this procedure is known as messa alla prova, or suspension of proceedings with probation. If the court subsequently made a favorable assessment, it declared the offense extinguished. Preparing and carrying out the project involved justice services and local social services, whose contributions could draw on separate budgets (Presidential Decree No. 448, 1988, arts. 28–29; Legislative Decree No. 272, 1989, art. 27).

The Italian Ministry of Justice, which administers juvenile justice services, introduced the Action for the Active Inclusion of Minors and Young Adults (AMA MI) to finance support for young people in residential communities as they approach exit from juvenile justice. The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the European Union's fund for employment, education, and social inclusion, finances the action under Italy's Child Guarantee priority for services to children facing disadvantage (European Parliament & Council, 2021a, art. 4; Italian Ministry

of Justice, 2025c, pp. 16–19). A probation order is one route into the program. The action also covers young people placed under precautionary orders during proceedings or under community measures imposed in the enforcement of a sentence. Funding a pathway under AMA MI involves a further administrative decision (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025c, pp. 16–19).

How do the rules governing juvenile probation, admission to AMA MI, and expenditure reporting determine which costs and outcomes can be linked to an individual funded reintegration episode in Italy? The study reads the validated 2024 probation statistics alongside program instruments issued through June 2026. It uses the national series to establish the scale and composition of probation and follows the program's financial record from the national plan to two local commitments and the rules for reporting expenditure. Each source records an event for a particular population at a particular date.

Scivoletto (2023) distinguishes the high proportion of favorable judicial conclusions from the evidence required to judge the effectiveness of probation. She calls for qualitative follow-up to accompany national monitoring. Castro and De Felice (2026) locate the educational purposes of the measure within a system in which welfare and security have competed for authority. The restrictions they examine narrow access to the educational project that can lead to the favorable disposition Scivoletto discusses. The population eligible for AMA MI is defined at another point, when young people in residential care under one of several judicial measures are approaching exit from juvenile justice.

Scivoletto's concern with what follows a judicial disposition has a counterpart in Wong et al. (2024), whose review examines aftercare for young people leaving custody. They find little consistent evidence that aftercare reduces arrests, convictions, or incarceration relative to usual reentry services. The seven studies that reported costs differed in the questions they addressed and in the detail they provided, which precluded a synthesis of the cost evidence. For an economic evaluation of AMA MI, an outcome comparison would need to be accompanied by comparable records of the services each provider delivered during the transition.

Ciappi et al. (2022) use standard costs to estimate the direct cost of producing juvenile justice services by offense group. Their study includes a cost-benefit exercise on investment in rehabilitation. In the AMA MI instruments, a standard unit cost has a specific administrative function. It values eligible staff time for reporting (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026d, pp. 7–9). A pathway that generates such an entry may also draw on ordinary residential care and municipal social work financed through other budgets. Two pathways with the same reported expenditure can therefore differ in the amount of support they draw from services financed outside the agreement. The question left open for AMA MI is how to connect commitments, payments, and certified expenditure to the resources used across providers for an individual pathway and to later reintegration outcomes for the same young person.

A May 2026 decree in Florence approved a commitment of EUR 10,594.55 under an agreement covering one recipient (Juvenile Justice Centre of Florence, 2026, operative section). By reading the local commitment decrees alongside the expenditure and participant reporting rules, this article shows where the financial record can be attached to a funded

reintegration episode and which services would have to be traced through other providers' records. The guidelines specify a pseudonymized code for participants classified as vulnerable and define how improvement is to be documented at program exit (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026c, pp. 55–58). Estimating the incremental costs and effects of AMA MI would require linking expenditure to documented service use and comparing later participation in education, training, or employment among eligible young people offered AMA MI and those receiving usual exit support, with follow-up beginning at a common point of eligibility.

Article 27 of the 1989 implementing decree placed preparation of the probation project with juvenile justice social services in cooperation with local services. The Juvenile Social Service Offices (Uffici di servizio sociale per i minorenni, USSMs) are the Ministry's local social work offices for young people in the justice system. They can draw on schools, health services, families, and social organizations in arranging support or supervision. A court can prescribe residence in a community, a supervised residential setting for young people under a judicial measure. The services called upon to carry out the project depend on its terms and on what providers can supply in the locality (Legislative Decree No. 272, 1989, art. 27; Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025b, tables 1.5–1.8).

Nelken (2006) questioned whether aggregate evidence of leniency captured the ways Italian juvenile justice operated in different institutional settings. The preparation of a project gives that question a material dimension. In their study of twelve difficult cases in Milan, Maggiolini et al. (2024) describe the demands that complex family and social circumstances place on services. Tortorelli (2025, pp. 64–65) connects variation in the treatment available to young people to the resources local authorities can devote to social services. An assessment of the terms of the judicial order therefore leaves open how the institutions charged with carrying it out meet its requirements.

Article 27 identifies a point at which differences in local capacity can enter the judicial process. The services prepare a project that the court can authorize, and some of the work envisaged in that project falls to providers outside the justice administration. If a residential project includes school attendance, prescribing residence gives the placement legal force. Arranging attendance still depends on the services that work with the school. The Milan cases show why what needs to be arranged can differ substantially from one young person to the next (Maggiolini et al., 2024). The decree explains where differences in available provision can become consequential, as social services turn the young person's circumstances into a practicable proposal. This gives institutional content to Nelken's (2006) caution about interpreting leniency. Courts can act under the same provision while considering projects whose content depends on what local providers are able to supply.

The Caivano Decree of 2023 was a package of emergency measures addressing youth offending and educational disadvantage. The law converting it in November introduced paragraph 5-bis into Article 28 and restricted admission to probation for specified offenses. The Italian Constitutional Court, which reviews legislation for compatibility with the Constitution, held in Judgment No. 8/2025 that the less favorable rule was inapplicable to offenses committed before November 15, 2023, and declared the referrals inadmissible (Italian Constitutional Court, 2025a, §§ 4.5–5). In Judgment No. 203/2025, it struck down the exclusion for aggravated sexual violence and aggravated group sexual violence insofar as the

mitigating circumstance for cases of lesser gravity applied (Italian Constitutional Court, 2025b, §§ 15–17). In June 2026, it returned one question concerning aggravated sexual violence to the referring court for reconsideration in light of that judgment and rejected the remaining challenges (Italian Constitutional Court, 2026, § 9). Punzo (2026) examines changes in detention and community referrals across the reform. For comparisons involving probation, the court's reasoning makes the date of the alleged offense and the date of the order separate variables. Orders issued in the same year may be subject to different rules.

The rulings separate two changes that a count of probation orders can combine. The reform can alter the set of cases in which probation is legally available. Courts can also vary in their use of the measure within that set. Using the order date to assign exposure would classify orders issued on or after November 15, 2023, for earlier conduct as governed by the restriction, even where the Court's ruling placed the case under the prior rule (Italian Constitutional Court, 2025a, §§ 4.5–5). For conduct governed by the amended provision, the charged offense and the circumstances addressed in Judgment No. 203/2025 help define the eligible pool (Italian Constitutional Court, 2025b, §§ 15–17). Punzo (2026) examines the distribution of judicial measures across the reform. To determine whether courts used probation differently among eligible cases, the comparison would need to include eligible cases that took another judicial route.

The April 2025 financing plan defined eligibility for AMA MI around a different event. It specified that recipients were to be aged 14–25 and approaching exit from juvenile justice while living in a residential community under one of the covered measures (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025c, pp. 16–19). The Juvenile Justice Centers (Centri per la giustizia minorile, CGMs) are the Ministry's territorial offices for coordinating juvenile justice services. They receive AMA MI funds as beneficiaries and design the autonomy pathways jointly with Third Sector organizations, such as social cooperatives, selected to deliver the agreed services (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025c, p. 19; 2026a). A partner takes up each case under a local agreement, with an assignment date recorded for program monitoring (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026c, pp. 56–57). These conditions determine the population to which the program's expenditure and results refer.

The financing plan introduces a separate decision about what public bodies will support as a placement ends. A young person placed under a precautionary order may meet the action's residence and exit conditions. Probation served outside a residential community, on its own, leaves the residence condition unsatisfied. The populations overlap where a probation placement meets the terms of the program (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025c, pp. 16–19). An assignment under the program connects that status to services arranged by the CGM and its partner. In the judicial project, social services organize provision to carry out the terms of probation. In the action, a territorial center uses a distinct financing instrument to organize support near exit, including for people who arrived there through other measures. The effects of a restriction on probation can reach AMA MI through changes in the composition of residential placements. Establishing whether they did so would require following those routes into the eligible population.

National Probation Records and the Limits of Comparison

The Ministry's validated 2024 statistical report is the national reference for the period before the selection and reporting instruments studied here. The Ministry had published an initial version of Una giustizia più inclusiva (A More Inclusive Justice System) in September 2024. This plan directs financing toward social and employment support for people under criminal justice measures (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2024). The annual probation statistics concern court orders issued during the calendar year and the people to whom those orders applied (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025b). The report on the administration of justice in 2025 supplies a later extraction of judicial outcomes for the same issuance cohort (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026e). The Ministry's separate annual study of probation for 2025 can extend the caseload series. The administrative report's figures for orders issued in 2025 cover only the period through October 31, so annual caseload comparisons and comparisons of judicial outcomes require separate attention to observation dates (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026b, 2026e).

The national series records 3,988 orders in 2019 and 3,043 in 2020. The count rose to 4,634 in 2021, then fell to 4,553 in 2022 and 4,506 in 2023. The 4,799 orders issued in 2024 represented an increase of 293, or 6.5% of the 2023 count. These movements span the pandemic and the change in legal eligibility. The annual aggregates give the scale of the caseload across those years, with the effect of either development on the number of orders left undetermined (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025b, table 1.1).

The 4,799 orders concerned 4,340 people, an average of 1.106 orders per person. Juvenile Social Service Offices worked with other organizations in preparing 4,707 projects, or 98.1% of the 2024 total. They prepared the remaining 92 alone. The Ministry records social-sector organizations in 3,873 projects, local health authorities in 1,419, municipalities in 1,135, and schools in 990. These categories overlap. Each count records an organization's involvement in project preparation. Valuing the work of those organizations would require evidence of the time and services they supplied during delivery (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025b, tables 1.5–1.6).

The counts by provider establish a minimum extent of joint involvement between social and health services. The 3,873 projects involving social-sector organizations and the 1,419 involving local health authorities together account for 5,292 recorded involvements within at most 4,707 jointly managed projects. At least 585 projects therefore involved both categories (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025b, tables 1.5–1.6). This means that more than two in five of the projects involving local health authorities also involved social-sector organizations, whatever the pattern of collaboration with schools and municipalities. The result identifies a recurring combination of providers within individual projects. Two territories with similar shares of jointly managed projects could still differ in how frequently they rely on this combination. A comparison of collaboration rates captures the incidence of joint management and leaves the composition of the participating services to be established separately.

The terms of the orders also describe intended provision. Of the 4,799 orders, 1,571 (32.7%) prescribed one to six months of probation, 2,980 (62.1%) prescribed seven to twelve months, and 248 (5.2%) prescribed more than twelve months. Residential placement was prescribed

in 890 orders (18.5%). Some individuals received more than one order, and the figures record prescriptions. The number of unique people who entered residential care and their actual person-days would have to be established from placement records. Identifying AMA MI eligibility would further require the date and circumstances of the anticipated exit (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025b, tables 1.7–1.8; 2025c, p. 16).

The published totals also place limits on the number of people to whom the residential prescriptions applied. The difference between 4,799 orders and 4,340 people is 459 orders beyond one per person. No more than 459 of the 890 residential prescriptions can therefore be additional residential prescriptions for people already counted in that category. At least 431 people had an order prescribing residence. The upper limit is 890 people, reached if every residential prescription concerns a different person. These bounds are calculated from the national margins (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025b, tables 1.7 and 2.1). They leave open how repeat orders were distributed across types of prescription. They also concern the people covered by orders, a population defined by a judicial act. A person already in a community when an order was issued, for example, would count toward the bound if that order prescribed residence. The timing of actual entry or departure is a separate observation.

Age and citizenship shares use people as the denominator. At the time probation was granted, 2,017 of the 4,340 people (46.5%) were aged 14–17, and 2,323 (53.5%) were young adults. The 999 people with foreign citizenship accounted for 23.0% of the total. They included 497 minors (24.6% of all minors) and 502 young adults (21.6% of all young adults). The Ministry counted 574 citizens of African countries, 57.5% of people with foreign citizenship and 13.2% of the caseload. The largest groups within that count held Moroccan (234), Tunisian (140), and Egyptian (109) citizenship (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025b, tables 2.1–2.2). These are classifications of citizenship among people granted probation. To study who received AMA MI support, an investigator would need data on the eligible residential population across the covered measures. Age in the program's monitoring records refers to the date on which assignment to the implementing partner was communicated (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026c, pp. 56–57).

By February 19, 2025, the Ministry had recorded outcomes for about one third of the orders issued in 2024. Of the orders with known outcomes, 83.7% ended with a favorable judicial conclusion (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025b, table 3.2). The later extraction of October 31, 2025, gives 85.5% among resolved orders for the same issuance year, without publishing the resolved denominator alongside that percentage (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026e, p. 787). Orders prescribed for a shorter duration can come to judgment sooner. The two figures describe an issuance cohort at different stages of resolution. A comparison would require a common follow-up window and an accounting of orders still open at the cutoff.

Scivoletto (2023) separates the court's disposition from the evidence needed to assess probation after proceedings end. The two extractions for 2024 establish a difficulty even within the narrower judicial measure. The favorable share rose by 1.8 percentage points as the observation date moved from February to October, while the number of orders on which the later percentage is based remains unpublished alongside it (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025b, table 3.2; 2026e, p. 787). Orders prescribing seven to twelve months of probation make up most of the issuance cohort. The time available for them to reach a decision by

February depended on when the court issued them. An annual comparison of favorable shares can thus reflect how much of each cohort has been observed. The dates of issue and resolution are needed to separate differences in the timing of decisions from differences in their recorded outcomes.

Financing and Reporting AMA MI

Italy's National Program for Inclusion and the Fight against Poverty 2021–2027 uses cohesion funds to expand access to services for people in or at risk of poverty. Under its Child Guarantee priority and the ESF+ objective for access to quality and affordable services (ESO4.11), the Ministry's April 4, 2025, financing plan allocated EUR 29 million to AMA MI across three regional categories (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025c, pp. 16–18). The decree of July 28, 2025, assigned EUR 26,489,307.60 to the notice for the selection of Third Sector partners (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025a, operative para. 2). The first instrument allocated funds to the action. The second stated the budget available for a particular selection procedure. Reconciling the sums would require a breakdown of the action's budget lines and their correspondence with the activities covered by the notice.

The difference between the two published amounts is EUR 2,510,692.40. Its significance lies in the scope of the decisions that produced the figures. If a later statement records payments to partners selected under the July notice, dividing those payments by the April allocation would express them as a share of the entire action. A payment-based measure of execution for the notice would use the provision authorized for that procedure and payments made within its scope. The subtraction can be made to the cent, while the distribution of the difference among budget lines remains to be established. The two acts identify which financing decision would be the relevant starting point for each comparison.

The financing plan assigns a tutor to accompany each recipient toward greater independence. This professional works with the young person and the services already involved to prepare an individual pathway and guide its completion. The plan envisages a simultaneous caseload of no more than three recipients per tutor. A personal autonomy grant (Dote per l'autonomia) covers eligible expenses such as training and preparation for work. The plan limits the grant to EUR 10,000 per recipient and EUR 1,000 per month and excludes expenses covered through ordinary residential provision. The activities and expenses authorized in an agreement with a local partner can thus extend beyond the costs chargeable to the individual grant (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025c, pp. 16–19).

The plan lists targets for 2029 separately under headings for minors and young adults. The age-specific rows show 627 minors and 173 young adults across the three categories. In the more developed regions the plan assigns EUR 10,573,400 and lists 229 minors and 63 young adults. In transition regions it assigns EUR 1,345,600 and lists 29 minors and 8 young adults. In less developed regions it assigns EUR 17,081,000 and lists 369 minors and 102 young adults. Dividing the allocations by the sum of the two age-specific figures within each category gives EUR 36,210, EUR 36,368, and EUR 36,265, respectively, to the nearest euro. The national quotient is EUR 36,250. In each category the share of planned participants and the share of the allocation differ by less than 0.1 percentage points (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025c, pp. 17–18).

That calculation follows the age headings of the April plan. Under the young adult heading the plan places the code EECO01, whose label denotes the total number of participants (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025c, p. 18). The April 2026 guidelines retain that definition and specify EECO06 for participants under 18. The CGMs report these data in Multifondo, the information system used to monitor participants and expenditure under the national program (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026c, pp. 55–58). As printed, the EECO01 values under the young adult heading are lower than the corresponding minor targets. The quotients therefore describe the distribution implied by the age-specific rows. Comparing them with delivery would require reconciling the plan's headings with operational definitions and establishing how the monitoring system counts people who receive support more than once. The regional quotients span EUR 158 at the reported precision. That range establishes how closely the funding shares track the targets under the two age headings. The calculation can be reproduced even though the scope of one set of targets remains unsettled. If the figures labeled EECO01 were interpreted as totals, each total would be smaller than the number of minors that it would have to include (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025c, p. 18; 2026c, pp. 56–58). The 800 implied by adding the age rows therefore has a defined use in describing the plan's distribution. Using it to measure delivery would require establishing how the planning target corresponds to the people counted under the reporting rules.

Two published decrees trace the subsequent financial step. They were selected because each identifies the amount and the agreement to which it applies. On March 30, 2026, the Catanzaro CGM, the territorial office serving Calabria, approved a commitment of EUR 23,372.88 under its agreement with Coriss–Exodus Sud, a Third Sector partnership responsible for implementing the agreed services (Juvenile Justice Centre of Catanzaro, 2026, operative section). On May 13, the Florence CGM, which serves Tuscany and Umbria, approved a EUR 10,594.55 commitment under a convention with SUN, the social cooperative selected to deliver support for one recipient (Juvenile Justice Centre of Florence, 2026, operative section). The Florence figure covers the financial plan attached to the convention. Its scope explains why it can exceed the ceiling for the personal grant. The decrees document approval of the commitments in those two cases. The extent of payment and the services actually provided would have to be established from the records of each operation.

In Florence, knowing that the agreement concerns one recipient makes it possible to isolate a difference of EUR 594.55 between the commitment and the maximum personal grant. Testing compliance with that maximum would require identifying the expenses assigned to the grant within the agreement and checking when they were incurred. The commitment covers the financial plan as a whole (Juvenile Justice Centre of Florence, 2026, operative section). Even a precisely identified number of recipients can therefore yield a misleading comparison when the monetary figures cover different activities. The Catanzaro and Florence decrees permit comparison at the stage of approval. A comparison of the amounts devoted to equivalent forms of support would require examining the corresponding lines of the financial plans.

Article 53(1)(b) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, which sets common rules for funds managed jointly by the European Union and its member states, provides for the use of unit costs (European Parliament & Council, 2021b, art. 53). The January 2026 methodology for AMA MI sets rounded hourly rates of EUR 34 for higher professional staff, EUR 29 for functionaries,

EUR 24 for assistants, and EUR 23 for operators. It derives the rates from annual personnel costs and 1,562.4 potentially workable hours per year. The applicable tariff values eligible CGM staff hours documented by assignment records, timesheets, and activity reports (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026d, pp. 7–9). The tariff thus makes a defined input reportable. An account of the resources used for a pathway would also include work performed outside this personnel schedule.

The beneficiary guidelines distinguish admitted costs, commitments, payments, and certified expenditure in the operation's financial records. The same guidelines define a separate administrative result. The indicator ISR4_2IT records participants whose situation has improved at the conclusion of the intervention, with supporting documentation specified in the monitoring rules (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026c, pp. 55–58). Mendez and Bachtler (2024) distinguish compliance, timely spending, and recorded achievement in their study of the European Regional Development Fund, an EU instrument that finances regional development. At the scale of a single AMA MI operation, a payment, an eligible hour, and an improvement recorded at exit each answer a different question about the intervention.

The distinction between spending and recorded achievement in Mendez and Bachtler (2024) also raises a question about what a financial figure represents. An hour entered under the rate for a functionary contributes a different amount to the report from an hour entered under the rate for an assistant (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026d, pp. 7–9). A change in the composition of staff time can consequently alter the value reported even when the number of eligible hours stays constant. The accounting rule standardizes the valuation of each staff category. Comparing expenditure across operations therefore requires identifying the stage reached by each operation and the mix of inputs covered by the reported amounts.

Resource Costs and Reintegration Outcomes

A single pathway may draw on ordinary residential care, municipal social work, schools, health services, and work paid for under the AMA MI agreement. Bovaird (2007) situates users and community organizations within the production of public services. For this study, the implication is that the provider of a resource and the organization that records the expenditure can be different. Levin et al. (2017) start the costing exercise from the quantities of inputs used and their value under a specified perspective. A public-sector account of an AMA MI episode would record caseworker and supervision time, residential person-days, the services supplied by partners and other providers, and an attributable share of administration. Shared costs could be apportioned using documented staff time or another stated allocation rule. A societal perspective would also value relevant time contributed by families and volunteers. The account would record the autonomy grant as a fiscal outlay and identify any services it financed so that the same expense was counted once.

The distinction between provider and payer matters for estimating what the offer of AMA MI adds to ordinary provision. A municipal social worker may already be working with a young person when a partner takes up the case. If the same work continues at the same resource cost under either strategy, a change in its source of finance changes who pays. Additional time devoted to that work enters the comparison through the amount of labor used. The plan's exclusion of expenses covered by ordinary residential provision governs charges to the grant (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2025c, pp. 16–19). A comparison would still record the

residential care used under each strategy from the common eligibility date, treating earlier placement days as part of the person's history.

The first descriptive measure could be the total public resource cost of an entry cohort divided by the number of people entering support. The same cohort's costs, divided by the number of pathways completed within a specified window, would give a second measure. Costs incurred by entrants whose pathways remain open or end early belong in the cohort account. Entry dates, actual service durations, and repeat episodes would have to be recorded before either measure could be compared across centers. These descriptive measures would document the resources associated with delivery and completion. Evaluating the consequences of the intervention would require a common endpoint and a comparison group.

When one initial pathway is followed per entrant, cost per completion is cost per entrant divided by the share completing within the observation window. The relationship follows from using the same cohort costs in both measures. A center can thus record a lower cost per completion at an unchanged cost per entrant if a larger proportion of its cohort completes within the window. Even within a common observation period, pathways of different lengths may leave different numbers of cases in progress. Reporting the two measures with separate counts of completed, open, and discontinued pathways makes the effect of the completion denominator visible.

The choice of endpoint follows the decision under study. Wilson and Hoge (2013) examine recidivism by comparing young people diverted from conventional processing with those whose cases followed the usual channels. The decision to offer AMA MI arises when eligible young people are already in residential care. Its immediate result indicator records a change in situation at the end of support (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026c, pp. 56–58). Later participation in education, training, or employment would capture a different part of the transition. Aizer and Doyle (2015) distinguished high school completion from adult incarceration in their study of juvenile incarceration in a large United States county. In their long-term economic evaluation of multisystemic therapy, a family and community treatment for young people, Klietz et al. (2010) used subsequent rearrests to estimate costs to taxpayers and losses to victims. The outcome and the perspective in each study determined which consequences it could value.

A prospective evaluation could compare an offer of AMA MI at eligibility with the usual exit support available to otherwise eligible young people. It would specify the services included in usual support and observe both groups from the same eligibility and assignment point. Hernán and Robins (2016) explain why eligibility, assignment to a strategy, and the start of follow-up need to be aligned in comparisons drawn from administrative records. A pre-specified outcome could be verified participation in education, training, or employment twelve months after that point, with each component also reported separately. The incremental cost-effectiveness ratio would divide the difference in mean public resource cost by the difference in the probability of the specified outcome. It would use the same horizon for resource use and outcome ascertainment across groups. The analysis would report the two differences, their uncertainty, and the treatment of incomplete follow-up alongside the ratio (Gertler et al., 2016; Levin et al., 2017).

The proposed comparison concerns an offer of support. People who decline it or start late would remain in the group to which the offer was made. Restricting the group to people who complete an autonomy pathway would define membership by an event that occurs after the offer, when differences in the ability to use the services may already have affected completion. Recording the offer and subsequent use as distinct events would preserve a common starting point for the comparison (Hernán & Robins, 2016). The protocol would seek the same twelve-month outcomes in education, training, or employment for eligible people under both strategies, including those whose use of services ended early.

Variation in the dates when CGMs began to deliver AMA MI could inform a separate comparison if the dates and pre-program outcomes were available. Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021) specify how effects can be estimated for groups exposed at different times under assumptions about their outcome trends in the absence of the intervention. In this setting, comparability would depend on the timing of actual entry into service, changes in statutory eligibility, baseline support needs, placement history, and local capacity. A change in the composition of the eligible population or in the provision of ordinary support could coincide with the start of AMA MI. The credibility of a staggered comparison would depend on evidence about those changes and on the suitability of centers where the program had yet to begin. Where that evidence is unavailable, the records can support descriptive performance analysis (Gertler et al., 2016).

The reporting rules give beneficiaries a place to begin building an episode record. Multifondo generates a unique recipient code by pseudonymizing the data of participants classified as vulnerable. The guidelines require beneficiaries to retain the underlying documents for verification (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026c, pp. 56–58). A research linkage would need a lawful basis and controlled access to connect that record to judicial orders, placement histories, provider records, and follow-up. The linkage would distinguish repeated orders from repeated funded episodes and report the proportion of records successfully matched. Harron et al. (2017) show how missed and false matches can bias analyses of linked data. Testing whether match quality varies across centers or among groups of recipients would be especially important where the objective is to study access. Disclosure controls would be needed when publishing results for small groups.

The recipient code begins within program administration. It gives a means of linking records for people entered in Multifondo under the procedure for vulnerable recipients (Italian Ministry of Justice, 2026c, pp. 56–58). A comparison based on that list would begin with a population already recorded under the intervention. In this setting there is a problem prior to the missed matches discussed by Harron et al. (2017). An eligible person who received usual support can be absent from the program's data even when the available records link accurately. The cohort would therefore have to be assembled from eligibility and placement records that cover both strategies. The program identifiers would then help trace services for the people assigned to AMA MI within that wider cohort.

Equitable access is an objective of the ESF+ (European Parliament & Council, 2021a). For AMA MI, a decline in the recorded cost per completed pathway could reflect a change in the support offered, a change in the people served, or a transfer of work to another budget. Observing access, service intensity, and later outcomes would help distinguish those

possibilities. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2021) treats efficiency and effectiveness as separate questions in its guidance on evaluating public interventions. The national statistics, program documents, and two commitment decrees used here refer to different populations and financial events. Participant-level payment records, service logs, and outcomes for a comparison cohort would be required to estimate incremental costs and effectiveness.

Conclusion

The Florence decree of May 2026 gives the financial study of reintegration a point of entry at the scale of one recipient. An administrator can identify the agreement for which EUR 10,594.55 was committed and the financial plan that governs it. Following the commitment through payment and certification would establish how the agreement was financed. Reconstructing the resources used would require following the young person across providers. Ordinary residential care, work by a municipal social worker, and services arranged through the implementing partner may belong to the same pathway. The agreements and reporting rules identify which items enter the program accounts. A study of public resource use would also need to account for services financed elsewhere.

The population to which those costs refer depends on a sequence of decisions. In 2024, 890 probation orders prescribed residential placement. They record what courts ordered in one issuance year. AMA MI addresses a population defined later in the pathway, when a person placed in a community under a covered measure is approaching exit from juvenile justice. Access to the action can thus be studied only with a denominator that includes people eligible through the other legal routes. Changes in the terms of probation eligibility make the date of the alleged offense relevant even among people whose orders were issued in the same year. The legal regime and the dates of placement and assignment belong in the analysis of the funded episode.

The closeness of the regional planning ratios has a narrower significance than the sums initially suggest. It follows from the relation between the regional shares of the allocation and the targets displayed under the two age headings. The quotients describe a planned distribution whose denominators require reconciliation with the monitoring codes. Once delivery begins, two centers serving similar numbers may face different costs if their recipients have different placement histories or if ordinary services supply different amounts of support. A comparison of costs would have to establish what each center and its partners provided, including the services financed outside the local convention. The dispersion of actual resource use remains an empirical question.

Time presents a related difficulty for the assessment of outcomes. The proportion of favorable judicial conclusions for orders issued in 2024 was recorded twice as the issuance cohort matured. Both figures concern the orders resolved by the relevant extraction. They are intelligible in relation to the dates on which courts reached their decisions. The program's indicator is attached to the end of the intervention, which follows its own timetable. An episode file would record both dates and establish their sequence for each participant. Observation at a fixed interval from eligibility would allow investigators to distinguish the result recorded at exit from a later outcome such as continued participation in training. The

difference matters when the purpose of support is to sustain a transition whose course extends beyond the period covered by the agreement.

These distinctions make an economic evaluation relevant to decisions about the organization of services. The same recorded expenditure can correspond to different amounts of public work if municipal services or residential providers bear different shares of it. A center that reaches young people with more intensive needs may spend more per person. Any judgment about efficiency depends on what the eligible population received and on the outcome that followed. Recording the share of eligible people admitted, alongside the resources used by those served, would make a change in access visible in the interpretation of costs.

A first avenue for further research is a prospective linkage and costing study in several CGMs. It could reconcile commitments, payments, and certified expenditure by operation, then join them to records of tutor hours, placement days, and services delivered under other budgets. A pilot would establish how often the same individual can be identified across records under controlled access, how repeated episodes are counted, and where dates or resource quantities are missing. Comparing the coverage of these records across centers would help determine whether differences in recorded service intensity reflect delivery or the way providers document their work.

A second avenue is to compare otherwise eligible young people offered AMA MI with those receiving usual exit support, starting follow-up at a common point of eligibility. A cohort followed for twelve months could record education, training, and employment from comparable sources and distinguish discontinuation of support from loss to observation. Interviews with young people and practitioners, subject to appropriate safeguards, could examine what happens between eligibility and assignment, including which services are accessible as a placement ends. Investigators could then ask whether access and continuity differ by citizenship within the eligible population, where the decision to offer support and the services that follow it can be observed together.

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Ethics and data availability. The study uses public administrative aggregates, programme instruments and legal sources. No identifiable participant data were collected. Source locations and denominators are given in the text so that the published aggregates and planned allocation ratios can be reconstructed.

AI statement: Grammarly was used for language assistance.

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