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**The Regional Politics of Childcare:
Expansion, Delivery and Social Investment
in Italy and Spain**

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Chapter 1 – Introduction and Research Design	8
1. <i>Research Object, Analytical Dimensions and Research Questions</i>	8
2. <i>Literature and Hypothesis</i>	16
3. <i>Case Selection and Methodology</i>	20
4. <i>The Work in a Nutshell</i>	25
Chapter 2 – Childcare and the Welfare State Transformations: New Social Risks, New Policies and Governance Dynamics	27
1. <i>Introduction</i>	27
2. <i>The Emergence of New Social Risks and Needs</i>	28
3. <i>Childcare and Family Policy</i>	32
4. <i>Childcare Expansion Across Western Welfare States</i>	37
5. <i>Four Models of Childcare Delivery</i>	40
6. <i>Childcare Policy and the Social Investment Paradigm</i>	43
7. <i>The Decentralization of Childcare Policy and the Patterns of Childcare Expansion in Multi-Tiered Welfare States</i>	45
Chapter 3 – In Search for a Theoretical Explanation	53
1. <i>Introduction</i>	53
2. <i>Functional Pressures and the Growing Childcare Demand</i>	53
3. <i>Historical Institutionalism and Beyond: Obstacles and Opportunities for Change</i>	55
4. <i>Childcare Policy Change and the Role of Ideas</i>	57
5. <i>Women in Politics as Agents of Change?</i>	59
6. <i>Partisan Preferences, Interest Groups and Political Exchanges: a “New” Politics of Childcare?</i>	60
Chapter 4 - Childcare Policy in Italy and Spain	71
1. <i>Introduction</i>	71
2. <i>The Italian Trajectory: Legislation, Institutional Framework and Trends</i>	72
3. <i>The Spanish Trajectory: Legislation, Institutional Framework and Trends</i>	85
4. <i>Similarities and Differences</i>	93
Chapter 5 – Childcare in the Italian Regions	96
1. <i>Introduction</i>	96
2. <i>Regional Variability at a Glance</i>	98
3. <i>Socio-Economic and Political Context in Tuscany and Piedmont</i>	105
4. <i>Childcare Policy Trajectory in Tuscany</i>	116
5. <i>Childcare Policy Trajectory in Piedmont</i>	140
Chapter 6 – Childcare Policy in the Spanish Autonomous Communities	156
1. <i>Introduction</i>	156
2. <i>Regional Variability at a Glance</i>	157
3. <i>Socio-Economic and Political Context in Andalusia and La Rioja</i>	162
4. <i>Childcare Policy Trajectory in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia</i>	172
5. <i>Childcare Policy Trajectory in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja</i>	191

Chapter 7 – Explaining the Different Regional Patterns of Childcare Expansion in Italy and Spain	206
1. <i>Introduction</i>	206
2. <i>Explicit and Implicit Marketization in The Italian Regions</i>	207
3. <i>Childcare Expansion through a Greater Public Involvement in the Spanish Regions</i>	212
4. <i>Expansion, Marketization and Social Investment: Partisan Preferences, Political Competition and “Exchanges” Dynamics in Italy and Spain</i>	216
Conclusions	232
List of Abbreviations	243
List of Figures and Tables	244
List of Interviews	251
References	254

Executive Summary

Italy and Spain have been traditionally characterized by underdeveloped childcare and persistent familism in the provision of care (Ferrera 1996, 2005a). However, in the last two decades, childcare has undergone an expansionary as well as divergent trajectory in Italy and Spain. An high childcare expansion coincided with the increase of public delivery and level of inclusiveness in Spain. By contrast, childcare expansion in Italy was moderate, driven by private sector and less inclusive than in Spain. Therefore, childcare policy change in both countries has varied along three analytical dimensions: the extent of expansion, the way childcare is delivered and the level of inclusiveness. The latter – if combined with the delivery of high quality service - is particularly relevant to achieve effective social investment aims on childcare reforms (Bonoli 2017; West et. al. 2019). In both countries regional governments hold key competences on the three dimensions of change. Due to a decentralized policy setting, Italian and Spanish regions distribute financial resources to the lower level of childcare implementation. Regional decisions over budget allocation for childcare contribute to shape childcare expansion and its direction in terms of childcare delivery. Also, regional governments in Italy and Spain adopt childcare regulation on quality requirements that have to be followed by public and private providers that run childcare services. Last but not least, regional government may develop initiatives to control price of childcare fees with the aim to make childcare access more affordable and inclusive. In sum, by defining quality regulations and mechanisms of fees reduction, regional-policy makers may contribute to the achievement of social investment aims for childcare.

Against this backdrop, we develop an empirical analysis of regional childcare trajectory in order to understand the determinants of Italian and Spanish divergence on childcare expansion, delivery and social investment. More precisely, we aim at answering: how and why regions expand childcare? How and why regions support a specific model of childcare delivery? And finally, how and why regions shape childcare reforms in congruence with social investment aims?

Partisan politics literature emphasized the role of government colour and political competition to explain childcare variation along expansion, delivery and social investment. According to theoretical literature, in a party system characterized by

moderate pluralism an high political competition between left and right wing political pole will favour a partisan convergence on the promotion of childcare expansion through public delivery (Schwander 2018). By contrast, in a context of *fragmented pluralism*, the presence of radical right will incentivize within-pole competition so that right parties will endorse conservative views on family care and childcare expansion through public delivery will be promoted only by left-parties. However, according to Gingrich (2011) left parties may also support market reforms only if aimed at increase public control on quality and price provided by private sector. As for social investment, partisan preferences are more polarized and less ambivalent: left parties are expected to endorse childcare reforms shaped by social investment, whereas the latter will not be promoted by right-wing parties (Morgan 2011a, 2013).

However, we argue that by looking only at the *supply side* (political parties) of political competition is crucial to explain childcare expansion but it is less suitable to explain scope and direction of childcare reforms. The latter might be influenced also by the *demand side* of the political arena, which is composed by electorate and interest groups. Some relevant interest groups might aggregate a strong socio-political demand to shape the content of childcare reforms in order to preserve and/or promote their interests. As a result, childcare policy change is the product of *political exchange* dynamics between interest groups and party governments.

Trough an in-depth reconstruction of policy-making processes in four regional cases – *Andalusia, Rioja, Tuscany* and *Piedmont* - we show that government colours and political competition dynamics still matter for childcare expansion. Also, political competition dynamics – rather than government colour – turn to be relevant to explain the shift from a social assistance to a social investment approach on childcare. Finally, *political exchange* dynamics between service providers, interested to expand their childcare supply, and governments looking for political support and sharing responsibilities on childcare policy, are crucial to explain changes on childcare delivery.

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Research Design

1. Research Object, Analytical Dimensions and Research Questions

Childcare policy emerged as a priority of Western Welfare States with the shift towards a post-industrial society. The latter brought about a series of socio-economic transformations, among which the sharp increase in female employment that changed family structures from a male-breadwinner to a dual-earner model. Before the shift towards a post-industrial society during the 1970s, care for children – and also for frail and dependent elderly – was provided within families by the unpaid work of housewives. The increase of female employment and the overall female emancipation from the traditional role played within the families placed upon women new challenges concerning the combination of paid work and family care. Against this backdrop, feminist movements have voiced for policies that, by favouring an equal gendered distribution of family duties, help to combine maternal employment with family life.

Western welfare states started to strengthen and develop a series of policies aimed at combining work and family life. These policies include: *maternity* and *parental leave*; a flexible regulation of working time (*part-time*); the provision, for a certain amount of time, of *monetary transfers* to bear the cost of raising children; and *services* that provide care for children outside the family. Childcare policy is the main pillar of the welfare state reorientation towards family policy. Indeed, differently from leave or part-time work, childcare may facilitate the combination of work and family life without loss of paid earnings.

Policy-makers shape childcare policy according to three main analytical dimensions: expansion, delivery and aims. These three analytical dimensions are particularly crucial to understand scope and direction of childcare reforms. Obviously, policy makers that aim at unburdening mothers from family care focus primarily on the expansion of the available externalised childcare places. However, childcare expansion can be delivered in different ways that imply a differentiated involvement of public and private providers. Indeed, public administration, private providers or a mix of

both can deliver childcare services. Childcare services are delivered by pure public providers when the latter holds the property and the management (staff personnel) of childcare centres. By contrast, when the childcare centre is held by private providers and managed by private staff childcare supply is entirely delivered by pure private providers. However, the pure private provision can be subsidized by public administration through demand subsidies, which support the families that enrol their children in a pure private childcare. Beyond pure public and pure private provisions there are two hybrid forms of childcare provision. Indeed, public administrations that hold a childcare centre may decide to outsource its management (mainly the childcare staff) to private providers (*outsourcing*). Also, public administration can purchase for the families childcare places in the centres held and managed by specific accredited private providers (*accreditation*). The latter to be accredited with public administrations had to meet specific requirements established by public governments.

The way in which each form of childcare delivery is regulated by public administration impacts on the congruence between childcare policy and its broader aims. Indeed, welfare states promote childcare policy not only for work-life balance aims but also as a part of a broader reorientation towards social investment. The social investment perspective emerged as a new social policy paradigm aimed at adapting welfare states to the post-industrial society. The social investment perspective sees welfare state policies focused on human capital development, active and social inclusion as productive investment that maximizes the chances of individuals to succeed in the labour market (Vandebroucke et. al. 2011). By focusing on “preparing instead of repairing” (Morel et. al. 2011:1) social investment childcare policies may help children coming from low-income families to break the circle of disadvantage (Esping-Andersen 2002; Ferrera 2010). Recently, also a supranational organization as EU Commission and international organizations as the OECD recognized the importance of social investment for childcare and promoted the diffusion of high quality services, accessible for disadvantaged groups (EU Commission 2013; OECD 2012, 2015). In sum, the social investment perspective emphasizes the development of high quality and affordable childcare services addressing socio-educational aims – rather than only social assistance and care – as well as the inclusion of disadvantaged children (Morgan,

2011a; Leon 2017; Bonoli et. al 2017). Therefore, the quantitative expansion of available childcare places by itself is not enough to ensure a childcare policy shaped by social investment agenda. In order to comply with the main premise of social investment paradigm, high quality childcare services should be not only widely available but also highly affordable for lower income families (Bonoli 2017). In other words, childcare policy is congruent with social investment aims when it delivers affordable and high quality childcare services. The extent to which each of the four aforementioned childcare provision matches with social investment aims will depend upon the regulation on childcare quality (staff-child ratio, staff qualifications and training) and access established by policy-makers.

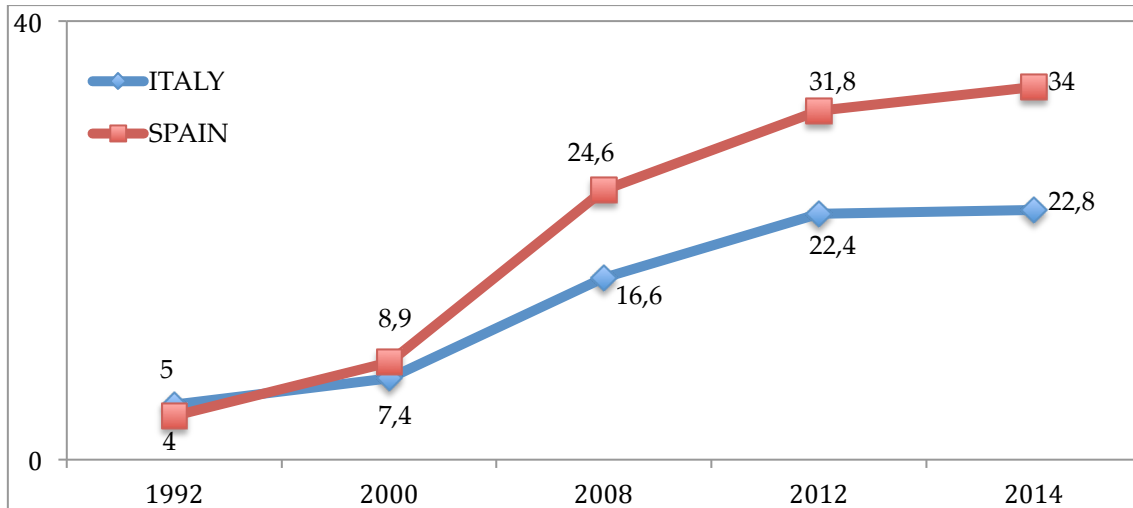
The way in which policy-makers expand, deliver and shape childcare policy differs both across and within Western welfare states. Indeed, from the 1970s childcare policy has developed and expanded in almost all Western countries, even though with different timing and intensity. The Nordic countries together with France were the pioneers of extensive childcare delivered by public services (Fargion 2000), while Continental and Southern European countries were long considered as laggards. From the late 1990s the provision of childcare started to develop consistently in some countries such as the UK, the Netherlands and Germany (Morgan 2013). However, countries may vary in the extent of childcare expansion as well as on the delivery of childcare services. Some countries provide fully public childcare services while others incentivize the creation of a private childcare market.

The comparative welfare state literature so far has studied childcare policy change mainly in terms of quantitative expansion of available childcare places or public spending over childcare (Bonoli and Reber 2010, Morgan 2013, Hieda 2013, Fleckenstein and Lee 2014, Ferragina and Seeleb-Kaiser 2015; Blome 2017). Only few contributions studied how and why such expansion takes place in terms of the delivery of public or private provision (Huber and Stephens 2000; Busemeyer and Seitzl 2017) or social investment strategy (Morgan 2011a). In general, the comparative welfare state literature has paid less attention to describe and explain the policy processes and dynamics that lead to a peculiar childcare expansion. More precisely, we are interested

in studying the determinants of the policy choices with regard to: i) the extent of childcare expansion; ii) the support towards public, private or a mix of both childcare provisions; iii) the social investment strategy.

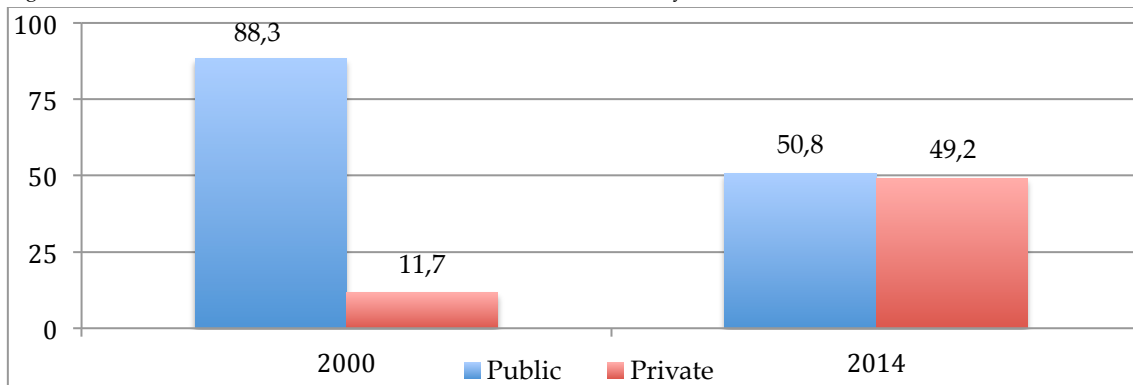
This three dimensional focus will drive our research on childcare reforms occurred in Italy and Spain in the last two decades. In this period, childcare coverage in Italy and Spain - traditionally conceived as familistic welfare states - have expanded. Indeed, the literature on comparative welfare states has long emphasized the persistent familism and policy inertia of social assistance and childcare policies in Italy and Spain. Both countries belong to the South European welfare model, in which the underdevelopment of social assistance and childcare services (Ferrera 1996, 2005a) led to “familism by default” (Saraceno 2010). Despite a consolidated familistic legacy, from 2000 childcare provision has expanded in both countries. As shown by figure 1.1 in the early 1990s both countries display almost the same (low) level of childcare coverage rate. From 2000 on, childcare coverage has expanded in both countries but with different intensity. The Spanish coverage rates in 2014 exceed the Italian one by 14 percentage points (pp.). More importantly, the Spanish coverage rate is over the Lisbon target while the Italian one remains one of the lowest in Europe. The departure from traditionally low coverage rate and underdeveloped childcare has taken different path in both countries with regard to state and market involvement in the provision of childcare services. Figure 1.2 shows that in 2000 - when childcare coverage in Italy was very limited as seen in figure 1.1 – a very high share (88%) of the total childcare supply was public. In 2014, in Italy, after the moderate – compared to Spain – childcare expansionary trajectory, the share of public provision sharply declined to 50,8%. Also, between 2000 and 2014 the increase in the absolute number of private services has been definitely higher than the growth of the absolute number of public supply (figure 1.3). Therefore, even though in Italy public childcare in 2014 is still half of the total childcare supply (figure 1.2), an increasing privatization of childcare services has driven the limited expansionary trend occurred between 2000 and 2014 (De Roit and Sabatinelli 2013).

Figure 1.1 – Childcare Coverage¹ in Italy and Spain, % Rate, 1992-2014



Source: for Italy, 1992 and 2000 (IDI 2002), 2008 (IDI 2011), 2012 (Istat 2013), 2015 (Istat 2016); for Spain, 1992, 2000 e 2008 (INE2011), 2012 (MECD 2013), 2014 (MECD 2015)

Figure 1.2 – The Share of Public and Private Childcare Provision in Italy, 2000-2014

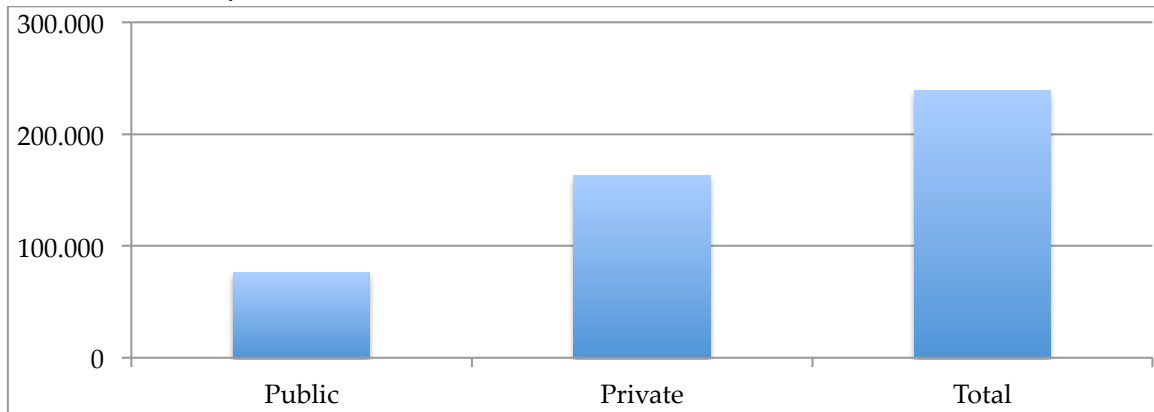


Source: for Italy for 2000 (Istituto degli Innocenti 2002), for 2014 (Istat 2017)

1

Both data are taken from the respective national registries. However, for the Italian case childcare coverage rate is calculated as the percentage number of the available places over the total of children aged 0-3 years old living in Italy. While in Spain, the percentage number of enrolment rates over the total of children aged 0-3 years old living in Spain is taken as reference of coverage in the childcare centres. Unfortunately, we are forced to compare these two data due to lack of data on enrolment rates for the Italian case as well as the lack of data on available childcare places for Spain. However, this does not affect the childcare divergence between the two countries. Indeed, if we had data on enrolments in Italy, this could have been the same or inferior to the number of available places we are showing, as logically the number of enrolled children cannot overcome the number of available places. Viceversa, for the same reasons, if we had data on available places for Spain, this figure could have been the same or higher than the figure on enrolment we are showing. Therefore, even with different data, that unfortunately we lack, childcare divergence between the two countries could have been eventually increased but for sure not reduced. Furthermore, we have chosen registered data collected by national institutional sources, as these are more comprehensive than the EU-SILC childcare statistics (Keck and Saraceno 2011). The latter – usually used for comparative purposes – report the actual usage of childcare places based on a survey instead of providing information on the number childcare places available or enrolment rates. Moreover, EU SILC data on childcare coverage include also child-minders, thus making it complicated to isolate the percentage of services available (Keck and Saraceno 2011).

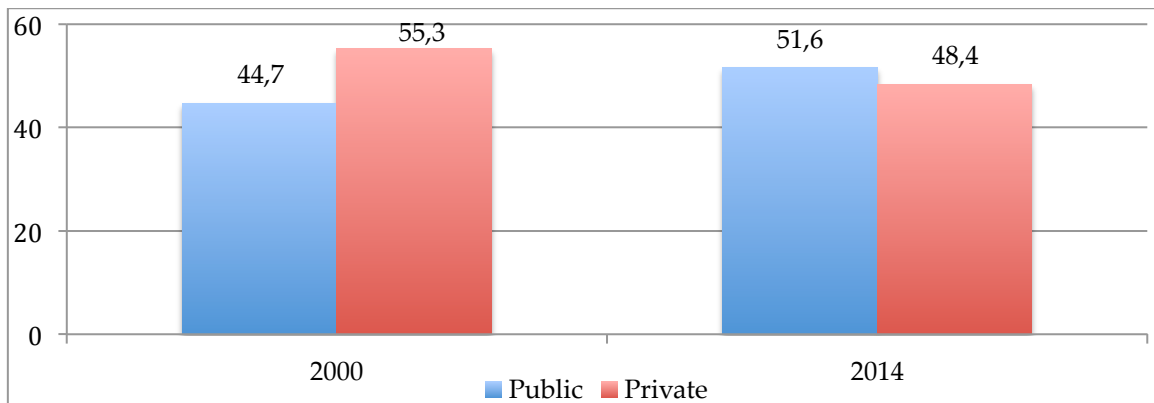
Figure 1.3 - The increase of available childcare places in Public, Private and Total Provision between 2000 and 2014, Absolute Numbers, Italy



Source: IDI (2002); Istat (2017)

By contrast in Spain the increase of childcare coverage rate has coincided with a diminishing share of private provision and a growing public involvement, as shown by the gradual increase of the public childcare share between 2000 and 2014 (figure 1.4).

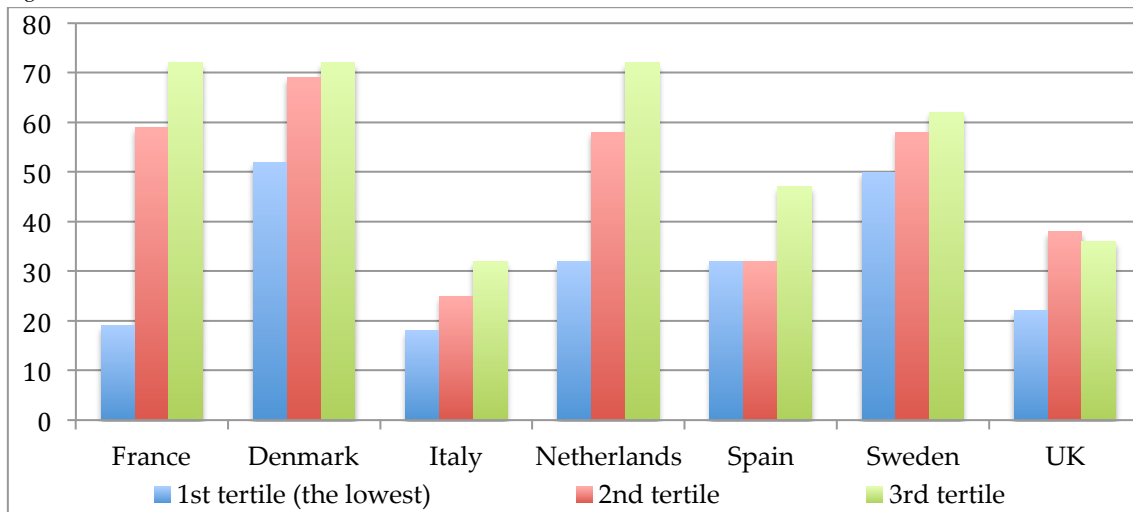
Figure 1.4 – The Share of Public and Private Childcare Provision in Spain, 2000-2014



Source: MEC (2000,2004,2008,2009,2010,2013,2015)

Also, by looking at data on childcare enrolment across different level of incomes, childcare access in Spain seems more inclusive than in Italy. The 32% of children coming from families with income in the lowest tertile is enrolled in childcare programs while 18 % only in Italy (figure 1.5). The Spanish rate in figure 1.4 is below the Nordic countries but it is similar to the rate of recent path shifter countries such as the Netherlands and, more surprisingly, above the rates of countries where childcare is traditionally developed such as France.

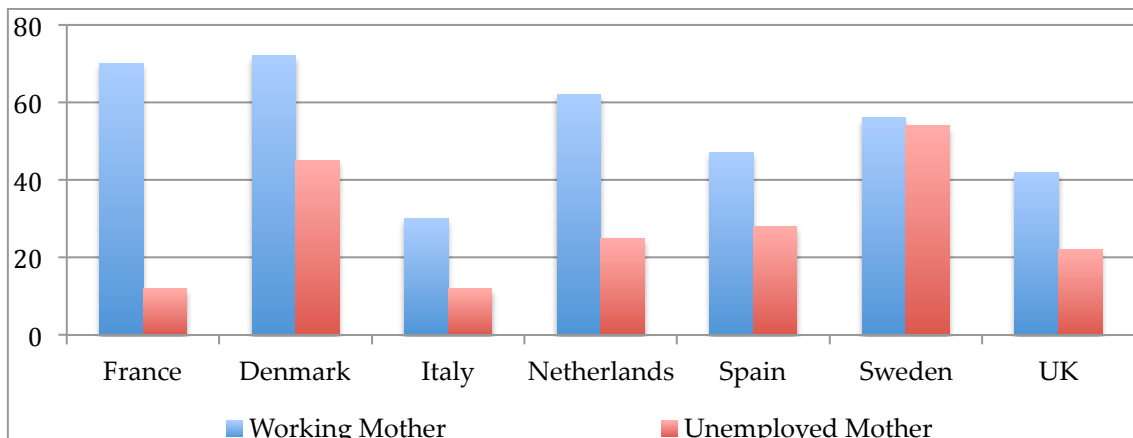
Figure 1.5 – Participation % Rates in formal ECEC by Equalised Disposable Household Income Tertile, Children Under Age Three, EU countries, 2014



Source: OECD (2016)

Italy and Spain diverge also when it comes to the attendance rates of children with working mothers and children with unemployed mothers (figure 1.6). By unburdening unemployed mother from care duties, childcare services may also serve as a potential tool for mother activation. By looking at both figures 1.5 and 1.6, it seems that childcare policy favours the achievements of social investment and work-life balance aims more in Spain than in Italy.

Figure 1.6 –Participation % Rates in Formal ECEC for Children with Unemployed or Working Mothers, EU Countries, 2014



Source: OECD (2016)

In sum, Italy and Spain have long been characterized by a strong familistic legacy in the provision of social care. However, recent childcare policy developments outlined above highlight that both countries have reduced the pervasiveness of familism with

different intensity and ways. In Spain, a path departure from a familistic legacy occurred through an high expansion of formal childcare and a gradual increase of state involvement in childcare provision. By contrast in Italy, the defamilization path was less marked than in Spain and it relied on the strengthening of market provision.

The legacy of institutional similarities makes the analysis of childcare policy divergence in both countries suitable for the most similar system research design.

Due to the decentralized policy setting shared by both countries regional governments in Italy and Spain held relevant competences with regard to childcare investment and regulation, two dimensions that shape the outcome of childcare policy change with regard to the three analytical dimensions (*expansion, delivery and aims*). In both countries the national governments provide resources for childcare expansion and issue policy guidelines and broad legislation, while municipalities are in charge of implementation. The latter is strongly influenced by the competences held at the regional level. Indeed, in both countries, regional governments receive the national financial resources and distribute them to the local level in charge of childcare implementation. The agreements achieved in the Intergovernmental Conferences between central and regional institutions define how national resources are distributed to the regions. Once regions receive their proportion of national resources they decide how to use them. More importantly, regions may also finance childcare expansion with additional regional financial resources. In sum, regional governments may differ in how to make use of national funding as well as in their willingness to allocate regional funding over childcare. As a result, public spending and the overall policy effort on childcare may vary across the national territory. Also, if the national level defines general legislation, regional authorities define detailed legislation – such as educational curriculum, criteria to set up childcare services – that impact on childcare supply. Indeed, regional governments by regulating on time and flexibility as well as on quality may affect childcare's broader objectives such as work-life balance and social investment. Regional governments may establish also criteria to regulate the entrance of private actors in childcare supply, in turn incentivizing or constraining private childcare supply. Due to the strong competences on childcare investment and

regulations held by regional governments in Italy and Spain we argue that the regional layer of government is more appropriate for a qualitative analysis of the policy process concerning policy change on childcare expansion, delivery and aims. Indeed, despite the amount of relevant childcare policy competences held by region in federalist/regionalist countries, the policy processes and dynamics of childcare policy change at regional level are largely under-researched.

Against this backdrop this work aim at answering the following research questions:

1. what are the determinants of childcare policy change at the sub-national level?

More precisely,

1.2. how and why regional governments expand childcare?

1.3. how do regional governments influence the delivery of childcare services? Do regional governments support public, private or a hybridization of both provisions? And why?

1.4 How and why regional government set childcare regulation in congruence with social investment aims?

2. Literature and Hypothesis

The literature on comparative welfare states have traditionally explained welfare policy developments, including childcare and family policy developments, by recurring to theoretical strands that emphasize the prominent role of different explanatory factors such as: functional pressures, institutional legacy, the role of agency (e.g. women lobbies for childcare) and partisan preferences of party governments.

The functionalist literature emphasizes the role played by social and economic developments to explain childcare policy change (Wilensky 1975). Following this reasoning, the diffused increase of female employment as well as the wide decrease of fertility rates would explain childcare policy developments. However, profound social and economic developments are well suited to identify common pressures on welfare state adaptation rather than to explain policy change. The functional pressures are

filtered by institutional and political context, which shape the scope and direction of policy change. According to historical institutionalism, welfare state adaptation to socio-economic challenges results constrained by policy legacy. Such approach, by emphasizing the constraints related with existing policies, turns to be less suitable to capture transformative policy change (Streeck and Thelen 2005; Mahoney and Thelen 2010). Since we aim at studying empirical cases that according to the figures showed above departed from their familistic legacy, historical institutionalism approaches do not seem appropriate to solve our puzzle. As we will see in chapter 3, an extensive body of literature found evidence of a positive association between women descriptive representation and the childcare availability. However, such evidence does not explain the outcomes and the related processes that lead to a specific reform pattern in terms of childcare expansion, delivery and aims. Traditional scholarships on partisan politics links childcare policy change and childcare variation to differences on political preferences over childcare, with left promoting public childcare and social investment whereas the right reluctant towards childcare investment or alternatively in favour of childcare marketization and overall less prone to social investment (Huber and Stephens 2000; Bonoli and Reber 2010; Morgan 2011). However, due to changes in the traditional normative beliefs and de-alignment of tradition voting (Emmeneger and Manow 2014; Gingrich and Hausermann 2015) right-wing began to converge on left-wing preferences over childcare expansion (Morgan 2013). Schwander (2018) specified that, the political convergence on the promotion of childcare expansion is shaped by the configuration of party system. In the presence of a radical right competitor, the moderate right will face a within-pole political competition thus increasing the between-pole divergence (Schwander 2018). By contrast, in the absence of a radical right competitor the moderate right competing only with left parties will be incentivized to converge on the same progressive positions over childcare (Schwander 2018). To better understand the argument of Schwander (2018) that links partisan preferences, party system configuration and childcare expansion, it is useful to distinguish between two features of party systems: *moderate pluralism* and *fragmented pluralism*. The former is characterized by only one political cleavage that shape political competition between the right and the left political pole, with limited relevance of

within pole competition (Sartori 1976). Conversely, *fragmented pluralism* implies the emergence of additional cleavages within both left and right-wing pole and the prevalence of centrifugal – rather than centripetal - political competition (Natili 2019). By linking these two concepts with the argument of Schwander (2018) we can say that partisan convergence over childcare is more likely to occur in a party system characterized by *moderate pluralism*. Conversely, in a party system characterized by *fragmented pluralism* the within pole competition in the right-wing camp will prevent the moderate right to foster childcare expansion. However, even when right-wing parties promoted childcare expansion they did not shaped childcare reforms according to social investment aims, which remain a prerogative of left parties (Morgan 2013). The latter are more prone to shape childcare expansion with social investment prescriptions (Morgan 2011a). As for childcare delivery, traditional partisan preferences used to be highly different. Left wing parties promoted childcare expansion through public childcare whereas right-wing parties are associated with higher level of childcare services held by private providers (Huber and Stephens 2000; Busemeyer and Seitzl 2017). However, Schwander (2018) argues that the absence of radical right competitor incentivizes moderate right to support not only childcare expansion but also the development of public childcare. Also, Gingrich (2011) argues that left parties can approach and support market reform in a way to provide public supervision over quality delivered by private provision as well as to extend public control over price established by private providers preventing the latter from shifting some cost into users. Therefore, a partisan ambivalence with regard to childcare delivery emerges from the theoretical literature on partisan politics.

Such partisan ambivalence might suggest that the partisan preferences and political competition dynamics to attract new voters are crucial to explain policy shifts towards childcare expansion but they might not be sufficient to explain scope and direction of childcare expansionary reforms. In other words, other factors might contribute to explain why a government expanded childcare through a specific model of childcare delivery. Following Stoppino (2001), I argue that the demand side of political competition is composed not only by the electorate but also by a series of social and institutional actors that may represent specific constituencies and have interests – as

well as resources – to promote in the case of a childcare reform. Such organized interest groups are women associations, associations of families, trade unions and service providers. Depending on the presence of interest groups and the strength of their *socio-political demand*, regional governments looking for political support may engage in *political exchanges* with them. Since the main features (presence and strength) of the socio-political demand aggregated by interest groups may vary according to specific regional contexts, the scope and direction of socio-political demand and the potential political exchange cannot be presumed theoretically but they should be verified empirically. To this regard we will draw some hypothesis only related to the *supply side* (partisan politics) of political competition. In the empirical chapters (chapters 5 and 6) by providing detailed description of childcare policy-making we will verify the extent to which interest groups actually contribute to childcare policy change. As a consequence, by elaborating on partisan politics literature and by considering the functional pressures key to have pressures on childcare demand we can draw some hypothesis with regard to the three dimensions of childcare policy change:

1. In the regions characterized by high functional pressures and traditionally governed by left parties we do expect a childcare expansion. The latter is likely to be promoted also by right-wing governments only in the case of a party-system characterized by *moderate pluralism*. By contrast, in a region governed by right-wing parties within a party system characterized by *fragmented pluralism* we do not expect the promotion of childcare expansion but rather the strengthening of conservative views on family care.

2. We do expect that left parties support the development of public childcare. Also, we do expect a left support to private delivery only if the latter is constrained to quality and price rules established by public. Right-wing parties, under *fragmented pluralism*, is expected to support private delivery of childcare. By contrast, in the presence of *moderate pluralism*, right-wing parties are more likely to support public delivery.

3. As for social investment we do expect that childcare reforms promoted by left-wing parties will be in line with social investment aims. Conversely, the concern of right-wing parties towards social investment aims will be rather scarce or absent.

These hypotheses will be tested on four selected regional cases in Italy and Spain through a qualitative research method. Case selection and methodology are the focus of the next section.

3. Case Selection and Methodology

The four cases selected for the empirical analysis are: Tuscany, Piedmont, the Autonomous Community of Andalusia and the Autonomous Community of La Rioja.

Three criteria drove our case selection. Firstly, we are analyzing cases in which the level of functional pressures is considered relevant, or in line with those of the national level. In other words, we are selecting regions that have a level of female employment high enough to act as a strong functional pressure for childcare demand. For this reason we started excluding those regions with low and stable female employment rates. Three out of the four regions Tuscany, Piedmont and La Rioja share almost the same medium-high level of female employment (table 1.1 and 1.2). Actually, Andalusia is one of the Autonomous Communities with the worst labor market performance in Spain (table 1.2). However, the rate of female employment in Andalusia is much higher compared with those of the least developed Italian regions.

Also, from the 1990s the level of female employment has sensitively increased, at the same pace of female employment at the national level (table 1.2). The age cohorts (25-34) and (35-44) - potentially more interested in the development of childcare services – have one of the highest female employment rates in Andalusia (see figure 6.3, chapter 6). In sum, in Andalusia the combination of overall improvements of female employment as well as the higher employment rate among women the younger age cohorts might have increased childcare demand in the last two decades.

Table 1.1 – Female Employment (20-64) % Rates, National and Regional Trends, Italy, 2000-2014

	Female Employment (20-64)		
	2000	2014	Δ 2000-2014
Emilia-Romagna	n.a	63	-
Marche	n.a	58,9	-
Lazio	41	54,8	-
Lazio	41	54,8	13,8
Sardegna	30,2	42,9	12,7
Liguria	46,1	57,5	11,4
Lombardy	50,6	61,6	11
Tuscany	50,6	60,6	10
ITALY	42	50,3	8,3
Piedmont	51,3	59,6	8,3
Abruzzo	38,5	46,6	8,1
Veneto	50,8	58,4	7,6
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	51,5	58,8	7,3
Umbria	50,6	57,1	6,5
Basilicata	31,9	38	6,1
Calabria	25,7	31,3	5,6
Sicilia	24	29,6	5,6
Puglia	26,4	31,9	5,5
Valle d'Aosta	60	65,1	5,1
Campania	25,7	29,9	4,2
Molise	39,4	42	2,6

Source: Eurostat for data on female employment and the official websites of regional governments for data on the number of years of left-wing regional governments

Table 1.2 – Female Employment (20-64), % Rates and Number of Years of Left-Wing Government in Spain and Spanish Autonomous Communities, 2000-2015

	Female Employment (20-64)		
	2000	2014	Δ 2000-2014
Cantabria	38,1	57	18,9
Rioja	44,3	60,3	16
Basque Country	46,5	61,6	15,1
Castilla y León	41	55,5	14,5
Community of Madrid	48,2	62,6	14,4
Valenciana Community	48,2	62,6	14,4
Aragón	47,1	58,2	11,1
Navarra	52,1	63	10,9
Extremadura	34,2	44,9	10,7
SPAIN	44,4	54,8	10,4
Castilla-la Mancha	36,9	47,3	10,4
Andalusia	33,4	43,7	10,3
Galicia	47	56,4	9,4
Murcia	42,5	50,5	8
Catalonia	54,8	62,7	7,9

Source: Eurostat for data on female employment and the official websites of regional governments for data on the number of years of left-wing regional governments

Secondly, we selected two cases for each countries representative of the national trends – that are, expansion through greater public involvement in Spain vs. moderate expansion through increased private provision in Italy. As shown in table 1.3, the expansion of childcare in Tuscany and Piedmont corresponded to a sharp decline of public childcare provision. While the Autonomous Communities of Andalusia and La Rioja expanded consistently the total formal childcare supply as well as the public provision (table 1.4).

Table 1.3 – Total Formal Childcare Coverage % Rate, Public Childcare % Rate, 2000-2014 and Number Center Left Government, 2000-2015, Italian Regions

	Coverage Rate %			Public Childcare % Rate			Number of Years of Center Left Government (2000-15)
	2000	2014	Δ 2000-2014	2000	2014	Δ 2000-2014	
Sardegna	6,4	27,9	21,5	88,6	39,6	-49	5
Lazio	8,5	28,3	19,8	91	45,5	-45,5	7
Liguria	12,3	28,8	16,5	95,7	50,3	-45,5	10
Umbria	11,6	37,2	25,6	91,6	47,8	-43,8	15
Sicilia	4,7	9,9	5,2	100	57,5	-42,5	3
Lombardy	9,7	27,5	17,8	91,7	49,9	-41,8	0
Abruzzo	4,1	20,2	16,1	94,4	53,6	-40,8	4
Calabria	1,9	8,7	6,8	57,4	16,9	-40,5	6
Tuscany	11,3	32,7	21,4	94,2	54,6	-39,6	15
Piedmont	10,7	25,4	14,7	89,8	52	-37,8	7
Veneto	7,2	25,5	18,3	78,7	40,9	-37,8	0
ITALY	7,4	22,4	15	88,3	50,8	-37,5	4
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	9,7	26,4	16,7	77,8	42,8	-35	7
Aosta Valley	12,3	39,9	27,6	100	71	-29	15
Emilia-Romagna	18,3	35,2	16,9	98,3	73,3	-25	15
Molise	2,1	21,2	19,1	87	62,1	-24,9	3
Puglia	2,7	12,6	9,9	65	42,1	-22,9	10
Basilicata	5,2	14,3	9,1	84,6	68,2	-16,4	15
Campania	2,2	6,4	4,2	44,31	35,4	-8,91	10
Marche	11,5	26,5	15	83,9	77	-6,9	15

Source: IDI (2002), Istat (2017)

Table 1.4 – Total Formal Childcare Coverage % Rate, Public Childcare % Rate, 2000-2014 and Number Center Left Government, 2000-2015, Spanish Autonomous Communities

	Coverage Rate %			Public Childcare % Rate			Number of Years of Center Left Government (2000-15)
	2000	2014	Δ 2000-2014	2000	2014	Δ 2000-2014	
Extremadura	1	29,5	29,5	1,03	80,7	79,67	11
Cantabria	2	26,5	24,5	10,7	79	68,3	8
Aragón	3	33,1	30,1	0	55,3	55,3	10
La Rioja	2,7	33,8	31,1	0	55	55	0
Castilla-la Mancha	2	31,8	29,8	32,7	64,9	32,2	11
Andalusia	1,1	37,9	36,8	8,3	39,5	31,2	15
Castilla y León	3	20,6	17,6	33,2	63,1	29,9	0
Cataluña	27	35,9	8,9	35,1	62,9	27,8	7
Valenciana Community	5	29,1	24,1	35	40	5	0,5
Galicia	13	41,4	28,4	55,6	54,4	-1,2	4
Murcia	8	17,5	9,5	63	51,8	-11,2	0
Community of Madrid	17	43,7	26,7	57,6	45,1	-12,5	0
Basque Country	22	52,3	30,3	66,4	53,2	-13,2	0
Navarra	22	24,1	2,1	100	84,1	-15,9	0,5

Source: MECD (2001, 2015)

Finally, since we aim at controlling the effect of party government on childcare expansion, a third criterion for case selection takes into account partisan variables at the regional level. More precisely, we are interested in regional cases that reproduced the peculiarities of national party systems. For this reasons, we excluded regional cases characterized by strong regional cleavages – such as the Basque Country, Catalonia, Navarra, Trentino Alto-Adige and Aosta Valley – where regionalist parties shape political competition. In the four regional cases selected, the two main parties – or coalitions – between 2000 and 2014 are the same in the national and regional party systems.

The new parties recently emerged at the national level such as Five Star Movements, Podemos and Ciudadanos appeared only in the last regional elections. However, beyond Five Star Movement in Piedmont in 2014, they all obtained less than 20% of consensus. As shown in the last column of tables 1.3 and 1.4, Tuscany and Andalusia share the partisan tradition of regional governments. Tuscany is one of the Italian regions that constitute the so-called *red belt* in which left parties have traditionally

ruled. The Spanish Socialist Party has uninterruptedly ruled the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, since its introduction. The Autonomous Community of La Rioja, instead, is a stronghold of the Spanish right wing. While Piedmont, between 2000 and 2014, has been characterized by the alternation of centre-right (2000-2005 and 2010-2014) and centre-left (2005-2010- 2014 to date) coalition party governments.

We excluded from case selection regions such as Lombardy and Veneto, although in both cases childcare has expanded through increased private provision as the Italian national trends. However, we reckon the cases of Lombardy and Veneto, traditionally governed by right-wing parties, as less puzzling with respect to Tuscany and Piedmont. In fact, differently from Lombardy and Veneto, the former has been traditionally governed by left-wing parties that, according to the literature (chapter 3), are expected to be less inclined to privatize social services. As a result, it is more puzzling to investigate a case as Tuscany in which, contrary to the expectations, the increase of private involvement in childcare provision was promoted by left-wing governments. Also, in the last two decades Lombardy and Veneto - differently from Piedmont - have expanded childcare above the national average. It is puzzling that Piedmont that shares similar functional pressures with Lombardy and Veneto has expanded childcare only to a smaller extent, and at the same pace of the national average. Moreover, it will be interesting to test hypothesis on the role played by left and right wing parties in childcare reform in a context of party government alternation as occurred in Piedmont in the last two decades.

The research will be conducted through a qualitative process tracing method, within case analyses will be integrated with systematic cross-case comparisons. Since we are interested in the evolutionary trajectory, placed in a specific historical context, process tracing appears more suited to identify the sequence of events and the causal chains that links possible causes and observed outcomes (Trampusch and Palier 2016). As a result, process tracing seems the most appropriate methodological choice to test whether our expectations hold for explaining childcare policy trajectory in the four regional cases.

Qualitative evidence is drawn from various sources: legislative documents,

parliamentary archives, electoral programs of political parties, programmatic documents of stakeholder organizations and 40 semi-structured interviews with key experts, bureaucrats, parties and trade unions representatives. By triangulating regional data on childcare provision with policy legislation, document analysis and semi-structured interviews we are interested in finding whether, how and why regional governments have pursued childcare expansion.

The methodological choice is connected with our theoretical objective. So far the scholarships on childcare reform have been characterized by quantitative studies that associate explanatory variables with childcare expansion, operationalized as increase in public spending or enrolment rates. By applying a qualitative method that looks at childcare regulation and the processes leading to reform adoption we reach a twofold aim. Firstly, we have more chances to explain what happens in cases that, in a quantitative study, may appear as deviant. Secondly, we are able to go beyond mere associations between dependent and independent variables by explaining how and why regional governments have followed a peculiar policy path.

Assuming that the thesis will succeed in defining causal mechanisms that lead to a peculiar childcare policy trajectory, it remains problematic to generalize results to other cases. Indeed, the major limit of process tracing is external validity. Whereas process tracing maximizes the internal validity of causal inferences, it does not generate any external validity per se. Therefore, we are conscious that further research is needed to control for the relevance of generalizations.

4. The Work in a Nutshell

The thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 introduces key concepts that are useful to understand childcare policy and its reforms. More precisely, it provides an overall description of the key features of childcare policy as well as a comparative perspective of childcare variation across welfare state regimes. Also, chapter 2 describes what are the different models of childcare delivery and how social investment perspective shapes childcare policy. Finally, chapter 2, after describing the division of childcare competences in a decentralized policy setting, provides an analytical framework of the

potential childcare expansionary patterns pursued by regional governments. Chapter 3 provides a review of the main strands of comparative welfare state literature that developed a theoretical explanation for childcare policy change. More precisely, chapter 3 after putting into question the explanatory power of some of the main theoretical strands highlights what are the key factors that shape the “new” politics of childcare. Chapter 4 presents the historical analysis of childcare and family policy in Italy and Spain in order to understand the policy evolution and the related challenges and trends in both countries. The central part of the thesis consists on the empirical analysis of regional childcare trajectories in Italy and Spain. Chapter 5 focuses on childcare trajectories in the selected Italian regions (Tuscany and Piedmont), whereas chapter 6 is based on childcare in the Autonomous Communities of Andalusia and Rioja. Both empirical chapters are complemented with key background data and information on socio-economic context and regional party systems. Finally, chapter 7 presents the main findings in a comparative perspective and discusses the implications for welfare state research. The thesis then concludes discussing the theoretical and empirical potentials for a future research agenda.

Chapter 2 – Childcare and the Welfare State Transformations: New Social Risks, New Policies and Governance Dynamics

1. Introduction

The relevance of childcare in the welfare policy agenda emerged with the shift-towards a post industrial society that brought about a series of profound socio-economic transformations such as: low economic growth, high unemployment rates, declining fertility, increasing ageing populations, and increasing female employment. Particularly, the massive female employment and emancipation transformed family structures from a male breadwinner to a dual earner model. In a context of male breadwinner model, care and assistance for children or frail elderly within the family were performed by the unpaid work of the housewife. The increasing female employment and the related shift towards a dual earner model required the development of policies aimed at promoted care outside the family. In turn, from the 1970s, western welfare states with different time and ways started to respond to the higher childcare demand. Childcare is only the main pillar of a wider array of family policy that includes also leave, monetary benefit and flexible working aimed at balancing work and family life.

The need to reconcile work and family is not the only aim of childcare policy. Childcare development has been advocate also by the proponents of a social investment agenda (Hemerijck 2013; Morel et. al 2011). The latter refer to policies that aim to help disadvantage people, by improving their life chances, to enter and succeed in education and in the labour market. The emphasis is placed on supply-side policies, such as increasing the childcare supply, that maximise the chances of disadvantaged children of succeeding in primary and secondary education in turn affecting their future labour market performances (Esping-Andersen 2002; Ferrera 2010). Against this backdrop, social investment advocates promote the development of high quality socio educational services that goes beyond mere assistance and care and target the inclusion of disadvantaged children.

The extent to which childcare reformers pursue a social investment agenda will depend upon the extent of childcare expansion and its istitutional design. Indeed,

childcare performed outside the family contexts can be delivered by state, market or by a complex interaction of both. As we will see later in this chapter, the way in which public administration structures and regulates childcare delivery have relevant implications for the achievement of broad aims such as work-life balance and social investment. Since in a decentralized policy setting, the regional level of government held key competences on childcare funding and regulation, the policy preferences and decisions of regional government will be determinant to shape the childcare expansionary trajectories as we will see throughout this chapter.

This chapter will present more in details each of the issues just mentioned and it is organized as follows. Paragraph 2 will focus on the emergence of new social risks and needs that were a pre-condition for childcare policy development. Then, paragraph 3 will outline the role of childcare policy within the broader set of family policy. Paragraphs 4,5,6 will be focused on the three analytical dimensions of the thesis by outlining respectively the childcare expansion across modern welfare states, the models of childcare delivery and the implications of a social investment agenda for childcare. Paragraph 7 will describe the decentralization process of childcare. More precisely, in paragraph 7 we will see why regions are a key institutional actor for childcare policy change in a multi-tiered welfare state. Also, paragraph 7 will analytically frame which are the potential patterns of childcare expansion that may be pursued by regional governments.

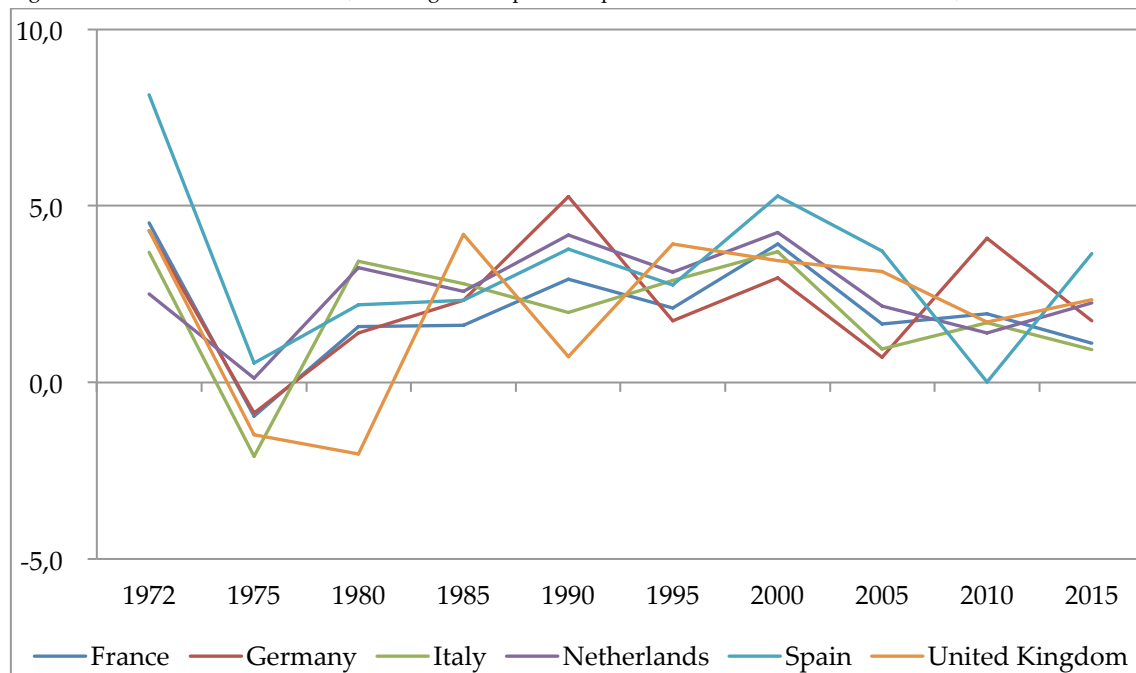
2. The Emergence of New Social Risks and Needs

The Welfare States of the Golden Age (1945-1975) provided extensive coverage for risks (interruption of income due to retirement, unemployment, sickness or disability) and needs (health care or education) that individuals could not adequately meet through the market or the family. The development of Welfare State during the Golden Age was characterized by highly favourable socio-economic circumstances. A high and continuous economic growth - mainly driven by a large and stable manufacturing sector - combined with neo-Keynesian macroeconomic policies, provided full employment and favourable wages for the male breadwinner. Against this backdrop, a nuclear family structure, divided between male breadwinner and female in charge of

care for frail elderly and young children, emerged. In a nutshell, social care used to be provided by the female unpaid work within the family, while social care services outside the family were weakly developed in most of the welfare states.

After the oil-crisis (1973), a welfare state shaped by an economic paradigm able to pursue full employment and protection from market distortions, started to show some cracks (Hemerijck 2013). The economic growth rate began to fall (figure 2.1) and unemployment rates increased (figure 2.2). The technological progress - that has driven the shift towards a post-Fordist society - lowered the employment rate of unskilled workers as well as required the development of new skills for the growing service economy (Hemerick 2013). Despite the overall employment decline, women by the mid-1970s – emancipated from their traditional care duties within the family - experienced a massive labor market entry (figure 2.3). Also, the average age of life expectancy has considerably increased since the 1970s (figure 2.4).

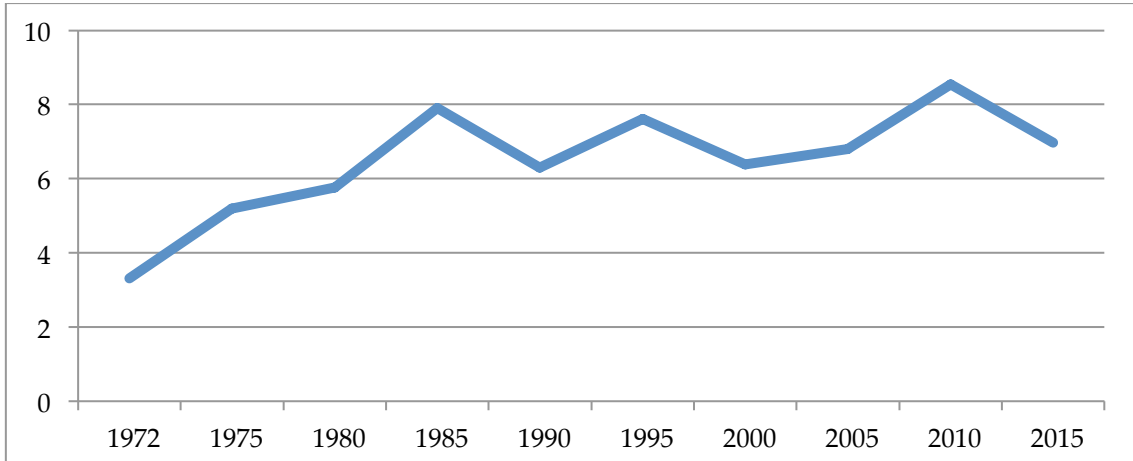
Figure 2.1 – Real GDP Growth Rate, % changes over previous period in some selected EU Countries, 1972-2015



Source: OECD

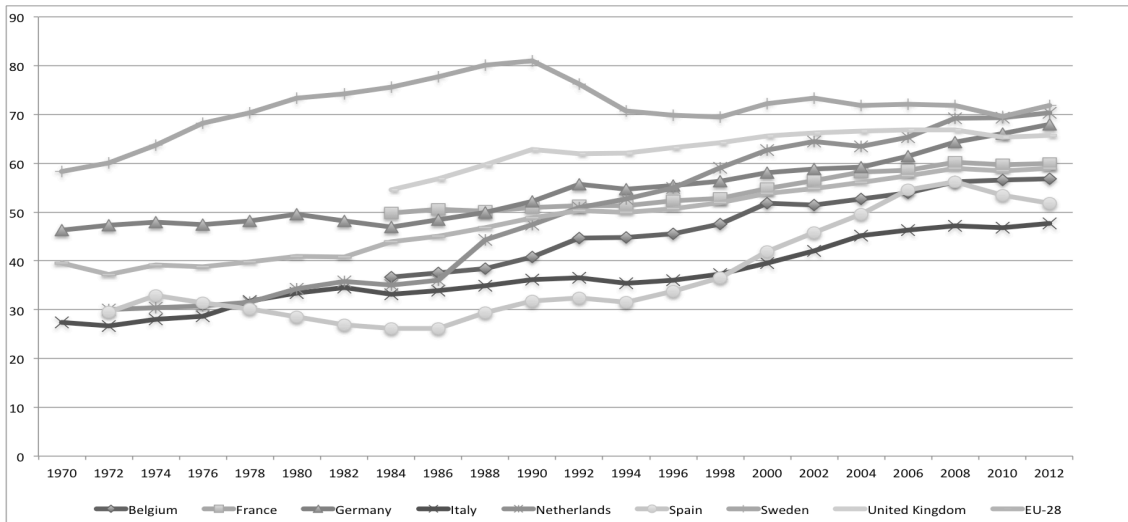
The growth of life expectancy combined with a widespread decline of fertility rates (table 2.1) points out how the western societies started to be increasingly shaped by ageing population and low birth rate. Overall, the combination of the socio-economic and structural changes has led to the emergence of new social risks: *“situations in which*

Figure 2.2 – Unemployment % Rate, OECD Countries average, 1972-2014



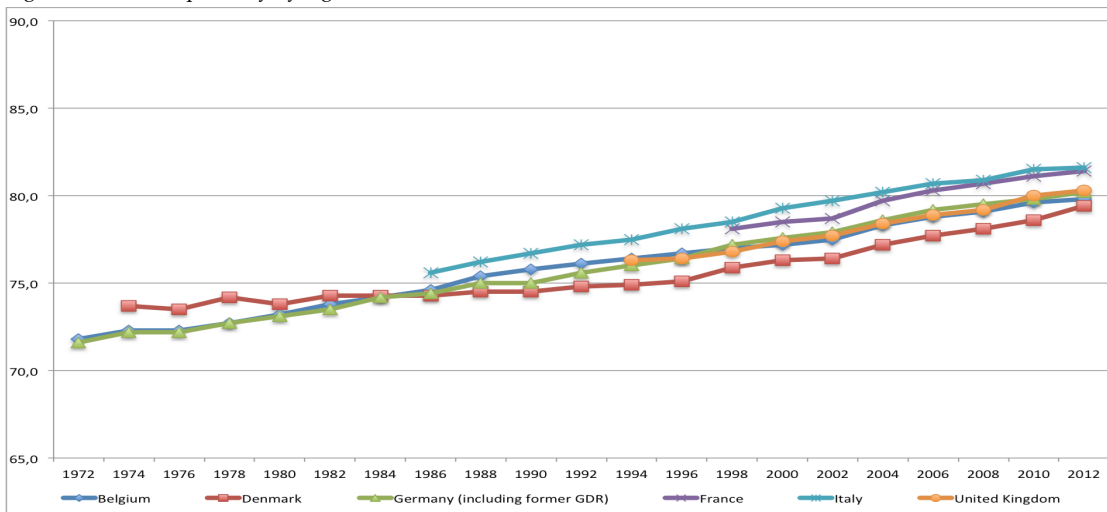
Source: OECD

Figure 2.3 – Women (15-64) Employment Rates, % values, 1970-2012, EU-28 and some EU countries



Source: Eurostat

Figure 2.4 – Life Expectancy by Age, EU 28 and Some Selected Countries, 1972-2012



Source: Eurostat

individuals experience welfare losses and which have arisen as a result of the socio-economic transformations” (Bonoli, 2007:498).

Table 2.1 - Fertility Rates in EU-28 and some selected EU countries, 1960-2015

	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Denmark	1,95	1,55	1,67	1,8	1,77	1,8	1,87	1,71
Germany	2,03	1,44	1,45	1,25	1,38	1,34	1,39	1,5
France	2,55	1,85	1,77	1,74	1,89	1,94	2,03	1,96
Italy	2,38	1,64	1,33	1,19	1,26	1,34	1,46	1,35
Netherlands	2,57	1,6	1,62	1,53	1,72	1,71	1,79	1,66
Spain	2,84	2,22	1,36	1,16	1,22	1,33	1,37	1,33
Sweden	1,92	1,68	2,13	1,73	1,54	1,77	1,98	1,85

Source: World Bank Database

For instance, the persisting and growing unemployment combined with the increased technological progress led to new social risks and needs over the individual’s life course. Due to the increased technological progress, individuals with low or obsolete might be confined to low quality and low paid jobs, in turn highly increasing the risk of their welfare losses. As a result, the risk to incur in long-term unemployment and the need of upgrading job skills to (re-) entry the labor market have called for a greater demand of both passive unemployment benefit and active labor market policy (ALMP), such as job training and counseling (Bonoli 2013).

Women, in a context of higher employment and education rate, face new opportunities and powerful trade-offs. On the one hand, the engagement in labor market makes women more emancipated from their traditional role. On the other hand, when care outside the family is low or absent, mothers of very young children find hard to conciliate family with employment. This risk is further exacerbated in the case of single parenthoods that, due to change in family structures and behaviors, are constantly increasing. In sum, if the sharp increase of female employment is not adequately supported by the development of social care services provided outside the family, the female emancipation risks to be an “incomplete revolution” (Esping-Andersen 2009).

All the aforementioned socio-economic trends and the related new social risks and needs are caused by different factors that are often external to welfare state, such as economic globalization or the increased technological process; however, such external factors place new internal challenges for post-war welfare states. Firstly, a declined

economic growth means in turn less financial resources for an already mature welfare state, which, being more focused on the preservation of income for core and stable workers, needed further expansion to protect individual from new social risks. Against this backdrop, proposals of welfare state reform were divided between retrenchment and recalibration. The former implies cuts on social programs for public budget reduction aims; the recalibration emphasizes the protection shift from old to new social risk and needs (Ferrera and Rhodes 2000, Esping-Andersen 2002). The extent to which welfare state adapted and responded to new challenges brought by the shift towards a post-industrial society has varied across and within welfare regimes (Taylor-Gooby 2004; Armingeon and Bonoli 2006; Bonoli and Natali 2012).

Finally, the emerged new social risks and needs brought by the combination of increased female employment and life expectancy as well as declined fertility rates has required the development of childcare and family policy in order to externalize care functions traditionally performed by unemployed women within the family. To this regard, next paragraph will outline the set of childcare and family policy developed by modern welfare states.

3. Childcare and Family Policy

In the light of the increasing female employment and decreasing fertility rates the development of childcare is part of a broader set of welfare policies that have been reoriented towards a new social need: reconciling work and family life. As highlighted by Lewis (2009), the policies to balance work and family life regulated, financed and provided by the state encompass at least three dimensions. Firstly, *time*: the regulation of working time and the provision of time to take care within the family; second, *money*: cash to buy formal care, replacement income when parents are on leave or expenditure on services; third, *services*: for childcare outside the family, directly provided by public or private (either no or for profit) companies. Basically, four types of policy instruments correspond to the above dimensions: leave, part-time working monetary transfers and childcare services.

Leave allows taking time off from work in order to take care of children at home. The *maternity leave* is the most common measure of this type. It is provided to mothers for a defined period before and after childbirth. The length of leave period and the replacement income differs across countries, even though maternity leave is usually paid between 80 and 100% of previous working wage. Recently under the stimulus of the EU directive 2010/18, EU countries introduced a *parental leave* to be used even after the maternity leave. Parental leave regulation highly varies across EU countries (Moss 2013). In some case, the couple has parental leave entitlements and they can decide how to split it. In some other cases, parental leave entitlement is individual or mixed. Finally, in EU countries the length of parental leave varies from 6 months to three years, while replacement income ranges from 100% to 30 % of working wage (Sabatinelli 2017). Paternity leaves also exist although it is less widespread as well as less convenient to take up, as it is often linked with a very low replacement income (Moss 2013). A low replacement income does not incentivize paternity leave take-up, thus weakening the division of family duties within the couples.

Part-time contracts and flexibility of working time allow spending more time for family care. Nevertheless, even though part-time working strengthens work-life balance opportunities it is often associated with fragmented employment patterns and low wages.

Monetary transfers are generally aimed at integrating household income reducing income losses and the potential risk of poverty associated with having children. Such financial support can be provided through direct monetary transfers or tax breaks and it has different coverage and generosity in the EU countries. Other financial transfers may be specifically conditioned to childcare expenses in order to bear the care needs of the families. As we will see below, public governments provide *cash for care* to support childcare demand.

Childcare services are a pillar of the policies aimed at promoting the balance between work and family life. Differently from leave or part-time working, childcare services affect less the working wage losses and the employment path. In other words, childcare appears overall more effective – among family policies - to combine paid employment with family duties. Indeed, once children are enrolled in compulsory

school, parents are unburdened by care responsibilities at least for a decent amount of time during the working day. The entry age of children in compulsory school is on average 6 years old, with countries variation between 5 and 7 years old. In turn, in pre-compulsory school years conciliation needs for parents are more stringent. The services for children during pre-school compulsory years are widely defined by international organizations – mainly the EU and the OECD - as Early Child Education and Care (ECEC) services. They can be organized either in a unique cycle of services for children aged from three months to the compulsory school age threshold or split in two different cycles according to different age (European Commission 2014). In the split system, the two cycles are divided between services for children aged 0-3 years old and pre-school arrangements from 3 years old to the beginning of the compulsory school. Childcare provision for children aged 0-3 years old can be *formal*, when it is supplied by either public or private centres, as well as *informal*, when it is provided by family members – often grandparents - or child-minders. While pre-school, is often universal, the coverage of formal childcare for children aged 0-3 years old may vary considerably across countries (see next paragraph). Moreover, while both cycles widely aim at helping parents to reconcile work and family life they also have different objectives, logics and organization. In almost every institutional context the second-cycle is highly funded by public, similarly to the compulsory school. As a consequence public pre-school provision is highly widespread and free of charge for parents. Also, staffs working conditions in pre-school arrangements are almost equivalent to the standards of teachers working in primary schools. Pre-school education was developed between the end of 1800s and the beginning of 1900, as a result of the pedagogical debate around two approaches in pre-school educational curriculum: readiness for school and socio-pedagogical (Bahle 2009). The former conceives pre-school provision as an opportunity to endow children with the cognitive skills background useful to be equipped for the first stage of compulsory school (Bennet 2005). A socio-pedagogical curriculum instead emphasizes the overall children well-being by paying attention also to their social and emotional development (Bennet 2005). Nowadays, the ways in which the two approaches shape the pre-school educational curriculum differ across countries (Jensen 2009).

The first ECEC cycle lies on the borderline between education and care. The first ECEC cycle, emerged as care services, gradually assumed an educational character as well. However, the institutional features of the first cycle differ from those of pre-school provision. Beyond Nordic countries where universal childcare supply is highly developed, in the majority of countries the supply – either public or private – of the first ECEC cycle is characterized by selective access criteria. Indeed, in the institutional contexts in which the demand for childcare (0-3) is much higher than the supply, formal childcare use is filtered by a series of criteria. The access criteria take into account parents' occupational status, household configuration, socio-economic differences, children social condition such as disability or sickness. The childcare access criteria might affect children participation rates. Adopting criteria that prioritizes childcare entry according to household income, might allow the social inclusion of disadvantaged children. However, when childcare supply is lower than demand, a definition of access criteria too much focused on household situation might exclude middle-income families, in turn emphasizing a risk of segregation. By contrast, if income is not considered as access priority, low-income families found it difficult to opt for more expensive market solutions, which instead are more affordable for middle/higher-income families. Also, a priority of childcare entry given to children with both employed parents would undermine the childcare access for children whose parents are involved in study programs, job training or merely in job searching. As a consequence, the potential of childcare facilities for activating unemployed parents would be weakened. Finally, a childcare access based on a *first come first served* would favour only families with better informative resources. Therefore, a mix of criteria to establish access priority becomes necessary when the childcare demand overcome supply. In turn, the higher is childcare supply, the less the access criteria may influence the participation rate. The latter might be further undermined by the extent to which parents are required to pay high fees for a childcare service (0-3). In fact, while free education is ensured for children enrolled in public pre-school arrangements, parents of children younger than 3 years old pay childcare fees not only when opting for private solutions but also to access in publicly provided services. More precisely, families looking for externalised childcare (0-3), may choose between formal services

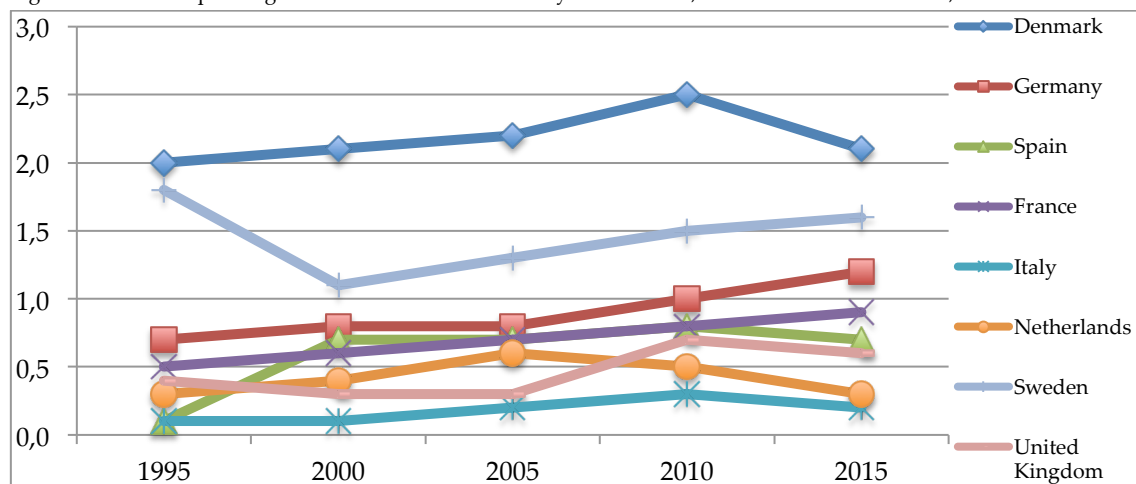
provided by private sector and those provided or subsidized by public governments. In both case, parents contribute to childcare costs by paying a childcare fee for access. Childcare fees for either public or private services might be partly subsidized by governments in different ways. Firstly, government subsidies are often devolved to low-income families. The latter may purchase childcare service at a discounted – and in some cases exempted – price. The extent of fees discount and exemption is regulated by public administrations and varies across institutional context. Secondly, public government may support childcare demand by providing monetary support – in the form of voucher or tax breaks - directly to the families. Such demand subsidies – defined as *cash for care* – is often conditioned to the payment of childcare fees. Once families receives a voucher to be spent on care facilities they can choose a service – either public or private – that better match their conciliation needs in terms of opening hours and/or the level of quality they prefer. When cash for care is not conditioned to pay fees of formal childcare service it may be used to integrate the lack of job earnings due to the time devolved for childcare within the family. In this case parents chooses according to their normative considerations whether is better for their children to receive formal or informal care (Ellingsaeter 2012). In a nutshell, either cash for care is conditioned to purchase childcare services or not, demand subsidies are aimed at increasing parental choice. Other more sophisticated forms of subsidized childcare may entail that public administration purchases childcare places by private providers for diminishing the increasing weight of waiting lists for public childcare. In this case families pay the childcare fee at the same price they would have paid a place in public childcare, while public administration pays the fees difference between priced paid by the families and the childcare fee of private services. As we will see in paragraph 4.2 of this chapter, this is one of the strategies pursued by public administration to expand childcare supply.

So far we have described the articulation of childcare and family policy that may be developed and implemented trough different policy instruments. The different use of these policy instruments increases cross-national differences on childcare policy outcome. Next paragraph will present the cross-national variations in terms of spending, coverage and care models.

4. Childcare Expansion Across Western Welfare States

In order to compare different childcare outcomes we look at childcare coverage data and spending across Western welfare states. Figure 2.5 shows that the Nordic countries (Denmark and Sweden) had already high spending in 1995. In Sweden a decreasing trend occurred between 1995 and 2000, even though the level of spending remained quite high in a comparative perspective. In Germany, the share of public spending devolved to in-kind benefits for families was quite constant between 1995 and 2005 around the 0,7 % of GDP. This share, in Germany, started to increase from 2005 and in 2015 was above 1% of GDP. In France the level of public spending for family services has steadily increased from 1995 to 2015. In the Netherlands the level of spending for childcare services was quite low in 1995. Then, after a steady increase between 2000 and 2005 the level of public spending for childcare in the Netherlands came back to the level of 1995. Surprisingly, in UK – after a slightly decrease between 1995 and 2005 –the level of public spending on family services reached the French rate in 2010 and slightly decreased in 2015. The level of public spending on family services in Spain was the same of Italy in 1995 and then started to increase. In 2015, Spain spends 0.8% of the GDP for family services, a higher share than the Italian one (0.1%).

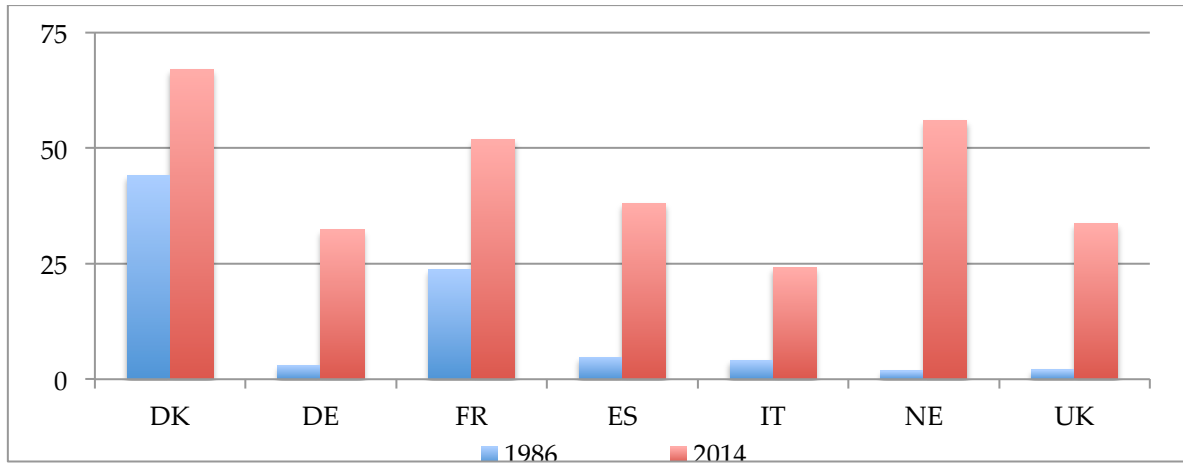
Figure 2.5 - Public Spending on in Kind-Benefits for Family as % of GDP, in some selected countries, 1980-2013



Source: Eurostat

By looking at the coverage rate of childcare services between 1986 and 2014 (figure 2.6) we can see how in the past three decades the availability of childcare places has increased almost everywhere, even though with different intensity.

Figure 2.6 - Coverage Rates of Childcare (0-3) in Some Selected EU Countries, 1986 and 2014



Source: for 1986 (Phillips and Moss 1989); for 2014 OECD Family Database

Childcare coverage rates in the Nordic countries and France were already high during the 1980s. It is more striking the trend of Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and UK. They had more or less the same childcare coverage rate in 1986. Then, the coverage rate has considerably increased in the Netherlands, UK and Spain, while only weakly in Italy. In 2014, childcare coverage in the Netherlands was slightly above the rate of a country with long and well-developed childcare tradition such as France. UK and Spain, in 2014 reached a childcare coverage rate above 35%. On the other hand, Italian childcare coverage rate lag behind, below 25%.

The different outcomes in public spending and coverage rates across countries signal a differentiated childcare development. Against this backdrop, social policy scholars have been long involved in classification exercises, either for the overall welfare state arrangements or by focusing only on care services. As for the former, the pioneering and influential work of Esping-Andersen (1990) has identified a three model typology of welfare regimes– social democratic, conservative and liberal – based on the analysis of *decommodification* and *destratification*. It should be underlined that this typology was, at least at the beginning, based on a study concerning the protection of workers from the risk of participating in the labor market and only later included the dimension of de-familisation and the issue of care (Esping-Andersen 1999).

During the Nineties the debate on childcare and family policy had in fact often highlighted the insufficiency of the Esping-Andersen (1990)'s typology. As a result, a bunch of studies started to classify welfare states in relation to care and family policy.

Anttonen and Sipila (1996), Bahle and Pfenning (2000), Bettio and Plantenga (2004) - have proposed a typology of European welfare states focused on the extent of social services (in particular care services for children and the elderly) developments in order to better understand prevailing mode of interaction between the different spheres (family, State, market, third sector) that provide care. The care models that came out from the classificatory exercises performed by the three studies mentioned above are somehow overlapping. A first cluster includes the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway, Sweden) where public governments strongly promote a high degree of formal childcare support. On the contrary, in the cluster including the Anglo-Saxon countries (Ireland, UK), childcare is largely provided by the private sector. The cost for these services is shared among families, companies and the state through an articulated system of vouchers. This type of measures have contributed to the increase in the childcare coverage rate in a Continental country, such as the Netherlands, which, in the last two decades have adopted similar reforms to those of the Anglo-Saxon countries (Bettio and Plantenga 2004). A third cluster comprehends the Southern European countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain) countries characterized by “passive” subsidiarity: the care function provided by families is not adequately supported by public intervention (Ranci and Sabatinelli 2013). This “unsupported familism” (Saraceno 1994) or “familism by default” (Saraceno 2010) implies a scarce development of childcare services. Contrary to the Southern European countries, the Continental countries share an approach towards “active” subsidiarity. The care functions are demanded to the families, which are adequately supported with generous monetary transfers from the public government. Within the Continental cluster we can distinguish two sub-groups: 1) the Francophone countries (Belgium and France), which have a strong legacy towards public childcare and 2) Austria and Germany. In the latter, the public provision of childcare is traditionally low and largely demanded to the third sector. However, recently Germany has fostered an ambitious plan of childcare reform, stating also the subjective right to childcare access for children aged 1-3 years old (Oliver and Matzke 2014). Beyond Germany also other EU countries adopted relevant childcare reforms in the last two decades (Bonoli 2013, Lewis 2009). Any reform towards childcare expansion might promote different engagement of

public and private providers for the delivery of childcare services. Indeed, childcare services are usually run by either public or private providers or by a mix of both. Next section will outline how the delivery of externalised childcare delivery works.

5. Four Models of Childcare Delivery

The childcare services that allow the externalisation of family care are provided by either public or private sector (table 2.2).

Table 2.2 - Four Models of Childcare Delivery

Childcare services held by public sector	<i>Pure Public (directly managed)</i>	Public sector holds and manages childcare services with public dependent workers. The public sector establishes fees price, access criteria and quality requirements.
	<i>Outsourced (indirectly managed)</i>	Public sector holds childcare centres but outsources the management (childcare staff) to private providers. Childcare staffs are private dependent workers. The public sector establishes fees price, access criteria and quality requirements.
Childcare services held by private sector	<i>Accreditation</i>	Pure private providers are accredited with public sector if they comply with specific quality requirements – and sometimes also with prices - established by public administration. The public administration purchases accredited childcare places, making them available for beneficiaries at a lower price than pure private provision.
	<i>Pure Private (eventually subsidized)</i>	Private providers hold the childcare centres and its management. Childcare staffs are private dependent workers. Public sector establishes fees price, access criteria but they may (or may not) be constrained by public administration to meet specific quality requirements. Public administration may indirectly subsidized pure private childcare supply it with demand subsidies for the users.

Source: author's elaboration

Childcare services held by public sector can be directly or indirectly managed. In the childcare services directly managed (*pure public*) the public administration is in charge of financing the building of its own childcare centres (supply side measures), which are then managed by childcare staffs hired and paid by the public sector. In a *pure public provision* the staff has the same working conditions of a public dependent. Moreover,

public administration establishes prices, access criteria and quality requirements of childcare services.

Childcare services held by public sector can be indirectly managed by private providers through *outsourcing* procedure. In this case, the public sector holds the childcare centres, establishes fees price, access criteria and quality requirements but the staffs needed to run a childcare services is provided by private for profit or no-profit companies. This means that public administration invests on the creation of new childcare centres but not on its staff, which is private.

Childcare services held by private providers can be pure private provision eventually supported with demand subsidies or accredited with the public sector. In a *pure private* (but eventually subsidized) setting, private providers hold and finance the building of their own childcare services. Childcare staffs are private dependent workers. Thus, in this case private providers are in charge of the costs for childcare expansion and management, including staff costs. Pure private providers establish their own childcare fees as well as access criteria, with the only constraint to meet basic health and infrastructural requirements before being authorized by public administration to run a childcare service. Also, a pure private childcare provision may (or may not) be indirectly supported and incentivized by public administration with vouchers (demand side measures) addressed to the families in order to pay (partially or totally) the childcare fees of the private childcare market. Pure private providers can also be accredited with the private sector. In this case public administration purchases childcare places within pure private services, making them available to families at a lower price than they would have paid for pure private childcare provision. In the accredited provision the ownership and management of childcare services are the same of a pure private provision. However, accredited private providers, differently from pure private providers, have to meet specific requirements in terms of quality (staff/child ratio; staff qualification and training; educational curriculum) established by public administration through contracts with private providers.

The implications of public-private mix are not trivial. The way in which public administration regulates this public-private mix influences the distribution of winners and losers among public administration, families, and producers (Alber 1995, Gingrich

2011). For instance, public administration and families may gain if accredited private providers have to contain price until a certain threshold as well as if they have to comply with the same (strict) requirements of a public childcare service. In this case, public administration achieves the expansion of childcare supply at contained costs, while the families are less affected by the higher costs of pure private services.

By contrast, if quality requirements for accreditation are not well specified or weak and private providers are free to decide the fees' price, private providers are about to gain from accreditation as whatever price they choose they receive public financing anyway. The public administration, instead, loses as it pays high fees for accredited services, and the families may be not satisfied in terms of quality needs. Also, the pure private model can have different implications depending on whether and how it is publicly subsidized with demand subsidies. The latter tend to increase considerably the number of available childcare places (Penn 2014). However childcare services provided by for-profit companies are often settled in well-off neighbourhoods with high demand and purchasing power, in order to maximize company's returns (Noailly and Visser 2009; Akgunduz and Plantenga 2014). In fact, subsidizing parents does not necessarily influence the spatial availability and the quality of service provision, unless a mixed strategy of regulation, supply-side and demand side subsidies is adopted. From his quantitative analysis Van Lancker (2018:287) concluded *"a market strategy combining demand-side subsidies with private provision might work to increase childcare participation for children across the income distribution, at least in the short term."*

However, in a model different from pure public, staffs personal are all private workers. The salary and working conditions of private workers are often worst than in the public sector. Therefore, if private workers are let free to employ low-qualified personal a decreasing in quality service occurs. Public administration - when defines contracts for *outsourcing* or *accreditation* - can constrain private choices on staff personal by binding private providers to comply with specific staff qualification and staff-child ratio. The extent to which public administration regulates these issues affects the level of quality service.

Finally, by regulating the ways in which childcare is delivered and provided public administration can contribute to achieve high quality service and affordability, two

essential dimensions for the proponents of a social investment paradigm for childcare. The contributions of the social investment paradigm for childcare development will be the focus of the next section.

6. Childcare Policy and the Social Investment Paradigm

The emphasis on the beneficial effect of childcare provision in removing obstacles to maternal employment is also at the centre of the social investment perspective. However, the notion of social investment more broadly refer to policies that aim to help disadvantaged people, by improving their life chances to succeed in education and the labour market. The emphasis is placed on supply-side policies, such as the increase of childcare supply, that maximise the chances of disadvantaged children of succeeding in primary and secondary education in turn affecting future labour market performances (Esping-Andersen 2002; Ferrera 2010).

In other words, social investment perspective while recognizes the importance of childcare for female employment and work-life balance, emphasizes also the educational aspects of childcare and the potential of the latter to break the cycle of disadvantaged for children raised in low income families. A childcare social investment agenda has been promoted also by the EU Commission and the OECD. Both organizations have long promoted childcare expansion for its beneficial effect on female employment and work-life balance (Eurofound 2015). Recently, they also acknowledged the necessity to focus on quality and accessibility of childcare services in order to reach social investment goals (OECD 2012; OECD 2015).

However, a childcare expansionary reform that is said to be inspired by a social investment agenda has to be linked with childcare affordability for lower income families. The latter, otherwise, find their access to childcare programs highly jeopardized. Indeed, childcare services are often characterized by Matthew effects, that tend to favor the access to services for middle-upper class at the expense of lower income families, as shown by the higher childcare participation rate among middle or high income families (Van Lancker and Ghysels 2012). The access to formal childcare

may be constrained by its availability, affordability or even by family cultural preferences in favor of home care. From the empirical research, such social bias appears more related to childcare affordability – the charged fees and progressivity of fees structure – rather than childcare availability or cultural preferences (Arbrassart and Bonoli 2015; Pavolini and Van Lancker 2018). As a consequence, if childcare public spending - and the overall policy setting - tend to favor middle-high income groups at expense of lower income families a social investment strategy fail to deliver its main promise (Bonoli et. al 2017).

Also, since the social investment agenda for childcare emphasizes the importance of children socio-educational development, a focus on the quality of childcare services is key to deliver socio-educational childcare services. Generally, quality considerations pertain to the relationship between staff and children and the broad educational objectives. More precisely, the number of children cared by one caregiver (i.e. staff-child ratio), the high staff qualification and training, and the design of the educational curriculum are factors contributing to good quality of ECEC services. We are well conscious that these aspects are not the only ones that concur to shape the overall quality of childcare services. However, staff qualifications and staff-child ratio are often taken into account as a standard reference by the research community to evaluate childcare quality. Research has shown how the interactions between professional staff and children works better with small classes, a low child-to-staff ratio and higher staff professional qualification (Eurofound 2015).

In sum, childcare reforms aimed at effectively delivering a social investment agenda should address two policy aspects: access and quality. As said above, high childcare fees highly undermined childcare access of low-income families. As a consequence, the promoters of childcare reforms should focus on discount fees or other mechanisms that control the prices of childcare fees favouring the acces for low-income families.

In parallel, public regulation should provide a moderate staff-child ratio and high standards of staff qualifications and training in order to provide high standards of workforce able to deliver high quality service.

Thus, governments can adopt childcare reform aimed at the expansion of childcare availability and public spending but the effectiveness of social investment would

depend from the extent to which childcare reform improve quality and make childcare more affordable (Bonoli et. al. 2017; West et. al. 2019). As a consequence, we identify three potential social investment outcomes for a childcare reform. Firstly, when a government invests new resources on childcare provisions and at the same time improves staff qualifications, maintains a contained staff-child ratio and provides measures to make childcare access affordable for low income families is pursuing a childcare expansion through a *robust social investment* strategy. Viceversa if a regional government pursues childcare expansion but disregards quality issues and measures to make childcare more affordable fails to deliver a childcare policy shaped by social investment approach (*failed social investment*). Finally, whether a government shapes childcare expansion by focusing only on one of the two policy dimensions is only partially delivering a childcare policy inspired by social investment (*partial social investment*).

The policy decisions regarding childcare affordability and quality, that shape the extent to which childcare policy pursue a social investment agenda are often taken by lower level of governments. Indeed, childcare policy is often decentralized to local and/or regional authorities. Next section will describe the decentralization processes of childcare policy and the division of childcare competences in a multi-tiered welfare state.

7. The Decentralization of Childcare Policy and the Patterns of Childcare Expansion in Multi-Tiered Welfare States

In the last four decades, territorial rescaling and the increasing competences gained by the regions and municipalities (Ferrera 2005b; Kazepov 2010) together with an increased dynamism of private – often no-profit - providers (Pavolini 2003) has led to an articulated scenario of multilevel interactions in the governance of social policies, especially social services.

The decentralization processes in Western Europe occurred in two phases. Firstly, during the 1970s the presence of meso-governments, the level of public administration

immediately below the national one (Moreno 2003), was growing in many countries. Germany and Switzerland were already two *coming together* federalist countries. Belgium, Italy and Spain accelerated their transformation from a central state to a regionalist/federalist state. Even France, a traditionally hyper-centralist country, adopted principles of devolution (Le Gales and Lequesne 1998). Against the backdrop of an overload of administrative functions held by the central state the latter has tended to decentralize policy competences to ensure a more effective management (Ferrera 2005b). Such first wave of decentralization was also prompted by the quest for a more democratic control and accountability over public policy as well as by the revival of peripheral identities, witnessed by the emergence of regional parties in the political arena (Ferrera 2005b). A second phase occurred during the 1990s, when in a context of strong budgetary pressures the devolution of competences was driven by political calculations, that is “passing the buck” of financial sustainability – and eventually retrenchment - of popular policy to subnational governments (Ferrera 2005b). Indeed, the institutional context of shared responsibilities and competences across different government levels might encourage cost-shifting practices among jurisdictions (Bonoli and Champion 2014). Arlotti and Aguilar-Hendrickson (2018) show how a “vicious layering” of multilevel governance on elderly care policy in Italy and Spain has brought about cost shifting between government levels and towards users as well as a misallocation of resources. Bonoli et. al. (2018) show how cost shifting practices are influenced by the federation history – whether the country is a holding or coming together federation and also a uni-national or plurinational federation – and the partisan dynamics. They argue that the subnational units face a trade off between increasing their social legitimacy, by for instance developing new social policy, and pursuing budget responsibility, in turn constraining new policy developments. Against this backdrop, they identified different cost-shifting mechanisms in four federalist/regionalist countries: Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Spain.

If in the first wave of decentralization central states gave spending powers to regions, the latter from the 1990s are under pressures of rigid institutional constraints such as Internal Stability Pacts stipulated to comply with European Monetary Union (EMU)

requirements (Maino and Neri 2011). The reduction of financial transfers from central to sub-national governments left regions with declining resources to tackle pressures over welfare adaptation (Fargion and Gualmini 2013), giving rise to a “decentralization of penury” (Keating 1998).

The declining resources transferred by the national level and the external constraints on sub-national public spending (Maino and Neri 2011) may lead to repercussions on how childcare is provided at the regional and local level. Indeed, investing in public childcare would require hiring new staff workers, which is constrained by the fiscal discipline that sub-national units have to follow (Maino and Neri 2011).

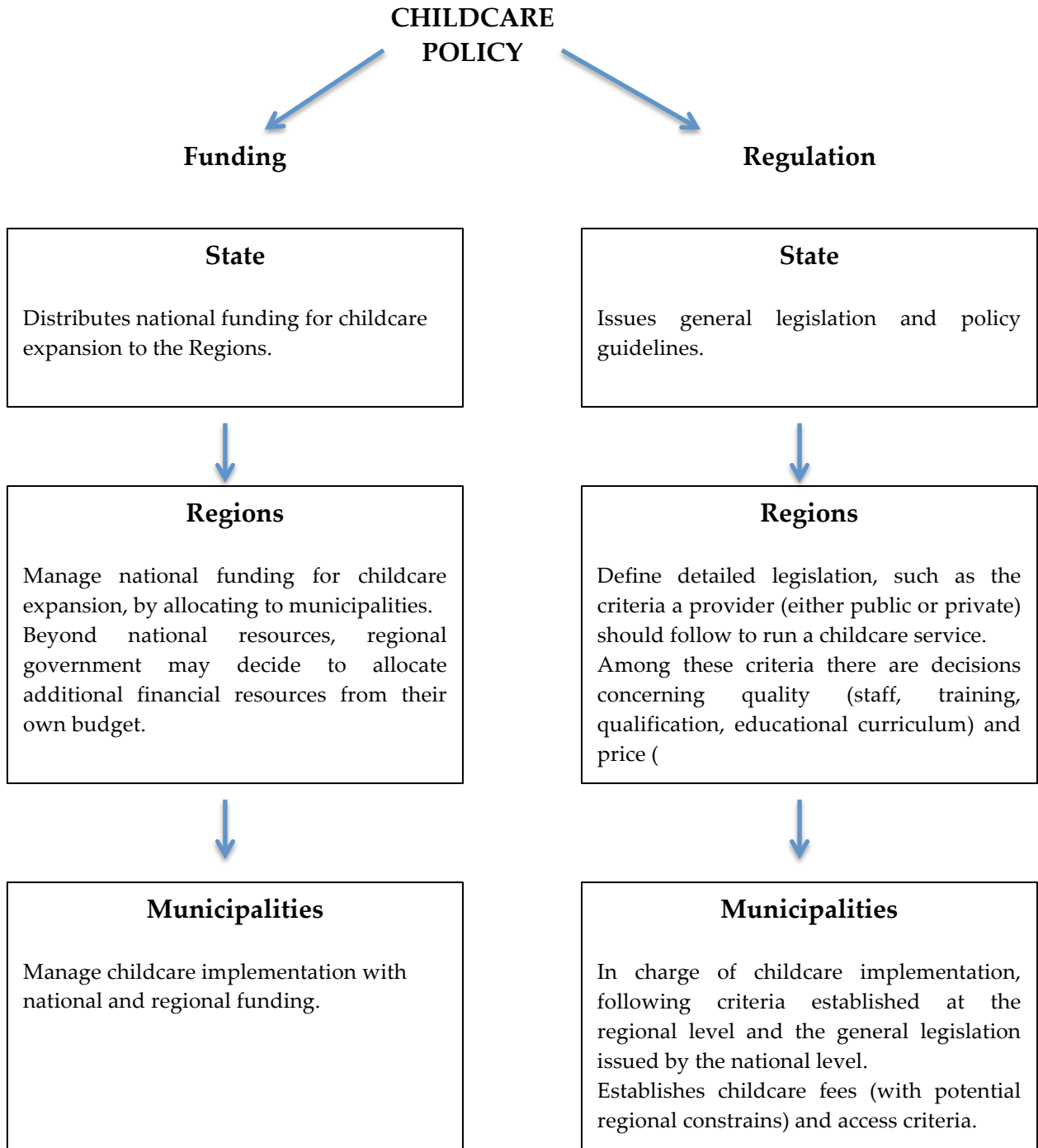
By contrast, due the lower costs of private or third sector childcare staff, public administration are increasingly resorting to market in order to satisfy the growing childcare demand (Ranci 2014). The way in which public administration supports marketization in childcare provision occurs mainly in three ways: out-sourcing, accreditation or by subsidizing private care services with demand subsidies (Ranci 2014). Whether and how public administration regulates those markets have different distributive implications for producers, users and public regulator itself. We argue that in a decentralized policy setting, the combination of competences on funding and regulation held by the regional governments made the latter key actors in childcare policy-making.

The next section will describe the division of childcare competences in a decentralized policy setting in which three levels of governments are included. Finally, section 7.2 describes the dynamics and implications of childcare policy-making in a multi-tiered welfare state.

7.1 Childcare Funding and Regulation: the Region as a Key Actor in the Multi-Level Decision Making

In a decentralized policy settings, typical of Italy, Spain or Germany, competences over childcare are distributed among different levels of government (figure 2.7). Indeed, once national financial resources are devolved to regional governments, the latter decide how to allocate them across regional municipalities, responsible for childcare

Figure 2.7 - Childcare Competences in a Decentralized Policy Setting



Source: author's elaboration

implementation. Regional governments may also decide to devolve additional resources, coming from their own budget, for supporting the investments in childcare

expansion. Thus, the willingness of regions to allocate additional resources affects the total available budget that municipalities have for childcare implementation.

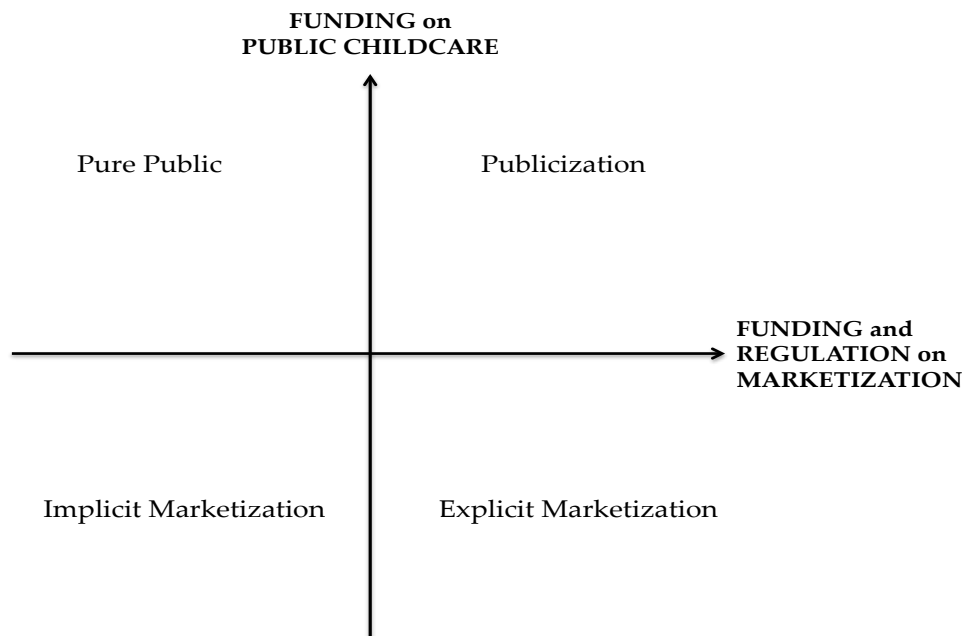
The role of regions is crucial in childcare regulation too. Indeed, the national level issues broad and general principles for childcare but the regions are in charge of defining the detailed legislation. For instance, they may define the requirements that either public or private provider has to follow to run a childcare service. Such requirements define the set of incentives that private producers (either no or for profit companies) encounter when setting up a childcare services. Also, such regulations define whether private providers have to follow specific requirements that shape the quality of the services or the price of the childcare fee. In other words, regulation issued by regional governments may have different distributive implications between the producers (private or public provider), the users (families with children aged 0-3 years old) and the public regulator itself. The way in which regional governments regulate aspects concerning the staff (ratio, qualification and training) and the educational curriculum shape the extent to which a childcare policy deliver high quality service. As for childcare access, local government establishes childcare fees and access criteria. However, there is some room for regional governments to influence childcare affordability. To this regard, the role of regional administrations is not trivial. Regional governments may constrain local administrations to apply a fixed childcare fee, a maximum fee threshold or a maximum and minimum range within which the local government can set its preferred fee. Alternatively, regional government may invest on vouchers aimed at helping parents to afford childcare fees. In sum, regional regulation has a strong impact on the delivery of high quality and affordable childcare services as prescribed by social investment.

To conclude, regional governments hold key competences to shape childcare policy change on the three dimensions of childcare policy change under-scrutiny in this work: expansion, delivery and social investment. Next section will speculate on the scope and direction of childcare policy change pursued by regional government. More precisely, next section will identify four patterns of childcare expansion that include different combinations of policy options.

6.2 Patterns of Childcare Expansion in Multi-Tiered Welfare States

As seen in previous chapter, in multi-tiered welfare states regions hold strong competences on childcare funding and regulation that make them a key institutional actor for childcare expansion. By combining the potential policy decisions of regional governments on childcare funding and regulation we can identify four patterns of childcare expansion (figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8 – Patterns of Childcare Expansion



Source: author's elaboration

In some cases, each of these patterns is associated with more than one of childcare delivery models or social investment outcomes which were outlined respectively in paragraph 5 and 6 of this chapter.

If a regional government devolves fewer resources for investment in new public municipal childcare than those to support private involvement as well as it regulates and defines the entry of provide providers in the childcare supply is pursuing an *explicit marketization* pattern. Indeed, public administration may find more convenient for many reasons - such as harsh external financial constraints for new public

investments - to promote a marketization mechanism (e.g. accreditation, outsourcing or demand vouchers for private provisions) in order to satisfy the growing childcare demand. Thus, an *explicit marketization* can be pursued by supporting one - or a mix - of the three childcare provisions in which private - either for or no profit -companies play a role. An *explicit marketization* strategy is not by itself incompatible with social investment goals. The social investment achievements within an *explicit marketization* pattern will depend by the extent to which public regulation constrains private providers to follow strict quality requirements and to maintain affordable childcare fees.

Private childcare supply in the form of pure private provision, accreditation or outsourcing might arise also by drift of the regional government. In this case, an *implicit marketization* occurs. Indeed, in the absence of regional regulation and funding pure private supply might emerge to match growing childcare demand, unmet by municipal public childcare left without resources by regional government. Also, in a context of growing childcare demand and scarce regional resources for municipalities the latter can start to outsource or accredit childcare places to pure private provision. As a result, due to the absence of a common regional regulatory framework for marketization mechanisms, the municipalities will define case by case their own rules for outsourcing and accreditation. Therefore, the *implicit marketization* caused by the drift of regional government exacerbates intraregional variability of childcare supply. In the case of *implicit marketization* childcare would expand as a result of a growing childcare demand meet mainly by private provision. The drift of regional intervention implies the lack of both a common regulatory framework on quality and a mechanism to control price of childcare fees. In this context, social investment prescriptions are highly undermined. Thus, an implicit marketization patterns is associated with one – or a mix – of the three ways of childcare delivery that involves private providers and also with a failed social investment.

When regional governments address financial investment only towards municipal childcare without promoting the entry of private providers is pursuing a *pure public expansionary* pattern. The literature emphasizes the higher standards of quality in municipal childcare compared to private provision (Lloyd and Penn 2012), and overall

considers pure public provision as highly conformed to social investment objectives (Morgan 2011a). However, only an empirical assessment of childcare reform and regulation would tell us to what extent a *pure public expansionary pattern* effectively pursue a social investment agenda. Indeed, if regional government increases funding for municipal childcare but the latter is not bounded to follow strict regulation on quality and childcare affordability, social investment objectives are highly undermined. Thus, potentially, a pure public expansionary pattern can be associated with a robust, partial or even failed social investment.

Finally, if a regional government devolves high share of public resources towards the overall childcare public and private supply as well as develop strong regulation of marketization mechanism is pursuing a "*publicization*" pattern. The latter can be pursued through a mix of the four models of childcare delivery by supporting the overall childcare system with higher public resources and stronger public regulation. Indeed, the main aim of a "*publicization*" strategy is to strengthen public supply as well as to extend public control and rules to private childcare supply. Against this backdrop, regional governments elaborate strong regulation on quality and price that makes more affordable the childcare services run by private providers, constraining them also to deliver high quality service. As a consequence, a publicization strategy is associated with *robust social investment* achievements.

Chapter 3 – In Search for a Theoretical Explanation

1. Introduction

As seen in previous chapters, childcare emerged as a welfare state priority with the shift towards a post-industrial society, when the profound socio-economic transformations brought about a series of new social risks and needs that were not adequately met by the welfare state of the golden age. Since the 1970s western welfare state, with different time and intensity, have tried to respond to higher childcare demand. As seen, in chapter 1 the development of childcare policy has varied across western countries. Some countries show a high level of childcare provision, while some other is lagging behind. Also, welfare state can vary not only in the quantitative expansion of childcare policy but also in the involvement of public and private provider and the extent to which pursue work-life balance and social investment. Chapter 2 has shown the different models and strategies public administration may pursue when expanding childcare. Therefore, so far we have seen that childcare policy change can be framed according to three analytical dimensions: the extent of expansion, the involvement of public or private providers, and the aims – such as social investment - that shape childcare reforms.

When we presented the puzzle in chapter 1 we show that Italy and Spain departed from their familistic legacy by taking different paths with regard to childcare delivery and social investment. In this chapter, we look for potential theoretical explanations of such divergence. To this aim, we review the main strands of theoretical literature on comparative welfare state and childcare reforms. More precisely, by emphasizing the strengths the limits of the theoretical approaches that explained childcare policy change we aim at identifying key factors that could allow interpreting childcare variation along the three analytical dimensions mentioned above.

2. Functional Pressures and the Growing Childcare Demand

Functionalist theories of social policy developments emphasize the role played by the

emergence of new needs, resulting essentially from socio-economic developments. According to the “logic of industrialization”, welfare state expansion – operationalized as increase in social public spending - is a consequence of the economic growth driven by the industrialization processes (Wilensky 1975). The “logic of industrialization” approach tells us more about the expansion as such than about the direction and extent of public spending. In other words, the “logic of industrialization” does not explain why countries with the same level of economic development differ in the extent and scope of public spending. Against this backdrop, the comparison between US and Sweden is particularly instructive. Both countries experienced same level of economic growth but high differences in the extent of public spending for welfare programs. Thus, a functionalist approach seems more suitable to identify common trends and challenges that may trigger welfare state expansion than to explain variation in welfare expansion, institutional configurations and policy-making.

As we have seen in chapter 1, the emergence of new social risks and needs required welfare state adaptation. Against this backdrop, the case of childcare and family policy is particularly emblematic. The welfare state expansion during the Golden Age (1945-1975) occurred in a context of full employment mainly associated with male breadwinner. The increasing women emancipation led to a massive entry of women workers influencing in turn maternity and family choices. Indeed, in a context of persistent male breadwinner model, women were traditionally relegated to care duties within the family. Against the backdrop of increasing female employment, the demand for childcare services grew consistently. However, the response to new social risks has differed across Western welfare states (Armingeon and Bonoli 2006). The structural transformations that lead to higher childcare demand did not automatically translate in new childcare policy developments (Hemerijck 2013). Indeed, *“needs alone do not create policies”* (Bonoli 2013).

The profound social and structural transformations - such as the massive female labour market entry or the declining fertility rates – are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the development of childcare policies (Bonoli 2013). More generally, a focus on variables such as female employment or fertility rates is more useful to identify common pressures towards childcare expansion rather than to explain

childcare policy change. Indeed, exogenous functional pressures are filtered by political and institutional context which shapes the extent and the direction of change.

3. Historical Institutionalism and Beyond: Obstacles and Opportunities for Change

As said above, the development of new social policies as a response to new socio-economic shocks is not automatic or immediate. The development of new policies will depend upon the institutional context in which those policies arise. As emphasized by Hecló (1974:16), when policy-makers are faced with new problems that require policy adaptation, their starting point does not entail the question “*where do we go*”? But rather “*where do we go from here*”? Policy-making does not happen in a vacuum but in a context of already existing policies that constrain – as well as shape - future policy options (Hecló 1974). As a consequence, the evolution of a policy sector should be analysed by primarily focusing on *policy legacy* (Pierson and Weaver 1993). According to historical institutionalism, the policy decisions taken in “*critical junctures*” shape the institutional configuration that once established activates two mechanisms: *policy feedback* and *lock-in effects*. Indeed, social actors and groups that have developed interests on the already established institutional configuration may mobilize to preserve it, generating in turn mechanisms of *policy feedback* (Easton 1957). Therefore, the high fixed costs, adaptive expectations and increasing returns associated with a specific institutional configuration generate *lock-in effects* towards change (Pierson 2000). Against this backdrop, the evolution of complex institutional configurations is conceived as inertial with only marginal - as well as incremental and gradual – changes (*punctuated equilibrium*) influenced by decisions taken in a particular critical juncture. Against this backdrop, historical institutionalism concerns policy evolution as characterised by *sequencing*, *slow-moving* and *path-dependent* processes (Pierson 2004). According to historical institutionalism, welfare state adaptation to socio-economic challenges is constrained by existing policies. For instance, welfare states that face strong budgetary challenges combined with a generous pension system - developed during the Golden Age of welfare state - might be less inclined to invest in new social policies such as childcare (Bonoli and Reber 2010). Indeed, Bonoli and Reber (2010)

found that high spending on old traditional programmes obstacles the development of new one, naming this effect “as crowding out”. The latter emphasizes the relevance of time on welfare state adaptation (Fargion 2000). Those welfare states in which the demand for new social risks emerged relatively early, during the 1970s, did not face competition from old age pensions, as the latter had not matured yet also due to demographic reasons. By contrast, finding public resources for childcare during the 1990s turned to be highly challenging in those institutional contexts where the weight of a generous pension system was already highly consistent (Bonoli 2007; Fargion 2000). This might explain the divergence between the early development of childcare policy in the Nordic Countries and the lag or inertia of Continental and Southern European Countries; however, the “crowding out” effect does not explain whether, how and why traditionally reluctant countries have overcome policy inertia and departed from their institutional path.

Indeed, the main critic to historical institutionalism refers to its excessive emphasis on policy legacy and continuity. If policy legacy has an explanatory power for policy inertia, it is less useful to provide explanations for cases of policy changes. By excessively emphasizing the structural constraints posed by already existing policies, the historical institutionalism is better equipped to explain institutional stability rather than processes that lead to change or replacement of a specific institutional configuration (Streeck and Thelen 2005; Jessoula 2009; Mahoney and Thelen 2010).

In contrast with historical institutional theories that emphasizes the persistence of institutions, a growing empirical literature has shown how modern welfare states are expanding even in some policy sectors that were traditionally underdeveloped (Hausermann, 2010; Bonoli and Natali 2012; Hemerijck, 2012). The empirical puzzle showed in chapter 1 – as well as the empirical evidence that will be presented in chapters 5 and 6 – highlight that childcare policy in Italy and Spain have departed from the persistence of family care through the expansion of externalised childcare services provided either by state or market. Since in both cases new childcare arrangements departed from already existing policy, childcare policy change is hard to be captured through historical institutional lenses that focuses mainly on policy legacy and path dependence.

However, some properties of a specific institutional configuration may constitute sometimes an opportunity – rather than a constraint – for policy actors to promote a gradual but transformative policy change (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). Ferrera (1993) by introducing the notion of *institutional wedge*, emphasized how policy actors might exploit accidental and partial change within institutional configuration, that altering their structure of opportunities and constraints might open new possibility for action and change. In the field of old age pensions, Jessoula (2004; 2009) showed how in Italy a pre-existing social protection institution, the so called TFR, has been key for the expansion of supplementary pension schemes, leading to a gradual pension policy change. Similarly, Morgan (2011b), reflecting about new theoretical challenges for explaining changes in the childcare policy field, suggests to reconstruct the historical trajectory of childcare policy by focusing on the actor's possibility of action within a specific institutional configuration. In other words, Morgan (2011b) points out how childcare policy change may result from the interaction between the institutional properties of childcare and the behaviour, preferences and strategies of actors operating in a specific policy arena. In sum, by integrating agency and partisan variables in the institutional theory we can highlight the potentials and the opportunities for change in a specific institutional configuration (Mahoney and Thelen 2010).

4. Childcare Policy Change and the Role of Ideas

The comparative welfare literature looked also at the explanatory power of ideas and discourses as a way to overcome the emphasis on stability of historical institutionalism. More precisely, some scholars analysed the role of ideas and discourses as endogenous forces of transformative institutional change (Beland 2005; Schmitd). In order to better understand the interest of theoretical literature on the role of ideas and discourses it is useful to remind distinction made by Heclho (1974) between *powering* and *puzzling*. Indeed, actors operate in the political arena not only to gain political power (*powering*) but also to acquire new knowledge as well as solutions to orientate their policy actions

(*puzzling*). Political actors – either political parties or social actors - “learn” and “adjust” their policy goals according to the new information gained by the diffusion of new policy paradigms, philosophies and solutions that may have different policy implications. Consequently, public discourses can be framed in different ways according to preferred policy goals. Matzke and Ostner (2010:474) pointed out that ideas come into play in a two-by-two pattern: *explicit*, as concepts and theories that inform policy measures and are used to “sell” policy proposals; or, as *implicit* assumptions about “how the world works”. The second pattern pertains to the ideological assumptions of political parties and affects the cognitive level of policy-making (Matzke and Ostner 2010).

The concepts and theories that inform policy choices and are used to “sell” policy proposals are often “learnt” by similar national experiences or by policy documents of international (i.e. UN, OECD) and supranational institutions (i.e. EU). For instance, the welfare state literature has already referred to European Union as “instigator of social policy reform” (Graziano 2004; Radaelli 2000), especially for social inclusion and anti-poverty policies (Armstrong 2010; Jessoula and Madama 2018). As for childcare the EU Council that took place in Barcelona in 2002 established that each Member State has to achieve a childcare coverage of 33% of the population below three years old. Supranational institutions complemented the quantitative target with theories and evidence on the beneficial effects of childcare policies on female employment, emphasizing the need to invest on childcare as part of an employment policy strategy (EU Council 2002; Eurofound 2015). More recently, the EU Commission also promoted the advantages of investing in childcare policy for social investment aims (EU Commission 2011, 2013).

The diffusion of ideas regarding childcare expansion and social investment policy promoted by supra-national and international institutions might have played a role in the recent childcare policy shift occurred in countries where these policies were traditionally underdeveloped. However, there is no evidence of convergence towards a single policy model in terms of expansion, delivery and social investment. Each of this dimension widely differ both within and cross country. This does not mean that some ideas “downloaded” by upper government levels does not matter in the social policy-

making process. For instance, In Germany, The CDU proponents of childcare reform emphasized, through strategic framing of public discourses, the economic benefits of childcare for female employment and children well-being in order to make better “digest” such reforms to their traditional constituencies and within the party (Fleckenstein 2011). Indeed, the diffusion of policy ideas provides useful information about existing solutions for policy-making and it empowers political actors with new ideational and discursive resources to frame and legitimate policy change. However, policy ideas alone do not produce change but they can be instrumental, as seen in the German case, for the political interests and strategies of actors that shape policy change.

5. Women in Politics as Agents of Change?

Due to the traditional unbalanced distribution of care duties within households, the issue of reconciling work and family life is inherently more stringent for mothers than it is for fathers. As a consequence, women in politics should be definitely more sensitive to childcare and family policy developments than men. Against this backdrop, an extensive body of literature analysed the statistical association between women political influence and the availability of childcare provision (Lovendusky and Norris 2003; Poggione 2004; Svers 2001; Wangnerud 2009). Such literature found a consistent positive association between the presence of women in parliaments and the legislation on gender equality issues, among which also childcare and family policy. The few case studies focused only on childcare policies showed a positive association between the presence of women in parliaments and the availability of childcare provisions. Such quantitative evidence comes either from national case studies such as Norway (Bratton and Ray 2002) or regional ones as Catalonia in Spain (Gonzalez Vidal 2004). Also, Bonoli and Reber (2010) found women descriptive representation to be positively associated with high childcare expenditure in OECD countries.

However, the quantitative evidence on the relationship between women descriptive representation and childcare provision tell us little about scope and direction of childcare policy change. Indeed, even though this literature shows evidence of the

association between women descriptive representation and childcare developments, it does not explain the causality mechanisms that lead to a specific childcare reform. In other words, once the association between women descriptive representation and childcare expansion (in terms of coverage rate and/or expenditure) is found, it remains unclear how women make a difference in the political processes. To this regard, some scholars argue that party affiliation matters more than sex, especially on contentious issues that require high expenditure of public resources. Traditionally, left wing parties promoted feminist issues, including the development of care services outside the family (Lowendusky 1986). Left parties pursue gender equality as part of their broader commitment to social equality. By contrast, Christian Democrats have traditionally seen family as the main provider of care services. However, as we will see in the next paragraph, recent changes in the political context - due to high electoral volatility and the emergence of new parties - make the ideational positioning of left and right-wing parties increasingly blurred. Also, women mobilization for childcare reform can take place even outside political parties as witnessed by the tradition of feminist movements that influenced the social policy-making from below (Stetson and Mazur 1995; O'Connor et. al 1999). Finally, women – either elected or not – are not the only interest groups with mobilization capacity in the field. Next paragraph will show that other organized groups have interests – as well as strong mobilization potential – childcare reforms.

6. Partisan Preferences, Interest Groups and Political Exchanges: a “New” Politics of Childcare?

As explained in the previous paragraphs of this chapter, each of the theoretical strands presented so far are not well suited to explain childcare policy change. Moreover, the aforementioned theoretical strands aimed at explaining childcare policy change mainly as a quantitative expansion of childcare availability and public spending on childcare while we aim at explaining childcare policy change by focusing also on two other dimensions of change: childcare delivery and social investment aims.

In order to move beyond the theoretical strands presented above and to provide explanations for the three dimensions (*expansion, delivery and social investment*) of childcare policy change we follow an approach of political theory that focus on the dynamics and processes of political action. More precisely, we focus our empirical analysis on the two sides of the political arena in which political action in modern democracies takes place: the *demand side* (i.e. social actors and the electorate) and the *supply side* (i.e. party system) (Stoppino 2001). In the *supply side*, different political parties compete to hold governmental office. Once in office, political parties are able to adopt policy decisions that are collectively binding and may target specific groups rather than others. Conversely, the *demand side* is represented by the electorate and by different interest groups. The latter do not seek governmental office but rather they are interested in the content of policy decisions since the latter may bring advantages or damages to their interests. Against this backdrop, interest groups exert pressure on the party government to shape the content of policy decisions. As a consequence, groups will orient their support towards a political party on the basis of the favourable policy decisions they manage to obtain.

As underlined by Stoppino (2001), a bidirectional relation between demand and supply characterizes the “normal” *political exchange* process. Political parties (*supply side*) “sell” policies to gain consensus and political support from the electorate as well as from interest groups. The latter exert pressure – trough electoral or financial support - to different political groups in order to obtain favourable policy decisions that guarantee (or increase) their power in the policy sector or, alternatively, to hamper policy decisions that are detrimental to their interests. Against this backdrop, social rights and the related policy developments are the political product of *political exchanges* between politicians, that seek to obtain and mantain governmental office and social actors interested in the specific content of public policy (Ferrera 2016). Natili (2019) showed how *political exchanges* between some social actors - such as trade unions and/or faith based organizations - and political actors looking for political support were crucial for introduction and institutionalization of minimum income schemes in the Spanish regions. Viceversa, the political weakness of would-be beneficiaries coupled with limited interest of the interest groups and the fragmented Italian party system

facilitated policy inertia or path reversal (Natili 2019). Interestingly, Natili (2019) showed how, for the introduction of minimum income, the political exchange dynamics between politicians and social actors are stronger and more effective than those that may occur between political parties and individual voters in the electoral arena. Indeed, within the electorate, the potential beneficiaries of minimum income schemes are few with dispersed interests and low capacity of political mobilization (Madama and Jessoula 2015).

By contrast, in the childcare policy field, political exchange dynamics between political parties and the electorate are more likely to occur. Indeed, after the massive increase of female employment, childcare expansion became very popular in the Western Welfare States. Political parties seeking governmental office might be highly sensitive to childcare expansion, that, differently from minimum income field, attracts a wide population regardless of social class. However, as already said childcare policy change is not expansion alone but it entails a series of policy decisions concerning quality, affordability, type of provision on which interest groups have a stronger mobilization potential compared to individual voters. Indeed, since childcare programs appeal a wide heterogeneity of would-be beneficiaries, the latter have dispersed interests and different preferences with respect to towards the organization of childcare and its delivery, not to mention their different capacity to afford externalised childcare. As a consequence, the heterogeneity of social policy preferences might undermine the mobilization capacity of would be beneficiaries for childcare (Armingeon and Bonoli 2006). By contrast, some groups, that are for instance involved in childcare delivery, may be stronger than single voters to exert a permanent pressure on the political process by aggregating an homogenous socio-political demand on specific policy issues with the aim to influence the final policy outcome.

Indeed, childcare expansion requires a series of policy and regulative decisions concerning the institutional design. The latter can be established by governments either unilaterally or, alternatively, by involving interest groups and stakeholders operating in the childcare sector. More precisely, a government that decide to invest on childcare may involve in the childcare policy-making a series of *social* and *institutional* stakeholders that have: a legacy in the provision of childcare, or more broadly, social

services and/or a legacy in terms of privileged political relationship with party governments (e.g. trade unions of with left parties or entrepreneurial associations with right parties). A government can involve stakeholders in the childcare policy-making through a formal bargaining mediated by the policy-making processes that traditionally take place within the employment policy field. In the case of a bargained policy-making process, the final policy outcome in terms of regulative framework and institutional design is accurately balanced among the different positions advanced by all the actors involved. Beyond formal bargaining, governments may limit stakeholders involvement only to an informal and less binding consultation in order to gain information about stakeholders positions and suggestions on peculiar policy issues.

In sum, I argue that looking at partisan politics and the exchange dynamics between parties and electorate is crucial to explain childcare expansion. However, once a political party promotes a reform towards childcare expansion, some interest groups might exert pressure to shape the content of the reform. Such pressure might influence the final outcome of the reform as concern regulative aspects that impact on childcare delivery, quality and affordability. Against this backdrop, a focus on the political exchange dynamics between parties and the electorate is crucial to understand childcare expansion, however, it is not sufficient to explain the scope and direction of childcare expansion. By including also an empirical focus on the political exchange dynamics between parties and interest groups we aim at contributing to explain the scope and direction of childcare expansionary reform in terms of childcare delivery and social investment. To this aim, next section will outline whether and how the theoretical literature studied the link between the two sides of political competition and childcare policy change in terms of expansion, delivery and social investment. More precisely, next paragraphs will discuss preferences and strategies of political parties and interest groups in the specific area of childcare policy.

6.1 The Supply Side of Political Competition: Partisan Preferences, Political Competition and Childcare Policy Change

According to the Power Resource Theory (PRT), the generosity and extensiveness of national welfare state will depend on the strength of left parties and the capacity of

trade unions to mobilise politically. Huber and Stephens (2000) adapted this approach to the study of childcare development by concluding that while social democratic parties tend to promote women's employment and the expansion of externalised childcare, conservative or Christian democratic parties advocate policies that support the traditional division of labour. By analysing childcare expenditure between 1980 and 2003 in 30 OECD countries, Bonoli and Reber (2010) found a strong and positive association between the social democratic governments and public spending on childcare. Indeed, Bonoli and Reber (2010), by considering public spending on childcare as proxy of childcare expansion, found higher childcare expansion in those countries governed by strong social democratic parties. By contrast, the statistical association between partisan government and public spending on childcare turned to be negative when Christian Democratic were in office (Bonoli and Reber 2010). The theory of partisan politics on childcare has been also exploited to assess childcare regional variation in countries characterized by decentralized policy setting. Madama (2010) studying variations of childcare public spending across Italian regions concluded that left regional governments had been crucial for setting and developing childcare services. Also, in Germany, quantitative analysis demonstrated that left-wing regional governments are positively associated with higher enrolment rates (Andrenescu and Carnes 2015) and public spending (Busemeyer and Seitzl 2017). Hieda (2013) still recognizes the importance of partisanship factors – especially the strength of the left – but in interaction with a social value dimension that have transformed party system into a two-dimensional one. More precisely, according to Hieda (2013) two dimensions shape the party system configuration: the emerging libertarian-conservative value dimension (Kitschelt 1994) is added to the more traditional socio-economic distributional conflict (Hauserman 2006). By analyzing the variation of childcare expenditure on 18 OECD countries, Hieda (2013) demonstrated that left-wing parties with a libertarian profile are most keen on expanding ECEC compared with more conservative left-wing parties, thus emphasizing that value orientation matters. From these scholarships emerge that partisan differences and particularly the strength of social democratic parties have a strong explanatory power for childcare expansion.

However, new empirical accounts as well as theoretical reflections emphasized how the traditional dichotomy – social democrats supporting externalized childcare services vs. Christian democracy advocating traditional family care – has been challenged by two trends: declining salience of traditional social identities, such as class and religion, and the de-alignment of voters from traditional political parties. The electoral de-alignment from traditional constituencies has been found to be greater in women voters than men (Gingrich and Hausermann 2015). Also Emmenegger and Manow (2014) highlight how the weakening of the religious cleavage has increased party competition towards women voters in Continental Europe. Thus, the electoral de-alignment, the weakening of class and religious cleavages, the shift towards more progressive beliefs have provided a fertile ground to attract new voters, such as women, around new policy issues. Against this backdrop, policy change is driven by the convergence of partisan positions, rather than their continued divergence, because traditionally conservative parties are more inclined to promote the expansion of ECEC in order to reach out new electoral constituencies in the working middle class, particularly women (Naumann 2012, Morgan 2013). This might explain the role played by Christian Democrats in recent policy developments in Germany and the Netherlands, two path-shifting countries that were traditionally reluctant toward family policy innovation (Seele-Kaiser 2016; Van Horen and Becker 2011). In order to explain childcare policy change on these two countries, Morgan (2013) linked the programmatic strategies to attract de-aligned female voters with the increased women's descriptive representation within political parties and parliaments. According to Morgan (2013), in Germany and the Netherlands, conservative parties confronted with declining voters started to promote women's role within party. Once women increased their political representation were more able to push for their particularly policy preferences such as the need to balance work and family life. In sum, the attention of party officials towards an increasing women political representation has reinforced a broader electoral objective, that is advancing an electoral and policy proposals to attract de-aligned voters such as women (Morgan 2013). Similarly Blome (2017), by looking at the changes towards normative beliefs and voting behaviour in Germany and Italy, concluded that family policy change in Germany has been

triggered by more egalitarian social norms among de-aligned voters, while in Italy the persistence of traditional normative beliefs has undermined the de-alignment from traditional political constituencies. Schwander (2018) reached similar conclusions of Morgan (2013) and Blome (2017) by tacking into account not only electoral demand for childcare policy but also party system configuration. She argues that in a traditional two-party system Christian-Democratic or Conservative parties will endorse a more progressive view if the electoral competition is only with a centre-left party, while a competitor on the right side of the ideological spectrum is likely to pull conservative parties in the opposite direction. According to Schwander (2018), the absence of a radical competitor on the right side can lead conservative party to converge with left-wing preferences over a childcare policy that foster a dual earner model instead of supporting a conservative family policy that reproduce the gendered division of labour.

The absence of such competition from the right side of the ideological spectrum would explain why the Spanish conservative party (PP) has aligned with the centre-left over childcare expansion while such partisan convergence did not happen in Italy, where the presence of radical right party is strong (Schwander 2018). Similarly, Leon et. al. 2019 concluded that Spanish conservative parties due to the higher presence of women in politics, the changes of socio-economic profile of female voters and changes towards more progressive attitudes had higher incentives – than Italian right wing - to converge towards left wing party preferences. In sum, recent advancements in partisan literature have shown how changing values, de-alignment of voters and/or the influence of women in political parties and governments facilitated a continued convergence between right-wing and left-wing parties over childcare expansion. However, as highlighted by Schwander (2018), partisan convergence between left and right parties towards childcare expansion is more likely to occur in a party configuration characterized by the absence of radical right parties. Against this backdrop, partisan differences are not the only explanatory sources for childcare expansion but also party configuration and party competition matters. In a party system characterized by *moderate pluralism* political competition between left and right on childcare expansion is very high. In this context, childcare expansion is likely to be promoted also by right-

wing parties. Conversely, in a party system characterized by fragmented pluralism, the political competition within the right-wing coalition will prevent moderate right to promote progressive views on childcare. As a consequence, the within pole political competition between radical and moderate right, will constrain the latter to promote conservative values on family care rather than childcare expansion. The latter, in a party system characterized by *fragmented pluralism*, will be promoted only by left-wing parties.

Once childcare is expanded it remains to understand what shape the institutional design of childcare provision takes and why. So far only few studies analysed both empirically and theoretically the link between partisan politics and childcare reform in terms of delivery and social investment aims.

Theoretically left-wing governments are in favour of developing as well as strengthening public service provision; whereas right-wing policy preferences are more in line with social services privatization aiming at limiting state involvement in the economy (Huber and Stephens 2001). Such dichotomy has been confirmed by a recent empirical study of Busemeyer and Seitzl (2017) on the childcare cross-regional variations in Germany. However, Gingrich (2011) argues that both right and left may pursue marketization reform of welfare services, including childcare, to achieve distinct political aims. According to Gingrich (2011), also the Left, that traditionally resisted marketization, began to consider market as a way to extend public control and supervision over service providers making them responsive to policy goals established by public administration. Also, the argument of Schwander (2018) that links partisan preferences, party configuration and policy change on childcare goes beyond the mere childcare expansion. She argues that in the absence of a radical right competitor, the centripetal political competition incentivizes the right-wing parties to converge towards the promotion of a progressive family policy model which include the development of public childcare and social investment. More precisely, the analysis of Schwander (2018) considers the expansion of childcare by itself a social investment policy. However, as explained in chapter 2 the expansion of childcare by itself does not automatically ensure that the social investment aims in terms of higher quality and affordability are achieved. As noted by Morgan (2011a) a partisan convergence

between left and right towards the promotion of childcare shaped by social investment aims is less likely to occur. A social investment strategy for childcare that focuses on childcare affordability in order to guarantee the access of children raised in disadvantaged families is inherently redistributive (Bonoli 2017). This emphasis on redistribution makes left parties – rather than right parties - more inclined to embrace a social investment view on childcare (Morgan 2011a). Indeed, Morgan (2013), when explained the right-wing convergence towards childcare expansion in some path shifter countries, also specified how the childcare institutional design promoted by right-wing in these countries was more shaped by mere work-life balance aims rather than social investment.

In sum, a well-established theoretical literature identified very clearly the mechanism of political competition as well as the conditions of party configuration that lead to childcare expansion. However, the theoretical literature is less clear and more contradictory on the link between the partisan preferences and the scope and direction of childcare expansion in terms of childcare delivery. This partisan ambivalence on childcare delivery suggests that a focus on partisan preferences only is not sufficient to understand the determinants of the scope and direction of childcare reforms. The latter might be influenced by a series of interest groups that interacts with the party governments in order to shape the content of the reform. Next section will outline what are the relevant interest groups in the childcare policy field and what their preferences for childcare reforms.

6.2 The Demand Side of the Political Competition: Interest Groups Mobilization for Childcare

The literature that studied the link between interest groups mobilization and childcare policy-making emphasized the role played by women lobbies and feminist movements to voice for the development of public policies aimed at unburdening women from family care favouring female emancipation and female employment (Lewis 1993; Nauman 2005). Particularly, Nauman (2005) by comparing childcare policy trajectories of Sweden and Germany during between the 1960s and 1970s, shows how Swedish

feminist movements lobbied intensively for childcare expansion whereas German feminist did not aggregate a strong demand for childcare development. Nauman (2005) explains childcare policy divergence between Sweden and Germany with the different strength of the two national feminist movements to promote the investment on childcare facilities as a mean to achieve equal opportunities in the balance of family duties within the couple (Nauman 2005).

Beyond women lobbies, there is a variety of interest groups that literature has not taken into account yet. However, such interest groups might aggregate strong demands with the aim to shape the content of childcare reforms. These interest groups are: the associations of services providers (either public or private), the associations of families as representatives of service users, trade unions as representatives of staff professionals. These stakeholders have different demands with regard to content of childcare reforms, in relation to the interests they aim to preserve or to promote.

Service providers can be gathered in the association of private (either profit or no-profit) or in the association of municipalities, as the latter are *de facto* the public providers in a decentralized policy-setting. Private providers might exert some pressure to shape the patterns of childcare expansion towards the support of childcare facilities managed or owned by their associates. Also, the associations of private providers might be interested in the definition of childcare regulation, especially the staff-child ratio. Indeed, they might prefer a high staff-child ratio with the aim to minimize the hiring of staff professionals as the latter represent the highest cost of their investment on childcare facilities.

The association of municipalities is an *institutional* stakeholder. Indeed, in a decentralized policy setting public childcare is mainly owned by municipalities. The latter, however, find hardly feasible to invest on childcare development and its maintenance. Indeed, childcare costs might be hardly affordable for the budget of local administration, especially for the smallest ones. Against this backdrop, the association of municipalities might exert strong pressure to attract regional financial transfers that support local childcare supply.

The trade unions are the main representatives of staff professionals. As a consequence, trade unions interests on the content of childcare reform are mainly related to the

protection and improvement of working conditions for staff professionals. Also, trade unions in order to prevent service providers – especially private – from hiring unqualified or unregistered staff, is interested in the definition of staff qualification requirements needed to be hired in a childcare service.

Finally, the association of families are concerned about the quality of care and education received by their children in the childcare centres. Also, high childcare fees might prevent families from enrolling their children in childcare centres. As a consequence, it is plausible that, if the associations of families are strong, they would voice for the improvements of childcare quality and affordability.

All these interest groups can favour or constrain childcare policy change by advocating the achievement of specific policy objectives related to their interests. Regional governments when build and design childcare policy change can mobilize some interest groups that have a relevant political and social weight in a specific sub-national political arena. Indeed, regional government might adopt childcare reform through bargaining platforms or consultations with stakeholders. The pressure and influence of the interest groups - involved in formal or informal consultations with regional governments – might shape childcare policy planning and design. In this case, childcare reforms would result from *political exchanges* between regional party government, seeking to maintain political power over regional territory, and stakeholders interested in the content of childcare reform.

Chapter 4 - Childcare Policy in Italy and Spain

1. Introduction

South European countries share similar characteristics with regard to welfare regimes. Esping-Andersen (1990) originally classified the Italian welfare regime as a Conservative-Corporatist model typical of continental countries - due to an institutional design built around a Bismarckian model in pension and labour market policies. Ferrera (1996) argued that South European Welfare States are more than a variant of the Conservative-Corporatist welfare regime. More precisely, beyond a Bismarckian model in pension and labour market policies Ferrera (1996) identified a series of distinctive features shared by South European Welfare States: a highly fragmented income maintenance system characterized by peaks of generosity and coverage gaps, a universalized health care sector; the persistence of familism; the underdevelopment of social assistance and care; a weak institutional capacity; the persistence of clientelism.

The emphasis on the familistic character as well as on the pervasiveness of the male-breadwinner model in the four Southern European countries seems to find a wide and shared consensus in the literature. Several scholars have emphasized how the cultural traditions and social norms embedded in Catholicism shaped family traditions with regard to the provision of social care (Pfau-Effinger 1998). In other familistic welfare regimes – such as the conservative-corporatist type – the male-breadwinner model is supported by family and fiscal policy that facilitates the caring role played by women within households, while in Southern Europe familism is largely “unsupported” (Keck and Saraceno 2010). In Italy and Spain social assistance care outside the family has been largely underdeveloped (Ferrera 2005a). Indeed, for many years both countries had a very low rate of childcare coverage for children aged 0-3 in contrast with pre-school arrangements for children aged 3-5 that were almost universalized already at the beginning of the 1990s (Naldini and Jurado 2013).

Beyond childcare services, the trajectories of policy instruments aimed at favouring work-life balance show similarities and differences between both countries.

Traditionally both countries shared a preference towards the support of family cash transfers over services. More recently, such unbalance seems more persistent in Italy than in Spain (Leon et. al. 2019). As for maternity leave, Italy introduced it already in the immediate second post-war period with the law 860 of 1950 (Ballestrero 1982). From the 1970s various legislative changes have extended the length of maternity leave (law 1204 of 1971) as well as they introduced paternal and paternity leave (law 53 of 2000 and legislative decree 151 of 2001) (Sabatinelli 2017). Spain introduced maternity leave much later than Italy. The first Spanish provision for maternity leave was issued in 1994 and from that time on Spanish legislation has conformed to EU standards as regards the adoption of maternity, paternity and parental leave (Leon et. al. 2019).

The next two sections concern the childcare policy trajectory in both countries by highlighting the evolution of policy legislation, the resulted institutional framework and the trends of childcare coverage rates, female employment and fertility. Finally, section 4 will compare both policy trajectories in order to highlight similarities and differences between the two countries.

2. The Italian Trajectory: Legislation, Institutional Framework and Trends

In Italy, already in 1859, the *Casati Law* set the age threshold for compulsory education at 6 years old. Pre-school services for children aged below 6 years old have been always organized in two separated cycles which corresponded to two different institutional arrangements: *pre-school*, called *scuola materna*, for children aged between 3 and 6 years old, and *childcare* services for children aged below 3 years old. The two cycles had two distinct and opposite trajectories. Firstly, pre-school arrangements fall under the educational system while childcare services have long been considered social assistance services and only lately defined as socio-educational services. Secondly, pre-school for children aged 3-5 achieved an almost universal coverage already at the end of the 1980s while a highly developed network of childcare service is still struggling to emerge (Sabatinelli 2017). Thirdly, the access to pre-school arrangements for children aged 3-5 years old is free with no family co-payment while the access for childcare services for children under three years is subjected to family co-

payment (childcare fees) and access criteria. In this paragraph, we aim at reconstructing the Italian trajectory of childcare services from the origins to nowadays in order to point out the main changes and trends.

A first sort of childcare started between the end of 1800s and the beginning of 1900s when a series of “enlightened” entrepreneurs created *nursery services* within the factories. The *Carcano Law* of 1902 made the *nursing services* compulsory for all the factories with at least 50 female workers, even though no sanctions were established for the non-compliant factories (Sabatinelli 2017). Such measures, inspired by a sort of “industrial paternalism”, targeted the families of the working class with the aim of providing spaces for care and custody of small children (Sabatinelli 2017 p. 110).

In 1925, the fascist government established the ONMI (*Opera Natalità, Maternità e Infanzia*), an institution promoting assistance and care for mothers and disadvantaged children (Minesso 2007). Actually, the ONMI took various interventions among which the creation of kindergartens for children aged 0-3 located within or next to the factories (Saraceno 1979). The main approach inspiring the ONMI was the same of the *Carcano Law*, that is to provide care and custody for children of the working class. In the first half of the 1900s the ONMI contributed to the establishment of a network of childcare services, even though its development was quantitatively poor (Minesso 2007).

In the immediate second post-war period, the issue of childcare development was very marginal in the national political arena and childcare services remained under the competences of ONMI until the 1970s, when the Italian parliament issued a first national legislation on childcare services (Fargion 1997). Indeed, the national law number 1044 of 1971 transferred the childcare competences from ONMI - finally closed in 1975 - to municipalities and regions (Fargion 1997). The national law 1044 of 1971, was set one year after the establishment of a new layer of governments, the regions. The latter, originally provided by the Italian Constitution in 1948 were finally set up in 1970 (Baldi 2003). As a result, the national law of 1971 provided an articulated division of childcare competences. From 1971, the municipalities are in charge of childcare implementation and administration. The regions elaborate the annual plan of childcare

services in order to identify priorities and policy interventions (*article 5 law 1044/1971*). The article 6 put in charge of the regions the definition of the criteria that municipalities had to follow when decide to build and manage a childcare service. The law number 1044 defined childcare as social service of public interest aimed at facilitating maternal access to labour market. After the national law of 1971, the provision of childcare services is no more only addressed to families of the working class but it has, at least in principle, universalistic aspirations. Against this backdrop, the law 1044/1971 set the ambitious target to reach the 5% of childcare coverage in five years (Fargion 1997). To achieve this goal a national fund for childcare, established by the national minister for public health, was transferred to local and regional authorities (Mari 2012). The national fund was combined by a withdrawal from the contribution rates provided by employers and a total of 70 milliards of Italian Lira coming from national public budget (Mari 2012). The local and regional authorities then could add their financial resources to those coming from central state. However, the allocation of national resources to sub-national entities was limited as well as characterized by delays and fragmentation (Saraceno 2003). As a result, in the following years the development of childcare service was rather limited and the ambitious goal set in 1971 was achieved only twenty years later (table 4.1). Indeed, as shown by table 4.1, in 1992 there were only 97.654 places which corresponded to the 5.8% over the total of infants aged 0-2.

Table 4.1 – Childcare Coverage, Absolute Numbers and Percentage Rates, Italy, Italy, 1992

	Absolute Numbers	% Childcare Places over the populations of children aged 0-2
ITALY	97.654	5,8

Source: IDI (2002)

Due to the imbalances between the low childcare supply and the growing childcare demand, municipalities started to develop a series of criteria that beneficiaries had to meet for childcare access (Saraceno 2003). Therefore, despite the universalistic aspirations of national law 1044/1971, parents had to rely on the local authorities for the fulfillment of childcare demands. As a result, the implementation of national law failed in its universalistic aspirations.

For more than two decades after the introduction of the first national law on childcare, the initiatives of national governments towards new funding and policy intervention on childcare were rather absent. Against this backdrop, the regional governments innovated the childcare legislation, by overcoming the definition of childcare as a social assistance service made by the national law of 1971. Indeed, between the 1970s and the 1990s, regional legislation on childcare defined the *kindergarten* as a socio-educational service, reorienting also staff competences towards this aim (Fargion 1997, Ferioli 2005).

In 1997, more than two decades after the introduction of the first national law on childcare, the national government made an attempt – even though rather timid – to legislate on childcare. The center-left government adopted the national law number 285/1997 aimed at stimulating the provision of innovative childcare services, such as the *Integrated Services* (“*Servizi Integrativi*”), which are playgrounds – open for a maximum of 5 hours per day – for children from 18 to 36 months, children and family centers, home based educational services (Sabatinelli 2017). Three years later the center-left government adopted the national law 328/2000, a framework law on social assistance which aimed at ensuring a better *vertical coordination* between different levels of government as well as a *horizontal coordination* by regulating the entry of third sector and private entities in the provision of social assistance services (Madama 2010). Firstly, the national law number 328/2000 introduced the procedure of *authorization* and *accreditation* that regions should follow to regulate the entrance of third sector and private providers in childcare supply. Indeed, after the adoption of the national law 328/2000 the regional governments have to establish the criteria for *authorization* and *accreditation*. Importantly, in order to deal with the variation of social assistance levels resulted from the decentralized policy setting, the national law 328/2000 assigned the central state the definition of the essential standards (*livelli essenziali*) and coverage levels of social assistance that had to be guaranteed across the national territory. However, in 2001, the constitutional reform 3/2001 reshaped the distribution of policy competences across different level of governments. The modified article 117 of Italian Constitution assigned the regions the exclusive responsibility for social assistance. As a consequence, the central state was no longer allowed to set minimum standards

autonomously as stated by national law 328/2000. More precisely, following the Constitutional reform, national and regional authorities have to find an agreement on the definition of essential standards through Intergovernmental Arrangements such as the *State-Region Conference*, and the central level have to carry the responsibility to finance the achievement of essential standards. As we will see below a first and very weak attempt to define the essential standards of childcare coverage levels was made in 2007.

Between 2001 and 2006 the center-right governments promoted the development of creches within the workplace. Two annual budget laws in 2002 and 2003 provided funding for the creation of company crèches. *“The funding targeted at enterprises was not framed as additional, but as alternative to, that provided to local government”* (Naldini and Saraceno 2008: 741). The regions appealed the Constitutional Court by claiming that as a consequence of the Constitutional reform of 3/2001, that assigned the exclusive competence of social assistance to the regions, the State could not legislate on childcare. Paradoxically, the Constitutional Court (*ruling 370/2003*) referred to the regional laws, that defined childcare as a socio-educational service, to affirm that the socio-educational and work-life balance implications of childcare make it falling under the competences of education and employment policy which are actually shared competences between central and regional level (Ferioli 2004). Thus, the *ruling 370/2003* reaffirmed the shared competence between central and sub-national levels, on childcare. However, the same *ruling 370/2003* declared unconstitutional the annual budget laws provided by right-wing government in 2002 and 2003, as any national funding cannot be linked to a specific aim such as financing company creches (Naldini and Saraceno 2008; Mari 2012). Indeed, being childcare a shared competence, the national funding devolved to regions should allow them to decide whether they want to strengthen their public services or boost private provision.

In sum, the Constitutional reform of 2001 made it more complicated the adoption of essential standards on childcare and social assistance. However, the *ruling 370/2003* of Constitutional Court contributed to define childcare as a socio-educational service as well as to clarify the distribution of policy competences. To sum up, the table 4.2 lists the distribution of childcare policy competences in Italy.

Table 4.2 – The Distribution of Childcare Policy Competences in Italy

National Level	<p>Drafts general legislation</p> <p>Defines the essential standards “livelli essenziali” (not defined yet) in accordance with the Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs) in the <i>Unified Conference</i></p> <p>Provides financing through the National Fund for Childcare distributed among LRAs in the Unified Conference</p>
Regional Level	<p>May finance childcare services with regional resources</p> <p>Distributes national and regional financial resources to municipalities for childcare implementation and administration.</p> <p>Defines the structural and organizational requirements (<i>e.g. staff-child ratio, staff qualification, space</i>)</p> <p>Defines requirements to authorize and accredit private childcare provision</p>
Municipalities	<p>Hold public childcare centers</p> <p>Are in charge of the management of childcare service according to organizational and structural criteria set by the regional level</p> <p>Authorize and accredit private providers according to the requirements set by regional level</p> <p>Identify access criteria for the beneficiaries and establish childcare fees paid by users</p>

Source: author’s elaboration

Each layer of government may legislate on childcare. The central state drafts general legislation and it defines, in the *Unified Conference*², the essential standards that have to be guaranteed across the national territory. The regional authorities define the organizational and structural requirements to run a childcare service. Finally, the municipalities establish access criteria and childcare fees paid by users. The establishment of national essential standards may constrain local and regional standards concerning organizational requirements or access criteria in order to guarantee higher uniformity across the national territory. However, when a national

² It includes representatives of State-Regions and State-Cities conferences

definition of essential standards is lacking – as in the Italian case – potential variation in childcare legislation is higher. As for the financing, regional governments distribute their own resources and those coming from central state to municipalities in charge of childcare implementation and administration. Decisions over the allocation of national resources to regional administrations take place in the *Unified Conference*.

In 2006, the center-left government promoted the adoption of a big expansionary plan - the so-called “Piano Nidi 2007-2009” – in order to achieve the 33% of childcare coverage, target agreed at the European level. The plan provided the allocation to the regions of 446 millions divided for three years as showed in table 4.3. The allocation of national financing has been established with the Agreement (*Intesa*) of 26.09.2007 in the *Unified Conference*. Also, the agreement of 2007 defined the essential standards of childcare coverage to be guaranteed over the national territory.

Table 4.3 - The Annual Share of Funding of the “Piano-Nidi” (2007-09)

Years	Resources (Mln of Euros)
2007	140
2008	206
2009	100

Source: IDI (2012a)

The minimum threshold for national childcare coverage was set at 13%, while the minimum regional threshold of childcare coverage was set at 6% (Mari 2012). However, what the Agreement of 2007 called as essential standards are more programmatic objectives than the guarantee of a minimum set of subjective rights for childcare beneficiaries (Mari 2012). Proper minimum standards that ensure the uniformity of subjective childcare rights have not been defined yet and the debate is still open (Naldini and Saraceno 2008; Mari 2012).

As we can see from table 4.4 the allocation of Piano Nidi financing varies across regions. Also, the extent to which each region contributed to the co-financing of Piano Nidi differs. How national resources were allocated? The national and regional authorities used to agree on a specific share of funding in the *Unified Conference*. The allocation procedure required that each regional government, in accordance with local

authorities, requests national funding on the basis of the regional planning for childcare previously approved through *regional acts* (Ceccaroni 2012). At the national level the administration in charge of allocating financial resources for childcare is the Department of Family Policy of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. The tri-annual national funding of the Piano Nidi occurred on annual basis. The allocation of each annual share was conditioned to the use of the resources devolved the year before (Ceccaroni 2012).

According to the intentions of the Minister of Family Policy, the adoption of Piano Nidi was meant to give new impulse to a sector traditionally under financed by the central state (Sabatinelli 2017). However, such stimulus lasted only few years. In 2010, the agreement reached in the Unified Conference confirmed the allocation of 100 millions, same share of 2009. After 2010, a drastic retrenchment of national childcare resources devolved to the regions occurred.

Table 4.4 – Total National Resources Allocated to Each Region for 2007-2008-2009, U.C. Agreement of 2007, Piano Nidi

Lombardy	55.855.537
Sicilia	47.379.02
Puglia	39.913.093
Lazio	38.672.019
Veneto	29.463.558
Emilia-Romagna	26.792.444
Campania	23.940.675
Piedmont	22.995.625
Tuscany	21.956.060
Sardegna	10.136.065
Abruzzo	10.072.699
Marche	9.223.638
Liguria	7.846.797
Friuli	5.746.328
Basilicata	5.359.31
Umbria	4.797.045
Molise	3.015.991
Aosta Valley	1.068.909

Source: IDI (2012a)

The IV Berlusconi government, installed in 2008 as a result of national elections, did not continue to target the strengthening of the weak network of traditional childcare services as prescribed by Piano Nidi. By contrast, the Carfagna-Sacconi Plan - the right-wing policy agenda for work-life balance drafted in 2010 - tried to spill over the concept of company crèches in the public administration by supporting the creation of crèches within public administrations for children of public employees. Also, the IV Berlusconi governments supported the creation of 700 new supplementary and integrative services such as the *family crèches* (nidi familiari) with the project called *Tagesmutter*. The latter was aimed at incentivizing the development of domestic childcare delivered by qualified professional staff. Such project was launched to make childcare supply more flexible and diversified (Carfagna and Sacconi 2010). However, the limited financial resources employed did not allow a strong development of the project (Del Boca 2010). Overall, the 2010 Carfagna-Sacconi Plan prescribed a model in which the grandparents help mothers in reconciling work and family by taking care of their children.

“There is a constant increase of family in which the elderlies offer their help in taking care of minors or make their pensions available to them, thus ensuring that women can participate in the labor market. This is the intergenerational plan that we aim to promote” (Carfagna and Sacconi 2010)³.

Against this backdrop, support for externalized childcare was not a priority for right-wing governments. In 2011, no national financial transfer was provided to regional authorities. In the same year, the central government further strengthened the *Internal Stability and Growth Pact* by restricting the possibility of hiring new staffs for public services (Neri 2014, 2016). Such constraints reduced considerably the possibility for local authorities to invest in new public childcare, for which staff cost is the major expenditure (Neri 2016). In 2012 under the Monti government, which replaced the IV Berlusconi government in 2011, two new *Agreements* were reached in the Unified Conference. According to the two Agreements, a total of 70 millions from the national

³ Translated by the author

budget was devolved to regions for both childcare and elderly services (table 4.5). In 2013 and 2014 a conspicuous share of Cohesion Fund was devolved to strengthen childcare services in Southern regions (table 4.5).

Finally, in November 2017, the Unified Conference planned to invest 209 millions in the framework of “*Integrated Educational System 0-6*” (Neri 2017) (table 4.5). The latter - planned by the “Buona Scuola” Decree of the Renzi’s Government in 2015 - aimed at shifting childcare provision from a mere social assistance service to a social and educational service integrated in the educational system. It is intended to ensure continuity between the age range 0-3 and 3-6 by extending childcare education (0-3) with the aim of achieving national coverage of 33% of the population under the age of three (Arlotti and Sabatinelli 2015). The new system is financed with a specific fund that allocates resources to local and regional authorities. As for governance, the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) coordinates LRAs initiatives, following the National Action Plan that will be adopted the by the central government (Arlotti and Sabatinelli 2015).

Table 4.5 – National Funding for Childcare after Piano Nidi, 2010-2015

Years	Schemes	Resoruces (mln EUR)	Regions involved
2010	Agreement in the <i>Unified Conference</i> on financing ECEC services for family support	100	All
2012	Two Agreements in the <i>Unified Conference</i> on financing the ECEC and elderly services	70	
2014	Agreement in the <i>Unified Conference</i> on financing ECEC services for family support	5	
2013- 2014	Action Plan for Early Childhood promoted by Minister of Territorial Cohesion with EU Cohesion Funds 2013-15 (postponed to 2017)	120 + 199	Campania, Calabria, Puglia, Sicilia
2017	Agreement in the Unified Conference – “ <i>Buona Scuola</i> ” Decree	209	All

Source: Sabatinelli (2017: 114) and Neri (2017)

In sum, the first comprehensive national law on childcare in 1971 defined kindergartens as social assistance services for which a multi-level policy setting was established. However, for more than three decades, the national level played a very weak role on childcare legislation and financing. In this period, the regions were keen to modernize childcare services, transforming them from social assistance to socio-educational services. Also, due to the a national financing, local and regional authorities had to face the increasing childcare demand trough their own financial resources (Fargion 1997).

Against the backdrop of the evolution of policy legislation outlined above, national childcare coverage passed from 5,8% in 1992 to 22,8% in 2014 (table 4.6).

Table 4.6 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Italy, 1986-2014

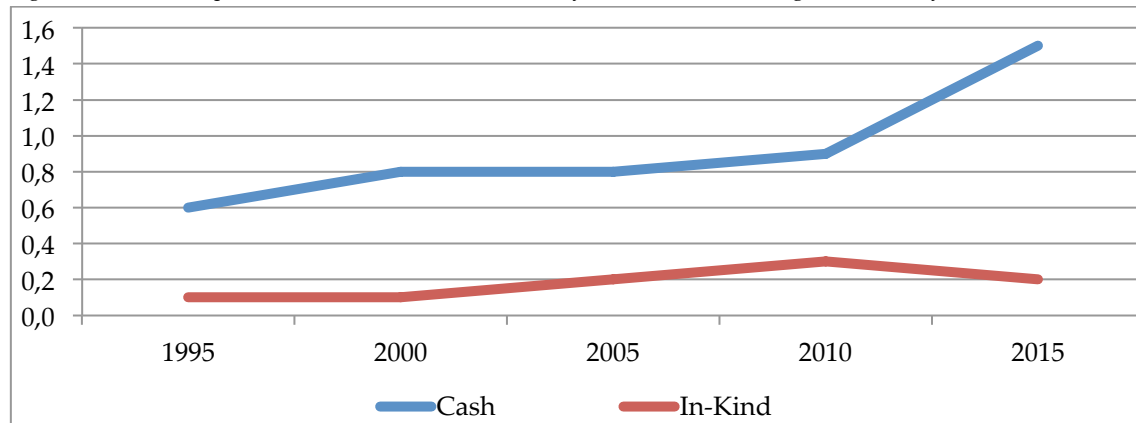
1992	2000	2008	2012	2014
5,8%	7,4%	16,6%	22,5%	22,8%

Source: for 1986 Philips and Moss (1989); for 1992 and 2000, Istituto degli Innocenti (2002); for 2012 and 2014 Istat

As shown in table 4.6 the change in childcare coverage from 1992 to 2000 was modest, passing from 5.8% to 7.4%. The most consistent change in childcare coverage occurred in 2000s. Indeed, childcare coverage rate rose to 16,6% in 2000 and to 22,8% in 2014. Nevertheless, the Italian childcare coverage rate still remains one of the lowest in Europe (see figure 2.5 chapter 2). However, childcare coverage rate is unevenly distributed across the national territory. As we will see in more detail in chapter 5, childcare is very underdeveloped in the South of Italy, whereas some regions in the Centre-North have a childcare coverage close to EU standards (see paragraph 5.2 chapter 5). Also, as seen in figure 1.2 chapter 1 the childcare expansion occurred since 2000 was driven by the increase of the availability of private places that passed from 11,7% in 2000 to 49,2% in 2014. Consequently, the childcare expansion occurred between 2000 and 2014 can be mostly attributed to the growth of private childcare provision, while overall public involvement remained low (De Roit and Sabatinelli 2013). The scarce political interest of national politics in the development of public childcare provision is evident by looking at the share of state resources devolved to services within the budget of the broader set of family policy. As shown in figure 4.1, public budget towards cash transfers has been much higher than those devolved to

services. National governments from 1995 to 2015 have oriented their family policy efforts more towards cash transfers than the development of a network of childcare services.

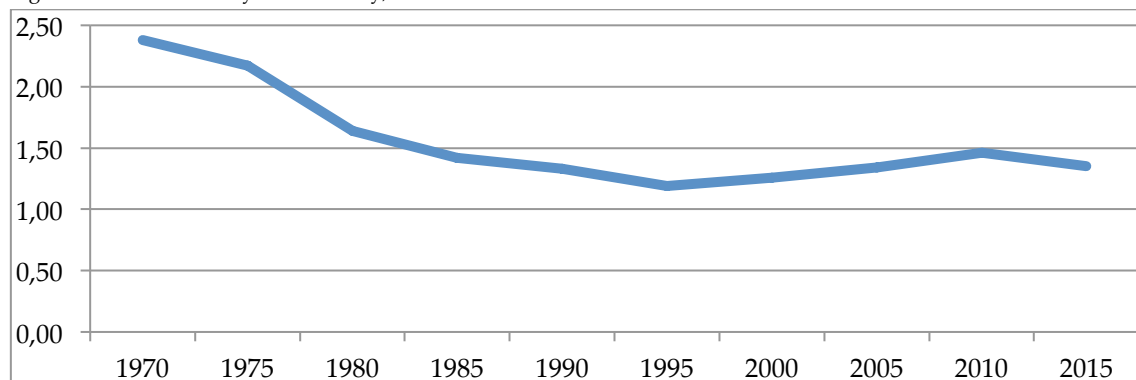
Figure 4.1 – Public Expenditure for Cash and In-Kind Family Benefits as a Percentage of GDP, Italy, 1995-2015



Source: Eurostat

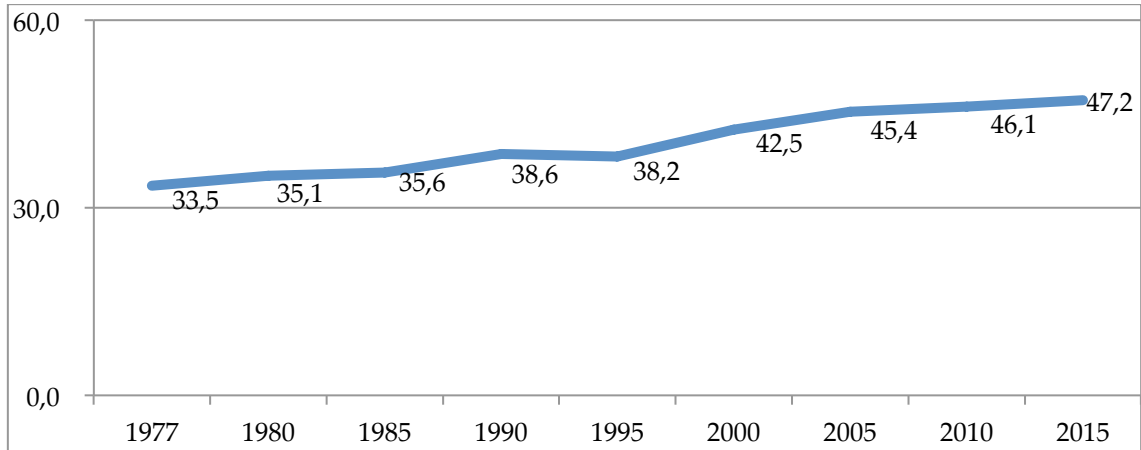
Childcare needs turns to be highly relevant in a country characterized by low and declining fertility (figure 4.2) as well as low female employment. Total fertility rates were quite high in 1970, almost 2.5. Since the 1970s Italian fertility rates declined and in 2015 are 1.35 (figure 4.2). The general trend towards the increase of female employment that characterized Western countries after the 1970s has been more modest in Italy. Here, the rate of female employment (15-64), even though it has increased from 33,5% in 1977 to 47,2% in 2015 (figure 4.3), remains one of the lowest in Europe (see figure 2.2 chapter 2).

Figure 4.2 – Total Fertility Rates in Italy, 1970-2015



Source: Eurostat

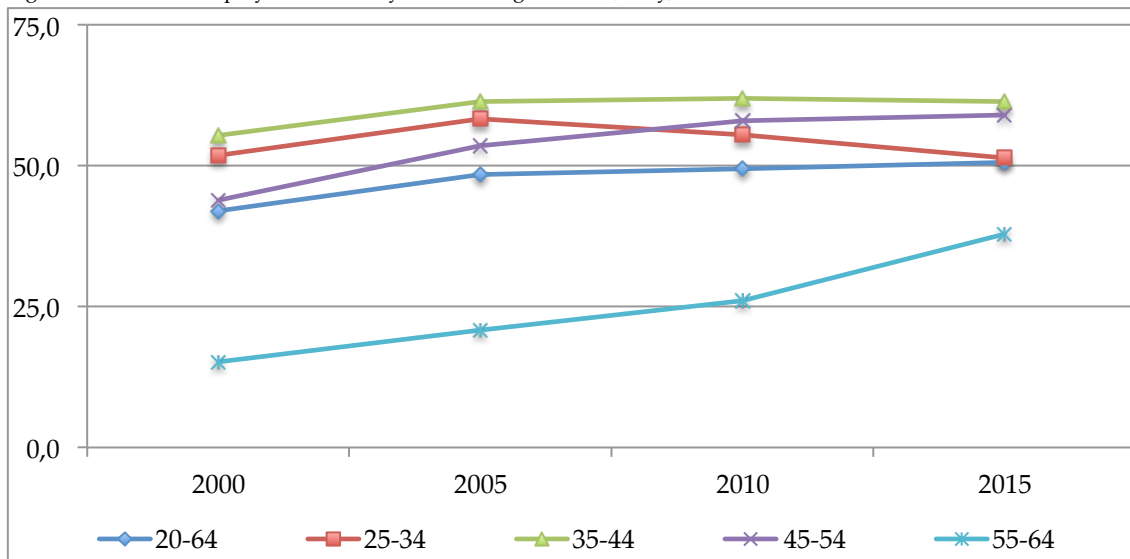
Figure 4.3 – Female Employment Rates (15-64) in Italy, 1977-2015



Source: Istat

By looking at various age cohorts the trend of female employment during the 2000s is particularly striking. Female employment 20-64 in Italy increased from almost 56% in 2000 to 60% in 2015 (figure 4.4). The employment for female aged 25-34 slightly increased from 2000 to 2005 but in 2015 it came back to the rate of 2000. Also, between 2000 and 2015 the female employment 35-44 remained more or less stable. By contrast, from 2000 to 2015, the employment levels of older age cohorts of women increased more consistently. Female employment 45-54 passed from 44% to almost 60% while female employment 55-64 sharply increased from 15% in 2000 to almost 38% in 2015 (figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4 - Female Employment Rates by Different Age Cohorts, Italy, 2000-2015



Source: Eurostat

It is interesting to note that the overall increase of female employment has been mainly driven by the increased employment rate of the older women. Indeed, if between 2000 and 2005 female employment grew in all age cohorts, since 2005 the share of female employment of younger age cohorts (25-34 and 35-44) – those potentially more interested in the strengthening of childcare supply - remained stable or even decreased. Against this backdrop, a strengthening of childcare services would be crucial to facilitate labour market activation of the younger age cohorts of working mothers.

3. The Spanish Trajectory: Legislation, Institutional Framework and Trends

Differently from Italy, in Spain the authoritarian phase started at the end of the 1930s and lasted until the late 1970s. As a consequence, the Spanish “golden age” of the welfare was “postponed” after 1976 with the transition to democracy. Indeed, a sudden welfare expansion during the 1980s accelerated the Spanish convergence towards a modern European welfare state. However, before as well as during and after the Fascist period, the Spanish welfare state was characterized by strong and persistent familism in the provision of care services. Only recently the Spanish welfare state departed from traditional familism due to a consistent growth of childcare coverage. This paragraph will draw the evolutionary trajectory of childcare policy from the origins of the Spanish welfare state to nowadays.

The Spanish Welfare State originated in a period of high political instability and conflict as well as slow industrialization circumscribed to few urban areas. Also, the Catholic Church highly shaped social and political life. Catholic conservative principles prescribed the abstention from work activities for women in order to fully devote their life to family care. Against this backdrop, childcare was mostly provided within the family. Catholic charitable institutions provided the few social assistance nursery services that existed outside the family. The Francoist regime continued to strongly promote the mothering and caring role of women while developing welfare measures targeting the male breadwinner (Naldini 2003; Valiente 2003). Family policies were promoted as pro-natalist measures rather than to empower women in the labour

market. Against this backdrop, the development of a wide network of childcare was definitely not a top priority (Camara Villar 1984). Pre-school years were divided in two cycles. A first cycle, for children aged 3-5, fell in the educational system, while the second cycle for children aged 0-2 years old developed as social-assistance services dependent from the Minister of Public Health (Valiente 2011). Childcare centres were intended as nursery centres of custody while the family had to provide education and care (Gonzalez 2004). Such social assistance approach continued to shape childcare services even in the first years of democracy. However, new institutional actors emerged as the process of democratization came along with the “federalization” of Spain (Moreno 2001). Indeed, from the approval of the Spanish Constitution in 1978 until 1983, the national parliament adopted distinct Autonomous Law (*Estatutos de Autonomia*), which devolved to regions numerous policy competences previously held by the central State (Moreno 2001). Social Assistance was transferred as exclusive competences of Autonomous Communities (Gallego et. al. 2003). In the same years, a process of democratization and decentralization also interested local governments. The first local election took place in 1979 and in 1985 the *Local Government Act* completed the Spanish decentralization process by transferring some responsibilities to municipalities according to a multi-level policy framework in which the municipalities complemented the policy responsibilities held by regions for social assistance (Navarro and Velasco 2016).

The democratization of Spain also brought a welfare expansion that suddenly placed the Spanish welfare state closer to European standards. During the 1980s a national health system was built while pensions and unemployment benefits were expanded (Ferrera 2005a). However, the agenda of the Socialist governments that ruled Spain for more a decade after the democracy transition lacked childcare reform. Thus, familism persisted to shape care provisions and the deficit of public childcare services was also maintained during the first phase of the democratic period. The limited political willingness to act in the area of family policy was interpreted as aversion towards all kinds of measures that could be associated with pro-natalist policies, as the latter were strongly supported by the previous Franco dictatorship (Valiente 1997).

Facing increasing female employment (figure 2.2 chapter 2) and lacking national interest towards the development of public childcare, the childcare services run by private providers grew to match increasing childcare demand (Gonzalez 2004). The very few public services were held either by local or regional authorities (Navarro and Velasco 2016). Firstly, municipalities - the level of government closer to citizens - faced more sharply the political pressure for childcare demand. As a consequence, they started to develop their own childcare services (Velasco 2012). Later, also the Autonomous Communities took initiatives towards childcare development in two ways. Firstly, they created their own network of childcare centres. Secondly, they employed subsidies to local governments to boost the creation of municipal childcare centres (Navarro and Velasco 2016). As a result, public childcare centres were held either by regions or municipalities. However, the private and public centres for childcare were both characterized by a mere social assistance approach (Gonzalez 2004).

The Educational law of 1990 (*Ley de Ordenacion General del Sistema Educativo - LOGSE*) was the first attempt of the central state to regulate childcare. Firstly, the LOGSE defined the distribution of policy competences (table 4.7), which remained unchanged until nowadays. The property of public centers of childcare is divided between regional and local administration. In some Autonomous Communities, a regional network of childcare centers complements the municipal supply of public childcare. In the majority of the Autonomous Communities, only municipalities hold public childcare for which received regional and national financing. Indeed, regional authorities distribute their own financial resources and those coming from the national level to local governments. The central state is in charge of defining the general legislation while the Autonomous Communities define issue regarding organizational and structural requirements that childcare providers have to follow.

The LOGSE included a large part of the demands of the Pedagogical Renewal Movements, such as: the inclusion of children under three years old in the educational system, the establishment of minimum quality levels and stronger public responsibility in the development of day care services (Rubio 2002).

Table 4.7 – The Distribution of Childcare Policy Competences in Spain

National Level	<p>Drafts general legislation</p> <p>May devolve national financing to the regions.</p>
Regional Level	<p>May hold childcare centers</p> <p>May finance childcare services with regional resources</p> <p>Distributes national and regional financial resources to municipalities for childcare implementation and administration.</p> <p>Defines the structural and organizational requirements (<i>e.g. staff-child ratio, staff qualification, space</i>)</p> <p>Defines requirements to authorize and accredit private childcare provision</p>
Municipalities	<p>May hold public childcare centers</p> <p>Are in charge of the management of childcare services according to organizational and structural criteria set by the regional level</p> <p>Authorize and accredit private providers according to the requirements set by regional level</p> <p>Identify access criteria for the beneficiaries and establish the threshold of family contributions for childcare fees.</p>

Source: author's elaboration

Indeed, the LOGSE incorporated the whole pre-school stage for children aged between 0 and 6 years old under the educational domain. However, the LOGSE guaranteed universal access by law only to children aged 3-5 years old. By contrast, day-care provision for children under-three remained underdeveloped and the political interest towards childcare investment was rather absent (Bianculli and Jordana 2013).

It is only at the end of the 1990s that the main parties introduced the development of childcare services in public speeches and party manifesto (Salido 2011). Firstly, the Centre-Right government targeted childcare provision for children aged 0-3 years old with the *Plan for Family Support* (2001-2004) aimed at reinforcing childcare services in coordination with the Autonomous Communities. More precisely, the Plan introduced a monthly benefit for working mothers with children under the age of three as a way to subsidize the purchasing of private day care services (Estevez Abe and Naldini 2016).

Also, the center-right government replaced the LOGSE with the *Ley Organica de Calidad de l'Educacion* (LOCE) in 2002. The LOCE regulated the first ECEC stage with more flexible criteria in terms of childcare infrastructures and pedagogical contents. At that moment, different educational interest groups raised their voice against a law that neglected the pedagogical and quality aspects of early childhood education as well as does not foresee adequate financing to cover the emerging family demands (Gonzalez 2004). Indeed, a series of stakeholders and trade unions such as *Confederacion Estatal de Movimientos de Renovacion Pedagogica*, *Confederacion General del Trabajo* (CGT), *Federacion de Ensenanza de Comiosione Obreras* (FE-CCOO), *Federacion de Trabajodors de la Ensenanza de la Union General de Trabajodors* (FETE-UGT), *Sindacato de Trabajaodras y Trabajadores de la Ensenanza* (STEs-i) mobilized against the LOCE. The latter, however, lasted only few years. In 2004, the Social Democrats – after winning the general elections – stopped the application of LOCE and announced yet another national law for education: the *Ley Organica de Educacion* (LOE). In order to support the new educational law the Social Democratic government issued the first childcare expansionary plan (*Educa 3*) financed by the central state. The plan *Educa 3* aimed at creating 300,000 new places to cover the growing unmet demand for early years education (0-3). The underlying logic behind *Educa 3* Plan was to stress the educational nature – instead of the merely social assistance character – of childcare for youngest children (0-3), in line with new social investment logic (Ibanez and Leon 2015). The national plan *Educa 3* was co-financed with the Autonomous Communities. The share of national funding devolved to each region was established through intergovernmental relationships in the Sectorial Conference for Education (*Conferencia Sectorial d'Educacion*), which is the state-region conference responsible for Education. The Intergovernmental Sectorial Conference for Education established the allocation of *Educa 3* national funding to the Autonomous Communities according to the following criteria: the number of population of children aged 0-2 years old, the territorial surface, the demographic dispersion over the regional territory and the presence of insular areas. Each of these criteria had a different relative weight and relevance – calculated in percentage terms - for allocation decisions.⁴ Following these criteria, from 2008 the

⁴ The Intergovernmental conference assigned the 94% of importance to the number of children aged 0-2

national government allocated an annual share of almost 100.000.000 euros. Table 4.8 shows the share of national funding devolved to Spanish Autonomous Communities in 2008 and 2011 (only available data).

Table 4.8 – The Share of National Funding Devolved to Spanish Autonomous Communities in 2008 and 2011

	2008	2011
Andalusia	26.345.395	20.459.522
Aragón	3.765.134	3.053.643
Asturias	2.402.660	1.804.514
Baleares	3.438.538	2.584.192
Canarias	6.765.890	4.651.291
Cantabria	1.487.923	1.181.688
Castilla y León	6.510.279	5.001.943
Castilla - La Mancha	6.255.609	5.111.622
Catalonia	21.847.457	17.433.036
Extremadura	3.398.813	2.424.186
Galicia	7.024.255	5.286.521
La Rioja	4.970.233	711.682
Community of Madrid	16.432.775	15.091.473
Murcia	4.161.951	3.917.995
Valenciana Community	14.656.953	11.256.692
TOTAL	129.463.873	100.000.000

Source: mecd.gob.es; <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/paginas/enlaces/270511EnlacePlanEduca3.aspx>

However, from 2011, Educa 3 funding was cut as a consequence of retrenchment pursued by right-wing governments under the pressure of the Great Recession (Valiente 2013). Also, in 2013, the centre-right government introduced a new Education law called LOMCE (*Ley Organica para la Mejora de la Ley Educativa*) that, however, did not introduced any particular changes to the organisation of ECEC.

In sum, despite the short phase of LOCE, the Spanish legislation on childcare evolved from a merely social-assistance approach to greater emphasis on educational and pedagogical aims (Gonzalez 2004). However, even though the national legislation includes ECEC provision for children aged 0-3 as part of the educational system, the universality of ECEC (0-3) is not guaranteed by law, as it is the pre-school provision for children aged 3-6 years old. The day-care provision for children under-three years old

years old. The territorial surface counted the 4,2 % while the demographic dispersion and insularity counted respectively 1,2% and 0,6 %.

remained low as shown by the coverage rates during the 1990s (table 4.9). By contrast, the coverage rate of childcare services has steadily increased in the last two decades from 5,5% in 1994 to 34% in 2014 (table 4.11), which is slightly above the European target of 33%.

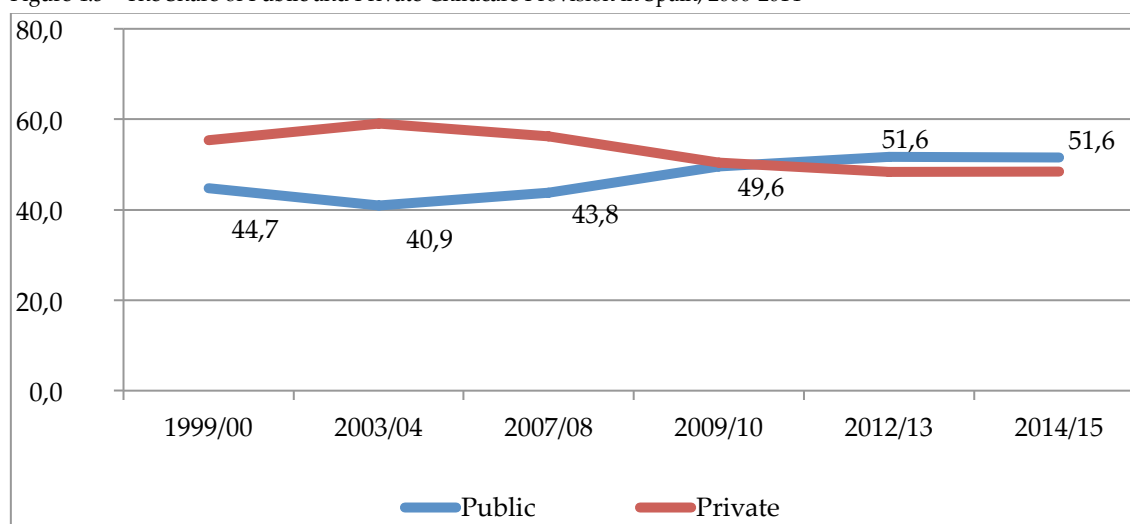
Table 4.9 – Childcare Coverage Rate, Children Aged 0-2, Spain, 1986-2014

1994	2000	2005	2007	2014
5,5	8,9	15	18,2	34

Source: for 1994 and 2000 (Istituto Nacional de Statistica 2011); for 2007, 2012 and 2016 MEC (2007,2012,2016)

For many years the coverage increase relied on private services, which were definitely more than public ones (figure 4.5). However, this trend diminished during 2000s and in 2011 the share of public services overcame the private ones (figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5 – The Share of Public and Private Childcare Provision in Spain, 2000-2014



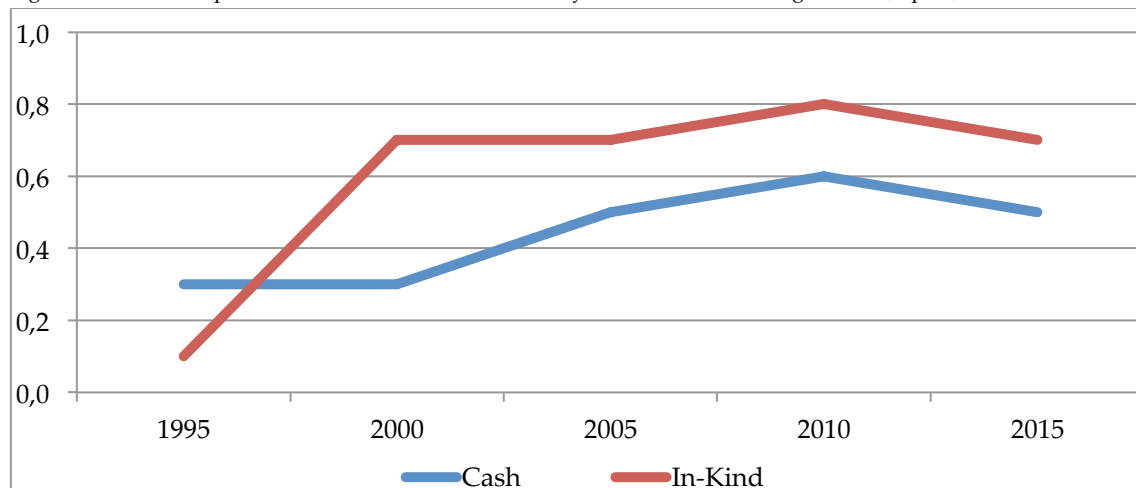
Source: MEC (2000,2004,2008,2009,2010,2013,2015)

This trend combined with the overall coverage increase (table 4.9) tells us of the relevance of the public contribution to the increase of childcare coverage, which even during the economic crisis has continued to increase. Same as Italy the childcare coverage rate is highly differentiated across the national territory, as we will see in chapter 6 paragrph 2.

Also, national spending on family services, that was traditionally rather absent, increased since 2000 overcoming those for family cash benefit (figure 4.6). However, despite such increase national funding for childcare declined since 2010 as

demonstrated by the retrenchment of Educa 3 in 2011. Nevertheless, childcare coverage rate continued to increase even when national spending was subjected to retrenchment. This highlights the key role played by regional governments to foster childcare increase.

Figure 4.6 – Public Expenditure for Cash and In-Kind Family Benefits as a Percentage of GDP, Spain, 1995-2015

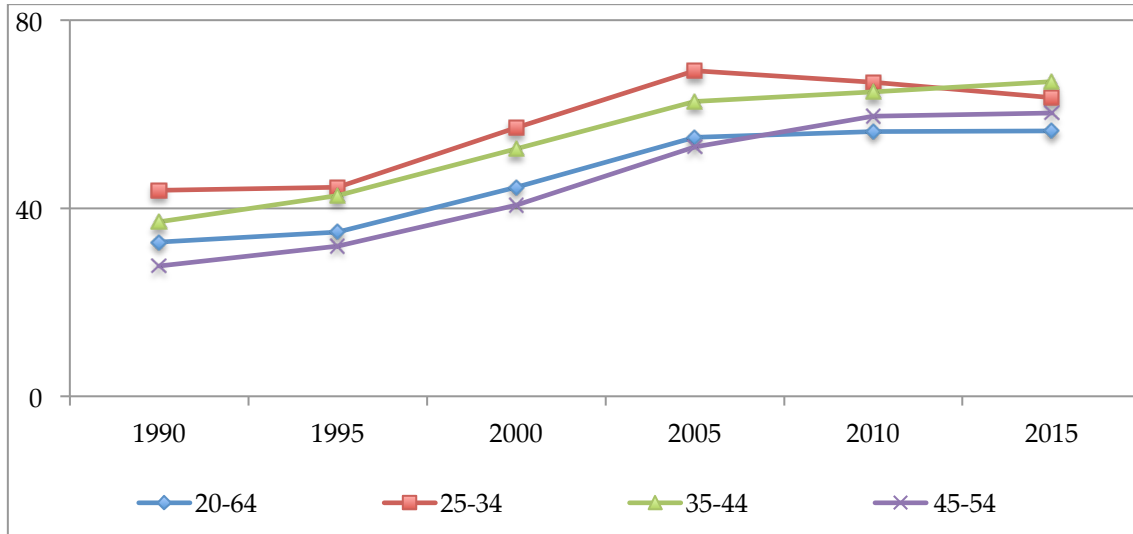


Source: Eurostat

The increasing availability of childcare services reflected the emerging childcare demand, due to the massive expansion of female employment. Indeed, already in the 1990s female employment has sharply increased in Spain (figure 4.7). The Spanish “*superwomen*” – given the scarcity of family services – have managed to combine their non-paid household activities with increasing paid activities (Moreno 2004).

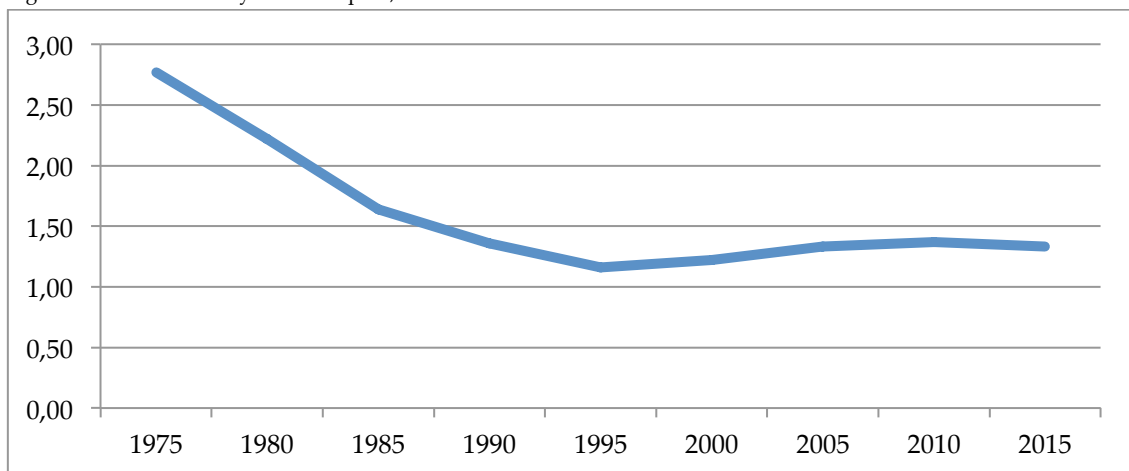
From the early 1990s to 2015, female employment increased for all the age cohorts (figure 4.8). Even though female employment 25-34 decreased from 2005 to 2015 it remained higher than the employment rates achieved prior to 2000. Overall, the sharp increase of female employment in Spain has benefited both younger and older age cohorts. In contrast with the generalized increase of female employment, national fertility trends sharply declined from the 1970s switching from 2.75 in 1970 to 1.33 in 2015.

Figure 4.7 - Female Employment Rates by Different Age Cohorts, Spain, 1990-2015



Source: OECD

Figure 4.8 - Total Fertility Rates in Spain, 1990-2015



Source: Eurostat

4. Similarities and Differences

Italy and Spain have been traditionally characterized by familistic welfare regime with underdeveloped childcare that - due to a decentralized childcare policy setting - has been unevenly distributed across the national territory. Also, both countries share similar functional pressures. In both countries fertility rates are low and declining (figures 4.2 and 4.8), and female employment 20-64 is below EU average (table 4.12). In 1995, female employment was very low in both countries with the Spanish rates lower than Italian ones (table 4.12). However, in the last two decades, Spain experienced a

sharper increase of female employment compared to Italy. As shown in table 4.10, from 1995 to 2015, female employment 20-64 in Spain grew of more than 20 pp. By contrast in Italy, female employment growth was much slower. The rates of female employment 20-64 increased of 12 pp. in twenty years. Moreover, in Spain, the increase of female employment regarded both young and old age cohorts (figure 4.7). In Italy, instead, especially in the last decade, the female employment of older age cohorts increased while employment rates of younger women decreased (figure 4.4).

Table 4.10 – Female Employment 20-64 in Italy, Spain and EU-28, 1995-2015

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
EU-28	n.a.	n.a.	59,9	62,1	64,3
Spain	34,9	44,5	55,1	56,3	56,4
Italy	38,5	42,2	48,5	49,5	50,6

Source: Eurostat

In sum, both countries have relevant high functional pressures towards childcare expansion. In Spain, policy-makers should address childcare development in order to match the growing childcare demand resulting from the sharpe increase of female employment. By contrast, In Italy, where female emplyement is lower than Spain, a consistent expansionary trajectory of childcare would favour female activation and employment of the younger age cohorts, which are particuraly suffering low employment.

The Italian childcare system and the related multi-level policy setting was set up already in the 1970s when Spain was still under the Francoist authoritarian regime. Indeed, Spain started to develop embryonic forms of formal childcare arrangements at the end of the 1980s, much later than Italy. However, at the beginning of the 1990s, Italy and Spain had similar low level of childcare coverage despite the lag of the Spanish take-off phase. In the last two decades both countries have deployed more efforts towards childcare expansion even though with different outcomes. Firstly, childcare expansion expanded in both countries but definitely more in Spain than in Italy. The former overcame the EU target on childcare coverage, whereas Italy has the lowest childcare coverage rate in Europe. Secondly, the childcare expansion in Spain coincided with the increase of the share of public services. By contrast, in Italy, in the last two decades the share of public services decreased and the modest childcare

expansion has been mainly driven by private provision. The national public spending on family is unbalanced towards cash benefits in Italy (figure 4.1), while in Spain the public expenditure for in-kind services overcame those for cash benefit (figure 4.6). Overall, public spending for family services is higher in Spain than Italy (table 4.11). Furthermore, public expenditure for family services in Spain is aligned with EU average (table 4.11).

Table 4.11 - Public Expenditure for In-Kind Benefits in Italy, Spain and EU-28, 1995-2015

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
EU-28	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0,7	0,8
Spain	0,1	0,7	0,7	0,8	0,7
Italy	0,1	0,1	0,2	0,3	0,2

Source: Eurostat

However, looking only at national trends and outcomes is not sufficient to compare childcare trajectories in Italy and Spain and explain their divergences. As seen above in tables 4.2 and 4.9, both countries share a similar decentralized policy setting that empowers regional governments with key functions on childcare spending and regulation. Indeed, regional governments distribute national funding to municipalities, which are responsible for childcare implementation. In other words, the decisions of regional government on budget allocation can orient childcare trajectory towards the support of public or private provision. Moreover, regional government establish rules that constrain childcare services delivered by municipal public providers or private providers. Regional regulations on staff-child ratio, staff qualification and training as well as the establishment of mechanisms to make childcare fees affordable are instructive to understand whether or not childcare policy is shaped according to social investment aims. Against this backdrop, an analysis of regional childcare trajectory will give us more insights on determinants of the divergences between Italy and Spain as concern childcare expansion, childcare delivery and social investment. To this regard, next chapters (5 and 6) are focused on the empirical analysis of regional childcare trajectory in the four selected regional cases. Finally, chapter 7 interprets the findings of the empirical analysis according to the analytical and theoretical framework illustrated in chapter 3.

Chapter 5 – Childcare in the Italian Regions

1. Introduction

As described in chapter 4 childcare policy in Italy has been traditionally underdeveloped. The progressive increase of childcare coverage rate in the last two decades has not been sufficient to fill the gap with the EU average, not even with the EU target of 33% agreed at the Council Conference of Barcelona in 2002. The national transfers to local and regional authorities for childcare funding has been absent for long time. Only since 2007 with the expansionary plan “Piano Nidi” the national government relaunched investments on childcare policy. The evolution of policy legislation was also very slow. After the national law 1044 of 1971 that set up rules and institutional competences for childcare, the national government introduced some novelties in the 1990s with the laws 285 of 1997 and 328 of 2000. The former established supplementary and flexible services that, differently from traditional crèches provides childcare for a smaller amount of time. The national law 328/2000 introduced the general principle of *authorization* and *accreditation* in the social services, including childcare, leaving to the regional competence the possibility to set the regulatory framework to authorize and accredit social services provided by non-state actors. More recently, the center-left national government with law 2/2017 tried to overcome the social assistance approach of old national childcare legislation of 1970s by integrating the national competences for childcare policy into the educational sector.

Despite few or absent national financial resources and policy legislation, some regional governments provided financial resources and regulatory framework to develop childcare policy at the sub-national level. Already before the expansionary trajectory some Center-Northern regions introduced innovative principles of policy legislation that transformed childcare from a social assistance to a socio-educational service (Mari 2012). Also, childcare coverage in these regions used to be higher than the national average. Indeed, the national average of childcare coverage is unevenly distributed across the national territory. Particularly, a gap between high childcare coverage rates in the Center-Northern regions and very low rates in the South emerged. Such

differences were already in place at the the end of the 1990s. During the childcare expansionary trajectory occurred over the national territory in the last two decades, childcare regional differences further exacerbated. Childcare coverage in some Northern regions got slightly above – or very close to – the EU target while in the Southern regions despite a small increase remains largely underdeveloped.

Overall, in the last two decades childcare coverage rate increased in all the Italian territory despite wide cross-regional differences. However, we know very little about the determinants of such expansion. Some contributions (Madama 2010; Vampa 2016) linked the high childcare availability of some region – such as Emilia-Romagna or Tuscany with partisan preferences and policy legacy. However, these scholarships studied the determinants of childcare regional differences by merely focus on differences in terms of quantitative expansion. By the way, we do not know wheter how and why such expansion have been promoted trough an increasing role of municipal public childcare or, alternatively, trough the entry of private providers in childcare supply. Also, we do not know wheter, how and why childcare expansion promoted by Italian regions have pursued social investment aims. To answer these questions we reckon that an empirical focus on the processes of childcare policy-making in the Italian regions is needed. Indeed, due to their competences on childcare funding and regulations outlined in chapter 4, Italian regions have the power to orient the scope and direction of childcare expansion in terms of childcare delivery and also childcare quality and affordability, two elements that primarily affect the achievement of social investment aims. Against this backdrop, this chapter provides empirical research on childcare policy-making processes occurred in Tuscany and Piedmont during the expansionary trajectory of the last two decades in order to understand wheter, how and why both regions: i) boosted childcare supply, ii) supported a precise model of childcare delivery, and finally iii) pursued social investment aims. Case selection allows to test our hypothesis on the role of partisan preferences on childcare policy change. Indeed, Tuscany has been traditionally governed by left-wing parties while both left and right-wing parties have alternatively ruled Piedmont region in the last two decades. A detailed empirical investigation on childcare policy-making processes in Tuscany and Piedmont is important to understand whether partisan

preferences are the only factors that drive childcare policy change or whether the positions and actions taken by some relevant interest groups, involved in childcare policy-making processes by regional government, may play some role.

This chapter is organized as follows. A first paragraph will describe the Italian regional differences on problem pressure (female employment and fertility rates) and childcare development. Also, this paragraph will briefly review how the literature has explained childcare cross-regional differences in Italy. The second paragraph will introduce the two selected regional cases by outlining their socio-economic and political contexts. Finally, the last two paragraphs will focus on the empirical investigation of the processes of childcare reforms that shaped childcare policy trajectory in Tuscany (paragraph 4) and Piedmont (paragraph 5) in the last two decades.

2. Regional Variability at a Glance

2.1 Problem Pressure: Female Employment and Fertility Rates in the Italian Regions

As already explained in previous chapters, two socio-economic variables such as female employment and fertility shape the extent of childcare needs. In the last two decades, female employment 20-64 increased in every Italian region (table 5.1). However, the national and regional average of female employment 20-64 remained always lower than EU average. Between 2000 and 2010 only two Italian regions (Aosta Valley and Emilia-Romagna) had an average rate of female employment 20-64 slightly above the EU average. In 2015, only the region of Aosta Valley kept this trend. In the same year, other regions such as Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Lombardy, Piedmont reached a female employment 20-64 rate above 60%, which is higher than national average (50,6%), however, slightly below EU average (65,7%). Other Center-Northern regions (Liguria, Umbria, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Veneto and Marche) had a female employment rate between 50 and 60%, which is above the national average. The latter, is undermined by the performance of Southern regions where female

employment rates are traditionally lower than the national average. In 2015, no one of the Southern Regions reached the 50% of female employment.

Table 5.1 – Female Employment (20-64) Rates, %, Italy, Italian Regions, EU-19, EU-28, 2000-2015

	2000	2005	2010	2015
Aosta Valley	60,0	61,7	64,0	65,7
EU-28	n.a	59,8	62,0	64,3
Emilia-Romagna	n.a	63,3	63,6	63,6
EU AREA (19 countries)	54,8	59,0	61,7	63,3
Tuscany	50,6	57,4	57,8	62,4
Lombardy	50,6	58,3	59,5	61,2
Piedmont	51,3	57,6	59,4	60,7
Liguria	46,1	53,4	58,0	59,9
Umbria	50,6	54,2	56,5	59,1
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	51,5	57,1	59,1	58,8
Veneto	50,8	56,1	57,1	57,9
Marche	n.a.	56,8	59,0	57,8
Lazio	41,0	51,3	52,6	54,5
ITALY	42,0	48,5	49,5	50,6
Abruzzo	38,5	47,7	47,3	46,2
Sardinia	30,2	40,0	44,9	45,2
Molise	39,4	40,0	42,2	42,5
Basilicata	31,9	37,7	38,2	39,4
Apulia	26,4	29,1	31,9	33,0
Calabria	25,7	33,9	32,9	31,0
Sicily	24,0	30,8	31,5	30,5
Campania	25,7	30,4	27,9	29,8

Source: Eurostat

In sum, even though female employment in the Italian regions increased in the last two decades, the female employment gap with the EU average remains. Also, the high difference in female employment levels between highly developed and poorer regions have not changed between 2000 and 2015.

The overall performance of fertility rates in Italy is even more worrying. In 2000, fertility rates in the Italian regions were particularly low and well below the EU average (table 5.2). Between 2000 and 2010 fertility rates slightly increased in almost every Italian region. However, fertility rates declined from 2010 to 2015, when only Lombardy, Emilia- Romagna, Aosta Valley and Veneto had the same fertility rates of national average (1,4). By contrast, fertility in the majority of the Italian regions fertility rates were lower than national average.

Table 5.2 – Fertility Rates in Italy, Italian Regions and EU-27, 2000-2015

	2000	2005	2010	2015
EU- 27	1,5	1,5	1,6	1,6
Lombardy	1,2	1,4	1,6	1,4
Emilia-Romagna	n.a.	1,4	1,5	1,4
Aosta Valley	1,3	1,3	1,6	1,4
Veneto	1,2	1,4	1,5	1,4
Piedmont	1,2	1,3	1,4	1,4
ITALY	1,2	1,3	1,5	1,4
Sicily	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,3
Campania	1,3	1,4	1,4	1,3
Marche	n.a.	1,3	1,4	1,3
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	1,1	1,2	1,4	1,3
Lazio	1,2	1,3	1,4	1,3
Liguria	1	1,2	1,4	1,3
Tuscany	1,1	1,3	1,4	1,3
Calabria	1,3	1,3	1,3	1,3
Abruzzo	1,2	1,2	1,4	1,3
Umbria	1,2	1,3	1,4	1,3
Puglia	1,4	1,3	1,3	1,2
Basilicata	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,2
Molise	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,2
Sardegna	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1

Source: Eurostat

Low and declining fertility rates characterize the whole national territory with very small differences between Southern and Northern region. By contrast, an outstanding female employment gap between northern and southern regions is highly visible in table 5.1. However, even though female employment rates in the northern regions are above the national average, they remain below the EU average. To conclude, with different extent and nuances across the national territory, fertility rates and female employment rates are a relevant source of problem pressure towards childcare expansion. Next section shows the level of development of childcare across Italian regions.

5.2 Childcare Developments across Italian Regions

As seen above in chapter 4, the Italian central government empowered regional and local authorities with childcare competences already in the 1971 when the first national law on childcare was issued. In parallel with relevant policy competences the central

level devolved financial resources for childcare to regional and local authorities. In this framework, regional authorities started to distribute such national resources to local government in order to set-up municipal public childcare. Indeed, initially, the childcare services were provided either by municipalities or charitable institutions. However, the national financing distributed by regional government to municipal childcare was modest and lasted for the first five years (1971-1976). For more than two decades, national childcare financing and regulation were absent. Due to the absence of national intervention, the regional policy-makers became highly relevant in the processes of childcare development in Italy. Regional governments kept financing municipal public childcare with their own resources. Also, during the 1980s some region introduced innovative legislation that transformed childcare from a social assistance service – as established by national law 1044/1971 to a socio-educational service by emphasizing the socio-pedagogical needs of children under three. However, two decades after its set-up childcare development in the Italian regions resulted very weak. In 1992, the highest childcare coverage among the Italian regions was in Emilia-Romagna (18.8%) (table 5.3). Beyond Emilia Romagna, the other center-northern regions in Italy showed a childcare coverage rate between 5 and 10% (table 5.3). By contrast, childcare was very underdeveloped in the Southern regions, where coverage rate was below 5%, and in some cases as Calabria, it did not even reach 1% (table 5.3). From 2000 to 2014 childcare coverage increased across the whole national territory. Nevertheless, in 2014, only three regions (Aosta Valley, Emilia-Romagna and Umbria) achieved a coverage rate above the EU target of 33% (table 5.3). In 2014, Tuscany was very close to the EU target by reaching 32,7% of childcare coverage rate. In the same year, the other developed regions of the Center-North of Italy had a childcare coverage rate between 20 and 30% (table 5.3). By contrast, between 2000 and 2014, childcare increase in the Southern regions was very weak. In 2014, childcare coverage in the Southern regions is below 15%, with the only exception of Molise that slightly overcomes 20%. In Basilicata and Apulia childcare coverage rate reaches respectively the 14,3% and the 12,6%. The situation is even worse in Calabria and Sicily, where in 2014 childcare coverage rate is respectively 8,7% and 9,9%. Therefore, the expansion of

childcare coverage rate - occurred between 2000 and 2014 - has further exacerbated the Center-Northern/Southern divide already existent in 1992.

Table 5.3 – Childcare Coverage Rate, Italian Regions, 1992-2014

	1992	2000	2008	2014
Northern				
Aosta Valley	7,6	12,3	17,2	39,9
Emilia-Romagna	18,8	18,3	24,8	35,4
Liguria	8	9,7	16,7	28,8
Lombardy	9,1	9,7	17,6	27,5
Friuli Venezia Giulia	5,4	7,8	15,6	26,4
Veneto	5,5	7,2	14,5	25,5
Piedmont	10,8	10,7	17,6	25,4
Central				
Umbria	8,7	11,6	25,8	37,2
Tuscany	7,9	11,3	20,1	32,7
Lazio	6,6	8,5	15,7	28,3
Marche	8,5	11,5	18,5	26,5
Abruzzo	4,7	4,1	9,2	20,2
Southern				
Molise	2,1	2,9	10,3	21,2
Basilicata	3,4	5,2	11,4	14,3
Puglia	4	2,7	6,6	12,6
Calabria	0,9	1,9	6,2	8,7
Island				
Sardinia	3,3	6,4	n.a.	27,9
Sicily	2,4	4,7	n.a.	9,9

Source: for 1992 and 2000 (IDI 2000); for 2008 (IDI 2010); for 2014 (Istat 2017)

Moreover, as already described in chapter 4, childcare expansion in Italy has coincided with a decrease of the share of public childcare provision. Indeed, between 2000 and 2014 childcare coverage rate in public services decreased in every Italian region (table 5.4). In 2000, childcare coverage in public services was quite high in every region except Campania where it was below 50%. In 2014, the share of childcare coverage in public services was below 50% in more than half of the Italian regions. Only Marche, Emilia-Romagna and Aosta-Valley maintain a very high public coverage over 70%. In other cases such as Tuscany, Abruzzo, Piedmont and Liguria even though the majority of childcare coverage rate is still public the latter substantially decrease in the last two

decades. Therefore, regional variation does not regard only the extent of childcare coverage but also the governance of childcare services.

Table 5.4 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Public Services, Italian Regions, 2000-2014

	2000	2014
Marche	83,9	77
Emilia-Romagna	98,3	73,3
Aosta Valley	100	71
Basilicata	84,6	68,2
Molise	87	62,1
Sicily	100	57,5
Tuscany	94,2	54,6
Abruzzo	94,4	53,6
Piedmont	89,8	52
ITALY	88,3	50,8
Liguria	95,7	50,3
Lombardy	91,7	49,9
Umbria	91,6	47,8
Lazio	91	45,5
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	77,8	42,8
Apulia	65	42,1
Veneto	78,7	40,9
Sardinia	88,6	39,6
Campania	44,31	35,4
Calabria	57,4	16,9

Source: for 2000 (IDI 2000); for 2014 (Istat 2017)

In sum, policy efforts with regard to childcare developments are highly differentiated across the Italian regions. Madama (2010) performed a cluster analysis in order to capture childcare policy differences and to identify the different regional «worlds of social services» in Italy. She identified at least four groups. The first (Puglia, Calabria, Basilicata, Campania, Sicily, Sardinia and Molise), named as the world of “*social welfare penury*”, characterized by high underdevelopment in terms of both expenditure and supply. In the second (Veneto, Lombardy, and Friuli-Venetia Giulia) “*transfer-rich social welfare world*”, measures elderly care and cash benefits are preferred, also through the widespread use of welfare vouchers. By contrast, a third group (Emilia-Romagna, Liguria, Piedmont and Tuscany) is “*service-rich*”, as it provides a wide supply of public services for families, with only limited use of welfare vouchers. Finally, a fourth group (Umbria, Abruzzi, Lazio and Marche) presents similar features to the service-rich

cluster, with less childcare expenditure and supply, so that it may be called a “moderately service-rich social welfare” cluster. The analysis of Madama (2010) is not updated with the latest developments in terms of childcare coverage and spending showed in table 5.3 and 5.5. However, from her cluster analysis emerged how the availability of childcare services is higher in those regions where female employment (table 5.1) and fertility rates (table 5.2) are higher. To this regard, Del Boca and Rosina (2009) argued that in the first decade of 2000s the “geography of fertility” has deeply changed in relation to childcare expansion. In the Center-Northern regions, the high availability of childcare services is associated with increasing fertility rates and female employment (Del Boca and Rosina 2009). By contrast, the underdevelopment of childcare in the Southern region is coupled with low levels of fertility and female employment (Del Boca and Rosina 2009). However, since 2010, fertility rates are declining even in the Center-Norther regions. Also, even considering the positive association between functional pressure and childcare expansion the direction of the association and the related causality link is not clear. In other words, it is not clear whether the growing childcare demand due to higher functional pressure led to childcare development or whether the latter prompt an increase of fertility and female employment rates. As already explained more in detail in paragraph chapter 3, socio-economic variables are more appropriate to identify the extent of problem pressure rather than to explain cross-regional differences with regard to childcare policy change. According to Madama (2010), the combination of policy legacy and partisan variables, such as the strength of the left, is better suited to explain the cross-regional differences in terms of childcare expansion. However, differently from Madama (2010) our study aims at explaining childcare policy change beyond mere childcare expansion. Indeed, we aim at explaining cross-regional differences also in terms of direction of childcare expansion with regard to delivery and social investment. Therefore, this study will bring new insights both on the empirical side – regarding processes and dynamics of childcare policy-making and on theoretical side – providing potential explanations for cross-regional differences. Before outlining the two regional childcare policy trajectories that will serve as empirical foundation for our theoretical reflection, the

next section will highlight the socio-economic trends and political context of the two selected regional cases.

3. Socio-Economic and Political Context in Tuscany and Piedmont

3.1 Socio-Economic Challenges in Tuscany and Piedmont

Located in the Centre-North of Italy, between the Tyrrhenian Sea and the central Apennine Mountains, the Tuscany Region is over 22,990 km² with a population of 3.743.730. A big share of regional population lives in Florence (999.862) the regional capital, but there are a series of medium-big city such as Pisa, Livorno, Arezzo, Siena, Lucca, Pistoia, Grosseto. A hilly and mountainous land with limited but very fertile agricultural land accompanies such high urban density. The economy and the industrial sector are very dynamic and multifaceted. Beyond agriculture that remains a significant industry - although declining over time - the more traditional industrial sectors in Tuscany includes: mining, textiles and clothing, chemicals/pharmaceuticals, metalworking, glass and ceramics (Banca d'Italia 2017).

On the other hand, Piedmont Region located in the North-West of Italy is the most western Italian region, close to the French border. Piedmont has a population of 4.375.865 the majority of which is located in the region capital Turin (890.529 inhabitants). Piedmont among the Italian regions is the second for territorial surface, the sixth for number of inhabitants, and the second for number of municipalities. Indeed, one of the peculiarities of Piedmont region is the extensiveness of its territory with a high number of small municipalities and a strong discrepancy in population between Turin and the rest of municipalities. For instance, the second biggest city after Turin is Novara, with 104.384 inhabitants, the rest of municipalities have less than 100.000 inhabitants. Furthermore, there are many municipalities with less than 15.000 inhabitants. The city of Turin and the area nearby is one of the capitals of Italian capitalism where many of historical industries, such as FIAT or Olivetti were born. The industrial districts include textile/clothing, ITC and food. Also, the small firms in large manufactures – although they have reduced their employment – remain an important

component of Piedmont's industrial base. Furthermore, out the area of Turin a rural and agricultural sector is widespread.

Table 5.5 shows the GDP (expressed in million of euros) in Italy and in some developed regions of the Centre-North, including Tuscany and Piedmont, in the period 2000-2015. In this period GDP grew in all the regions included in table 5.5. However, Tuscany and Piedmont are the ones where GDP grew less. More precisely, GDP growth between 2000 and 2015 in Tuscany has been slightly higher than Piedmont. The latter, however, has higher GDP than Tuscany. Overall, Tuscany and Piedmont have the same medium-high level of economic development.

Also, Tuscany and Piedmont performed relatively well - compared to Italian and EU-27 average - concerning poverty rates (table 5.6). In 2005, while Italian at risk of poverty rates (25,6%) were almost the same as EU-27 average (25,8%), Tuscany and Piedmont stood below Italian and EU-27 average with respectively 14,8% and 16,5% of people at risk of poverty rate. The risk of poverty in Tuscany however increased with economic crisis passing from 14,8% of 2005 to 17,5% in 2010 and then continued to increase in 2015 (18,6%).

Table 5.5 – GDP (million of euros) in Italy and selected Regions, 2000-2015

	2000	2005	2008	2010	2015	Δ 2000 - 2015
ITALY	1.239.266	1.489.726	1.632.151	1.604.515	1.652.153	412.887
Lombardy	257.315	310.195	346.189	345.569	359.349	102.034
Emilia-Romagna	106.968	127.191	142.842	138.755	149.693	42.725
Veneto	112.686	136.174	147.220	144.738	152.656	39.970
Tuscany	80.776	96.425	106.096	105.152	110.182	29.406
Piedmont	100.449	120.012	129.164	125.313	127.866	27.417

Source: Eurostat

Table 5.6 – AROPE⁵ Rates, Total Employment Rates, Female Employment (20-64) Rates, %, EU-27, Italy, Tuscany and Piedmont, 2000-2015

		2000	2005	2010	2013	2015
At risk of Poverty Rate (AROPE)	EU-27	n.a	25,8	23,7	24,6	23,7
	Italy	n.a	25,6	25	28,5	28,7
	Tuscany	n.a	14,8	17,5	18,4	18,6
	Piedmont	n.a	16,3	18,2	16,5	18
Total Employment Rate (20-64)	EU-27	66,6	68	69	68,8	70,1
	Italy	57,1	61,5	61	59,7	60,5
	Tuscany	62,6	67,5	67,8	68	69,2
	Piedmont	63,7	67,6	67,5	66,4	68,1
Female Employment (20-64)	EU-27	57,3	60,1	62,2	62,7	64,3
	Italy	42	48,5	49,5	49,9	50,6
	Tuscany	50,6	57,4	57,8	60,8	62,4
	Piedmont	51,3	57,6	59,4	55,3	60,3

Source: Eurostat

In Piedmont the overall increase of poverty rates between 2000 and 2015 has been smaller than Tuscany. Poverty rates in Piedmont passed from 16,3% in 2005 to 18% in 2015 (table 5.6). In this year, Tuscany and Piedmont share almost similar poverty rates (table 5.6).

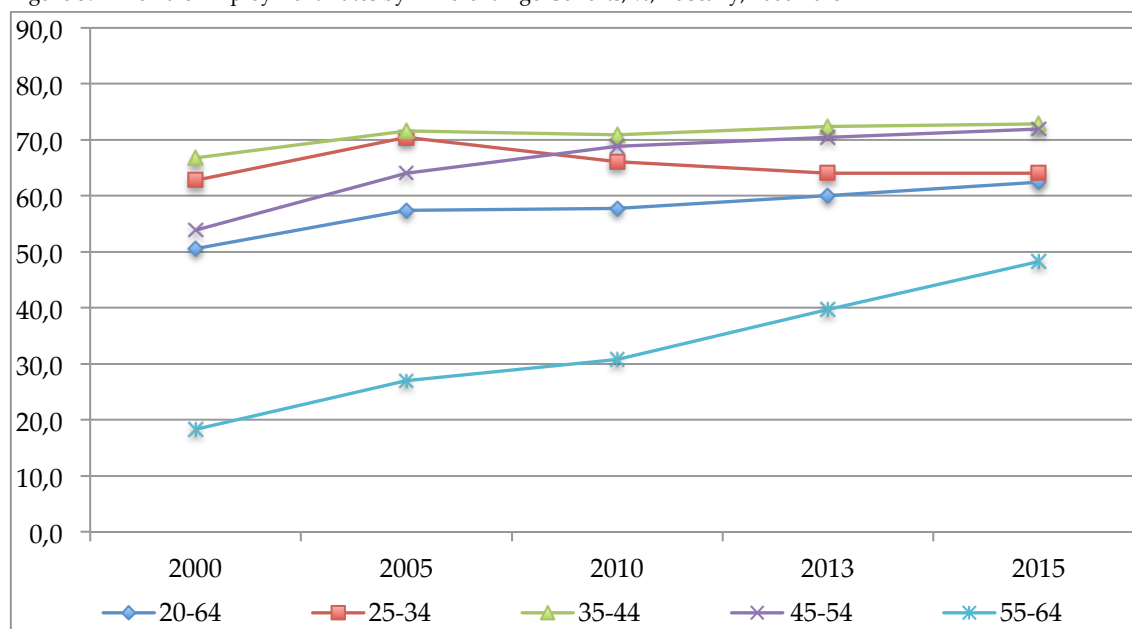
Tuscany and Piedmont are very similar also concerning the performance of total and female employment rates. Already in 2000, total employment rates in Tuscany and Piedmont were around 60%, definitely higher than national average. The distance with national average has increased between 2000 and 2015 (57,1%) (table 5.6). In 2015, Tuscany and Piedmont had respectively the 69,2 and 68,1% of total employment rate while the national average was 60,5% (table 5.6). It is interesting to note, that, in 2000 total employment rate in Piedmont was slightly higher than in Tuscany. By contrast from 2005, total employment rates in Tuscany overcame those of Piedmont. However, total employment rate in both regions is below the EU average, which in 2015 was 70,1% (table 5.6). Female employment between 2000 and 2015 grew in both regions, even though female employment growth was higher in Tuscany than in Piedmont. Indeed, female employment in Piedmont passed from 51,3% in 2000 to 60,3% in 2015, while in Tuscany it switches from 50,6% in 2000 to 62,4% in 2015. Between 2000 and

⁵ The AROPE rate, the share of pers the total population which is at risk of poverty or social exclusion, is the headline indicator to monitor the achievement of poverty target within the Europe 2020 strategy. More precisely, AROPE corresponds to the sum of persons who are either at risk poverty, or severely materially deprived or living in households with low-work intensity.

2015, female employment rates in both regions were higher than national average but below EU average, which in 2015 was 64,3%.

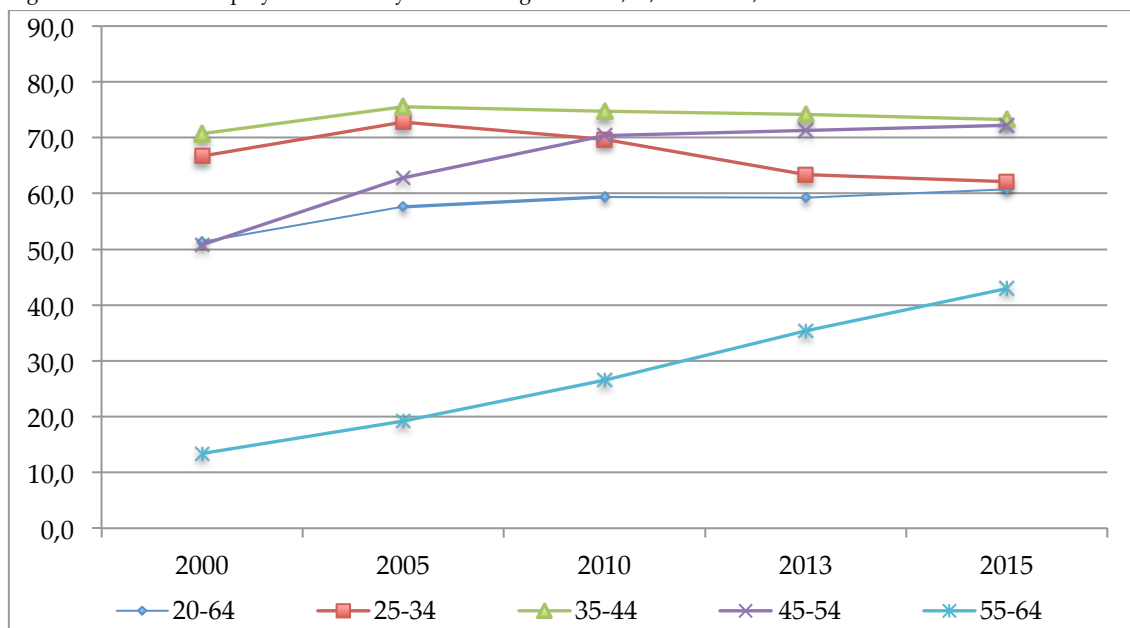
In both regions female employment grew in all the age cohorts until 2005 (figures 5.1 and 5.2). Between 2005 and 2015, female employment 25-34 has decreased from 70% to 64% in Tuscany (figure 5.1) and from 72% to 62% in Piedmont (figure 5.2). In the same period, employment rate for female aged 35-44 remained more or less stable around 71% in Tuscany (figure 5.1) while it has decreased from 75% to 72% in Piedmont (figure 5.2). By contrast, female employment in older age cohorts such as 45-54 has passed from 64% (2005) to more than 70% (2015) in Tuscany and from 62% (2005) to 72% (2015) in Piedmont. The increase of female employment 55-64 was even higher switching from 27% (2005) to almost 50% (2015) in Tuscany and from 20% (2000) to 43% (2015) in Piedmont. In sum, the overall increase of female employment 20-64 occurred between 2000 and 2015 showed table 5.6 has been driven by older age cohorts. By contrast, between 2000 and 2015, female employment among younger age cohorts, those that can benefit more from childcare expansion, decreased.

Figure 5.1 – Female Employment Rates by Different Age Cohorts, %, Tuscany, 2000-2015



Source: Eurostat

Figure 5.2 - Female Employment Rates by Different Age Cohorts, %, Piedmont, 2000-2015



Source: Eurostat

Tuscany and Piedmont also faces many of the same issues and challenges characterizing Italy and Western Europe such as a low fertility rate and increased ageing population. From 1990 to 2015 fertility rates slightly increased passing from 1,1 to 1,3 in Tuscany and from 1 to 1,4 in Piedmont (table 5.7). In both cases, fertility rates are lower compared to EU-27 average (1,6 in 2015). Prior to 2005, fertility rates in Tuscany and Piedmont were below the national average. From 2005, fertility rates in Tuscany and Piedmont are line with national average. The number of population aged over 65 constantly increased in both regions (tables 5.8 and 5.9). In Tuscany the number of population aged 0-2 after a progressive increase from 1995 to 2010 had a sharp decrease in 2015 (table 5.8). The same decrease occurred in Piedmont but less sharply (table 5.9). Overall, in both regions the share of old age people over the total population represents almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total population.

Table 5.7 - Total Fertility Rates, EU-27, Italy, Tuscany, Piedmont and EU-27, 1990-2015

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
EU-27	n.a	n.a	1,5	1,5	1,6	1,6
Italy	1,3	1,2	1,7	1,3	1,5	1,4
Tuscany	1,1	1	1,1	1,3	1,4	1,3
Piedmont	1	1,1	1,3	1,3	1,4	1,4

Source: Eurostat

Table 5.8 – Population in Tuscany: total, people aged less than 2 years old and over 65, 1995-2015

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Total	3.505.309	3.491.580	3.557.577	3.657.340	3.752.654
0-2 years old	77.102	80.250	90.596	97.620	89.372
65 + years old	726.139	769.827	822.448	860.303	927.544

Source: Eurostat

Table 5.9 -Total Population, 0-2 years old and over 65 years old in Piedmont, 1995-2015

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Total Population	4.261.168	4.225.083	4.272.118	4.362.041	4.424.467
0-2 years old	98.736	102.549	109.528	116.428	107.064
over 65	795.634	867.380	949.541	1.007.531	1.080.991

Source: Eurostat

To conclude, two regions as Tuscany and Piedmont with the similar level of economic development, poverty and employment rates share common problem pressure towards childcare needs, as highlighted by the recent decline of young female employment, the traditionally low fertility rates and the increase of ageing population.

3.2. Regional Political Competition within the Italian Party System

3.2.1 Party System and Electoral Rules

After the second world war the first free parliamentary elections in Italy were held in 1946. From the post second world war to the early 1990s – a period named as “*first Republic*” – the structure of the Italian party system was very fragmented being characterized by at least seven state-wide parties. Such political fragmentation combined with a pure proportional electoral system incentivized the formation of multi-party coalition governments, which characterized Italian party system for at least four decades. Due to a large electoral consensus, the leading party of such coalition governments used to be the Christian Democracy (DC), a moderate party openly supported by Catholic Church. DC, at the centre of the Italian political spectrum, used to form highly unstable multi-party coalition governments with smaller parties of the political spectrum such as: Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and Italian Social-Democrat Party (PSDI) on the centre left, Italian Republican Party (PRI) on the centre and Italian Liberal Party (PLI) on the centre-right. The two opposition parties, Italian Communist

Party (PCI) and *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI), belonged respectively to the left and the right of the political spectrum. The Italian Communist Party, the main leftist party in Italy at that time, used to gain a large electoral consensus able to contend the political majority of DC. However, international factors connected with the Cold War prevented that PCI became a concrete alternative for the national government. This introduces a further peculiarity of the Italian party system. The latter, for at least four decades, was characterized by a communist/anti-communist cleavage, rather than by a traditional left/right cleavage as in most Western democracies (Cotta and Verzichelli 2008).

On the other hand, MSI was a neo-fascist political party present in Italy until the early 1990s. The MSI had a marked extreme-right ideology and relatively low electoral support around 5% with a peak of 8.7% in 1972.

The structure of regional party system reflected the national one, with the important difference that PCI, as we will see below, ruled coalition governments in some peculiar regional and local contexts. Also, the electoral system at the regional level was a pure proportional system, with a prevalence of legislative power over the executive and the indirect election of the President of Regional Council appointed by the Regional Parliaments, which instead were directly elected. This political landscape changed during the early 1990s when the national party system was shaken by the “*Bribe City*” scandal. After that, the national party system of the “*first republic*” was replaced by a bipolar party system in which two political coalitions - left and right wing – confronted each other in the electoral competition with a majoritarian electoral system. The main party of the right-wing coalition was *Forza Italia* (FI), a center-right liberal party founded by the entrepreneur Silvio Berlusconi in 1994. The rest of the coalition was composed by the post-fascist party *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN), one of the heir of the DC the Union of Cristian and Centre Democrats (CCD), and an anti-system and radical right party known as Northern League (LN). The latter emerged as a territorialist party advocating the secession of the Northern regions from the rest of Italy. In 2008, FI and AN merged together in the *Popolo della Libertá* (PdL). On the other hand, the main party of left wing coalition was the Left Democratic Party (PDS) then transformed in *Democratici di Sinistra* (DS), the main successor of PCI’s tradition. DS composed the left-wing coalitions with a centrist ally, the Italian Populary Party (PPI) then trasformed in

Margherita and a radical left party, *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista* (PRC). In 2007 DS and Margherita merged together into Democratic Party (PD) while the legacy of the radical left was maintained by *Sinistra Ecologia e Libertá* (SEL), a party resulted from the union of the hiers of PRC and the members of DS which were against the political merge with Margherita. Thus, after 1992 the political competition in Italy was shaped by two political coalitions which were higly fragmented and unstable. Indeed, in this phase the Italian party system was characterized by “*fragmented bipolarism*” (Chiaramonte and Di Virgilio 2000), in which two big and fragmented coalitions compete for political elections. Such “*fragmented bipolarism*” was reproduced at regional level, where in 1995 the electoral system was changed by the introduction of a majoritarian mechanism which strengthened the government role over legislative assembly (Rubechi 2013). The major impact of electoral rule changes concerned the timing of government coalition formation. After 1995 the regional coalition party government and its programme have to be indicated before regional elections, differently from the previous proportional setting that implied the formation of government majority after the elections. The majoritarian push was then completed in 2000 when it was introduced - for the first time at the regional level - the direct election of the President of the Government.

In sum, regional party system followed the changes of the national party system. As for the electoral system, it changed from a pure proportional system to a strong majoritarian one. Finally, since 2000 the majoritarian shift became even more marked by introducing the direct election of the President of Regional Government.

3.2.1 The Political System in Tuscany

The political system in Tuscany has been highly stable since the introduction of regions in 1970. Centre-left parties of different types have a consolidated government tradition since the 1970s. The changes – either national or regional – both in the electoral rules and the party system influenced the dynamics of government formation without undermining the left predominance though. In contrast with the national level, where the governments between 1947 and 1992 were mainly characterized by the DC leading role, in Tuscany PCI gained 42,3 % in the first regional election (1970) and ruled the

first regional government in coalition with other left parties such as PSI and PSIUP⁶ (Baccetti 2005). During the following years the high consensus towards left parties has been rather stable. In order to classify the regional party systems, Vassallo and Baldini (2000) calculated the distance between the seats obtained by the parties traditionally ruling national government (DC and its traditional allies) and PCI in the period 1970-1995. They identified four clusters among which Tuscany belong to the so-called “*red belt*” cluster together with Emilia-Romagna and Umbria in which the predominance of PCI has been high and constant.

The changes of party system and electoral rules occurred in the 1990s have not influenced the strength of left in Tuscany. The centre-left coalition – even though with some changing setting within the coalition – has constantly repeated its electoral success in Tuscany. The solidity of the centre left electoral success was confirmed even in the regional elections of 2000 with the direct election of the center-left coalition candidate, Claudio Martini, which was then confirmed in 2005. During these two mandates, the government ruled by Martini has been rather stable, with no councillor changes within the first mandate and the confirmation of half his first government between the first and the second mandate (Profeti 2010). At the 2010 regional elections the centre-left coalition “*Toscana Democratica*” opposed the right wing coalition composed by PDL and Northern League. The center-left coalition gained 59,7% of votes, which was mainly concentrated in the PD (42%) followed by IDV 9,4%⁷. The candidate president for left wing coalition, Enrico Rossi, has resulted among the most voted Presidents in Italy (Profeti 2010). On the other hand, the centre-wing coalition reached the 34,4%. The newly elected President Enrico Rossi immediately brought some innovation in the formation of his regional government, following gender egalitarian criteria. Indeed, women counsellors composed half of the Rossi’s government in 2010 (Profeti 2010). After five years the incumbent president Rossi was

⁶ The President was Lelio Lagorio, a member of PSI. Indeed, even though the PCI was by far the main party, in terms of seats and electoral consensus, a member of PSI was designed as President as a result of coalition bargaining (Baccetti 2005).

⁷ The other parties of the centre left coalition, FdS and Sel, obtained respectively, 5,3% and 3,4% of votes (Profeti 2010).

the candidate of centre left coalition against Monica Faenzi, representative of right-wing coalition. Enrico Rossi was confirmed with 59,7% against the 34,4% gained by the centre-right coalition, which confirmed its traditional political weaknesses in Tuscany.

3.2.2. The Political System in Piedmont

As for the regional political system in Piedmont we can identify two phases according to the major changes occurred in the electoral and party systems. A first phase goes from 1970 - when the regions were introduced - to 1995. In this year the combination of new electoral rules and the changed party systems opened a new phase of regional political system.

In the first phase, between 1970 and 1995, when the electoral system was proportional and the president indirectly elected by the general assembly, the governing coalition was similar to those ruling national governments with some relevant exceptions. Vassallo and Baldini (2000) identified Piedmont as a region where the political competition was high and sometimes led to the exclusion of Christian Democracy – steering party in all national government coalitions from 1945 to 1992 – from regional government. This actually happened in Piedmont between 1975 and 1983. Indeed if the first regional government was ruled by DC in coalition with PS, PSDI and PRI, the extraordinary result of PCI in the regional elections of 1975 led to one of the first Italian regional government composed by PCI and PSI with the exclusion of DC. The agreement between PC and PSI implied: the presidency of regional government for PSI, a higher share of regional councillors and a higher relative influence on government programme for PCI. The government crisis in 1983 during the III regional legislature was then solved with the exit of PCI from the regional government and the entrance of DC, PSDI, PRI and PLI. This coalition setting lasted until 1995, when new the majoritarian rule changed regional electoral systems. From 1995 electoral competition in Piedmont became highly competitive. At the 1995 regional election the centre-right coalition composed by Forza Italia, Alleanza Nazionale (AN) and Centro Cristiano Democratico (CCD) gained the 39,7% against the 35,6% of center-left coalition. As a consequence, Enzo Ghigo - the candidate president of the centre-right coalition - became president in 1995. Ghigo was then confirmed in 2000, when for the

first time the direct election of the President was introduced in regional elections. In 2000, the centre-right coalition increased its consensus (51,78 %) with respect to the previous election also including in the coalition the Northern League that gained the 7,56 % of votes. The electoral success of centre-right coalition ended in 2005, with the election of President Mercedes Bresso leading the left-wing coalition, composed by DS, Margherita, PRC and a series of smaller parties (PdCI, the Greens, SDI, IdV, UDEUR). The left-wing coalition gained 50,9% of votes against 47,5% of centre-right. In such highly competitive – but also fragmented - political context every political choice towards inclusion or exclusion of some parties from the coalition may result to be relevant for the final election. Against this backdrop, the 2009 European election gave the opportunity of a sort of “mid-term” assessment of the electoral consensus of the two coalitions, in order to test whether to enlarge or restrict the political alliance. The decreasing share of votes of centre-left parties as well as the growing consensus of Northern League led to different considerations in the two coalitions. The centre-left started to consider that becoming a more inclusive coalition would have helped Bresso’s confirmation in 2010 (Bobba and Seddone 2010). On the right wing side, Northern League claimed and obtained the candidature for the presidency in the election of 2010 (Bobba and Seddone 2010). The choice to continue including the Northern League in the centre-right coalition and appointing a member of Northern League as candidate President was contrasted by the centrist ally of right wing coalition: Unione di Centro (UDC). UDC discontent within the centre-right coalition and the centre left perspective to build a more inclusive coalition converged, and in the 2010 election UDC joined centre-left. Such coalition enlargement did not avoid a defeat in the election of 2010, when the centre right coalition, steered by the Northern League candidate Cota won for few decimals. Indeed, the regional elections of 2010 were the most competitive in Piedmont. Cota became president with 47,3 % of votes against the 46,9% of incumbent president of left-wing, Mercedes Bresso. The latter, already the day after, asked for the recount of votes as well as announced the decision to appeal to *Tribunale Amministrativo Regionale* (TAR) for the alleged irregularity of four minor electoral lists (Bobba and Seddone 2014). The regional elections of 2014 took place in a completely different political context with the decreasing consensus of Forza Italia and

the appearance of a third force: the Five Star Movement. Against this backdrop, the centre left coalition won the last electoral competition with the 47,9% of votes, a slight increase compared to 2010. On the other hand, the centre-right coalition gained the 22,9%, almost the same as Five Star movement that has passed from 3,7% in 2010 to 21,4% in 2014.

4. Childcare Policy Trajectory in Tuscany

4.1 Introduction

Tuscany - together with Emilia Romagna and Umbria - has constituted the so called “red belt”, an area in the Centre-North of Italy traditionally governed by centre-left parties, more precisely, during the 1970s-1980s, by the Italian Communist Party (PCI). The latter, which was constantly excluded by the national government, found in the sub-national political arena a place where experiment and develop its government abilities as well as its political preference towards the development of a strong welfare policy (Ciarini 2012; Vampa 2016). Against this backdrop, Tuscany region has been at the forefront concerning the development of childcare services in Italy. As shown in table 5.10, the childcare policy legislation in Tuscany can be divided in three phases.

A first phase started already two years after the national law 1044/1971, when the Tuscan regional government adopted the first regional legislation that set-up childcare system in Tuscany by establishing requirements and providing resources to run municipal public childcare. Regional legislation on childcare was then updated already during the 1970s and 1980s. However, the major changes occurred in third wave of regional legislation from 1999 to 2015. In this period, regional legislation on childcare introduced relevant novelties that boosted childcare supply, altered the previous equilibrium between public and private childcare provision and finally tried to orient quality requirements towards social investment prescriptions. Therefore, the childcare policy changes occurred within the third phase of regional legislation impacted on the three analytical dimensions of our work.

Table 5.10 - Childcare Policy Legislation in Tuscany from 1970s to date

Phases	Legislation	Main Policy Changes	
1	L.R. 16/1973	- Investment – co-financed with the national level – in the development of childcare supply - Staff-child ratio: 1/5 - Staff qualifications: diploma of nursery	Set-up and Take-off of Childcare System
	L.R. 2/1979	- staff-child ratio: 1/7	
2	L.R. 47/1986	<i>“childcare services in Tuscany aims at responding to children needs as well as preventing the conditions of psychophysical and sociocultural disadvantage”</i>	Embryonic Social Investment
3	L.R. 22/1999	- Introduced marketization mechanisms (Authorization and Accreditation) - Promoted the development of Integrative services - Introduced pedagogical coordination (municipal and territorial) - Introduced Conciliation Vouchers	Introduced Marketization and Partial Social Investment
	L.R 32/2002 d.pgr 47/R/2003	- Staff child/ratio: 1/6 for children aged below 18 months 1/9 for children aged above 18 months - Staff Qualification required: at least ISCED 5 or obtained diploma on socio-pedagogical subjects	
	L.R. 2/2013 d.pgr 41/R/2013	Staff child/ratio: - 1/6 for children below 12 months - 1/7 for children aged between 12 and 23 months - 1/10 for children aged between 24 and 36 months	

Source: author's elaboration

For this reason, the empirical analysis in this chapter (paragraph 4.3 below) will be focused on the third phase of regional legislation in order to reconstruct the policy processes that lead to childcare policy changes. However, prior to focus on the empirical analysis, next section will briefly describe the origins of childcare in Tuscany.

4.2. *The First Two Phases of Formal Childcare in Tuscany: Set-up and Innovative Legislation*

A first phase that set up regulations and investments for the take-off of the childcare system occurred already in the 1970s (table 5.10). Indeed, two years after the introduction of the national law on childcare (law n. 1044 of 1971) the Tuscan regional government issued the regional law number 16 aimed at regulating formal childcare services defined as a social assistance support for employed mothers. Indeed, the regional law 16/1973 was mainly inspired by social assistance principles. In parallel to the establishment of regional regulatory framework, the regional government financed – together with national level – the initial boost of municipal childcare supply. Indeed, regional government initially supported only municipal public childcare, that in Tuscany represented the high majority of childcare supply at that time. The first childcare regional law 16/1973 established the requirements that each municipality has to follow to set-up childcare services. Among these requirements there was a very low staff child ratio: 1 staff educator every 5 children (table 5.10). According to Magrini (2014), at that time the limited childcare demand and the low level of female employment led regional policy-makers to establish a very low staff-child ratio (Magrini 2014). By contrast, few years later, due to the progressive increase of childcare demand, the regional law number 2 of 1979 established the increase of the staff-child ratio from 1/5 to 1/7 (Magrini 2014) (table 5.10). This was not the only change to the first regional childcare law issued in the 1970s. Indeed, a new regional law in 1986 (regional law number 47) overcame the social assistance approach of the 1970s, by stating for the first time the educational relevance of childcare services: *“childcare services in Tuscany aims at responding to children needs as well as preventing the conditions of psychophysical and sociocultural disadvantage.”*

Already in 1980s, Tuscany was one of the pioneer regions to introduce innovative principles, such as the focus on educational and social development of the children, that national legislator had not introduced yet at that time. The focus on socio-educational development of children represented an embryonic form of social investment approach, at least on paper. Indeed, in order to make concrete the principles stated in the regional law of 1986 further steps are required such as:

developing an educational curriculum, maintaining a moderate ratio between staff and enrolled children, improving staff qualification, favouring access of disadvantaged children. These steps have not been adopted yet at that time. They will be adopted later, in the third phase of regional legislation, which is the focus of next section.

4.3 Childcare Policy-Making Processes in the Third Phase of Regional Legislation

Despite intense and innovative childcare legislation issued during the 1970s and the 1980s, at the beginning of the 1990s childcare coverage in Tuscany was limited even though higher than national average (see figure 5.3). To this aim, a third phase of regional legislation was particularly aimed to childcare expansion by promoting the diversification of childcare provision and supply. Indeed, the three regional laws that have followed each other between 1999 and 2013 have been oriented towards regulating the childcare private supply as well as promoting the development of *Integrative Services*.

More precisely, the regional law 22/1999 primarily introduced the key elements that shape the childcare system that we have nowadays in Tuscany. The regional laws 32/2002 and 2/2013 did not introduced particularly changes to the policy framework promoted at the end of the 1990s. The two regional laws issued during 2000s were only aimed at integrating the policy framework of regional law 22/1999 into a broader law on education policy, which comprhended also labour market and training policy. However, during 2000s, implementing regulations such as 47/R/2003 and d.pgr 41/R/2013 introduced some changes to childcare regulation, particularly to quality requirements such as staff qualifications and staff-child ratio.

Next section will focus on the policy processes that led to the adoption of regional law 22/1999 (section 4.3.1). Then, in section 4.3.2 will focus on the adoption of regional regulations concerning childcare quality requirements. In the section 4.3.3, we will see how regional financial financial planning supported childcare policy in the last two decades. A final section will outline the trends and outcomes of regional childcare trajectory in terms of expansion, delivery and social investment.

4.3.1 *The Adoption of Regional Law 22/1999: Political Preferences and Stakeholders Consultations*

In 1992, childcare coverage rate in Tuscany was limited even though higher than the national average. Such limited coverage rate worried left-wing politicians that governed Tuscany for long time. The political willingness to increase regional childcare supply was mentioned in the electoral programme drafted by center left coalition for the regional election of 1995.

“We aimed at increasing childcare supply to give parents, especially mothers, higher chances to combine their professional and familiar life. However, we have to put at the centre of new interventions on childcare the education of children as it is in the childcare policy tradition of Tuscany” (Electoral Program of Center-Left Coalition, Regional Election 1995)⁸.

However, before that left parties translated this political willingness into a reform proposal, a series of innovative and flexible services that integrated the supply of traditional public creches were promoted by no-profit cooperatives.

“As no profit cooperative operating in Tuscany we have been always active in the social assistance sector. In 1997 the national law 285 was a good opportunity to start operating also in the childcare services not necessarily in competition with the traditional public crèches but to complement the overall childcare supply with innovative services in terms of pedagogical projects and flexible solutions in terms of time duration and arrangements” (Interview 31 – Member of Legacoop Cooperative).

Indeed, no profit cooperatives started to exploit the opportunities contained in the national law 285 and begun to set up *integrative services*. However, such services developed spontaneously without a regional legislative framework that properly regulated them. In 1998, the Regional Councillor of Education expressed the

⁸ Translated by the author.

willingness to regulate the regional childcare supply in the light of the novelties brought by the national law number 285 as well as to cope with the new needs of a dynamic society characterized by increasing female employment rates (Interview 30 – Former Regional Councillor for Education).

The goal of the regional councillor that presented the proposal of regional law in 1998 was to regulate the no-profit initiatives that were spontaneously developing as well as to improve the supply of traditional crèches by increasing its availability and flexibility in terms of time duration and activities (Interview 30 – Former Regional Councillor for Education). In the presentation of the proposal of regional law number 22/1999 the regional councillor emphasized the propensity of the regional government to build a childcare market providing the strengthening of public supply but also the creation of a private supply supported through the accreditation mechanism (Introductory Note to the Bill proposal 373/1998 – Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1998a). Indeed, the main intention of the regional government was to strengthen public investment on childcare supply as well as to promote the initiatives of no-profit private companies in the provision of childcare facilities (Introductory Note to the Bill proposal 373/1998 – Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1998a).

Table 5.11 summarizes the main novelties proposed by the regional government in the bill proposal 373/1998 that, in 1999, became the regional law number 22.

Firstly, the bill proposal 373 differentiated between traditional crèches and integrative services. The latter, as developed in national law 285/1997, perform integrative activities, such as socialization or playgrounds, in a smaller amount of time compared to traditional crèches. Against this backdrop, the families used to complement the daily supply of traditional crèches with integrative services either to increment the amount of externalised care or to give to their children different opportunities of socialization beyond family contexts.

Second, the regional government proposed the introduction of market mechanisms, adequately regulated. Indeed, following the bill proposal 373, each private providers that aims at running a childcare services has to be authorize by municipalities according to a set a set of hygienical and technical requirements set by regional government (*authorization*).

Table 5.11 – Main Elements of Bill Proposal 373/1998

<p>Diversification of Supply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Traditional Crèches:</i> for care and education of children aged between 3 months and 3 years old. • <i>Integrative Services</i> which consist of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Centers for parents and children:</i> playgrounds and educational activities for children aged between 3 months and 3 years old. It includes the presence of parents and professional staff. - <i>Microcheches:</i> flexible services in terms of time (less duration than traditional crèches) and activities for children <i>aged between 18 months and 3 years old.</i> - <i>Residential Childcare (nido domiciliare):</i> parents gather together to share their educational and care activities within their own domestic environment or in the home of professional staffs (<i>educatore a domicilio</i>).
<p>Diversification of Providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of <i>Authorization:</i> private providers that aim at running a childcare services have to be authorized by municipalities according to regulative criteria established by regional government. • Introduction of <i>Accreditation:</i> public administration contracts out new childcare places in services already held and managed by private providers. In this case, private providers that engage in public contracting out have to follow further quality requirements compared to the mere authorization procedure. • Municipalities are also free to <i>outsource</i> only the management of childcare services held by themselves.
<p>New Instruments for Regional Planning and Coordination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Regional Plan for Educational Interventions</i> • <i>Establishment of Educational Territorial Areas</i> • <i>Territorial Pedagogical Coordination</i>
<p>Postpones the definition of regulative criteria on quality and infrastructure to the adoption of <i>implementing regulation.</i></p>

Source: author elaboration on Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region (1998a)

Also, municipalities had the possibility to purchase new childcare places in the private services held and managed by private providers that follow further quality requirements than those needed for normal authorization (*accreditation*). Therefore,

either for *authorization* or *accreditation* the municipalities had to follow hygienical, technical and quality requirements, established by the regional government. The definition of these requirements was not provided in the bill proposal. The latter postponed the definition of the requirements that municipalities have to follow to authorize and accredit private providers, to the adoption of the *implementing regulations* (*regolamenti d'attuazione*, administrative acts issued by Regional Council of Ministries) within 6 months from the adoption of the regional law.

Finally, the bill 373/1998 proposed new instruments for the regional governance of education policy such as an annual governmental document that is *the regional plan for educational interventions*. The latter had to develop and integrate all the policy interventions on education as well as to indicate the allocated financial resources. Also, according to the bill proponents, the regional municipalities had to be gathered in 35 educational areas⁹ with the aim to harmonize educational interventions within each educational area in order to minimize the regional policy variations with respect to important issues such as the definition of fees or pedagogical coordination. Since the municipalities have the power to establish childcare fees, the regional government aimed at minimizing the variation of childcare fees across municipalities through the introduction of educational areas. Indeed, each educational area had the explicit - even though not binding - mandate to harmonize local childcare fees within the territorial educational areas so to minimize as much as possible fees variation in the regional territory.

Moreover, in the context of the new integrated system of childcare framed by bill 373, the latter launched the establishment of municipal pedagogical coordination between public childcare and accredited private services. Municipal coordination concerns the *horizontal pedagogical coordination* between public and private services for children aged 0-3 and the *vertical pedagogical coordination* between educational staffs of the ECEC services and those of the preschool (3-6) with the aim of pursuing educational

⁹ These are: Aretina, Casentino, Val d'Arno, Val di Chiana Aretina, Valtiberina, Empolese Val D'Elsa, Fiorentina, Fiorentina Sud-Est, Fiorentina Nord-Ovest, Mugello, Val D'Arno e Valdissieve, Colline Metallifere, Colline dell'Albegna, Amiata Grossetana, Grossetana, Val di Cornia, Bassa Val di Cecina, Elba, Livornese, Piana di Lucca, Versilia, Valle del Serchio, Lunigiana, Apuane, Val di Cecina, Valdera, Valdarno Inferiore, Pisana, Val di Nievole, Pistoiese, Pratese, Alta Val d'Elsa, Amiata Val d'Orcia, Senese, Val di Chiana Senese

continuity in the age 0-6. Thus, another goal of educational territorial areas would be to harmonize territorial pedagogical coordination. More precisely, *the horizontal pedagogical coordination* implied also the organization of joint training courses for staff working in public and private accredited services.

The bill proposal 373 of 1998 was discussed both within the regional parliament and within the education and budget parliamentary committees.

“every new law and regulations was anticipated by formal consultation with stakeholders (social/no profit organization as well as pure private providers), trade unions, representative of municipal association (ANCI)” (Interview 22 - Department of Education, Regional Administration of Tuscany).

The formal consultation within the Education parliamentary committee included the (non-binding) opinions of stakeholders such as representatives of professional staff (trade unions), association of municipalities, association of private (either no or for profit) providers. The Trade Unions welcomed the initiative of the regional government to build a new regional framework law for childcare as well as to regulate the private supply that otherwise would have developed in the informal economy without any quality control (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1998b). However, trade unions recognized that the extent to which the new regulative framework impact on quality of services and working conditions of professional staff would depend on the approval of new regulations, which was postponed after the law adoption. As a result, they postponed the bargaining on these issues to the future consultations for the approval of implementing regulation. However, in the discussions for the approval of bill 373/1998, the representative of CGIL pointed out the necessity to differentiate the public and private contribution in the traditional and integrative childcare services. The former, according to trade unions preferences, had to be provided by public administration that would ensure higher standards in terms of quality required to deliver an adequate educational service (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1998b) whereas, according to CGIL representative, the potentials of no profit private providers could be exploited for the development of integrative

services that are more flexible solutions with less stringent educational aims (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1998b). On the other hand, the associations of no profit private providers claimed the high qualification of their trained professional staff (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1998b). The latter, according to *Legacoop*¹⁰ representative, would have been eventually ready to deliver high quality services even in the traditional crèches (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1998b). For this reason, the association of no-profit private providers (*Legacoop*) welcomed the proposed policy design as facilitating and regulating their entry in the regional childcare system (Regional Parliament of Tuscany 1998b). Moreover, the representative of *Legacoop*, Grazia Faltoni, claimed that the next regional calls (*bandi regionali di finanziamento*) devolved to local authorities for childcare financing would provide ex-ante a defined share of funding to outsourced or accredited services delivered by no profit cooperatives (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1998b). The association of municipalities demanded that local governments would acquire a wider role in the planning of regional intervention instead of being relegated only to implementation (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1998b). More importantly, the representatives of municipalities feared that the entry of private providers would have entailed a loss of centrality and power of municipal public actors in childcare supply. To this regard, they claimed the supremacy of public service in terms of quality and organization, to contrast the trend towards marketization emphasized by the bill proposal (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1998b). The opposition of the majority of municipalities to the marketization trend is not trivial for political consequences. Indeed, in a region with a strong left party tradition, the same parties used to administer both regional government and the majority of municipalities. Consequently, some intra-party or intra-coalition conflict emerged. Some mayors, of the same coalition that was governing the Tuscany Region, pushed for maintaining and strengthening the municipal public supply (Interview 16 – Member of Regional Parliament, Democratic Party; Interview 30 – Former Regional Councillor for Education). On the other hand, opposition parties in the regional parliament agreed on the overall policy design and

¹⁰ *Legacoop* is the biggest association of no-profit cooperatives in Italy together with *Confcooperative*

regulatory framework even though with some remarks. Firstly, they complained about the scarce interest devolved to some form of family crèche (*nido domiciliare*) that according to their policy preference would have been the best solution to strengthen childcare supply in Tuscany (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1999). Secondly, they contested the decentralization of the final decision on authorization and accreditation to municipalities (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1999). The opposition parties would have preferred that a regional organism maintained the final word on authorization or accreditation (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1999). However, despite few opposition remarks, in the final parliamentary debate they declared their abstention vote without totally rejecting the proposal (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1999).

The regional government responded to right-wing remarks by stating that according to the bill proponents the family crèche (*nido domiciliare*) is only one of the integrative services but it cannot be the main arrangement of childcare supply which remains anchored to traditional crèches supplied by either public or private providers. In the parliamentary debate and the consultation for the approval of the bill proposal, the members of regional government remarked how the introduction of marketization mechanism occurs in the framework of public regulation, in which municipalities actually play a central role. Against this backdrop, the bill proponents rejected the right-wing proposal of establishing a regional organism as it would have entailed a loss of centrality of municipal authorities. In turn, the municipalities' reluctance to the regional proposal would have been further exacerbated (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1999). In other words, the regional government responded to municipalities scepticism, emphasizing how the proposed regional regulation did not entail a decrease of local power but actually gives new competences, such as the final decision on authorization and accreditation, to municipalities (Parliamentary Archives of Tuscany Region 1999; Interview 30 – Former Regional Councillor for Education).

The formal consultations in the Education committee of the regional parliament took place in various stages between 1998 and 1999. By contrast, the parliamentary process of bill proposal 373/1998 was quite smooth and the bill was finally approved with the positive vote of the entire centre left coalition and the abstention vote of right-wing

parties. So the bill 373/1998 became the regional law 22/1999 with actually no changes compared to the initial proposal. The regional law 22/1999 was the first law in Italy that introduced the mechanism of authorization and accreditation in the provision of social services. One year later, the national parliament approved the national law 328, which introduced the general principle of authorization and accreditation procedure for the provision of social services stating that each regional government had to set their own rules to implement both mechanisms. Against this backdrop, the regional government of Tuscany ruled by centre-left coalition anticipated the national government.

The remarks made by the stakeholders consulted in the Education parliamentary committee were actually taken into consideration for the steps that followed the adoption of regional law. Indeed, as a follow-up to the adopted regional law 22/1999, the regional government had to plan childcare regional financing and the implementing regulations regarding quality and technical requirements valid for public and accredited private services. Such requirements were included in a framework regulation adopted four years later the regional law 22/1999, instead of six months as stated in the law. In this vacancy period, the regulative criteria applied were those of the previous regional law 47/1986. The new quality requirements were actually introduced in 2003 (*d.pgr 41/R/2003*) and then they slightly changed in 2013 with the adoption of implementing regulation *d.pgr 47/R/2013*. The definition of requirements has been concerted with a series of stakeholders. Next section will focus on this process.

4.3.2 The Adoption of Implementing Regulations: From Formal Consultation to Bargaining

After the adoption of regional law 22 in 1999, the third wave of regional legislation on childcare continued during 2000s. The regional law 22/1999 was abrogated by regional law 32/2003, which was further changed by regional law number 2 in 2013. However, in both cases, regional legislation did not introduce particular changes to the childcare policy setting adopted at the end of the 1990s.

“In 2002, there was a renewed interest in childcare services due to the new EU inputs such as achieving the 33% of childcare coverage, that became our regional target. However, the regional approach towards childcare did not change. Since we embraced the life long learning approach promoted by the EU institutions we only integrated childcare legislation into the broader legislative framework of education policy” (Interview 30 – Former Regional Councillor for Education).

Both laws actually integrated the childcare policy setting already stated in regional law 22/1999 into a framework law on education, training and labour market. Indeed, the regional laws 32/2002 and 2/2013 concerned the entire educational policy of Tuscany including also training policy and job counselling in the context of active labour market policy.

The main policy changes during 2000s concerned the quality requirements that were finally adopted in 2003. Prior to 2003, the qualification required for childcare staff was the nursery diploma, as stated by regional law 16/1973. The implementing regulation *d.pgr 47/R/2013* introduced the mandatory requirement for childcare staff to hold a bachelor degree or specialized diploma on socio-pedagogical subject. Also, it introduced a differentiated staff-child ratio: 1/6 for children aged below 18 months and 1/9 for children aged above 18 months. This ratio was then changed by a new implementing regulation, the *d.pgr 41/R/2013*. The latter established three staff-child ratio: 1 staff member every 6 children aged below 12 months; 1 staff member every 6 children aged between 12 and 23 months; 1 staff member every 10 children aged between 24 and 26 months.

Such decisions were adopted through implementing regulation that is a regional government prerogative with no involvement of regional parliament. However, the adoption of implementing regulation in 2003 and 2013 resulted from a bargaining process with stakeholders such as trade unions, associations of private providers and associations of municipalities. The regional DG of Education steered bargaining tables with the aforementioned stakeholders before the adoption of both implementing regulations. Indeed, trade unions representatives have emphasized how childcare

policy-making in Tuscany has been traditionally inspired by a concerted approach (Interview 24 – CGIL; Interview 25 CISL; Confalonieri and Canale 2013).

The requirement of high staff qualification (such as degree or specialized diploma), was one of the successful claims of trade unions in the bargaining process (Regional Government of Tuscany 2002). Trade unions manage to achieve one of the objectives, such as the improvement of staff qualifications, considered as fundamental to effectively transform childcare from a social assistance to a socio-educational service. The trade unions, however, complained that the childcare system in Tuscany does not adequately meet quality requirements such as staff training (Interview 17 and 18, CGIL - CISL). As said above, the regional law 22/1999 introduced municipal coordination to guarantee a pedagogical coordination between services managed by public sector and those managed by private providers through *outsourcing* or *accreditation*. Regional policy-makers recognize the integration of public and private childcare workers for staff training courses as crucial for guarantying quality service (Interview 15 – DG Education, Regional Administration). In 2014, the regional government devolved to pedagogical coordination and staff training courses 16,2% of the overall childcare expenditure in Tuscany (Regional Government of Tuscany 2014). By contrast, trade unions representatives highlight the risk of further dualizing labour conditions when organizing the same training for staff with different working and salary conditions (Interview 24, CIGL – Interview 25, CISL).

The staff-child ratio introduced in 2003, and then changed in 2013, transformed the unique ratio provided by regional law of the 1970s into a differentiated staff-child ratio. The latter represented a balance between the instances of private no-profit providers and those of staff representatives. As recognized by public official that steered the bargaining process on implementing regulations in 2013:

“A differentiated but contained staff-child ratio as those identified by the two regulations seemed a proper equilibrium between increasing the number of children in classrooms and maintaining quality” (Interview 15 – Public Official, Regional Administration).

Indeed, a differentiated but contained staff-child ratio allows to increase the number of children (as requested by no-profit cooperatives) by splitting them in different classrooms thus avoiding the presence of an excessive number of children in one classroom as advocated by trade-unions.

In sum, the bargaining processes for the adoption of implementing regulations led to the introduction of a balanced staff-child ratio and higher staff qualifications. Such requirements have to be followed by either public or private providers that plan to build and manage a childcare service in Tuscany. So far, the empirical analysis has focused on the trajectory of the regulatory framework of childcare in Tuscany. Next section will focus on the scope and direction of regional financial planning for childcare in the last two decades.

4.3.3 Financial Support for Childcare Services

Table 5.12 shows the share of the financial resources allocated by regional government in some selected years (due to the available data) between 2000 and 2015.

Table 5.12 – Financial Resources Allocated for Childcare in Tuscany, 2000-2014

2000	2008	2010	2013	2014
7.489.625	6.802.613	7.773.893	5.399.289	7.363.004

Source: for 2000 (Regional Parliament of Tuscany 1999); for 2008, 2010, 2013 (IDI database); for 2014 (Regione Toscana 2014)

These figures include regional resources and European resources coming from ESF addressed by regional government towards childcare goals. Indeed, the regional law 22/1999 was supported also with ESF resources.

“To support the regional law 22/1999 we increased the share of regional budget traditionally devolved to childcare but most importantly we could rely on European resources coming from ESF and ERDF in the context of Operational Regional Program 2000-2006. The use of European resources was important to increase our financial effort towards childcare investment” (Interview 30 – Former Regional Councillor for Education).

Actually, we do not have data on the extent of the share of EU resources over the total regional resources allocated on childcare listed in table 5.11. However, in the Operational Programmes (2000-2007 and 2007-2013) the regional government exploited ESF resources to finance *Conciliation Vouchers* (Interview 30 – Former Regional Councillor for Education, Confalonieri and Canale 2013). The latter, was an instrument associated to the active labour market policy to support unemployed mothers in their job search. More precisely, the unemployed mother who demonstrated her unemployed status and the consequent enrolment in training courses received a monthly amount ranging between 100 and 200 euros to spend on public, private and accredited services. This kind of voucher complemented the fees discounts scheme – established at the local level - devolved to low-income households according to ISEE. The *Conciliation Vouchers* were used also as an instrument to reduce the waiting lists on public childcare. Those who could not benefit from public childcare due to long waiting lists could use *conciliation vouchers* to buy accredited services.

Also, between 2007 and 2010, the regional government received important shares of national funding that are not included in the table above. Indeed, for three years (2007, 2008 and 2009) Tuscany Region received a total amount of 21.956.060 millions from the national government in the context of the national childcare expansionary plan “Piano Nidi” (table 5.13). The latter was also co-financed by regions. Tuscany invested in the expansionary plan “Piano Nidi” 6.586.819 for whole period (2007-2009). Such regional resources were additional to the traditional annual regional budget for childcare showed in table 5.12.

Table 5.13 – Piano Nidi (2007-2009), National and Regional Funding

National Funding 2007-2009	Share co-financed by Tuscany
21.956.060	6.586.819

Source: Confalonieri and Canale (2013)

The national funding directed to regions for childcare financing was rather absent prior to 2007 as well as rather limited after “Piano Nidi”. Before and after “Piano Nidi” regional government in Tuscany relied on its own financial resources to support childcare policy. In sum, the regional financial planning for childcare is composed by regional financial resources but also by national and European resources. Each year the

regional government drafts the annual calls for regional financing in which distributes financial resources to local authorities in order to address specific childcare policy initiatives. The analysis of the annual calls of regional financing directed to municipalities from 1999 to 2015 reveals that regional governments constrained local authorities to reserve a minimum share (defined ex-ante) of new childcare services for externalisation or accreditation to providers coming from third sector no-profit cooperatives, as requested by no-profit cooperatives in the former consultation for the adoption of regional law 22/1999. More precisely, the regional government devolved funding to local authorities in order to finance projects for the creation of new childcare services or management of existing services according to four arrangements: i) pure public services; ii) outsourced services; iii) the increasing of service daily time duration; iv) the purchase of new places provided by private providers (*accreditation*) (table 5.14).

Table 5.14 – Childcare Arrangements Financed through Regional Funding

Pure Public Services held and directly managed by public administration
Public services held by public administration but indirectly managed (outsourced to private providers)
Public services, either pure or outsourced, that aim at increasing their daily time duration
Municipalities that purchase new childcare places from accredited private providers

Source: Regional Calls for Childcare Financing (1999-2015)

In 2014 (only available data), the share of regional funding addressed to the increase of public supply was 112.500 compared to 1.280.087 devolved to municipalities for purchasing childcare places in the accredited private services (table 5.15).

Table 5.15 – Financial Resources Allocated by Regional Government for Specific Actions in the Public and Accredited Private Childcare Services, 2014

	Public	Accredited Private
Increasing Places	112.505,5	1.280.087,1
Vouchers	22.951,9	659.951,9
Increasing Time Duration	137.665,4	

Source: Regione Toscana (2014)

Also, the regional resources channelled to vouchers for accredited services are definitely higher than those devolved to vouchers for public childcare (table 5.15).

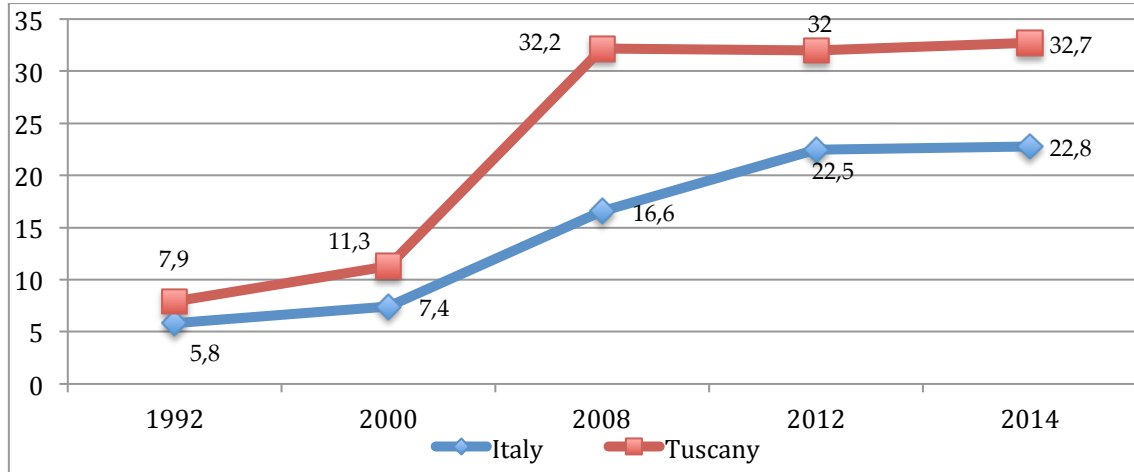
Finally, in 2014, the regional government allocated 137.665 million for financing the increase of the opening hours of public childcare (table 5.15).

The regional government thus explicitly supported projects of childcare services developed by no-profit cooperatives following the principle of *horizontal subsidiarity* according to which civil society organizations participate actively in the provision of welfare for the whole community (Introductory Note to the Bill proposal 373/1998; Interview 30 – Former Regional Councillor for Education). The presence of no profit organizations represented by Legacoop or Confcooperative is traditionally quite strong in Tuscany. Also, they are quite structured organizations particularly embedded in the social and economic life in Tuscany, with a strong legacy towards the provisions of other social assistance services aimed at the social inclusion of marginalised groups or at the prevention of drug addiction. Against this backdrop, regional government decided to support the extension of the provision of childcare services – traditionally dominated by public providers in Tuscany – to no-profit private providers in order to guarantee a multifaceted childcare supply (Interview 30 – Former Regional Councillor for Education). The regional funding supported the outsourced or accredited no-profit provision. No-profit cooperatives that plan to build a pure private service did not receive regional public funding. This is because, both outsourced and accredited services in Tuscany, differently from full private provision, have to follow the same quality and technical requirements of public services. In these sense, according to regional policy-makers, financing childcare provision outsourced or accredited to no-profit cooperatives would have implied financing a childcare centre that followed the same requirements of public childcare.

4.4 Trends and Outcomes of Childcare Policy-Making Processes

In the last two decades the regional planning in terms of policy regulation and investment contributed to childcare expansion in Tuscany. Indeed, the third phase of regional legislation went in parallel to the increase of childcare coverage rate. The latter was 7,9% in 1992 compared to a national average of 5.8% (figure 5.3).

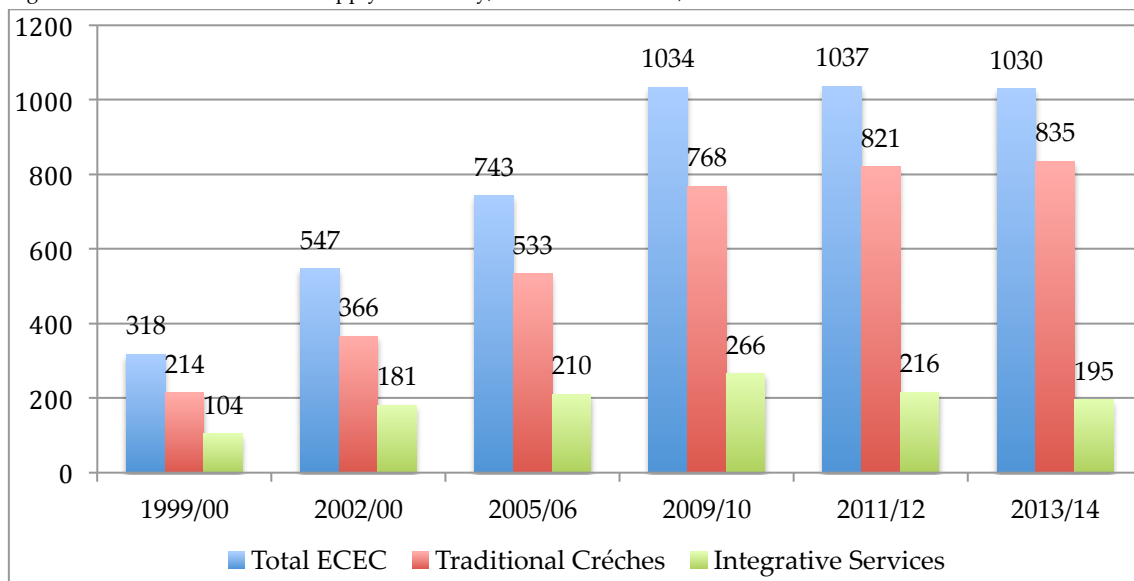
Figure 5.3 – Childcare Coverage Rate, Italy and Tuscany, 2000-2014



Source: for 1992 and 2000 (IDI 2002); for 2008 (IDI 2008); for 2012 and 2014 (Istat 2014 and 2016)

Such distance further increased during 2000s. In this period, childcare coverage in Tuscany switched from 11,3% in 2000 to 32,7 in 2014, getting very close to the EU target on childcare coverage rate (33%) (figure 5.3). By contrast, the national average of childcare coverage rate in 2014 is 10 percentage points lower than in Tuscany. The absolute number of total childcare places in Tuscany grew from 318 in 1999/2000 to 1030 in 2013/14, with a small decrease of 7 places from 2011/12 to 2013/14 (figure 5.3). The majority of the total number of available childcare places in Tuscany is represented by the traditional crèches, which increased constantly from 214 places in 1999/2000 to 835 (figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4 - The Total Childcare Supply in Tuscany, Absolute Numbers, 1999-2015

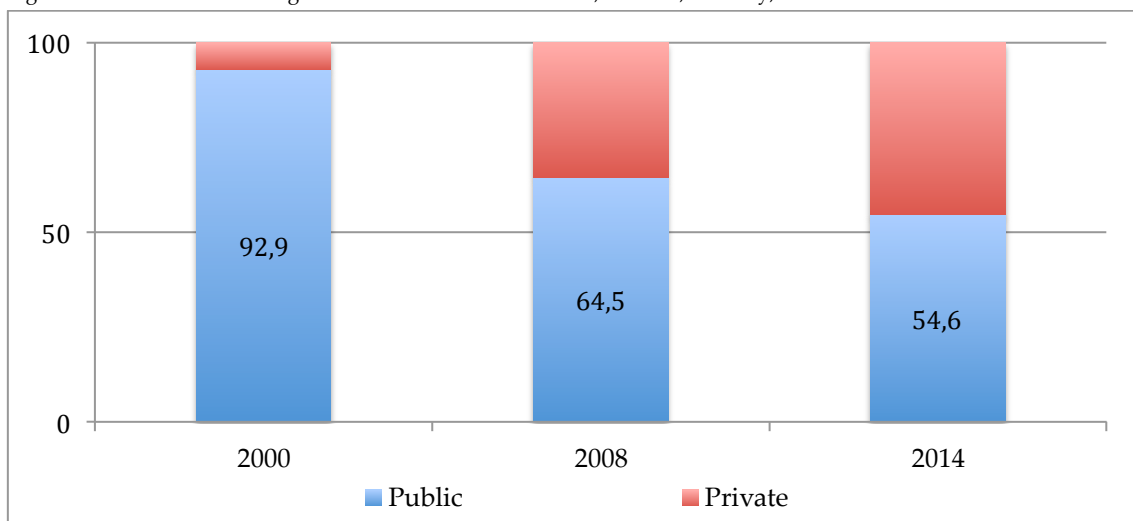


Source: for 1999 and 2002 (IDI 2006); from 2005 (IDI 2016)

The supply of integrative services in Tuscany remained marginal compared to traditional crèches. After a progressive growth from 104 places in 1999/2000 to 266 in 2009/10, the number of available places in the integrative services shrunk to 195 in 2013/14 (figure 5.4).

During childcare expansionary phase in Tuscany, childcare coverage rate in the public provision decreased from 92,9% in 2000 to 54,6% in 2014 (figure 5.5). By contrast, childcare coverage rate in private services increased from a very 7,1% in 2000 to 45,4% in 2014 (figure 5.5).

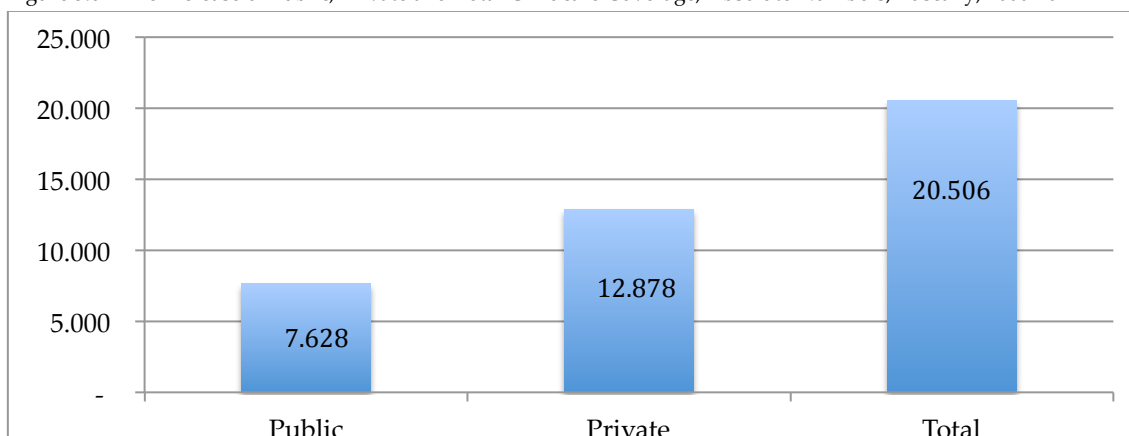
Figure 5.5 – Childcare Coverage in Public and Private Services, % Rates, Tuscany, 2000-2014



Source: for 2000 (IDI 2002); for 2008 and 2014 Istat

Also, by looking at the increase of the absolute numbers of the available childcare places between 2000 and 2014 (figure 5.6), we can observe that the growth in the number of available private places has been higher than the increase of public services.

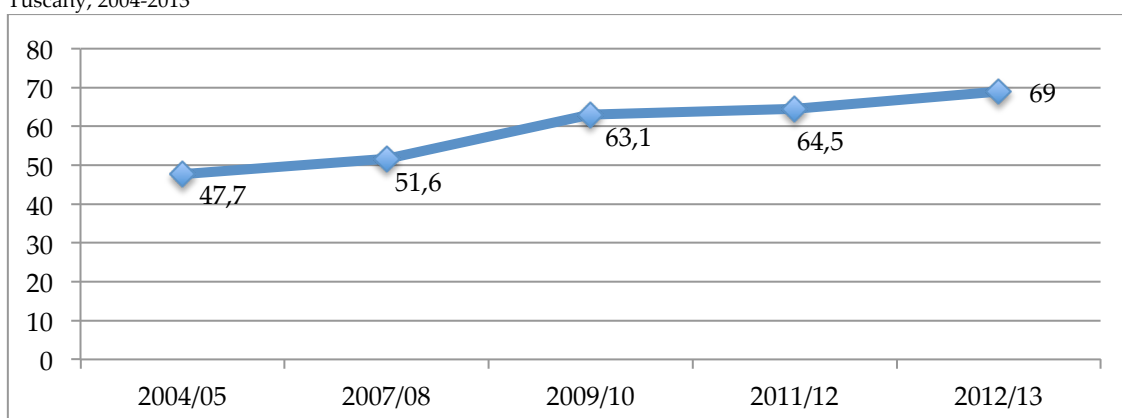
Figure 5.6 – The Increase of Public, Private and Total Childcare Coverage, Absolute Numbers, Tuscany, 2000-2014



Source: IDI (2002); Istat (2017)

Since 2004 (first available data) private providers and public administration have increasingly engaged in accreditation procedure following the framework rule established since 1999. The share of accredited private providers over the total of private provision has grown from 47,7 % in 2004/05 to 69% in 2012/13 (figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7 – Childcare Coverage Rate in the Accredited Private Provision over the Total of Private Provision, % Rates, Tuscany, 2004-2013



Source: IDI (2012b)

Thus, accredited providers, that in 2012/13 were almost the 70% of the total private provision, have driven the overall gradual increase of private provision. The introduction of new rules such as accreditation has proven to be a fertile ground for private actors to enter in the childcare supply in Tuscany and displace a fully public model.

Also, the share of childcare services held by public administration but managed by private providers (*outsourcing*) had an outstanding growth. Table 5.16 shows the evolution of childcare coverage in public services directly (*pure public services*) and indirectly (*outsourcing*) managed between 2004 and 2014.

Table 5.16 – The share of Public Services, Directly and Indirectly Managed,%, Tuscany, 2004-2014

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2014/15
Public Directly Managed	63,3	62,2	60,6	39,4
Public Indirectly Managed (outsourcing)	36,7	37,8	39,4	60,6

Source: IDI (2006), IDI (2015)

The childcare coverage rate in the outsourced services increased from 36,7% to 60,6%. By contrast, childcare coverage in pure public services decreased from 63,3% to 39,4%. Therefore, a large share of the increase of public coverage showed in figure 5.5 is represented by the public services held by municipalities but managed by private providers (*outsourcing*).

In sum, between 2000 and 2014 an increase of private provision, the majority of which were *accredited* private providers - has driven the overall childcare expansionary trend in Tuscany. A gradual displacement of a fully public model has been facilitated by the regional support towards *accredited* private provision and *outsourcing* of public childcare. The choice of regional governments to support accredited services was particularly visible not only in the establishment of accreditation procedure in the regional law 22/1999 – but also in the allocation of regional financial resources specifically devolved to municipalities for the purchasing of private childcare services in private (table 5.8). As showed in table 5.8 the investment on accredited private providers are ten times higher than the investment in new public places. Also, article 4.4 of the regional law 32/2002 stated the possibility of introducing vouchers - financed by regional resources - for families that purchase accredited private services. These subsidies allowed childcare users to choose among different accredited providers and funded providers based on this choice. The regional resources addressing vouchers for accredited services are definitely higher than those devolved to vouchers for public childcare (table 5.15).

As for childcare affordability in Tuscany, the establishment of childcare fees is actually a prerogative of municipalities. The latter define access criteria, the amount of childcare fees and the extent of fees discount. However, the regional government contributed to childcare affordability in Tuscany in two ways. Firstly, the regional government established the vouchers for unemployed mothers to help them affording childcare costs in the context of activation policy. Secondly, the educational areas, introduced by regional government, pursue the harmonization to minimize as much as possible regional variation on childcare fees and guarantee childcare affordability. The latter, however, is jeopardized by the high cost of childcare fees. Table 5.17 shows that in Tuscany, on average, childcare fees for public services vary from an average of 345

euros for a service opened maximum 7 hours to 427 for more than 7 hours services. Private supply costs between an average of 420 euros (maximum 7 hours) to 526 euros (more than 7 hour services).

Table 5.17 - Average of Childcare Fees for Formal Public and Private Childcare in Tuscany, 2014

Childcare Provision	Average Price of Childcare Fees
Public	345 euros (max 7 hours)
	427 euros (more than 7 hours)
Private	420 euros (max than 7 hours)
	526 (more than 7 hours)

Source: Regional Government of Tuscany (2014)

Beyond the voucher for unemployed women, introduced in 2002 in the context of regional activation policy, the regional government does not provide mechanisms of fees discounts. The latter are established at the municipal level. The 75% of municipalities in Tuscany established a scheme of childcare fees discount (Regione Toscana 2014). However, childcare fees are highly variable across the regional territory (table 5.18), showing that the attempts made by regional governments towards fees harmonization failed.

Table 5.18 – Average Price (Euros) of Childcare Fees in the Main Tuscan Cities

	Public	Private
Arezzo	424,7	476,1
Firenze	448	562,2
Grosseto	361,3	392
Livorno	361,9	480,7
Lucca	490,3	547
Massa Carrara	323,3	338,1
Pisa	403,1	550,7
Prato	612,9	575,9
Pistoia	390,8	488,7
Siena	445,5	542,5

Source: Regione Toscana (2014)

The association of families (AGE) that are overall satisfied with the quality delivered by childcare services in Tuscany complained about the low affordability of childcare fees in Tuscany (Interview 32 – AGE). The association of families does not consider adequately sufficient the regional initiatives to support childcare affordability. According to the interviewed representative of the association of families, childcare fees in Tuscany are too high, highly variable both between public and private services and across the regional territory.

To conclude, childcare coverage rate has expanded in Tuscany at a faster pace than the national average, even though it remains slightly below the EU target of 33%. Such expansion went in parallel to an intense phase of regulation and investment over childcare started by regional government in 1999 to face the growing demand and needs due to the increased female employment.

The preference of regional government to provide parental choice over a multifaceted childcare supply contributed to support – even financially – the development of childcare services delivered by non-public actors as no-profit cooperatives. However, the introduction of marketization mechanism was highly regulated by public administration that - through municipalities, which authorize and accredit private provision according to regional regulations - maintains a public control and supervision over private childcare provision in Tuscany. The adoption of new rules has been bargained with the main stakeholders. In this occasion the role of trade unions has been keen in advancing and achieving the improvement of qualification required for staff professionals. To some extent, the objective to shape a socio-educational service inspired by social investment has been not only declared (Electoral Programme of Center Left Coalition 1996, 2000), but also pursued as demonstrated by the attention to the qualification of staff professionals. However, the high childcare fees, which are also highly different across the regional territory, contrasts with the objective to make childcare affordable as prescribed by social investment perspective.

5. Childcare Policy Trajectory in Piedmont

5.1 Introduction

Childcare policy in Piedmont started to be developed and regulated already in the 1970s. Two years after the introduction of the national law 1044/71 the regional government ruled by Christian Democracy in coalition with PS, PSDI and PRI issued the regional law number 3 of 1973 that introduced the rules to build and manage municipal childcare defined as a social assistance service. Table 5.19 shows the main features of the regional law n. 3/1973 and the further attempts – either successful or failed - to reform childcare policy in Piedmont. The regional law 3/1973 contained a series of criteria – such as a 1:7 staff child ratio - that municipal administrations had to follow in order to build and manage a childcare centre. Indeed, childcare services in Piedmont developed as social assistance services mainly provided by public sector. After the set-up of regional rules for childcare development, for many years regional legislation in this field has been absent. Also, childcare issues have not shaped regional political debate for long time. The oldest electoral programmes that we found are those for the regional elections of 1995 in which two big coalitions - right and left wing - were competing for regional government in Piedmont. Any mention of childcare development was rather absent in right wing electoral program while the electoral program of left parties contained only vague and generic reference to policy measures for supporting female employment and improving work-life balance in Piedmont (Electoral Program for Regional Election, Center-Left Coalition 1995; Electoral Program for Regional Election Center-Right Coalition 1995). In the early 2000s the right-wing government promoted the development of Integrative Service to complement the supply of traditional *chrèches*. Also, in 2004, the right-wing government “borrowed” from the legislation on health-care services the regulatory framework to authorize private providers to run a childcare service. Since this regulation was only focused on health-care requirements, it enhanced the social assistance approach of childcare rather than promoting the development of a socio-educational childcare service. The latter was then promoted by left-wing government. Indeed, as a result of 2005 regional election, left-wing government replaced the previous right-wing regional government.

Table 5.19 – Childcare Policy Legislation in Piedmont from 1970 to date

Phases	Legislation	Main Changes	
1	Regional Law 16/1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financed, together with the national level, the boosting of childcare supply - Set requirements for childcare services (e.g. Staff-Child Ratio: 1:7, Staff Qualification: diploma of nursery) 	Set-up and Take-off of Childcare System
2	Council Resolution n. 191361 / 2000	Promoted Creation of Integrative Services: Baby Parking	Promotion of Integrative Services and Social Assistance Approach
	Council Resolution n. 289464 / 2003	Promoted Creation of Micro-Crèches	
	Council Resolution n. 4814482 / 2004	Promoted Creation of Integrative Services: Family-Crèches	
	Council Resolution n. 689844 / 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provided Resources for the Development of Integrative Services - Provided Financial Contributions for Increasing Time Duration of Public Childcare 	
	Regional Law 1/2004 on Health Care	Established Authorization Procedure for private providers “borrowed” from health care regulations: ASL (Azienda Sanitaria Locale - Local Health Authority) in charge of the function of supervision and control. ASL authorizes the running of childcare services	
3	Bill Proposal of 13.07.2007 and Bill Proposal – n. 81, 13.10.2010	<p>Comprehensive bills on childcare regulation proposing, among other things, the adoption of <i>Authorization</i> and <i>Accreditation</i>, the establishment of pedagogical coordination and the definition of a new staff-child ratio:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1:6 for children aged between 3 and 12 months; 1:8 for children aged between 12 and 36 months (DDL 13.07.2007) - 1:8 for children aged between 3 and 24 months; 1:10 for children aged between 25 and 36 months (DDL 618.2009 and PDL 81.2010) 	Failed Attempt to Regulate on Childcare

Source: author's elaboration

Between 2005 and 2010, the left-wing coalition government tried for two times to build a comprehensive reform on childcare with the aim to innovate the old legislation of the

1970s. However, both reform attempts failed and Piedmont remained one of the few regions with the oldest childcare legislation in Italy. Next section focuses on the empirical analysis of the childcare-making processes in the last two decades.

5.2 Childcare Policy Making Processes in the Last Two Decades

5.2.1 A Social Assistance Service for Work-Life Balance: Childcare under Right-Wing Government in the Early 2000s.

In 2000 the new elected government had to receipt the innovation brought by the national law 328/2000 in order to establish the criteria required for authorization and accreditation. However, the new elected right-wing government disregarded the adoption of a comprehensive reform on childcare, arguing that work-life balance needs are better meet by company crèches within the workplaces (Interview 36 – Forza Italia). To this aim, right wing regional government welcomed the proposal of right-wing national government – that in that period was held by right-wing - to incentivize company crèches. As a result, the right-wing regional government elaborated synergies with the “friendly” national government to promote and support trough national funding the development of company crèches (Interview 36 – Forza Italia).

“The right wing coalition composed by Forza Italia, Northern League and Alleanza Nazionale strongly believed that work-life balance in Italy and Piedmont deserved a new impulse, different from those traditionally promoting by our political counterpart. Indeed, we considered the traditional public crèches, advocated by centre-left, as too old and rigid to meet the emerging flexible needs of the families. Since Piedmont has a strong industrial sector as well as an emerging tertiary sector we promoted the development of company crèches within the workplaces as a mean to reconcile work and family life for employed women” (Interview 36 – Forza Italia)

However, the expectations of regional government to support the development of company crèches with new national funding contrasted with the *ruling 370/2003* of

Italian Constitutional Court. The latter declared unconstitutional the national funding for company crèches provided by the right-wing national government (see paragraph 2 chapter 4). Against this backdrop, right wing regional government between 2000 and 2005 limited its action to the promotion of integrative services and the increase of service time duration for traditional childcare services.

“We thought that by promoting innovative solutions such as micro crèches or integrative services, combined with the increase of time duration of traditional crèches, we were giving parents more flexibility for choosing their preferred care options.” (Interview 36 - Forza Italia).

The right-wing government promoted these policy interventions through administrative acts such as Council Resolutions (in Italian called *“delibere”*) with no attempts of reforming and updating the regional law of 1973. The *“baby-parking”* was introduced in 2000 as a socio-educational service to guarantee children socialization only for a limited time and with less requirements (e.g. absence of lunch services). The *micro-crèches* introduced in 2003 are similar to the traditional crèches as concern the activities but differ from traditional crèches in the number of available childcare places and opening hours which are both limited. Both *“baby parking”* and *micro-crèches* are externalised care services for children. By contrast, in the *family crèches* - introduced in 2004 - childcare take in place in a domestic context. Indeed, the family crèche is an experimental socio-educational service addressed to children between the age of 3 months and 3 years and it is intended to promote opportunities for the socialization of children, as well as to enhance the role of parents in the educational intervention, guaranteeing a direct involvement of families in the management of the service. According to regional policy-makers, the *family crèche* is seen as a potential alternative to the traditional crèches in terms of time flexibility and context with the aim to guarantee as much as possible the relationship between parents and children (article 1.2 of Council Resolution n. 4814482/2004). The major aim of this experimental service is to encourage the aggregation and relationships between families linked by neighborhood or friendship relations, favouring a mutual enrichment and the

strengthening of the parental role (article 1.3 of Council Resolution n. 4814482/2004). The establishment of a *family crèche*, however, takes place in accordance with the local authorities in order to ensure the connection of *family crèches* with the network of childcare services within a specific municipal territory. To this aim, any *family crèches* should be formally linked with a traditional crèches – either public or private – for supervision and support of the activities. Indeed, the children socialization activities within the *family crèches* are supported by the presence of professional staff, that jointly with parents, perform care and socialization activities in a domestic context. All the aforementioned integrative services have the same requirements in terms of staff qualification and staff-child ratio (table 5.20).

Table 5.20 – Requirements for Staff-Child Ratio and Staff Qualification Valid for Integrative Childcare Services in Piedmont

Staff Child-Ratio			Staff-Qualification
Number of Children	Professional Staff	Auxiliary Staff	
1-6	1	1	Professional Staff: specialized high-school diploma or specialized bachelor (on Educational subjects)
6-12	2	1-2	
12-18	3	2	Auxilliary Staff: any high school diploma
18-24	4	2-3	

Source: Council Resolution n. 289464/2003

The integrative services in Piedmont provides basically one professional staff plus one auxiliary staff every six children. The required staff qualifications differs between professional and auxiliary staff. The former has to obtain a bachelor degree on educational sciences or alternatively a specialized diploma from socio-pedagogical high schools. Auxiliary staffs, instead, are required to have only a high school diploma. The council resolutions that introduced Integrative Services were directly issued by the regional government and thus did not imply discussion in the regional parliament. However, trade unions tried to stimulate a political debate on childcare by issuing a programmatic document that criticized the promotion of integrative services at the expense of traditional crèches which remained underdeveloped as well as underregulated (CGIL Piemonte 2004; Interview 37 – CGIL Piemonte; Interview 38 –

CISL Piemonte). In 2004, the second Ghigo government approved the regional law for health care extending the authorization procedure valid for social assistance and health care services to childcare services. This means that the Local Health Authority (ASL – Azienda Sanitaria Locale) provides the authorization to run a childcare services after having ensured that the new childcare centres meet a mandatory set of health and hygienical requirements. Therefore, the Local Health Authority exerts a formal control only on the minimum hygienic and sanitary requirements needed to run a childcare services without assessing the content of the socio-educational curriculum and activities. Against this backdrop, the local governments - in charge of childcare implementation – work in synergy with the Local Health Authority but municipalities do not hold the final word on the authorization to run a childcare service.

The aim to innovate the old childcare legislation of the 1970s as well as to promote the strengthening of the public network of childcare centres was mentioned in the electoral program of centre-left coalition, that in 2005 competed to replace the right-wing regional government. According to the centre left proposals, a new regional regulation for childcare has to establish a clear and well-structured procedure for authorization and accreditation aimed at ensuring a socio-educational development of children and not only social assistance (Electoral Program of Centre-Left Coalition 2005). In 2005, the centre-left coalition won the regional elections and replaced the second Ghigo government. Two years later, centre-left coalition promoted three interventions on childcare investment and regulation as we will see in the next section.

5.2.2 Childcare Under Left-Wing Government: (Failed) Attempts of Reform

First, the left-wing government in 2005 engaged in the co-financing of the national expansionary Plan “Piano Nidi.” Table 5.21 shows the share of national and regional financing for childcare allocated for the three years (2007-2008-2009) of the “Piano Nidi”. The national government allocated to Piedmont 22.995.625 millions while Piedmont co-financed the expansionary plan with 15.340.490 millions for a total of 38.336.115 millions invested for childcare in Piedmont between 2007 and 2009. The regional co-financing corresponded to 66,7% of the share invested by national level,

one of the highest regional contributions to the national expansionary plan (Confalonieri and Canale 2013).

Table 5.21 – Piano Nidi (2007-2009), National and Regional Funding in Piedmont

National Funding 2007-2009	Share co-financed by Piedmont	% Ratio	Total
22.995.625	15.340.490	66,7	38.336.115

Source: Confalonieri and Canale 2013

An annual regional investment of more than 5 millions every year from 2007 to 2009 combined with the national resources illustrated by table 5.20 allowed the strengthening of the traditional crèches of municipal childcare that were disregarded from the antecedents governments (Interview 33 – Public Official, Region of Piedmont). Indeed, as reported by a public official working in the childcare unit:

“Between 2006 and 2009 we have been asked by the competent regional councillor to provide a taxonomy of the existing public childcare centre in order to strengthen the existing services and further enlarging the network of public centre in the context of the new resources allocated for childcare” (Interview 33 – Public Official, Region of Piedmont).

The second intervention promoted by centre left coalition regarded a support for unemployed women. More precisely, in the framework of the second Operational Regional Program (POR 2007-2013) the left wing promoted “Conciliation Vouchers” for unemployed mothers to support parental expenditures on childcare fees as a measure for labour market activation (Confalonieri and Canale 2013). Indeed, the potential recipients have to demonstrate to have a household income below a certain threshold and to be enrolled in job counselling and training (POR 2007-2013 – Regione Piemonte).

Between 2005 and 2010, the left-wing government also tried to innovate the old childcare legislation and provide a regulatory framework for authorization and accreditation as reported by the introductory notes to the bill proposals of 2007 and 2010. However, as mentioned in table 5.18 both attempts to approve new regional rules for childcare failed. The two proposals were not discussed in the plenary session of

regional parliament. The first proposal was not even presented in the regional parliament. More precisely, the proposal of 2007 was elaborated within the Democratic Party with informal consultations with trade unions (Interview 35 – Democratic Party; Interview 37 - CGIL Piedmont; Interview 38 CISL Piedmont). The second proposal was presented in the regional parliament and it was at least discussed in the competent committee of regional parliament. In both cases, the regional government involved all the social actors interested and active in the childcare sector to make the childcare reform process more participative (Interview 35 – Democratic Party, Piedmont).

“A childcare reform was lacking since the 1970s. Therefore, we needed to gather and integrate all the proposals coming from actors and groups that operating in the childcare sector have a profound knowledge of problems and needs” (Interview 35 – Democratic Party, Piedmont).

To this aim, the associations of private providers (either no or for profit), the representatives of municipality association (ANCI Piemonte) and Trade Unions (CGIL-CISL-UIL) were consulted as external experts when the bill proposal 81/2010 was discussed in the competent committee of regional parliament. Both proposals advanced by the Democratic Party were more or less the same. Broadly speaking, they have same structure and they pursue the same aim, which is to transform childcare in Piedmont from a pure care service to a socio-educational service. To this aim, the two bill proposals identified a set of rules aimed at improving staff qualifications and training that are crucial to deliver high quality service. The trade unions agreed on most of the proposals welcoming the policy shift towards educational childcare. However, they opposed the proposed staff-child ratio, contending that the quality of a socio-educational childcare services is better ensured with a low staff/child ratio [Regional Parliament of Piedmont, 2007].

The first proposal of 2007 identified a differentiated 1 to 6 staff-child ratio for children aged 3-12 months, and 1 staff member every 8 children for children aged 12-36 months. The trade unions (CGIL-CISL-UIL) consulted within the legislative committee criticized the identified staff-child ratio (Parliamentary Archives of Piedmont Region 2007). Trade unions, instead, proposed a unique 1 to 6 staff-child ratio and the

introduction of pedagogical coordination (Parliamentary Archives of Piedmont Region 2007). The bill proponents agreed on pedagogical coordination but remarked the necessity to adequate the staff-child ratio to the new institutional context characterized by growing demand and low financial capacity (Parliamentary Archives of Piedmont Region 2007).

Two years later a new bill (PDL 81/2010) proposed a new staff-child ratio: 1:8 for children aged between 3 and 24 months and 1:10 for children aged between 25 and 36 months. The consultation process on PDL 81/2010 within the legislative committee also involved private providers. Particularly, the association of private for providers, API Piemonte, proposed to introduce a third staff-child ratio (1 staff member every 9 children) for children from 1 to 2 years old, while trade unions remained irremovable on their proposal to establish a unique staff-child ratio: 1 staff member every 6 children [Parliamentary Archives of Piedmont Region 2009]. Since staff cost represents the highest expenditure to set up and maintain a childcare service, the definition of staff-child ratio became highly contentious.

“We tried for two times to innovate regional childcare legislation and in both occasions we faced strong opposition of Trade Unions and high disagreement, between the stakeholders consulted, on the definition of staff-child ratio. We developed formal and informal consultations with stakeholders, especially trade unions. We slightly changed our initial position trying to achieve a convergence on staff-child ratio but the strong opposition of trade unions remained. As a result, we did not feel confident to proceed without a wide convergence on the definition of staff-child ratio and the overall childcare regulation” (Interview 35 – Democratic Party, Piedmont).

In both occasions, the political proponents of the childcare reform did not go further to avoid a political clash with stakeholders, especially with trade unions. Against this backdrop, the regional government appeared weak as unable to find and promote a proper balance between the instances of Trade Unions and those of private providers. By contrast, trade unions especially CGIL and CISL, strongly contrasted the proposal to increase the staff-child established by regional law 3/1973. Such increase was

considered as a detriment to service quality and a way to favour a further childcare privatization in Piedmont (Interview 37 - CGIL Piedmont; Interview 38 CISL Piedmont). As a consequence, both CGIL and CISL, promoted a moderate staff-child ratio (1 / 6) slightly smaller than those established by the regional law 3/1973 (staff/child ratio 1 / 7) (Interview 37 - CGIL Piedmont; Interview 38 CISL Piedmont).

However, as a consequence of the political stalemate on the definition of staff-child ratio the adoption of a regional regulatory framework on authorization and accreditation did not go further and the local government that decide to engage in accreditation procedure set autonomously in each accreditation contract the rules that private providers have to meet to be accredited. This increased the emergence of a myriad of accreditation contracts with different rules across the same regional territory. Other interest groups that could have benefited by a common regional regulatory framework did not have the same level of strength in channelling their claims as trade unions and API Piemonte did. For instance, the association of municipalities (ANCI Piemonte) lacks an internal cohesion on childcare, being divided between cities with high density and small municipalities of the rural areas. These two groups of municipalities have different needs related to childcare due to the opposite situation of childcare development, which is high in the urban centres and relatively scarce in the rural areas (Interview 33 – Public Official; Interview 34 – ANCI Piemonte). Also, political divisions further increase the lack of internal cohesion within ANCI Piemonte. Indeed, the number of local government ruled by left and right wing coalitions is almost the same. As a consequence, ANCI Piemonte tends to reproduce the preferences of their regional parties: right wing in favour of company crèches and left parties advocating public childcare. This polarization undermined the achievement of a common position on childcare, which is an issue with scarce political relevance within ANCI Piemonte (Interview 34 – ANCI Piemonte). Also, the few no profit cooperatives operating for childcare in Piedmont are too weak in terms of cohesion, resources and ideas, thus, they lack the necessary strength and preparation to develop and advance a strong policy position on childcare (Interview 33 – Public Official Region of Piedmont).

In sum, the VIII legislature (2005 and 2010) ended in 2010 with a failure attempt to build a new comprehensive bill on childcare regulation. The political competition for the regional elections of 2010 re-proposed the traditional polarization over childcare: left-wing parties promoted the strengthening of public childcare and the adoption of a regional law on childcare; whereas, right-wing parties persisted to support the development of company crèches and integrative services.

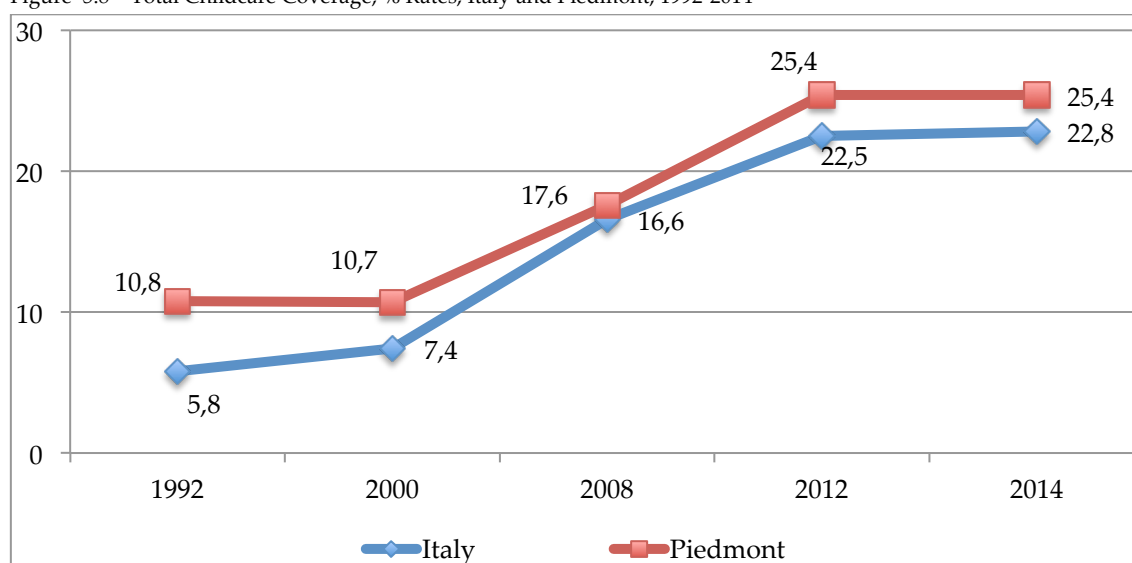
5.2.3. The Right-Wing Coalition Back to Government

The right wing coalition led by President Cota of Northern League won the regional elections in 2010. The first discourse of President Cota in the regional parliament emphasized the role of family as care provider and the importance to preserve the parental freedom of choice between externalised and family care (Regione Piemonte 2010). One year later, the regional government allocated 750.000 euros for the development of company crèches in the rural areas and 1.000.000,00 for the development of “baby-parking” and family crèches, especially in the local context where these services were absent. In 2012, the right-wing government introduced a new and very peculiar experimental service for childcare. Indeed, in 2012, the regional government established synergies with the Regional Federation of Farmers (*Federazione Regionale Coltivatori Diretti*) to transform some of old and not used farms into childcare services for families living in the rural areas of Piedmont. Such project called “Agri-Tata” was launched by the council resolution 47-4250 of 2012. The latter identified social assistance and care for children aged 0-3 as the main aim of such services. To this aim, the required qualification for staff professional, established by the council resolution 47-4250 of 2012, is the diploma of nursery. In sum, the “Agri-Tata” project was aimed at ensuring work-life balance options for families working and living in the rural areas that represent a large territory of Piedmont.

5.3 Trends and Outcomes of Childcare Policy-Making Process

To what extent the childcare development promoted in different ways by the alternating party governments contributed to increase childcare coverage rate in Piedmont? As we can see from figure 5.8 in 1992 Piedmont had almost the double of available childcare places compared to the Italian average. The childcare coverage rate in Piedmont remained stable during the 1990s while the Italian rate increased only slightly from 5,8% in 1992 to 7,4% in 2000.

Figure 5.8 – Total Childcare Coverage, % Rates, Italy and Piedmont, 1992-2014

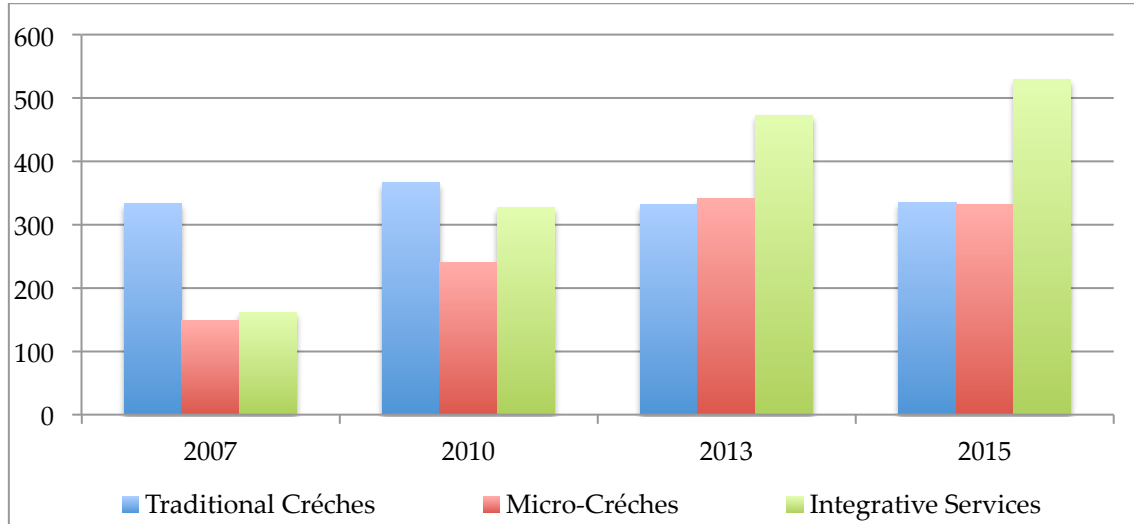


Source: for 1992 and 2000 (IDI 2002); for 2008, 2012 and 2014 (Istat)

From 2000 childcare coverage rate in Piedmont increased at more or less the same pace than the national average. The latter has grown from 7,4% in 2000 to 22,8% in 2014, while childcare coverage rate in Piedmont has increased from 10,7% to 25,4%. In sum, the gap between the national and regional average has shrunk. In 2014, the childcare coverage rate in Piedmont remains far from the EU target of 33%. This moderate childcare expansion in Piedmont has been driven by a diversification of the type of services (traditional crèches, micro crèches or integrative services) and providers (public or private). Indeed, the total childcare supply is not only composed by traditional crèches but also by a series of alternatives such as micro crèches and integrative services promoted by the right wing governments. By looking at figure 5.9,

we can see that incidence of integrative services over the total childcare supply has continuously increased.

Figure 5.9 – Absolute Number Traditional Crèches, Micro-Crèches and Integrative Services, Piedmont, 2007-2015

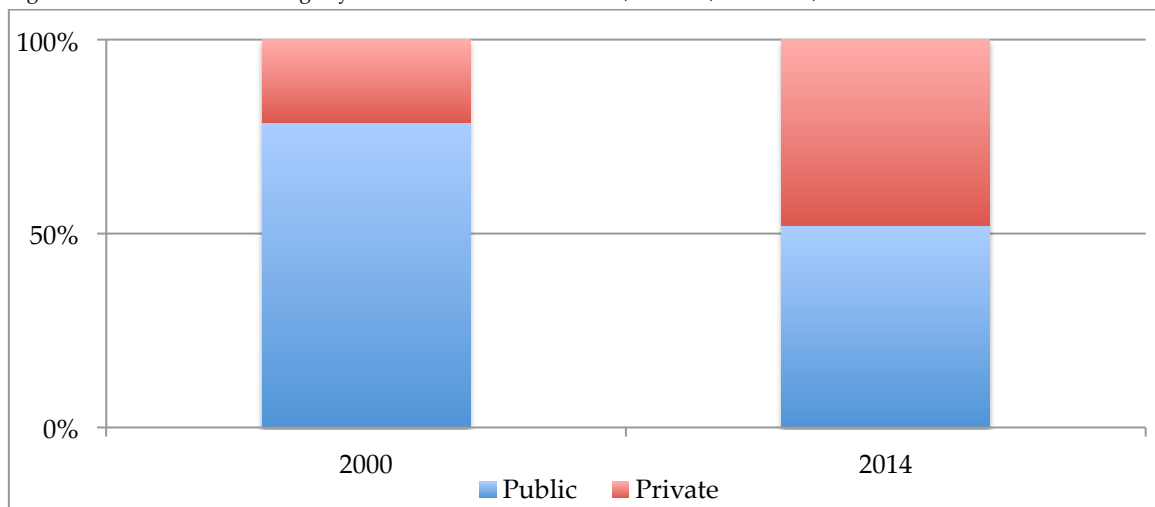


Source: Regione Piemonte (2015)

In 2015, the integrative services represent most of the childcare supply. Also, the number of micro-crèches from 2013 is more or less the same of traditional crèches that from 2010 slightly decreased.

The diversification of childcare supply in Piedmont regarded also the type of childcare providers. As shown in figure 5.10, the percentage rate of available public childcare places in Piedmont decreased from 78,6 % in 2000 to 52,0 in 2014.

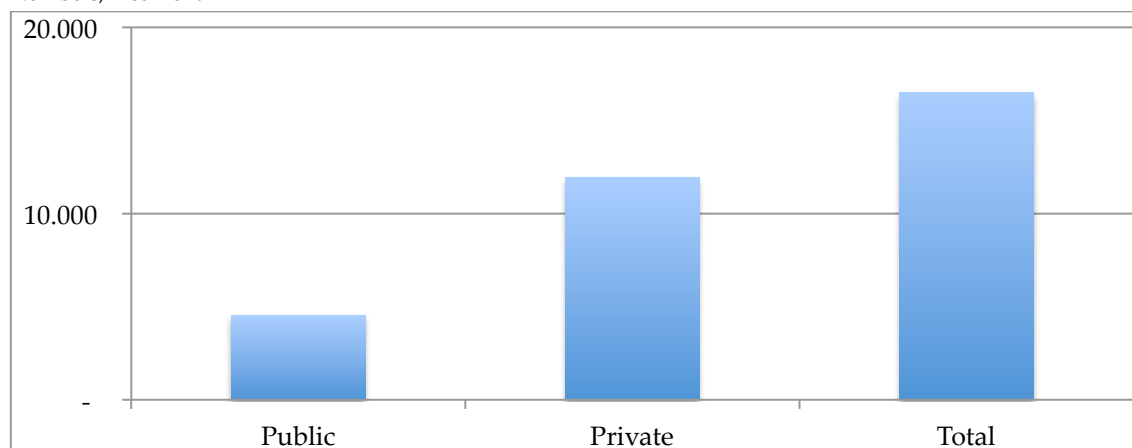
Figure 5.10 – Childcare Coverage by Public and Private Provision, % Rates, Piedmont, 2000-2014



Source: for 2000 (IDI 2002); for 2014 (Istat 2017)

Also, the increase of the absolute numbers of private childcare places has been almost the triple of the increase of the number of public services (figure 5.11).

Figure 5.11 – The Increase of Childcare Coverage in Public and Private Services between 2000 and 2014, Absolute Numbers, Piedmont



Source: IDI (2002); Istat (2017)

By shifting our focus to the absolute number of childcare centres, the trend towards childcare privatization is even more visible. Table 5.22 shows the absolute number of public and private centres in Piedmont between 2000 and 2015. At the beginning of 2000 private centres were only 70. In a context of growing demand not matched by public supply, private provision started to increase. In 2003 there were already 206 private centres while the public ones increased only by 19 new infrastructures. In 12 years the number of public centres had only slightly grown while private services skyrocketed to 898 in 2015.

Table 5.22 – Absolute Number of Public and Private Centres for Formal Childcare in Piedmont, 2000-2015

	2000	2003	2005	2010	2015
Public	240	259	263	233	309
Private	70	206	295	701	898

Source: from 2000 to 2010 (Confalonieri and Canale 2013); for 2015 (Regione Piemonte)

The increased availability of private childcare places occurred between 2000 and 2015 facilitated the overall childcare expansion that took place in Piedmont in the same years. The moderate growth of childcare did not lead to the end of the persistence of a large number of municipalities without childcare supply. Indeed, childcare supply in

Piedmont does not cover every municipality. As referred in table 5.23, in 2011 only the 30,4% of municipalities was covered by at least one childcare centre. This rate grew to 35,4% in 2012, and then remained stable until 2015 (35,9%). As said above, in Piedmont there is a large amount of very small municipalities. In these local contexts, small administrations find hard to develop and run a childcare service (Caprioglio and Musso 2013).

Table 5.23 - Number of Municipalities with at least One Childcare Centre, % Rates, Piedmont, 2011-2015

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
30,4	35,4	34,4	35,7	35,9

Source: Regione Piemonte (2015)

As for childcare affordability from a study of Davico and Gullino (2016) we do know that in Piedmont the average price for a childcare place is 400 euros in the municipal public childcare and 550 for private services. Moreover, childcare fees do not overcome 500 euros in the public services whereas in the private services can reach 700 euros (Davico and Gullino 2016). The regional government does not provide any scheme of fees discount, leaving the decisions on childcare fees discounts completely in the hands of municipalities that define access criteria and income scales for fees discount.

In sum, the moderate childcare development in Piedmont has been shaped by the alternation of party government and the related party preferences towards childcare investment and regulation. Right-wing governments promoted the creation of integrative services and company crèches instead of focusing on the strengthening of traditional crèches. As a result, in Piedmont childcare coverage is higher in the integrative services rather than in the traditional crèches. Also, the share of private provision grew definitely more than the share of public services. The latter were only promoted between 2005 and 2010 during the left-wing government. In the same period, left-wing regional government developed Conciliation Vouchers for unemployed mothers enrolled in job counselling. Also, left-wing government promoted bill proposals to update childcare regulation in Piedmont. The two attempts to build a new regulation on *authorization* and *accreditation* for childcare in Piedmont failed on the definition of staff-child ratio that became highly contentious. As a result, left-wing government postponed the adoption of a regional law waiting to find a

balance between the instances of private providers and those of trade unions, which strongly opposed the increase of staff-child ratio proposed by left-wing government. Nowadays, childcare regulation in Piedmont still dates back to the old regional law 3/1973. The authorization procedure for childcare is adopted from health care regulation. Consequently, childcare services in Piedmont are more shaped by social assistance than education. As for accreditation, Piedmont still lacks a regional regulatory framework. The municipalities that decide to accredit new private providers establish their own rules on quality issues - such as staff qualification and training. The different choices made by local governments on accreditation procedures increase the uneven distribution of childcare outcomes across municipalities in Piedmont. The absence of mechanisms that contribute to childcare affordability and regulatory provisions that foster high quality undermines the achievement of social investment aims on childcare policy in Piedmont.

Chapter 6 – Childcare Policy in the Spanish Autonomous Communities

1. Introduction

In Spain, during the Francoist regime, the very residual system of social protection was mainly centralized and characterized by corporatism with no involvement of sub-national institutions and actors (Guillén 1996). As seen in chapter 4 democratization came along with a process of both federalization and welfare state expansion. As highlighted by Gallego and Subirats (2011:100) *“the evolution of welfare state in Spain has been, and still is, fully associated with the territorial distribution of power.”* During the new democratic era in Spain, the regions contributed to narrow the gap between Spain and the rest of Western Europe in the expansion and consolidation of welfare programmes. Chapter 4 outlines the division of childcare competences highlighting how the genetic moment of childcare development occurred through the joint action of municipalities and regions that expanded their social services adding the delivery of childcare programmes in the absence of national intervention. The policy efforts deployed by sub-national administrations to install and develop a network of childcare services were neither sufficient to achieve discrete standard of childcare coverage nor uniform across the national territory. Until the early 2000s the presence of services for children aged 0-3 was very scarce in Spain. At that time, besides the richest Autonomous Communities - such as Basque Country, Catalonia, Community of Madrid and Navarra - where childcare coverage was definitely higher than the national average, childcare policy was highly underdeveloped or even barely existent in the rest of Spain. Since 2000s childcare coverage began to grow all over the national territory leading to an outstanding reduction of cross-regional differences. Therefore in Spain, childcare expansion occurred even in those regions where childcare coverage was barely existent.

Differently from the Italian case for which we can rely on some study on regional variability of childcare, similar classification exercises for the Spanish Autonomous Communities have not been developed yet. Therefore, the empirical analysis in this chapter will help to understand what are the favourable political conditions that make

childcare expansion possible even in context traditionally reluctant to policy change. Indeed, this chapter represents a first attempt to empirically describe and compare regional childcare outcomes in two regional case studies. The cases of Andalusia and Rioja are particularly suitable to test our hypothesis for two main reasons. Firstly, even though they have distinct socio-economic performances, female employment in the last two decades has considerably grown in both Autonomous Communities. This contributed to increase the level of functional pressures towards childcare expansion. Secondly, and more importantly, regional governments in both Autonomous Communities had a distinct political tradition. Right-wing parties have ruled the Autonomous Community of La Rioja for long time. By contrast, the regional government of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia has been a traditional stronghold for the Spanish Left. The different political legacy makes the two Autonomous Communities suitable to test our research hypothesis that link partisan preferences and childcare policy change.

This chapter aims to investigate the childcare trajectory of the last two decades in the two selected Autonomous Communities, providing a detailed description of the childcare policy-making process, in order to understand whether childcare policy change was shaped only by partisan preferences or, also, somehow influenced by the agency of relevant interest groups involved in the political arena.

This chapter is organized as follows. A first paragraph will give us a glance of the childcare regional variability in Spain by outlining the different level of problem pressure and childcare coverage. Paragraph 3 will provide a brief overview of the socio-economic trends and the political context in Andalusia and Rioja. Finally, paragraphs 4 and 5 will focus on the empirical investigation of the childcare trajectory respectively in Andalusia and Rioja.

2. Regional Variability at a Glance

2.1. Problem Pressure: Female Employment and Fertility Rates in the Spanish Regions

In the period between 2000 and 2015 female employment increased in every Spanish region. In 2000, the national average of female employment (20-64) was 44,4% (table

6.1). Actually, in 2000, only three Spanish regions (Balears Island, Catalonia and Navarra) had a female employment average rate above the 50% (table 6.1). During 2000s female employment increased in every regions, most of which reached female employment rate above 50% in 2015. In some region female employment growth was extraordinary. For instance, female employment (20-64) rate in the Community of Madrid has increased from 48,2% in 2000 to 65,3 in 2015. Female employment (20-64) rate in La Rioja has shifted from 44,3% in 2000 to 61,8% in 2015. Also, female employment (20-64) in Cantabria and Castilla y Leon has passed respectively from 38,1% (2000) to 57% (2015) and from 41% (2000) to 56,5% (2015). In 2015, only the Autonomos Community of Madrid and the Balears Island had a female employment rate above the EU-28 average. However, in 2015, Navarra, Catalonia and Basque Country have reached a female employment rate above 60%, very close to EU-28 average (64,2%). Female employment increased remarkably even in the least developed regions such as Extramadura and Andalusia. Indeed, female employment rate has shifted from 34,2% (2000) to 44,6% (2015) in Extremadura and from 33,4% (2000) to 44,6% (2015) in Andalusia.

As for regional fertility rates, they had a very small increase from 2000 to 2010 and then a small decrease (table 6.2). Regional fertility rates were constantly below the EU average, except in 2010 when Murcia reached a fertility rate (1,6) slightly higher than EU-27 average (1,5). In 2015, only Murcia has a fertility rate equal to EU-27 average. The Basque country had the highest increase in fertility rates which has switched from 1 in 2000 to 1,4 in 2015. Interestingly, Andalusia, one of the least developed Spanish region, had constantly one of the highest fertility rates among the Spanish regions. Fertility rates in Andalusia fluctuated between 1,3 in 2000 and 1,4 in 2015 with the peak of 1,5 in 2005 and 2010.

Due to the combination of low fertility rates with high and increasing female employment the extent of probleme pressure in Spain is quite strong and diffused across the national territory. Indeed, the high and increasing female employment rates have obviously beneficial effect in terms of female emancipation. The latter would be enhanced if the availability of externalised childcare services release mothers from family care, in turn favouring gender and work-life balance. Next section will describe

to what extent the availability of childcare services is evenly distributed across the Spanish national territory.

Table 6.1 – Female Employment (20-64) Rates in EU-28, Spain and Spanish Regions, 2000-2015

	2000	2005	2010	2015
Balears Island	58,2	61,6	61,6	65,4
Community of Madrid	48,2	63,8	64,8	65,3
EU-28	n.a.	59,8	62,0	64,2
Navarra	52,1	62,7	63,3	63,5
Catalonia	54,8	63,0	62,5	63,0
Basque Country	46,5	58,0	62,4	62,9
La Rioja	44,3	59,8	59,2	61,8
Aragón	47,1	58,9	60,0	59,8
Galicia	47,0	54,4	57,5	57,5
Cantabria	38,1	52,9	56,2	57,0
Castilla y León	41,0	52,0	55,9	56,5
SPAIN	44,4	55,1	56,3	56,4
Asturias	36,6	47,6	54,1	56,0
Valenciana Community	45,6	55,2	54,3	55,7
Canarias	44,3	52,8	49,9	50,3
Murcia	42,5	51,5	53,4	49,1
Castilla-la Mancha	36,9	47,6	49,8	48,6
Andalusia	33,4	44,4	46,8	45,9
Extremadura	34,2	44,0	46,7	44,6

Source: Eurostat

Table 6.2 – Fertility Rates in EU-27, Spain and Spanish Regions, 2000-2015

	2000	2005	2010	2015
EU- 27	1,5	1,5	1,6	1,6
Murcia	1,4	1,6	1,6	1,6
Navarra	1,2	1,3	1,4	1,4
Catalonia	1,3	1,4	1,5	1,4
Andalusia	1,3	1,5	1,5	1,4
Basque Country	1,0	1,2	1,3	1,4
Community of Madrid	1,2	1,3	1,4	1,4
Aragón	1,1	1,2	1,4	1,4
La Rioja	1,1	1,3	1,4	1,3
Spain	1,2	1,3	1,4	1,3
Castilla-la Mancha	1,3	1,3	1,4	1,3
Valenciana Community	1,2	1,4	1,4	1,3
Extremadura	1,3	1,3	1,3	1,3
Balears Island	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,2
Castilla y León	1,0	1,1	1,2	1,2
Cantabria	1,0	1,2	1,3	1,2
Galicia	1,0	1,0	1,1	1,1
Canarias	1,3	1,2	1,1	1,1
Asturias	0,9	1,0	1,0	1,0

Source: Eurostat

2.2 Childcare Developments in The Spanish Regions

For long time regional childcare in Spain was largely underdeveloped. Until early 2000s most of the Autonomous Communities (Andalusia, Aragon, Cantabria, Castilla y La Mancha, Castilla y Leon, Extremadura, Murcia, Rioja) had a very residual childcare coverage, below 10% and in some cases it was even below 5% (table 6.3). Only some Autonomous Community (Catalunia, Madrid, Galizia, Navarra, Pais Vasco) had a quite developed network of childcare services. During 2000s such differences reduced and childcare coverage rates increased in almost every Autonomous Community (table 6.3). Childcare expansion was extraordinary in Andalusia, Aragon, Cantabria, Extremadura, Castilla-la Mancha and Rioja that passed from an extremely low (below 5% and in some case also 1 – 2 %) coverage rate in 2000 to a very high one in 2014. In some of these regions - like Andalusia, Aragon and Rioja - coverage rates in 2014 are even slightly above the national average. Some regions that were already well performing in 2000 further increased their coverage rate in 14 years. Childcare coverage rate in Basque country doubled between 2000 and 2014. In the Autonomous Community of Madrid childcare coverage rate has increased more than double between 2000 and 2014.

Table 6.3 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Spain, National and Regional Trends, %, 2000 and 2014

	2000	2014
Basque Country	22	52,3
Community of Madrid	17	43,7
Galicia	13	41,4
Andalusia	1,1	37,9
Catalonia	27	35,9
SPAIN	9	34
Rioja	2,7	33,8
Aragón	3	33,1
Castilla-la Mancha	2	31,8
Extremadura	1	29,5
Valencian Community	5	29,1
Cantabria	2	26,5
Navarra	22	24,1
Castilla y León	3	20,6
Murcia	8	17,5

Source: MECD (2001); MECD (2015)

Also, the extent to which childcare services are delivered by public or private providers vary across the Spanish regions. Table 6.4 shows the share of childcare coverage in public services between 2000 and 2014. In many regions such as Extremadura, Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha, Catalonia, Aragon, Rioja, there was an extraordinary growth of childcare coverage in services publicly provided. Between 2000 and 2014, the rate of childcare coverage in public services has passed from 1,1% to 80,7% in Extremadura, from 10,7% to 79% in Cantabria, from 35,1% to 62,9% in Catalonia. In some region as Galicia, the share of childcare coverage in public services remained rather stable passing from 55,6% in 2000 to 54,4% in 2014. By contrast, in some other region the share of childcare coverage in public services reduced. In Basque Country it has passed from 66,4% in 2000 to 53,2% in 2014. In the Autonomous Community of Madrid, the childcare coverage of public services was 57,1% in 2000 while it reduced to 45,1% in 2015.

Table 6.4 – Childcare Coverage in Public Services, %, Spain and Spanish Regions, 2000-2014

	2000	2014
Navarra	100	84,1
Extremadura	1,1	80,7
Cantabria	10,7	79
Castilla-la Mancha	32,7	64,9
Castilla y León	33,2	63,1
Cataluña	35,1	62,9
Aragón	0	55,3
La Rioja	0	55
Galicia	55,6	54,4
Basque Country	66,4	53,2
Murcia	63	51,8
SPAIN	44,7	51,6
Community of Madrid	57,6	45,1
Valenciana Community	35	40
Andalusia	8,3	39,5

Source: MECD (2001); MECD (2015)

In sum, until 2000s childcare coverage was underdeveloped and fragmented across the Spanish territory. Since the early 2000s childcare expanded across the whole national territory and coverage differences between the richest Autonomous Communities and

the rest of Spain reduced. Also, the coverage of public childcare increased in almost all Autonomous Communities except four (Basque Country, Madrid, Murcia, Navarra). Sections 4 and 5 in this chapter will investigate the policy-making process that led to childcare expansion in the two selected Autonomous Communities, Andalusia and Rioja. More precisely, we will describe how regional government in both cases promoted childcare expansion and shaped the childcare institutional design. Prior to focus on the empirical investigation section 2 and 3 will briefly outline the socio-economic and political context in Andalusia and Rioja.

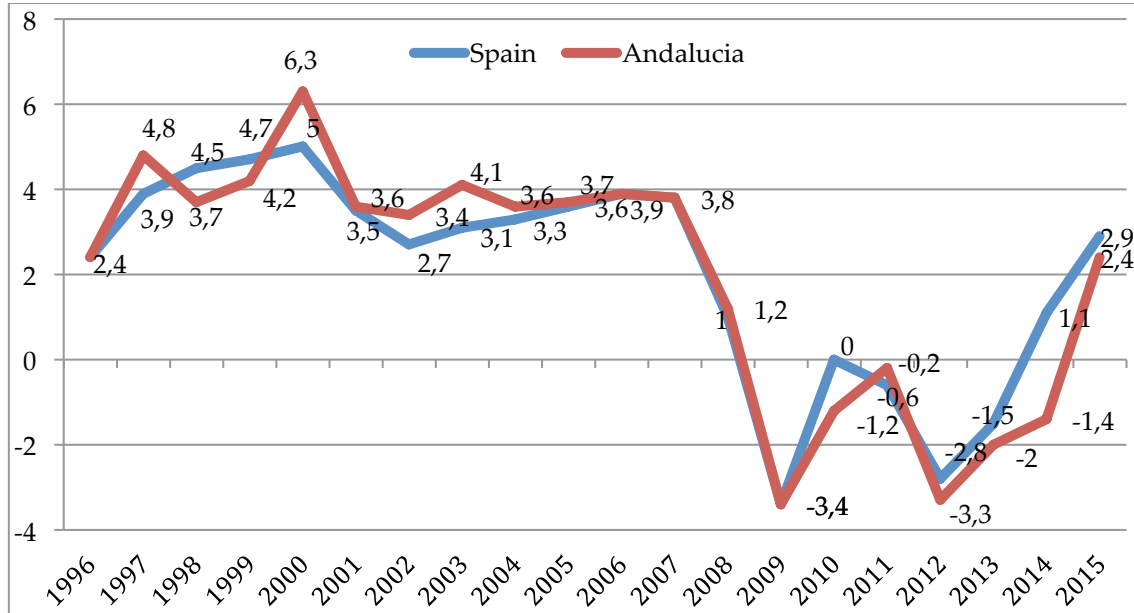
3. Socio-Economic and Political Context in Andalusia and La Rioja

3.1 Socio-Economic Challenges

The Autonomous Community of Andalusia is located in the south of Spain next to the Portugal border. With 8.403.350 inhabitants the Autonomous Community of Andalusia is the most populated of Spain. Historically, Andalusia is one of the least developed Autonomous Communities with the agricultural sector that until 20 years ago used to predominate over other industrial sector. Indeed, in the last two decades GDP, in Andalusia has sensitively grown. In the period 1995-2006, before the economic crisis, the regional economy was positioned above the national average in terms of nominal GDP growth, which was 7,7% in Andalusia and 7,4% in Spain (Laurent, Periáñez and Petit, 2010). Also, in real terms, the regional average annual GDP growth for 1996-2007 (4%) was above the national average (3.7%) (figure 6.1), positioning Andalusia as the Autonomous Community with the third highest GDP growth, behind the Autonomous Communities of Madrid (4.5%) and Murcia (4.3%) (OECD 2010:51). The progress on GDP before 2008 can be partly explained by the comparative advantage on labour cost rather than by the development of a knowledge-based economy, that in Andalusia has struggled to emerge (IDEA 2008). Instead, a cheap labour cost - that is 20% lower on

average than in the other Spanish Autonomous Communities - characterizes the economic and labour conditions of Andalusia (IDEA 2008).

Figure 6.1 – GDP growth rate, % change over previous period, Andalusia and Spain, 1996-2015



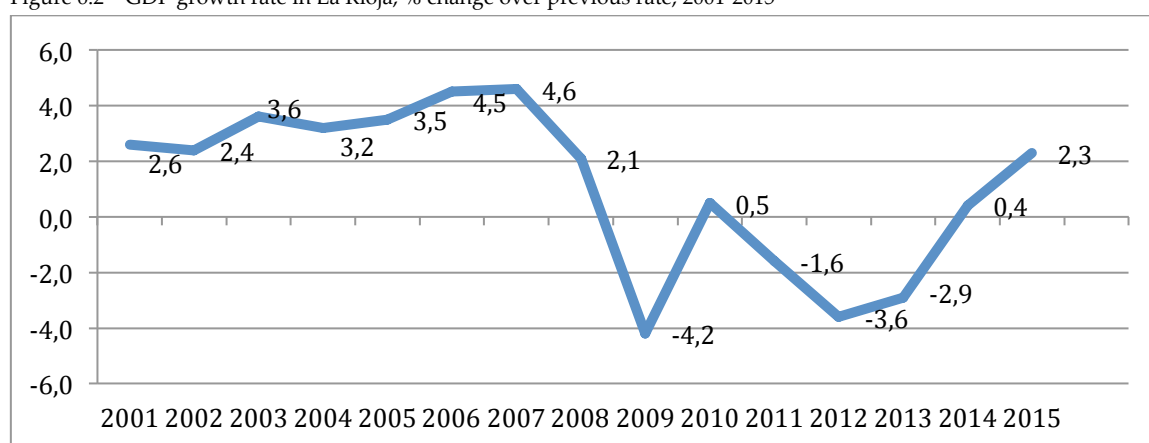
Source: for 1996-2008 (Junta de Andalucía 2009); for 2009-2015 (Eurostat)

This in turn implies lower salaries as well as lower cost of life in Andalusia. The economic growth in Andalusia, before the crisis, has been mainly driven by construction and tourism sectors. The latter industrial sectors are the ones who suffered most the effects of the economic crisis in Spain. In turn, this had an impact in the economic performance of Andalusia. From 2008 to 2014, the GDP growth rate was only negative. Only, in 2015 the GDP growth rate came back almost to pre 2008 level.

On the other hand, La Rioja is an Autonomous Community of Spain, located in the north of the Iberian country between two wealthy Autonomous Communities such as Navarra and Basque Country, in the heart of the Ebro Valley. It is the second smallest Autonomous Community in terms of territorial extension as well as one with fewer inhabitants, 312,647, half of which lives in the region capital, Logrono. The rest of the population is disseminated in the 174 municipalities, 94 of which have less than 200 inhabitants. The leading economic sectors are agriculture, wine and tourism. The economy of La Rioja is also driven by traditional sectors such as footwear and textiles and, recent efforts have promoted innovation in traditional industries to make the

latter a leading sector of the economy of La Rioja (EU Industrial Policy Report 2018). Against this backdrop, the Autonomous Community of La Rioja has been characterized by a relatively good economic performance as shown by the medium-high level of GDP growth rate at least between 2001 and 2007 (figure 6.2). Then, also the Autonomous Community of La Rioja has highly suffered from the economic crisis, with GDP growth rate passing from + 4,6% in 2007 to -4,2% in 2009 (figure 6.2). The GDP growth rate then fluctuated between negative and slightly positive rates between 2009 and 2014. In 2015 it came back to the 2008 level (figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 – GDP growth rate in La Rioja, % change over previous rate, 2001-2015



Source: Eurostat

The Autonomous Communities of Andalusia and La Rioja have different performance as concern poverty and employment trends (table 6.6). Poverty rates in Andalusia are highly above national and EU-27 average and they have increased from 27,2% in 2005 to 35,7 in 2015. By contrast, poverty rates in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja have declined from 22,2% in 2005 to 17,1% in 2015, well below the national and the EU-average. Also, total employment rate in La Rioja is definitely higher than Andalusia. The total employment rate in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja have increased from 64,4% in 2000 to 73,6% in 2005 and then it has decreased to 68,5% in 2015. Indeed total employment rates in La Rioja decreased with the economic crisis, remaining still relatively high compared to the national and the EU average. On the other hand, the total employment rate in Andalusia is below national and EU average. However, the total employment rate in Andalusia had a sharp increase from 2000 (50,6%) to 2005 (59,6%) and then it gradually decreased to 52,6% in 2015. Between 2000 and 2015, both

Andalusia and La Rioja experienced an increase of the female employment rates, even though with different levels. Female employment rate in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja increased from 44,3% in 2000 to 61,8% in 2015, above the national average and slightly below the EU-27 average. By contrast, the female employment rate of Andalusia was always below national and EU-27 average. However, female employment in Andalusia has increased from 33,4% in 2000 to 45,9% in 2015

Table 6.5 - AROPE¹¹ Rates, Total Employment Rates, Female Employment (20-64) Rates, %, EU-27, Spain, Andalusia and La Rioja

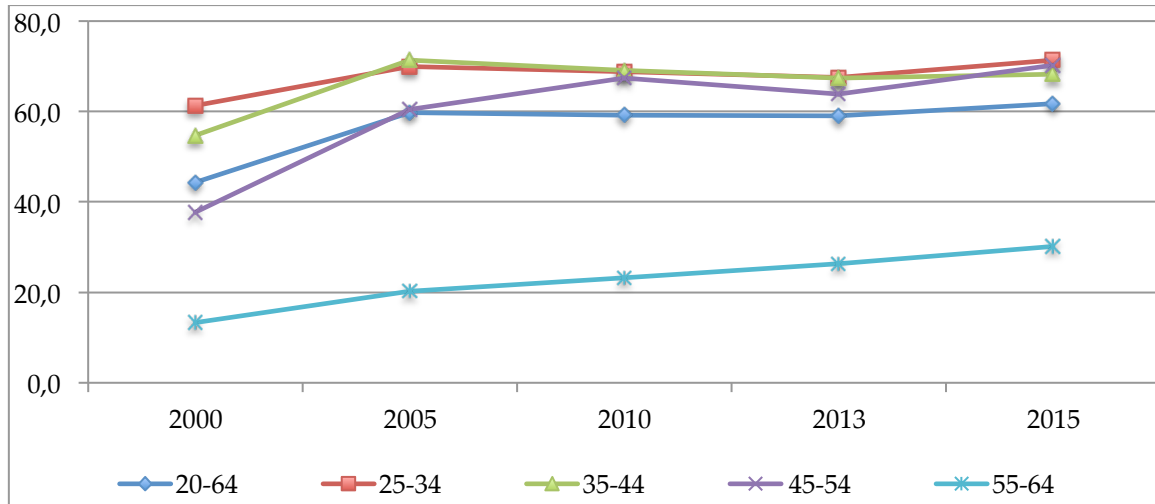
		2000	2005	2010	2013	2015
At risk of Poverty Rate (AROPE)	EU-27	n.a	25,8	23,7	24,6	23,7
	Spain	n.a	20,1	20,7	20,4	22,1
	Andalucia	n.a	27,2	28,3	29,1	35,7
	La Rioja	n.a	22,2	21,2	19,3	17,1
Total Employment Rate (20-64)	EU-27	66,6	68	69	68,8	70,1
	Spain	60,6	67,5	62,8	58,6	62
	Andalucia	50,6	59,6	54,4	48,7	52,6
	La Rioja	64,4	73,6	68	63,8	68,5
Female (20-64) Employment	EU-27	57,3	60,1	62,2	62,7	64,3
	Spain	44,4	55,1	56,3	53,8	56,4
	Andalucia	33,4	44,4	46,8	43,1	45,9
	La Rioja	44,3	59,8	59,2	59	61,8

Source: Eurostat

Moreover, from 2000 the female employment of younger age cohorts, those potentially more interested in childcare developments, started to increase either in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja (figure 6.3) than in Andalusia (figure 6.4). In the former case, the female employment rate for age cohorts 25-34 and 35-44 in 2000 was respectively 61,3% and 54,7%. Then, the female employment of both age cohorts in La Rioja fluctuated around 70% between 2005 and 2015.

¹¹ The AROPE rate, the share of pers the total population which is at risk of poverty or social exclusion, is the headline indicator to monitor the achievement of poverty target within the Europe 2020 strategy. More precisely, AROPE corresponds to the sum of persons who are either at risk poverty, or severely materially deprived or living in households with low-work intensity.

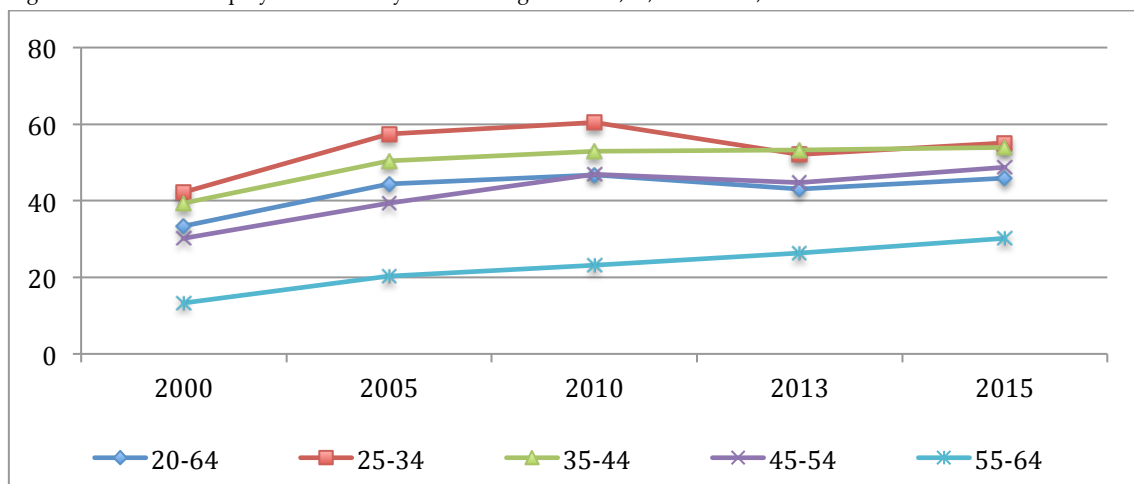
Figure 6.3 - Female Employment Rates by Different Age Cohorts, %, La Rioja, 2000-2015



Source: Eurostat

The levels of female employment increased in all age cohorts in Andalusia. Particularly, female employment for women aged 25-34 increased from 42,2% in 2000 to 60% in 2010 and then it decreased to 53,9 in 2015, remaining higher than in 2000. Female Employment for women aged 35-44 increased from 39,4% in 2000 to 53% in 2010, then it remained more or less stable until 2015. Interestingly, either in Andalusia or La Rioja, the female employment rate of women aged 25-44 is higher than those of women aged 45-64.

Figure 6.4 – Female Employment Rates by Different Age Cohorts, %, Andalusia, 2000-2015



Source: Eurostat

As for fertility rates both regions, had different performance before 2005 (table 6.6). Since 2005 fertility rates in both regions are more or less aligned to the same level of

national average and below the EU-27 average. Interestingly, fertility rates in Andalusia were traditionally higher than the national average (table 6.6).

From the mid-1990s to 2015 fertility rates in Andalusia fluctuated around 1,4 with a peak of 1,5 in 2005. By contrast, in 1995 fertility rates were quite low in La Rioja and then they increased during the 2000s.

Table 6.6 - Total Fertility Rates, Spain, Andalusia, La Rioja and EU-27, 1995-2015

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
EU-27	n.a.	1,5	1,5	1,6	1,6
Spain	1,2	1,2	1,3	1,4	1,3
Andalusia	1,4	1,3	1,5	1,5	1,4
La Rioja	1	1,1	1,1	1,4	1,3

Source: Eurostat

These figures on fertility are coupled with the increase of the absolute number of infant population aged 0-2. The latter, in La Rioja has increased from 6.541 in 1996 to 8.850 in 2015 with a peak of 10.157 in 2010 (table 6.7). In Andalusia, the number of children aged 0-2 has increased from 254.812 in 1995 to 293.145 and then decreased to 250.641 in 2015 (table 6.8). In line with common trends in western countries, ageing population increased in both regions, even though not too much with respect to total share of the population (tables 6.7 and 6.8).

Table 6.7 - Total Population in La Rioja, 1995-2015

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Total Population	268.055	273.828	298.045	319.934	313.569
Population aged 0-2	6.541	6.815	8.643	10.157	8.850
Population aged over 65	47.346	52.429	54.720	58.289	62.715

Source: Eurostat

Table 6.8 - Total Population, population aged below 2 and over 65 years old, Andalusia, Absolute Numbers, 1995-2015

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Total Population	7.115.498	7.285.992	7.730.696	8.276.008	8.399.618
Population aged 0-2	254.812	233.147	260.312	293.145	250.641
Population aged over 65	900.966	1.027.545	1.118.049	1.227.755	1.361.496

Source: Eurostat

In sum, the level of socio-economic development is highly different between La-Rioja and Andalusia. The former is a relatively wealthy Autonomous Community with high

employment rates and relatively low poverty rates. By contrast, Andalusia is one of the least economically developed Spanish regions. However, Andalusia experienced remarkably growth and development over the last three decades bridging the gap with the rest of Spain and EU-27 (OECD 2010). More importantly, both regions share high problem pressure due to remarkable female employment growth occurred in both regions - even though with different rates – between 2000 and 2015.

3.2 Regional Political Competition within the Spanish Party System

3.2.1 Party System and Electoral Rules

Compared to Italy the Spanish party system has been much more stable, with longer cabinet and fewer electoral changes. The recent history of Spanish political system can be divided in three different phases: the transition to democracy (1977-1982); the Socialist predominant phase (1982-1992); and the period of bipolar competition and alternation (1992-2015).

In the transition period the centrist party Union of the Democratic Centre (UCD) formed by Adolfo Suarez and composed by a variety of small centris parties – emerged as the majority party, similarly to DC in Italy. The right of the political spectrum was occupied by Popular Alliance (AP), formed by a political élite that - prior to the transition - used to be very close to the Francoist regime. However, the main competitor of UCD, stood on the left side of the political spectrum. Indeed, in the first democratic electoral consultation in 1977, the only party who got very close to the consensus obtained by UCD was the the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE). The latter after the Extraordinary national congress in 1979 that dismissed the Marxist ideological stances and adopted a reformist program, became a credible political alternative to UCD (Linz and Moreno 1999). The main competitor on the “left” for PSOE was the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) which maintained more radical and “leftist” views compared to PSOE. In 1977, only this four state-wide parties were present in national parliament (Bosco 2005).

The national election of 1982 contributed to reshape Spanish party system. Indeed, in 1982 the PSOE obtained for the first time a broad majority and it started a predominant phase over Spanish government that lasted ten years. In this period, some important changes affected the Spanish political system. After the great defeat in 1982 the UCD started a sudden disintegration that benefited, in terms of electoral consensus, the PSOE and AP. The latter, became the main antagonist of PSOE during its predominant phase. The ninth national congress of AP, in 1989, transformed AP into a liberal, conservative and Christian Democratic party named Popular Party (PP). Also, in 1986 the Spanish Communist Party that became increasingly smaller in terms of electoral consensus, formed the party of United Left (IU) in coalition with other small radical left parties (Linz and Moreno 1999).

From the 1990s, Spain shifted to a stable party system characterized by moderate pluralism with centripetal political competition as well as government alternation between PP and PSOE. Such features remain unchanged at least until 2015 when the emergence of new important political forces such as Podemos and Ciudadanos reshaped Spanish Party system. As for the Spanish electoral system, a proportional law with D'Hondt method was introduced in 1977. The Spanish electoral system requires that a party running for national elections achieves 5% of votes as a minimum threshold to gain political representation in the national parliament.

At the regional level political competition was shaped by the same major state-wide political forces. Besides national parties, a number of regional parties gained political representation in the regional parliament. This happened particularly in those Autonomous Communities shaped by strong territorial political cleavage such as Basque Country and Catalonia. The statutory laws of the Autonomous Communities allow them to set autonomously their electoral system which is in most of the cases proportional, similarly to the national level. However, the minimum threshold of votes required to gain access in regional parliament may vary according to different regional electoral rules. Next section will show the features of political competition and electoral system in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia and La Rioja.

3.2.2 The Political System in The Autonomous Community of Andalusia

Since its introduction, the Autonomous Community of Andalusia has an electoral proportional law with D'hondt method. The parties running for regional elections that achieve minimum threshold of 3% of electoral votes have access to parliament representation. The party system in Andalusia has been traditionally highly stable and little fragmented. Until 2015, the two main national parties PSOE and PP used to get about 75% of votes. The political parties that entered in regional parliament were often the same parties that used to struggle for national elections, with the exception of the Andalusian Party (AP). The latter is a regionalist party that has electorally exploited the centre-periphery cleavage by advancing federalist pretensions and it has been ideologically close to left wing positions on social issues. AP has obtained a small parliamentary representation for seven consecutive legislatures (1982-2008). From 2008 onwards AP started to decline its consensus. AP was then dissolved in 2015. The left political spectrum has been represented also by the Unified Left (Izquierda Unida, IU), which is a national political party - at the left of PSOE - that has always achieved a marginal parliamentary representation in Andalusia.

Overall, in Andalusia, the PSOE either through absolute majorities, minority governments or coalition governments has always been in power. This constitutes a greatest exception in Spain, since Andalusia is the only Autonomous Community in which the same party has governed since the beginning of the autonomic process. The most leftist positions of the Andalusian voters and the strong party identification with the PSOE (Ortega and Montabes 2011), made the biggest AC of Spain an electoral feud of PSOE. The political trajectory and the overall political system in Andalusia can be divided into four stages. In a first stage between 1982 and 1994, PSOE became the hegemonic political force in Andalusia, gaining for three successive regional elections the absolute majorities. A second stage occurred when PSOE lost its absolute majority between 1994 and 2004. Firstly, in 1994 PSOE formed a minority government. Later in 1996 and 2004, the PSOE steered a government coalition with the Andalusian Party. A third stage, from 2004 to 2012, was characterized by the return to the absolute majorities of the PSOE. Finally, there is a final stage in which the PSOE loses the

absolute majority again. In the 2012 elections, the PP obtained more votes than the PSOE, but it did not get an absolute majority consequently it could not form a government. Nevertheless, the PSOE through a coalition pact with *Izquierda Unida- Los Verdes* reached the number of seats necessary to have a parliamentary majority supporting a coalition government. The last regional elections of 2015, in Andalusia, have produced important changes in the party system. In addition to the PSOE, PP and IU the new parties, Podemos and Ciudadanos joined the regional parliament by gaining respectively the 14,8 and 9,24 of votes. The PSOE with 35,28% of consensus did not get the absolute majority. However, PSOE managed to form a coalition government with Ciudadanos, appointing the PSOE former councillor for Equality and Social Policy, Susana Diaz, as president of regional government.

3.3 The Political System in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja

The political system in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja has been rather stable and little fragmented, often reproducing the electoral trends of the national level.

The limited political fragmentation is associated with a relatively high electoral threshold to gain access in regional parliament, set at 5%. This, until the last elections in 2015, has given access only to the two biggest Spanish political parties, PSOE and PP, and to a small local party, Partido Riojano (PR). The latter is a regionalist party, with progressive view on socio-economic issues, that until 2015 has been constantly the third political force by getting between 5 and 7 % of votes. The rest of the electoral consensus, since the introduction of regional elections, has been divided between PSOE and PP. Against this backdrop, the winning party - who used to get around 50% of votes - did not have to struggle to form a one party majority government.

La Rioja is usually conceived as a traditional PP stronghold due to a long electoral success since 1995. However, between 1983 and 1995 the PSOE had been able to gain two out of three regional electoral competition, reproducing a national electoral trend favourable to the socialist in those years. Nevertheless, since 1995 the PP has started its absolute predominance over the Autonomous Community of La Rioja. Pedro Sanz Alonso, elected for the first time in 1995 has been president for twenty years until 2015.

In this time span, the PP won the electoral regional competition with 50% votes, except for the elections of 2003 and 2007 when PP for few votes missed the absolute majority. In 2003 and 2007, PP got respectively the 49,54% and 49,67% share of votes. In both cases PP manage to form a regional government with the abstention vote of the two representatives of PR. In 2015, following the national trend, two new political forces obtained electoral representation in the parliament of La Rioja: Podemos and Ciudadanos. The former gained 11,2% of votes, the latter 10,5%. The first party was PP with 38,6% of consensus while PSOE got the 26,7%. Such increased electoral fragmentation in the regional elections appeared for the first time in La Rioja. However, PP managed to form and lead the regional government thanks to the abstention vote of Ciudadanos party, and the PP candidate Jose Ignacio Caniceros became president.

4. Childcare Policy Trajectory in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia

4.1 From Inertia and Unclear Policy Framework to Childcare Reform

For long time childcare in Andalusia has been largely underdeveloped reflecting a typical situation of the Southern regions in Europe. During the 1980s and 1990s the very few crèches in Andalusia were divided between *crèches in the workplace* and *crèches outside the workplace*. The former, called *guarderías laborales*, were created by no-profit private providers, which received public financing for maintenance costs. The *crèches outside workplace*, in Spanish called *guarderías no laborales*, were mainly provided by catholic parishes and/or charitable entities. More precisely, the public and private entities that planned to create childcare services presented a project to the regional administration that decided whether to finance it or not (FEUSO 2018). The procedure was very informal with no clear framework rules binding and valid for all. The regional DG for Social Policy (*Consejería de Asuntos Sociales*) was the regional administration responsible for organizing childcare supply.

Against this backdrop, the overall childcare system was driven by social assistance - more precisely "care" - rather than socio-educational aims. The overall scarce network of childcare centres was largely privatized. The political interest towards childcare development in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia was quite low or absent during the 1990s. The political programmes of the main parties – PSOE and PP – for the 1996 elections did not even mention childcare development as one of their policy objectives. Only, the small left party, IU, in the V legislature (1996-2000) tried to stimulate a policy debate in the regional parliament but without success (Parliamentary Archives of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia 1997).

From 2000 on, the political salience of childcare increased and childcare policy measures started to be developed. Table 6.9 summarizes the evolution of childcare policy legislation during 2000s, identifying three main phases. Firstly, in 2002, a "*Plan for Family Support*" was introduced by the *Decree 137/2002* that provided measures to support families – especially low income ones – in their costs for external childcare. In this occasion, the regional government focused mainly on childcare affordability making a first step towards a childcare policy shaped by social investment. Also, a Childcare platform was created to formally consult the relevant stakeholders (municipal public providers, profit and no profit providers, trade unions) involved in the childcare policy arena. A second phase started with a new Educational Law that defined childcare as a socio-educational service. As a consequence, childcare policy competences shifted from DG Equality and Social Policy to DG Education. Finally, since 2008 a third phase of regional legislation aimed at introducing new regulatory framework for childcare system in Andalusia. Indeed, in 2008 the regional decree 428 introduced the *accreditation* system, which was regulated by *Decree 149/2009* as well as by the Agreement of 7th July 2009 between DG Educaion and DG Budget. As we will see in further details in the next sections, the rules established during the third phase of regional legislation contributed to "*publicize*" the childcare private provision as well as to introduce robust social investment elements. The empirical analysis, which is the focus of the next sections, describes childcare policy changes and the related policy-making process occurred during 2000s in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia.

Table 6.9 - Childcare Policy Legislation in Andalusia

Phases	Legislation	Main Changes	
1	<i>Decree 137/2002</i> <i>“Plan for Family Support”</i>	It introduced: - measures to increase childcare time duration to help parents reconciling work and family life - a system of fees discount to favour childcare access of low income families Established a Childcare Platform that gathers the relevant stakeholders (municipalities, no and for profit providers, trade unions) of childcare policy arena. The platform was steered by the DG Equality and Social Policy in charge of childcare competence.	First Steps towards Social Investment and Actors Involvement
2	<i>Ley 17/2007</i> <i>Educational Law of Andalusia</i>	Defines childcare as a socio-educational service. As a consequence, childcare competences shifted from DG Equality and Social Policy to DG Education, which in turn steers the workings of childcare platform.	Further Improvements on Social Investment
3	<i>Decree 428/2008</i>	Introduced the Accreditation system	Publicization and Robust Social Investment
	<i>Decree 149/2009</i>	Established rules, criteria and requirements valid for public and accredited private services	
	<i>Agreement of 7.7.2009 between DG Budget and DG Education</i>	Established maximum fee threshold and fees discounts according to income scales valid for public and accredited private services	

Source: author's elaboration

4.2 Childcare Policy-Making Processes

4.2.1 The Plan For Family Support and the Childcare Platform

An increasing political concern towards childcare development started in 2000. Indeed, for the regional election of 2000 both PSOE and PP targeted at least vague and generic childcare goals. The electoral programme of PSOE, the party that gained the regional elections of 2000, precisely expressed the aim to “*increase the network of childcare centres*

for children aged 0-3 years old in order to fully cover the demand of children coming from low income families" (PSOE 2000). As a result, the IV Gonzalez regional government held by Social Democrats introduced the *Plan for Family Support* ("*Plan de Apoyo a las Familias Andaluzas*"). The latter, introduced with the *Decree 137/2002*, corresponded to a wide policy agenda aimed at helping families to accomplish their tasks related to long-term care and childcare. Against this backdrop, the *Plan for Family Support* was the first governmental document that stressed the need to develop a childcare policy in line with the new needs of dual earner couples (*Decreto 137/2002*). Indeed, such plan was developed with the explicit aim to respond to functional pressures that, due to increasing fertility and female employment rates started to become more stringent (*Decreto 137/2002*). The plan was not directly aimed at creating new childcare places but rather it was aimed at making the already existing childcare supply more affordable and better equipped for the work-life balance needs of the emerging dual earner couples. The latter were steadily increasing due to growing female employment in Andalusia as seen above in table 6.5. To this regard, the *Plan for Family Support* contained specific policy measures aimed at increasing childcare time duration. Indeed, the Plan adopted a new opening hours of childcare centres: from 7h30 a.m. to 20 p.m. More precisely, the traditional activities of childcare services were performed from 9 am to 5 pm. The time from 7.30 am to 9 am and from 5 pm to 8 pm was devolved to a series of integrative services, such as playgrounds, performed in the same centre where traditional daily care used to take place. Also, the *Plan for Family Support* made childcare access definitely more affordable. Even though municipal public childcare and private providers remained free to establish their preferred childcare fees, the Plan provided large and generous fee discounts. The latter varied from 25% to 100% of the total childcare fees, according to the economic situation as well as number of household members.

The DG Social Policy that was in charge of childcare followed a participatory approach for the drafting of the *Plan for Family Support* (Interview 11 – DG Education). The association of Municipalities, the association of private (either no or for profit) providers, and the trade unions were consulted in the *Childcare Platform*, steered by the DG Social Policy. The *Childcare Platform* was established with the aim to have a formal

policy arena, where informing and consulting the stakeholders involved in the childcare sector about policy initiatives and plans. Indeed, the regional government before adopting a final version of decree and legislation used to present its programmatic policy plans to stakeholders in order to get useful insights and suggestions from the latter. Such formal consultation platform has been a first and important arena for stakeholders to channel their claims.

“During the 1990s in the context of scarcity and underdevelopment of childcare services in Andalusia we have claimed - but unheard - the set up of a strategy for childcare development. With the establishment of the platform we have found an institutional place were to advance our views” (Interview 10 – CEI-A).

Even though the *Plan for Family Support* entailed a participatory approach through consultation with stakeholders, the adoption of such plan did not have a particular echo in the regional parliament. Indeed, the Plan for Family Support was adopted by a governmental decree that, differently from ordinary legislation, did not imply a parliamentary debate. Nevertheless, once adopted, the *Plan for Family Support* raised some debate within the Regional Parliament. Izquierda Unida welcomed the attention to low income families showed by the *Plan for Family Support*, highlighting however how the latter was too unbalanced towards dual earner couples (Parliamentary Archives of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia 2002). To this regard, in July 2002 the group of *Izquierda Unida* proposed the extension of the benefits provided by the *Plan for Family Support* to children with one or two unemployed parents (Parliamentary Archives of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia 2002). Interestingly, three years later, in May 2005, the PP regional group proposed the creation of new childcare places by restructuring the public network of childcare centres, which was quite weak (Parliamentary Archives of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia 2005). Both proposals were not even discussed in Regional Parliament. However, as we will see below, the political salience of childcare started to increase and the regional elections of 2004 and 2008 became more competitive on work-life balance issues.

4.2.2 *The Shift Towards a Socio-Educational Service and the Rise of Political Competition Over Childcare*

During early 2000s the issue of childcare development started to gain political visibility in Andalusia. As emphasized by a regional public official working in DG Education, “the sudden but progressive increase of fertility and female employment rates made the development of childcare a new political issue previously neglected” (Interview 11 – DG Education).

Beyond functional pressures, also the establishment of Childcare Platform contributed to increase the political visibility of childcare. Indeed, the members involved in Childcare Platform started to issue position papers and programmatic documents on childcare policy proposals as a follow-up to the discussions held in the Childcare Platform. In this context, Trade Unions, especially CCOO (*Comisiones Obreras*), and the *Coordinamento Escuelas Infantil Andalusia* (CEI-A) voiced for the delivery of a socio-educational childcare rather than mere social assistance services (Interview 6-CCOO; Interview 10-CEI-A). The CEI-A is a self-employment no profit cooperative composed by staff professionals of childcare services. CEI-A has a long tradition in the delivery of ECEC services of both cycles (0-2 and 3-5). They also delivered training courses for their associates as well as for staff professional of public services. Such training courses were aimed at developing the socio-educational teaching skills of childcare staff. CCOO, in their programmatic documents claimed the importance of developing a socio-educational childcare service with the appropriate qualifications for staff professional (CCOO 2005). In the same years, the debate about the nature of childcare services for children aged 0-3 years old shaped also the national political debate. Indeed, as seen in chapter 5, in 2006 the national *Ley Organica d'Educacion* (LOE), reasserted the educational nature of childcare service. Against this backdrop, in 2007, one year before the 2008 regional elections in Andalusia, the center-left regional government approved the new educational law of (law number 17 of 2007). The latter affirmed the educational character of childcare services in Andalusia transforming the so called “*guarderías*” in “*escuelas infantiles*” (infant school). Importantly, the regional

law 17/2007 transferred the competences from DG Social Policy to DG of Education (Consejería de Educación).

“When I was regional councillor for Education, me and the other members of regional government had very clear the objective to make childcare a socio-educational service rather than a social assistance one. Moving childcare competence from DG of Social Policy to DG Education was the first step to achieve such aim” (Interview 2 – Former Regional Councillor for Education).

However, the definition of rules concerning quality and control was postponed to the approval of a governmental decree that the government planned to concert with the stakeholders in the Childcare Platform.

The overall consultation and workings for the approval of new regulations on childcare were interrupted by the regional elections of 2008. In this occasion, the issue of childcare development remained highly visible in the political agenda. The PSOE wanted to link the childcare qualitative developments brought by *law 17/2007* with a quantitative expansion of childcare places (Interview 2 – Former Regional Councillor for Education). To this regard, the PSOE electoral programme for the 2008 regional elections targeted the *“creation of new 100.000 childcare places for children aged between 0 and 3 years old with the objective to satisfy the childcare demand for children aged between 0 and 3 years old within the 2008-2012 legislature”* (PSOE 2008). More precisely, the 2008 PSOE electoral programme promoted the *“creation of municipal public childcare and the accreditation of private services”* (PSOE 2008). Such strategy was aimed at achieving the 33% of childcare coverage soon as prescribed by the EU target adopted in 2002 within the Lisbon Strategy (PSOE 2008). All the electoral programs of the main parties involved in electoral competition of 2008 at least mentioned childcare development as policy goals. The whole political spectrum, from right to left parties, almost totally converged towards the strengthening of childcare centres, especially public. The group of IU was particularly active. At the beginning of the VIII legislature (2008-2012) IU presented a bill proposal for the universalization of childcare for children aged 0-3 years old. Also PP Andalusia, presented a bill proposal whose content was

surprisingly not too far from those proposed by IU. More precisely, the PP Andalusia in 2008 presented a bill proposal on childcare mainly based around three points: i) free childcare access; ii) achieving 33% of childcare coverage; iii) favouring the development of childcare services in the municipalities with more than 500 inhabitants. Once again, both proposals were not even discussed in the regional parliament. However, they stimulated public debate and political action in the regional government. The Trade Union CCOO presented a programmatic document in which they emphasized the urgency to invest in public network of childcare services, with pedagogical contents delivered by qualified as well as permanently trained professionals (CCOO 2008). The regional government was quite conscious of the necessity to intervene on childcare but preferred to shape its own strategy and goals (Interview 2 – Former Regional Councillor for Education). Indeed, as the former councillor for Education reported:

“The functional pressures were quite strong. The association of families, the Trade Unions and also the different political parties, including PP, claimed and pushed for extending childcare availability and affordability. Against this backdrop, we elaborated an overarching strategy aimed at building and shaping the overall childcare system by investing new public resources, setting new rules and providing new fees policy” (Interview 2 – Former Regional Councillor for Education).

Indeed, as we will see in the next section, a series of governmental interventions between 2008 and 2009 introduced a new regulatory framework for childcare. In 2008 the regional government adopted the Decree 428 that brought two main novelties. Firstly, it ended the unclear procedure to finance municipal public childcare. Secondly, it introduced the accreditation mechanism for those childcare services held by private providers that meet specific requirements in terms of quality and price established by regional regulation. Indeed, the *Decree 149/2009* established the requirements valid for accredited services that are equal to those regulating public services. Also, the agreement of 7th July between DG Education and DG Budget established a maximum fee threshold and a system of fee discounts valid either for accredited or public

services. Also, financial resources allocated for childcare increased since 2008. Against this backdrop, the next two sections focus on the new regulatory framework developed by regional government between 2008 and 2009 as well as on the financial support towards childcare.

4.2.3 Political Preferences and Formal Consultation for a New Regulatory Framework

One year later the adoption of regional Educational Law 17 of 2007, the regional government issued the *Decree 438/2008* that gave a new impulse to the childcare system in Andalusia. The article 18.1 states that,

*“the DG of Education will promote an increase of childcare supply financed by the Government of Andalusia. To this aim, the Government and the DG of Education will define the conditions according to which establishing agreement with other administrations, local government and private companies for the creation of new childcare places”*¹²

Indeed, the decree 428/2008 established a clear procedure for financing municipal childcare as well as introduced the mechanism of accreditation with private providers. A clear procedure for financing municipal childcare was claimed by the *Federation of Andalusian Municipalities and Provinces (FAMP)* in the childcare platform.

“Since the establishment of the Childcare Platform we claimed a clearer and well structured system of financing of our municipal childcare in order to better cope with the emerging needs of our families” (Interview 13 – Former Representative of FAMP).

Indeed, before 2008 the regional financing of childcare services used to work differently. Prior to 2008, the municipalities and the private entities were used to request regional administration to finance their project of childcare building. Such procedure changed in 2008 when the *Decree 428* allowed regional governments to

¹² Translated by the author.

allocate either national or regional resources to municipalities – independently from their request – for the creation of new childcare places.

The agreements the regional administration makes with local government and private companies for the creation of new childcare places have similarities and differences. The regional governments allocate financial resources to local governments in order to boost municipal childcare supply. The municipalities can then decide whether to outsource (or not) the management of the service while it keeps holding the property of the centre (*outsourcing*). Differently, in case of private companies, the latter build childcare centres, then they can decide whether to ask regional government for *accreditation*. The private providers to be accredited have to comply with a series of requisites and criteria, mainly related to quality and price that are the same valid for public childcare places. Once a private service is accredited, families can enrol their children in such childcare centres benefiting from the same price and discounts of childcare fees applied to public services. More precisely, accredited private services receive from the DG Education the amount (or the total) of the fee discounted for families. In sum, the regional government supports public and accredited private services in different ways. However, both type of provisions had to follow the same rules concerning technical requirements, quality, price and fees discounts. Such rules were established by regional government through the *Decree 149/2009* and the *Agreement of 7.7.2009 between DG Budget and DG Education*.

Table 6.10 summarizes the main requirements in terms of quality and price that public and accredited private providers are expected to follow in order to run a childcare service in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia. *Decree 149/2009* regulated more in depth the first cycle of ECEC for children aged 0-3 years old. More specifically, the *decree* introduced requirements for staff qualification and staff-child ratio. Article 14 identified the number of children attending the age related classroom (unit): 8 children for childcare unit of children aged below 1 years old, 13 children in the childcare unit with children aged between 1 and 2 years old, 20 children for unit of children aged above 2 years old. Every childcare centre has one qualified staff member for every unit plus 1 or 2 two auxiliary staff members depending on the size of the centre. The article 16 of *Decree 149/2009* specifies that professional staff member have to hold at least a 3

years bachelor degree. Moreover, they have to pass the exam as a teacher for the first cycle of early years education and care. By contrast, the auxiliary staff members are required to hold the 3 years bachelor degree only.

Table 6.10 – Main Requirements Valid for Public and Accredited Private Childcare Services in Andalusia

Decree 149/2009	<p>Staff Qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional staff: ISCED 5 (at least 3 year bachelor) + passed exam who gives the title of teacher for first cycle ECEC - Auxiliary staff: ISCED 5 <p>Staff / Child Ratio:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1/8 for children aged below 1 years old - 1/13 for children aged between 1 and 2 years old - 1/20 for children aged above 3 years old
Agreement of 7.7.2009 between DG Budget and DG Education	<p>Maximum Threshold for Monthly Childcare Fees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 278 euros (Lunch Included) - 209 euros (Lunch Excluded)

Source: Decree 149/2009 of Regional Government of Andalusia and Agreement of 7th July 2009 between DG Budget and DG Education

Finally, the agreement between DG Budget and DG Education established a unique price for childcare fee. As a consequence, municipal and accredited private providers cannot set their childcare fees above a defined threshold, which is 278 euro/month comprehensive of childcare activities and lunch, 209 euros without lunch. Also, the same agreement established a generous system of fees discount. Family with one children enrolled will receive a fee discount according to the indicator of their economic situation [Public Indicator in Income of Multiple Effects (IPREM)].

A fees discount of 75% will address families with income between 0,5 and 1 IPREM. Families whose per capita income is above 1 IPREM and equal to or less than 1.5 IPREM will get a 50% reduction of childcare fee. Families with per capita income higher than 1.5 IPREM and equal to or less than 2 IPREM will get a 25% fees reduction. When the family is a user of two places, the second will have a bonus of 30% of the amount that is applicable to the first place. Of course fees reductions regards also

families with more than one children enrolled in a childcare service. When the family enrolls three children, the third enrolment will be discounted by 60% of the amount applicable to the first place. When the family uses more than three places, the fourth and the next will be free of charge.

All the rules described so far were established after consultations in the childcare Platform (Interview 11 - DG Education). Even though, as said above, the consultations within the platform are very top-down and not binding, the stakeholders found some room to contribute on childcare regulation. This occurred more intensively when childcare competence passed from DG Social Policy to DG Education. In this occasion, the DG Education acquired also the steering role of the childcare platform.

“The activation of the childcare platform occurred already in 2002. However, the first years we have experienced a lighter version of the Childcare Platform. It is under the DG Education that the Childcare Platform became more relevant and important. The DG Education and the Regional Ministry of Education wanted to really include stakeholders in order to identify problems and solutions to solve it” (Interview 8 - ACADE).

The approval of the qualifications needed for the professional staff working in public and accredited childcare services was a step forward advocated for long time by Trade Unions, especially CCOO, and no profit cooperatives as CEI-A (Interview 6 CCOO; Interview 10-CEI-A). Both organizations, also built an “alliance” within the platform to voice for improving quality by bringing evidence - in the platform meetings - of the beneficial effects of qualified staff on the social and pedagogical development of children (Interview 6 - CCOO; Interview 10 - CEI-A).

Beyond staff qualifications, consultations were developed to approve a staff-child ratio valid for public and accredited private services. Discussions over staff-child ratio turn to be contentious as two positions, apparently incompatible, were confronted (Interview 8 – ACADE; Interview 11 - DG Education). On the one hand, the Trade Unions, emphasized that high quality services are better delivered with a moderate staff-child ratio (Interview 6 – CCOO; CCOO 2008). By advocating small size class, the trade unions were also pursuing the employment maximization for staff professionals

(Interview 11 – DG Education). On the other hand, private providers (either no or for profit) pursued their interests to maximize profit and minimize staff cost, which is the higher expenditure for childcare investment (Interview 11 – DG Education). As a consequence, they claimed the high qualification of their personnel, reckoned as able to deal with a class composed by a high number of children (Interview 8 – ACADE). Against this backdrop, the regional administration had to find a point of equilibrium. As seen in table 6.7, the approved staff child ratio is differentiated according to children age but it is quite high in contrast to what expressed by Trade Unions regarding the necessity of small size classrooms. However, in each unit (classroom) staff professional is supported by one member auxiliary staff that is required to be qualified, even though lower than full professional staff (table 6.7). Trade Unions were not fully satisfied by this choice. Nevertheless, they emphasized that qualifications requirements for childcare staff was one of their requests and that, overall, the presence of qualified professional and auxiliary staff would help facing the high number of children for class established by Decree 140/2009 (Interview 6 – CCOO). The Regional Ministry of Education and the public officials from DG Education confirmed that the new rules on staff-child ratio and staff qualifications resulted from intense negotiations with stakeholders (Interview 2 – Former Regional Councillor for Education; Interview 11 – DG Education).

Also, the fixed price of childcare fee was established after deep consultations within the platform. The regional government when presented the discussions on childcare fees within the platform meetings had one clear objective: to establish a unique price for childcare fees relatively affordable for everyone in order to avoid class segregation between childcare centres (Interview 2 PSOE; Interview 11 – DG Education, Regional Administration). To this aim, the regional government engaged in a phase of confrontation and study with stakeholders in order to understand which was the more appropriate price taking into account the needs of families and the staff costs undertaken by public and private providers. In other words, according to legislators, the choice on childcare fees had to balance the families needs of affordable childcare with the sustainability of the investments deployed by childcare providers (Interview 11 – DG Education, Regional Administration). After an in-depth analysis within the

platform a unique price for childcare fee was established and finally ratified by the Agreement of 7th July 2009 between DG Education and Budget.

Finally, such intense legislation phase has been linked with a consistent allocation of financial resources to municipalities. The financial sources came either from regional budget or from the national plan Educa 3. However, already before Educa 3 regional government in Andalusia increased the share of financial resources allocated for childcare. The trajectory of financial support over childcare during 2000s is the focus of the next section.

4.2.4 The Regional Financial Support for Childcare and the Distribution of National Funding

In order to support the Plan for Family Support the regional budget for childcare was relatively conspicuous already in 2003 (first available data). In this year, the total budget for childcare in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia was 192.223.848 (table 6.11). The figures in table 6.11 include the expenses for: the construction of new childcare centres, the fees discount established by the *Plan for Family Support*, and the staff personnel of childcare centres held by the regional administration.

Table 6.11 – Regional Expenditure for Childcare, Andalusia, 2003-2015, Millions of Euros

2003	192.223.848
2005	211.434.288
2007	252.929.964
2009	274.281.274
2010	308.530.062
2011	305.738.075
2012	306.557.753
2013	272.241.866
2014	262.261.574
2015	267.700.281

Source: Presupuestos de la Comunidad Autonoma de Andalusia (2003-2015)¹³

Indeed, in Andalusia even though municipalities hold most of the public childcare supply, there are also few childcare centres held by regional administration, in which

¹³ (<https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/organismos/haciendaindustriayenergia/areas/presupuestos.html>)

the latter pays staff personnel. The share of regional budget for childcare increased until 252.929.964 in 2007 and 306.557.753 in 2014. The establishment of national expansionary plan *Educa 3* in 2008 contributed to the increase on childcare investment. Such plan was co-financed between the national and the regional government. As seen in chapter 4, the Autonomous Community of Andalusia received the highest share of national financing being the most populous Autonomous Community in Spain. The *Orden 25/11/2008* established how the *Educa 3* resources were allocated within Andalusia (table 6.12).

Table 6.12 – Criteria for Allocation of *Educa 3* resources, *Orden 25/11/2008*

30 %	In the municipalities where childcare services are completely absent
20%	In the urban areas characterized by economic, social and geographical difficulties
20%	In the urban areas characterized by industrial density
30%	In the urban areas where there is already high schooling demand

Source: author's elaboration

Since, until 2008, in many municipalities of Andalusia childcare supply lacked completely, 30% of financial resources were allocated to municipalities in which the childcare services were absent. A share of 20% of the whole *Educa 3* plan was devolved to contrast the lack of municipal childcare supply in the urban areas characterized by economic or social issues in order help children of low income families to break the cycle of disadvantage (*Orden 25/11/2008*). Small municipalities without childcare services and far from big cities received also 20% of allocated resources. Another share of 20% targeted the areas of Andalusian cities characterized by high concentration of industrial districts or service economy companies in order to favour a better work-life balance for employees. Finally, 30% was devolved to the urban areas with high schooling demand in order to satisfy the unmet childcare demand. However, the In 2012 national funds provided by *Educa 3* were cut. However, the regional government continued to invest on childcare almost the same share of the period pre 2008, when childcare was entirely financed with regional budget.

“Every budget allocation is a politically choice. We decided to keep investing on childcare even in the absence of the national cofinancing of Educa 3 as we strongly believe in the strength and importance of socio-educational services for under 3 years children” (Interview 3 - PSOE)

Indeed, regional childcare financing remained high even after the abolishment of the national plan Educa 3 in 2011 (table 6.11).

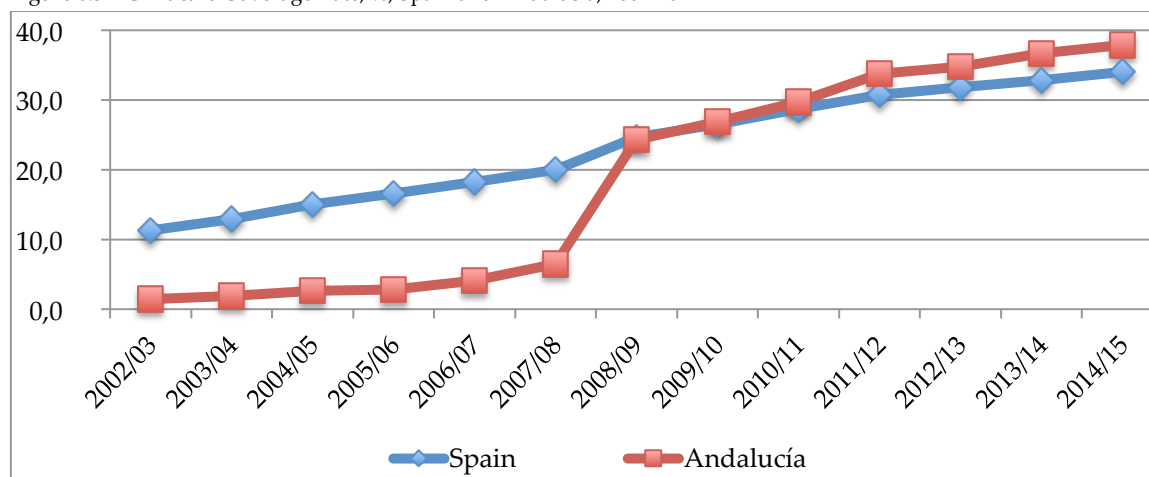
In sum, regional financial budget for childcare has constantly increased from 2003 to 2012. Despite a gradual decrease from 2012 to 2014 regional budget for childcare remained quite high and it has even slightly increased from 2014 to 2015. Finally, the Decree 428/2008 made the regional financial transfers towards municipal childcare more direct and clear.

4.3 Trends and Outcomes of Childcare Policy-Making

Since 2000, the intense policy legislation - summarized in the table 6.9 at the beginning of this paragraph – favoured childcare development in Andalusia.

By looking at figure 6.5, the percentage number of enrolment rates increased from 1,1% in 2002/03 to over 35% in 2014/15, above the national average and the EU target of 33%. In 2002/03, there were almost ten percentage points of difference between the national rate and the regional ones. By contrast, in 2014/15, the childcare coverage rate in Andalusia was slightly above the national average.

Figure 6.5 – Childcare Coverage Rate, %, Spain and Andalusia, 2002-2014



Source: MECD (2005,2006,2007,2008,2009,2010,2011,2012,2013,2014,2015,2016)

A sharp increase of childcare coverage rate coincided with the introduction of the educational law (17/2007) of Andalusia. As described above, the competence shift to DG Education gave definitely a new impulse to the childcare system in Andalusia.

One year after the introduction of educational law 17/2007 and the provision of new national and regional funding, enrolment rates have remarkably grown in both public and private childcare sectors (table 6.13)

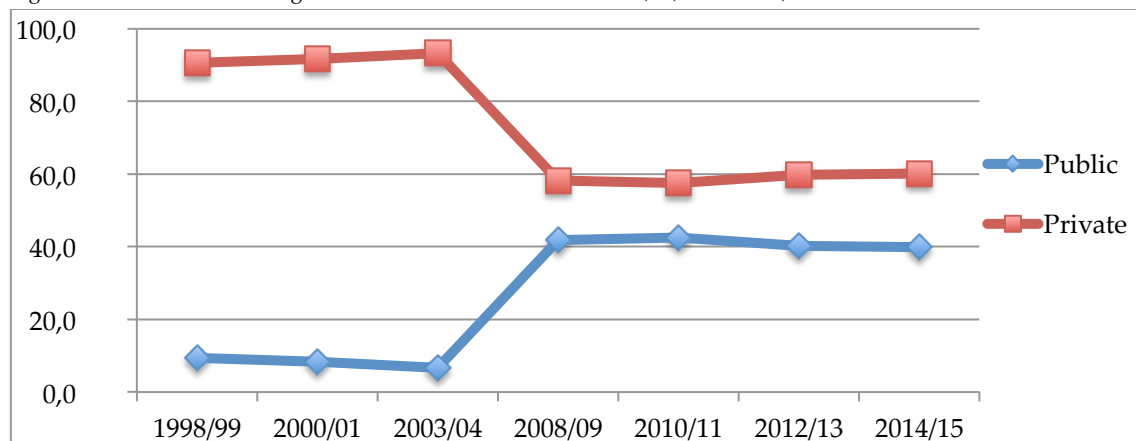
Table 6.13 – Absolute Numbers of Enrolled Children in Public and Private Services, Andalusia, 2005-2014

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Public	155	112	103	29.064	34.265	38.228	38.865	39.966	38.266
Private	7.212	10.689	17.412	40.313	44.737	55.159	59.701	54.706	57.225
Total	7.367	10.801	17.515	69.377	79.002	93.387	98.566	91.672	95.491

Source: Consejería d'Educacion, Unidad Estadística y Cartográfica

In relative terms, during the very high childcare expansion in Andalusia, the growth of public service was higher than private. Figure 6.6 shows the convergence between public and private childcare provision occurred in Andalusia.

Figure 6.6 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Public and Private Services, %, Andalusia, 1998-2014



Source: MECD (2000, 2002, 2005, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016)

A big share of private provision is composed by accredited private providers, which, since 2008, have to follow strict rules on quality and price established by the regional administration. By looking at the data on enrolment rates disaggregated between public, accredited private services and full private provision we can have a picture of the extent to which each provision contributes to childcare supply in Andalusia. Unfortunately we do have disaggregated data only for the period 2012-2015 (table

6.14). In this period, the extent of full private provision is very limited, between 11% and 12% of the overall childcare supply. The latter is mostly represented by accredited private services (almost 50%) a public provision (almost 40%).

Table 6.14 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Public, Accredited Private and Full Private Services, %, Andalusia, 2012-2015

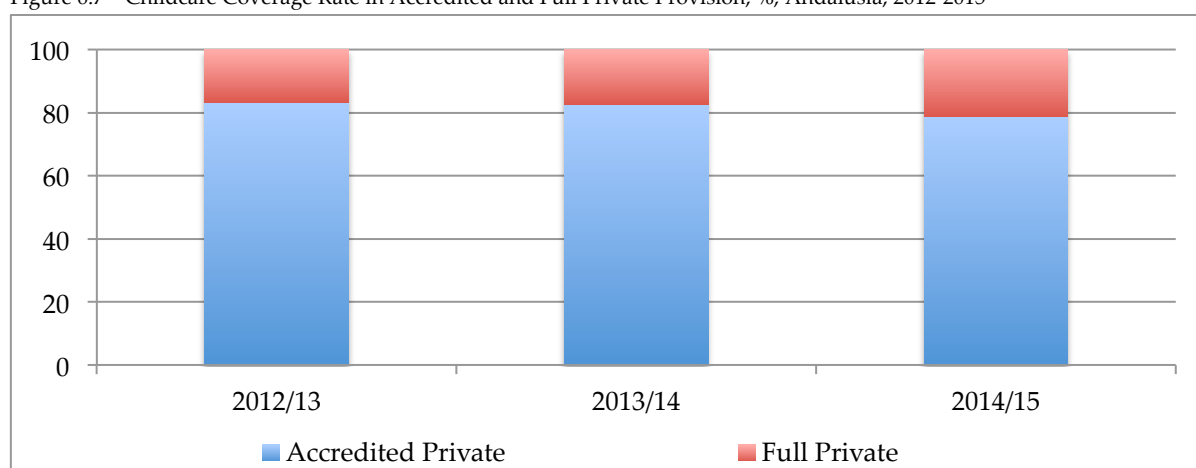
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Public	39,4	40,3	40
Accredited Private	50,4	49,3	47,2
Full Private	11,2	11,4	12,8

Source: Consejería d'Educacion, Unidad Estadística y Cartografica, Comunidad Autonoma de Andalusia

Moreover, over the total of private provision, a high majority (around 80%) of children aged 0-3 years old are enrolled in accredited private services (figure 6.7).

These data show that the policy efforts deployed by regional government, in terms of high resources invested and intense policy legislation, resulted in a very high childcare expansion. Against this backdrop, public authorities play a key role. Firstly, the number of municipal childcare, barely existent before 2000, experienced a sharp growth after 2000.

Figure 6.7 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Accredited and Full Private Provision, %, Andalusia, 2012-2015



Source: Consejería d'Educacion, Unidad Estadística y Cartografica, Comunidad Autonoma de Andalusia

Secondly, the accreditation procedure introduced by the regional government contributed to transform the high majority of total private provision of childcare into a sort of public-private hybrid in which the room for public control over quality and price turns to be stringent. In Andalusia, public and accredited private services together represent almost the 85-90% of childcare supply. Public services are held by

the public administration (mostly municipalities only a small amount are held by regional administration). In some case, municipalities outsource the management of some resources, basically the staff, to private providers. Indeed, the municipalities decide whether to outsource or not the management of public services and unfortunately we do not have data that estimate the extent of public services indirectly managed over the total of public provision in Andalusia. However, the sharp increase of municipal childcare services - either directly or indirectly managed – would have hardly occurred without the willingness of regional government to channel national and regional funding to municipal childcare.

In sum, both public (either directly or indirectly managed) and accredited private services follow the same rules established by regional government. This means that the 85-90% of the beneficiaries enrolled in the childcare services in Andalusia enjoy the same high quality requirements and fixed (low) price established by the regional government. As a consequence, the strategy to expand childcare developed by regional government achieved a robust degree of social investment by delivering a childcare supply almost totally shaped by high quality and affordable service.

Childcare issues became highly political competitive during 2000s with the increasing of the extent of problem pressure due to a gradual female employment growth. Against this backdrop, a strategy to support childcare expansion – especially public – was advocated by the whole political spectrum from Izquierda Unida to Partido Popular. Pressured by a strong political competition within the left camp and from the right-wing, the PSOE regional government adopted a strategy to strengthen municipal supply as well as to “publicize” private provision by introducing accreditation. The way in which accreditation was regulated increased public control over private provision by constraining private providers to stick on quality and price requirements established by regional government. The latter followed a participatory approach for the establishment of childcare regulation by informing stakeholders of their reform initiatives and consulting them before reform adoption. Against this backdrop, stakeholders such associations of municipalities (FAMP) could raise their claims over the necessity to have clear and structured framework of regional financial transfers for childcare creation. Also, stakeholders, such as trade unions, contributed to raise the

political salience of childcare needs focusing on the regulation of peculiar policy issues especially as concern the quality of services.

5. Childcare Policy Trajectory in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja

5.1 From Underdeveloped Social Assistance Services to the Development of Socio-Educational Services

Childcare in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja was originally developed as a social assistance service ("*guarderías infantiles*") under the competence of DG Social Service. Against this backdrop, between the late 1980s and early 1990s the municipalities started to request regional financing to build their own childcare centre (Navarra and Velasco 2016). Also, in the same period, the PSOE regional governments set up six childcare centres owned directly by the regional administration (Interview 20 – Public Official). More precisely, the Autonomous Community of La Rioja for a long time has developed a dual system of childcare composed by *guarderías* and educational centres for children aged 0-3. The former – that represented most of childcare supply – were centre of care and custody for children aged 0-3 run by either public or private providers under the competence of DG Social Services. By the late 1990s a series of educational centres for early years – governed by DG Education – started to be developed by either public (municipal) or private providers but originally the supply remained low as we will see more in detail in the figure 6.8 below. Until the early 2000s, fertility rates in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja were very low as seen in table 6.6 above. A political debate and competition over childcare at the regional level struggled to emerge. When in 1995 the PP firstly gained the majority in the regional parliament, only the PSOE presented questions about the situation of public network of childcare services in La Rioja asking to transfer the few childcare centres held by the regional government under the property of municipalities (Parliament of the Autonomous Community of La Rioja 1997).

The most important changes in the childcare policy setting of the Autonomous Community of La Rioja occurred in the first two decades of 2000s and they can be divided in two phases (table 6.15). Firstly, in 2009 the right-wing regional government adopted the Decree 49 to boost municipal childcare supply as well as to regulate childcare services provided by private companies. Secondly, in 2019, the Orden/EDU/23, by providing a universal and almost total discount for childcare fee shaped the regional childcare system with robust social investment achievements.

Table 6.15 – Childcare Policy Legislation during 2000s in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja

Phases	Legislation	Main Changes	
1	Decree 49/2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planned investment for municipal public childcare - Developed quality requirements valid for public and private provision 	Boost of Public Supply and First Elements of Publicization
2	<i>Orden EDU/23/2019 Aid Program for Childcare Fees</i>	Provided an almost total and universal discount for childcare fees	Towards a Robust Social Investment

Source: author's elaboration

In both cases the adopted legislation resulted from a governmental initiative with no involvement of relevant stakeholders and scarce parliamentary debate limited to the presentation of the Aid Program for childcare fees in 2019. Next section focuses on the childcare policy-making process that led to the adoption of Decree 49/2009 and Orden EDU/23/2019. Finally, section 5.3 outlines the resulted trends and outcomes of childcare policy-making.

5.2 Childcare Policy-Making Process

5.2.1 A Rising Political Competition

From 2000 political competition and functional pressures over childcare became more stringent. In the fifth (2000-2005) and sixth (2005-2010) legislatures of regional parliament the PSOE presented two bill proposals (5L/PRDG-0395 and 6L/PRDG-0057),

respectively in 2002 and 2004, promoting the transformation of old *guarderías* in socio-educational services and the universalization of free access to public childcare (Parliament of the Autonomous Community of La Rioja 2002 and 2004). In parallel, an outstanding growth of female employment started from 2000 as seen above in paragraph 3 of this chapter (table 6.5 and figure 6.3). In the same period fertility rates, traditionally very low in La Rioja, started to increase and from 2005 converged to the national average. Last but not the least, the approval of the national Educational law (Ley Organica d'Educacion) in 2006 – that shifted childcare services under the educational system - presented an occasion for the supporters of socio-educational services to promote the spill-over and the “downloading” of such principles. Indeed, one year later the approval of LOE, the necessity to develop regional legislation according to the educational aims emerged in the public debate. Both PSOE and PP party programs for the regional elections of 2007 included the necessity to transform childcare services into proper socio-educational services (Interview 15 - PSOE Rioja; Interview 19 - PP Rioja). Also, the Executive Secretary of FETE-UGT Rioja, Valentin Marzo Arpon, demanded that DG Education - following the national law approved in 2006 - would take responsibility over childcare competences in order to develop an educational service with public regulation towards quality and control as well as to invest on new childcare infrastructure¹⁴. As described in the next section, the shift from a childcare service shaped by social assistance and care towards a childcare services aimed at the socio-educational development of children actually occurred in 2009.

5.2.2 *The Shift Towards a Socio-Educational Service and a New Regulatory Framework*

In 2009 the right-wing government with the regional councillor for Education, Luis Alegre, and the regional councilor for Social Services, Sagrario Loza declared the intention of the right-wing regional government to end the dual system of childcare services by transforming the old *guarderías* into proper socio-educational childcare

¹⁴ “Educacion Infantil de 0 a 3 anos”, article of larioja.com published on 11th December 2008

services.¹⁵ To this aim, the right wing regional government elaborated the governemental decree 49/2009, the first regulatory framework for childcare in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja. Indeed, *decree 49/2009* mentions the requirements needed to run childcare services in La Rioja as well as the allocated resources to boost childcare supply. Table 6.16 shows the main requirements concerning opening hours, staff-child ratio and staff qualifications.

Table 6.16 – Opening Hours, Staff-Child Ratio and Staff Qualifications for Childcare in La Rioja

Opening Hours	From 7.30 to 17.30
Staff-Child Ratio	- 1 professional staff every 8 children aged below 1 year old - 1 professional staff every 13 children aged between 1 and 2 years old - 1 professional staff every 20 children aged between 2 and 3 years
Staff Qualifications	Professional Staff: ISCED 5 (at least 3 year bachelor) on socio-educational subjects or an high school diploma on the specialization Auxiliary Staff: any diploma

Source: Decree 49/2009, Autonomous Community of La Rioja

A broad opening hour (from 7.30 to 17.30) was defined to favour the families work-life balance needs, even though it was also established that children could not attend more than 8 hours per day. The article 26 of decree 49/2009 set a differentiated staff/child ratio: 1/8 for children aged less than 1 years old, 1/13 for children aged between 1 and 2 years old and 1/20 for children between 2 and 3 years old. Staff professionals had to demonstrate to hold a bachelor degree on socio-educational subjects or at least a high school diploma on the same specialization. Then, every childcare centres is free to hire *auxiliary staff* to complement – but not to replace – professional staff in their tasks and activities (article 24.3 of decree 49/2009). Such rules were developed by the joint work of the regional councillor and the public official competent for childcare under the DG Education.

“The regional councillor for Education aimed at delivering high quality socio-educational services. To this aim our unit competent for childcare in the DG Education was in charge of

¹⁵ “Las Guarderías se convertirán en centros educativos para atender a niños de 0 a 3 años”, article of larioja.com published on 9th February 2009

developing studies and analysis to define the requisites through which high quality childcare services are better delivered” (Interview 20 – Public Official)

The interviewed representatives of trade unions UGT and CCOO lamented that the establishment of the new rules for childcare was a very top-down process. The government decided and implemented the policy agenda with no consultation with stakeholders that were only informed of the decisions taken as confirmed also by the president of the association of private providers (Interview 14 – UGT; Interview 22 CCOO). As complement to the regional regulation, *decree 49/2009* also mentions the allocation of regional resources for childcare development, which is the focus of the next section.

5.2.3 Financial Support Over Childcare

The *decree 49/2009* allocated regional funding to support maintenance of municipal childcare in various regional territory (Galilea, Fuenmayor, Lardero, Murillo, Autol, Alcanadre, Villamediana, Pradejón, Ausejo, San Vicente de la Sonsierra, Alberite, Albelda, Navarrete, Logroño, Santo Domingo de la Calzada, Cervera de Río Alhama, Calahorra) and investment in new municipal childcare centres (Agoncillo, Cenicero, Rincon de Soto, Haro) (table 6.17). Such support towards public municipal centres was confirmed one year later with the approval of *Orden 30/2010* that provided collaboration agreements with various Local Administrations for boosting the creation of new ECEC centres.

Even though the childcare reform process in La Rioja was unilaterally promoted by regional government, the association of municipalities managed to have informal consultation aimed at orienting regional funding for childcare expansion towards public childcare (Interview 21 – FEMP). More precisely, the main aim of informal consultation for FEMP was to obtain regional funding for the municipalities of the rural areas where childcare was basically absent. Since La Rioja is a traditional stronghold of Partido Popular, many local governments were administered by the same

Table 6.17 – Financial Resources for Childcare allocated by Regional Government, La Rioja, 2009

	Expenditure (Euros)	Municipalities
Maintenance of existing childcare centres	752.010	Galilea, Fuenmayor, Lardero, Murillo, Autol, Alcanadre, Villamediana, Pradejón, Ausejo, San Vicente de la Sonsierra, Alberite, Albelda, Navarrete, Logroño, Santo Domingo de la Calzada, Cervera de Río Alhama, Calahorra
Investment on creation of new childcare centres	612.312	Agoncillo
	209.409	Cenicero
	1.106.306	Pradejon
	436.063	Rincon de Soto (held by regional administration)
	3.096.469	Haro (held by regional administration)

Source: Decree 149/2009, The Government of Autonomous Community of La Rioja

party who held regional government for long time. As a result, the association of municipalities was quite united and strong to advance their demands. The interviews with the responsible of Educational matters for PP La Rioja confirms that the decisions of regional government was in line with FEMP demands.

“Due to increase of birth and female employment the needs of childcare became more intense. As a result, we empowered municipalities with new resources to support the creation of public childcare. Also, we were quite conscious that without a regional intervention the small municipalities would had found hardly possible to finance new childcare centres. Against this backdrop, we supported the rural municipalities with the aim to avoid depopulation”
(Interview 19 – PP Rioja)

The introductory report to the Orden 30/2010 remarked that main aim of regional initiatives on childcare was to ensure the development of childcare in rural areas in order to avoid internal depopulation by giving chances of externalised public care to families who were living there (Introductory Report to Orden 30/2010).

To this aim, the regional government channelled national and regional funding to the development of public childcare (Interview 20 – Public Official). Indeed, we know

from table 4.9 (chapter 4) that the Autonomous Community of La Rioja received 4.970.223 Euros in 2008 and 711.682 Euros in 2011 as part of the national expansionary plan Educa 3. The latter allocated national financial resources to the Autonomous Community of La Rioja also in 2009 and 2010 but unfortunately we do not have data on the allocated annual share. Table 6.18 shows the total regional budget allocated by from 2006 (first available data) to 2015 for the maintenance of public childcare and the creation of new public services.

Table 6.18 – Public Expenditure for Childcare (0-3) in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja, 2006-2015, Euros

2006	5.360
2007	5.754
2008	6.416
2009	6.212.569
2010	7.026.426
2011	4.759.383
2012	4.832.245
2013	1.266.367
2014	1.276.956
2015	1.099.450

Source: for 2009 (Decree 49/2009); from 2006 to 2015 (Presupuestos Generales de La Rioja, Hacienda –Portal Gobierno de la Rioja)

This budget was very low in 2006, 2007 and 2008. In 2008 it was complemented with Educa 3 national funding, which as said, was 4.970.223 Euros. However, from 2009 the regional financing was conspicuous too. In 2011, the regional funding devolved to public childcare was 4.759.383 Euros while the national contribution of Educa 3 only 711.682 Euros. Moreover, once Educa 3 was cut in 2012, the Riojan regional government continued to invest high resources on municipal public childcare, precisely 4.832.245 Euros. The share of regional budget allocated for childcare reduced in 2013; however, it was definitely higher than the resources invested prior to 2008. The whole financial resources for childcare was developed to boost the municipal childcare supply in order to increase childcare availability in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja especially in the small municipalities located in the rural areas. If the main focus

of regional right-government in the first phase of childcare reform was the increase of the childcare availability, nothing has been done to make childcare more affordable. However, childcare affordability became the main focus of the second phase of childcare reform in La Rioja, as described in the next section.

5.2.4 The Recent Focus on Childcare Affordability

The affordability of childcare access is one of the main claims of PSOE Rioja that since early 2000s has proposed universalization and free access for childcare.

“We are afraid that PP in La Rioja was only interested on the increase of the quantitative availability of childcare places without caring about its affordability. The municipalities are let free to establish their fees. Also, most of the times the municipalities outsource the management of public childcare services to private providers, which establishes childcare fees. Here, in Logrono, the high majority of childcare provision is private and there is no control of childcare fees that are high and variable” (Interview 17 – Association of Families and PSOE Logrono). Recently, in September 2018, nine months before the regional elections of May 2019, the President of Regional Government of La Rioja, Jose Canizeros, announced that the coalition government composed by PP and Ciudadanos was considering the possibility to establish free childcare access in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja.¹⁶

Such announcement triggered political reactions from the Socialist Party of the Autonomous Community of La Rioja.

“The announcement of free childcare access was clearly an electoral move of a party that by looking at electoral polls was afraid to loose power in La Rioja after 24 years. In the last 24 years we have always campaigned for universal and free childcare access. The Popular Party in the regional parliament rejected the two proposals we made – between 2000 and 2010 - for universal and free childcare access. Anyway, after President’s declaration we prepared another

¹⁶ “Las guarderías de La Rioja serán gratuitas para niños de 0 a 3 años”, article published in noticiasdearnedo.es the 13th September 2018.

bill proposal for free childcare access to be presented in regional parliament in order to verify the real intentions of regional government to pursue this way” (Interview 15 – PSOE Rioja, Regional Parliament).

Indeed, in early 2019 the regional deputy of PSOE, Emilia Fernandez, presented a comprehensive bill for childcare in La Rioja aimed at guarantying universal and free childcare access (Regional Parliament 2019). Moreover, the PSOE bill proposal prioritized investment on new municipal childcare providing also the possibility of establishing accreditation procedure with childcare no profit providers (Parlamento de la Rioja 2019). Against this backdrop, the bill required that the public administration subsidized only childcare services supplied by public providers or no-profit cooperatives, but not those of pure private for-profit providers (Parliament of la Rioja 2019). Such bill proposal was presented on the 17th of January 2019 and then discussed on 28th February, 2019. The analysis of this parliamentary debate is interesting to understand the political positions over the issue. Indeed, Jose Manuel Garrido for PP, Ubis Lopez for Ciudadanos, and finally, the regional councillor Galliana took the word to explain their positions. Basically, the three of them in their intervention agreed with the attempts to make childcare affordable. However, they highlighted a series of remarks in order to motivate the rejection of the PSOE proposal. Firstly, according to Garrido (PP Rioja) and Lopes (Ciudadanos), the PSOE proposal was driven by ideological concerns against pure private providers that in La Rioja represent a high share of childcare supply (Parliament of La Rioja 2019). As a result, according to the two regional deputies, the exclusion of pure private providers from public financing for discounted childcare would have implied a reduced availability of affordable childcare in the Autonomous Community of la Rioja. Secondly, the regional councillor Galliana remarked that the objective of the government is to make affordable the whole childcare supply of La Rioja, leaving then to the parents the freedom to choose in which childcare centre enrolling their children (Parliament of the Autonomous Community of La Rioja 2019). Finally, they invited PSOE Rioja to converge on the proposal that was about to be developed by the coalition government in order to make

the whole childcare supply affordable as declared by President Canizeros in September 2018.

The right-wing regional government finally approved the discount of childcare fees the 24th May 2019 with the *Orden EDU/23/2019*. The latter defines all the characteristics of the project called “*Bono Infantil*” aimed at providing a universal and almost totally free childcare access. Table 6.19 outlines its main characteristics. Firstly, the discount of childcare fees concerns childcare devolved to socio-educational activities. The latter represents the 90-95 % of the externalised childcare activities. It remains excluded from fees discount the lunch or the extra-activities performed outside the time devolved to the socio-educational curriculum. If parents want to include also extra-activities for their children, they will pay differences between the discounted amount and the total final price. The regime of discounted fees will apply to every child formally resident in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja who is enrolled in a public or private childcare centre. The latter receives the amount of the discounted fees directly from the regional DG Education. The public and private childcare centres eligible for the program “*Bono Infantil*” are those who comply with the requisites established by regional decree 49/2009. Finally, childcare centres benefiting of the Bono Infantil cannot raise their childcare fees above the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The *Orden EDU/23/2019* and the regional budget law for 2019 allocate 4,2 millions of Euros to finance the program “*Bono Infantil*.” The article 1.2 of *Orden EDU/23/2019* states that the annual share for financing the program is conditioned upon the availability of financial resources in the annual budget law. Also, the *Orden EDU/23/2019* established a progressive implementation of the program.

Table 6.19 – Main Elements of the Aid Program for Childcare Fee “*Bono Infantil*”, Autonomous Community of La Rioja

What is financed?	Childcare fees for the socio-educational curriculum, which is the 90-95 % of the activities of childcare centre. It remains excluded from fees discount the lunch or other extra activities.
Eligibility	Every child resident in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja, enrolled in public and private childcare centres that meet requirements established by regional decree 49/2009.
Financing	Regional funding conditioning upon the availability in the annual budget law. Budget allocated for 2019: 4,2 millions of Euros.
Implementation	Progressive. Expected to be completed in the course 2021/2022

Source: Orden EDU/23/2019

More precisely, for the course 2019/2020 the aid program will cover only the first course (children aged from 3 months to 1 years old) of ECEC in the municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants and the second course (children aged from 1 to 2 years old) in the rest of the regional territory. In 2020/21, the program will be extended to the second year in the Riojan municipalities with more than 5,000 inhabitants. Finally, in 2021/22 the progressive implementation of the program on the whole ECEC cycles is expected to be completed.

The interviewed representative of PSOE Rioja criticized the instability of the “Bono Infantil” program that relies both on annual decisions on budget law and gradual implementation (Interview 15 - PSOE Rioja). The PSOE feared that once elections will be over, the program could even be cut, whereas the adoption of a regional law proposed many times by PSOE Rioja would have ensured the stability of free childcare access (Interview 15 - PSOE Rioja). By contrast, the representative of PP identified the adoption of the aid program for childcare fees as a part of a long-run strategy deployed by Popular Party in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja.

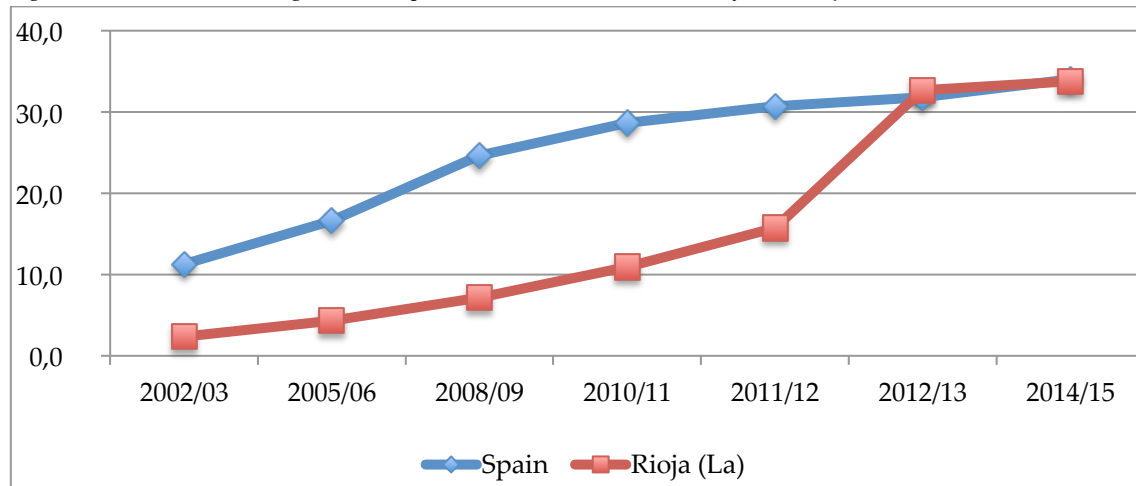
“The project of <<Bono infantil>> was criticized by PSOE as they said it was only driven by electoral concerns. However, the introduction of <<Bono Infantil>> was only the last step of a long-run strategy that begun in 2012 when we started investing on childcare availability. In 2019, we continued invested on childcare but on its affordability. Our future challenge will be to make effective the progressive implementation of free childcare access for all ECEC cycles” (Interview 19 – PP Rioja).

However, the PSOE won the 2019 regional election in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja. As a result, it will be interesting to see whether PSOE Rioja will strengthen or replace the aid program adopted by right wing.

5.3 Trends and Outcomes of Childcare Policy-Making

The amount of resources invested from 2008 contributed to increase the available childcare places for the enrolment of new pupils, which passed from 2%, in the early 2000 to almost 35% in 2014/15 (figure 6.8).

Figure 6.8 – Childcare Coverage Rate, %, Spain and Autonomous Community of La Rioja, 2002-2015



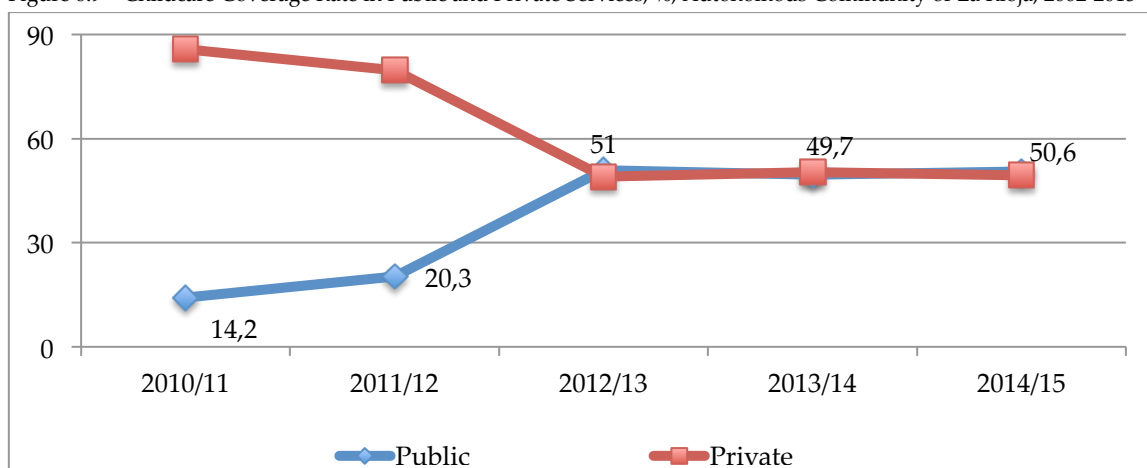
Source: MECD (2004,2007, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016)

However, the regional councillor for Education specified that data of the national ministry for education (MECD) do not consider the enrolments in *guarderías* prior to 2011, when the dual system of childcare services still existed.¹⁷ Therefore, the increase of enrolment rates showed in figure 6.8 can be partly attributed to re-categorisation of old childcare services that prior to 2011 did not enter in the statistics of national ministry for education (MECD).

Nevertheless, the regional government between 2008 and 2015 deployed a twofold effort. Firstly, childcare services in the Autonomous Community of la Rioja shifted from social assistance to socio-educational services as stated in the governmental decree 49/2009. Secondly, the regional government from 2008 engaged in massive financing of public childcare. Due to new creation of available public places the childcare coverage rate in public childcare grew considerably passing in five years from 14.2% to 50, 6% (figure 6.9).

¹⁷ "La conciliación laboral y familiar multiplica la escolarización de menores de 2 años", article published on larioja.com the 29th October 2014

Figure 6.9 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Public and Private Services, %, Autonomous Community of La Rioja, 2002-2015



Source: MECD (2004,2007, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016)

The decree 149/2009 did not mention public-private partnerships or financial support towards private entities. The regional government allocated financial resources to municipalities for supporting specific childcare centres. It then left to municipalities the decision whether to outsource or not the management of some public centres. The local government of Logrono - where it is concentrated almost all the private childcare supply of La Rioja (table 6.20) - incentivizes childcare private provision with demand subsidies called *chiquibecas*.

Table 6.20 – Private Childcare Centres, Childcare Units and Enrolled Children in Private Centres, Absolute Numbers, The Autonomous Community of La Rioja, 2014/15

Municipalities	Number of Centres	Number of Units	Number of Enrolled Children
Alfaro	1	1	13
Banos de Rio Tobia	1	2	18
Logrono	38	128	1466

Source: Gobierno de La Rioja¹⁸

By contrast, there are many public places in the rural areas outside the city of Logrono (table 6.21) as consequence of the strategy pursued by the regional government to support childcare development outside of the urban areas of Logrono. The five public childcare services in Logrono (table 6.17) are the old *guarderías* held by regional

¹⁸ <http://www.larioja.org/educarioja-centros/es/informacion-escolar>

government that were transformed into socio-educational childcare services from 2009. Also, prior to 2009 the *guarderías* held by the regional government were among the only public childcare centres in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja (Interview 20 – Public Official).

Table 6.21 – Childcare Coverage in Public Services, Absolute Numbers, The Autonomous Community of La Rioja, 2014/15

Municipality	Childcare Centre	Childcare Unit	Enrolled Children
Agoncillo	E.I.P.C. Piruleta	2	13
Albelda de Iregua	E.I.P.C. Nuestra Señora de Bueyo	5	39
Alberite	E.I.P.C. Mercedes Benito	2	21
Alcanadre	E.I.P.C. Daniel Alonso	1	5
Alfaro	E.I.P.C. La Florida	5	54
Arnedo	E.I.P.C. Nuestra Señora de Vico	11	121
Ausejo	E.I.P.C. Pelusín	1	8
Autol	E.I.P.C. Dino	2	23
Calahorra	E.I.P.C. Nuestra Señora del Carmen	10	123
Calahorra	E.I.P.C. Santos Martires	8	95
Cenicero	E.I.P.C. El Trenecito	3	25
Cervera del Río Alhama	E.I.P.C. San Miguel	1	8
Fuenmayor	E.I.P.C. Gloria Fuertes	3	43
Galilea	E.I.P.C. Coletitas y Cuquím	1	6
Haro	E.I.P.C. Las Luces	8	92
Lardero	E.I.P.C. Los Almendros	10	118
Logroño	E.I.P.C. Carrusel	6	66
Logroño	E.I.P.C. Chispita	3	60
Logroño	E.I.P.C. El Arco	6	82
Logroño	E.I.P.C. El Cubo	7	81
Logroño	E.I.P.C. Municipal La Casa Cuna	5	67
Murillo de Rio Leza	E.I.P.C. Eladio del Campo	2	20
Nájera	E.I.P.C. Reina Estefanía	4	37
Navarrete	E.I.P.C. Las Santitas	4	50
Pradejón	E.I.P.C. La Alegria	3	34
Rincón de Soto	E.I.P.C. Principe Felipe	6	48
San Vicente de la Sonsierra	E.I.P.C. San Pelayo	1	13
Santo Domingo de la Calzada	E.I.P.C. Virgen de la Plaza	5	66
Villamediana de Iregua	E.I.P.C. Gonzalo de Berceo	7	88
TOTAL		132	1.506

Source: <http://www.larioja.org/educarioja-centros/es/informacion-escolar>

To conclude, after a period of relative underdevelopment of childcare in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja, the right-wing regional government invested on municipal childcare to increase childcare availability, especially in the rural areas. Also,

the regional decree 49/2009 specified a set of quality requirements that public and private providers have to meet to be authorized to run a childcare service. Finally, more recently, the right-wing government concentrated policy efforts to make childcare more affordable by introducing a universal and generous program of fees discount financed with regional resources. In sum, regional government in La Rioja pressured by increasing functional pressures and political competition with PSOE adopted a publicization strategy aimed at boosting public supply as well as regulating pure private provision. The introduction of quality requirements together with the adoption of measures to make childcare affordable highlight a regional childcare policy shaped by robust social investment elements.

Chapter 7 – Explaining the Different Regional Patterns of Childcare Expansion in Italy and Spain

1. Introduction

Welfare state in Italy and Spain has been traditionally characterized by the underdevelopment of social assistance policies, particularly childcare (Ferrera 1996, 2005a). In both countries, according to the principle of subsidiarity, care duties have been traditionally demanded to families. Moreover, subsidiarity in the provision of care was rather “passive” as families were not adequately supported by state. Against this backdrop, welfare state in Italy and Spain was largely characterized by “unsupported familism” (Saraceno 1994) and “familism by default” (Saraceno 2010).

In both countries, for long time, work-life balance and the development of externalised childcare have been absent from national policy debate and interventions. It is only between 2006 and 2007 that both Italian and Spanish national governments adopted a childcare expansionary plan. Indeed, the “*Piano Nidi*” adopted in 2006 in Italy and the plan “*Educa 3*”, adopted one year later in Spain, devolved to regional governments new national resources for childcare expansion.

However, in the last two decades, childcare expanded in both countries even before that the two national expansionary plans were adopted. This accounts for the relevant role played by regional governments that in the absence of national interventions promoted childcare expansion. In chapter 5 and 6 we have seen that regional childcare undertook major transformations with regard to childcare delivery and childcare regulation concerning quality and affordability, two dimensions that affect the extent to which a childcare reform achieve social investment aims. A childcare expansion, which was higher in the Spanish regions than in the Italian ones, reduced the extent of familistic legacy in both countries. The departure from familistic legacy in the provision of care was promoted through marketization in the Italian regions whereas through an increased public involvement in Spain. Also, the four regional cases show a certain variability with regard to the extent to which their childcare expansionary

patterns achieve social investment aims. In sum, the empirical analysis of the four regional cases shows a variation along the three dimensions of change (expansion, delivery and social investment) that lead us to our main research questions: what are the determinants of childcare policy change at the regional level? And more precisely how and why regions expand childcare? How and why regional governments support a specific model of childcare delivery? And finally, how and why regional childcare reforms are congruent with social investment aims? The answer to these questions is the main aim of this chapter that is organized as follows. The first two paragraphs describe and assess analytically the regional childcare trajectories in Italy (paragraph 7.2) and Spain (paragraph 7.3). Finally, paragraph 7.4 aims at explaining why regions took a specific patterns by highlighting key factors that determined childcare policy change in each regional case.

2. Explicit and Implicit Marketization in The Italian Regions

The empirical investigation in chapter 5 described the trajectory that led to childcare policy change in Tuscany and Piedmont. Prior to the childcare expansionary trajectory, both regions shared similar conditions with regard to the development and institutional design of childcare. Indeed, until the early 2000s, childcare in both regions was limited but relatively high if compared to the national level. Also, both in Tuscany and Piedmont, childcare was mainly delivered by public providers. By contrast, the expansionary trajectory in both regions was driven by an increase of private delivery. However, the marketization patterns and social investment outcomes differed in both regions.

Childcare expansion in Tuscany has been promoted through a reform process that actually started at the end of the 1990s, when the left-wing government – that traditionally governed Tuscany – promoted a childcare expansion to face the increasing functional pressures due to the growing female employment.

The first and main reform that shaped the actual childcare system in Tuscany was the regional law 22/1999. The latter introduced two main novelties. Firstly, the definition of

new integrative services that complemented the supply of traditional *chrèches*. Secondly, the introduction of two mechanisms such as authorization and accreditation procedures that promoted the entry of private providers in the childcare supply. These two novelties had a different impact on childcare supply in Tuscany. Indeed, in the last two decades, while the supply of integrative services remained marginal compared to those of traditional *chrèches*, the private provision of childcare has passed from 7% in 2000 to 45,4% in 2014 (figure 5.5. chapter 5). The share of accredited private provision on the total of private provision has grown from 47,7% in 2004/2005 to 69% in 2012/13 (figure 5.7 chapter 5). Also, the share of public childcare services indirectly managed (*outsourcing*) over the total of public provision has increased from 36,7% in 2004/05 to 60,6% in 2014/15 (table 5.16 chapter 5). Private provision through *outsourcing* and *accreditation* gradually displaced a full public model of childcare that was dominant in Tuscany until the early 2000s.

The regional government pursued childcare expansion through *explicit marketization*, by contributing with regulation and funding to the increased protagonism of private sector - especially no-profit cooperatives. As for childcare financing, the regional government allocated to municipalities new regional resources through regional calls for childcare funding (*bandi regionali di finanziamento*). The latter established the possibility for the local government to receive regional funding for financing one of the following policy choices: directly managed public childcare, indirectly managed public childcare, accredited private provision and the increase of time duration of childcare services. Therefore, the regional government financed both outsourced and accredited childcare. The share of regional financing devolved to accreditation was definitely higher than those invested for public childcare (table 5.15 chapter 5). The implementing regulations (d.pgr 47/R/2003 and d.pgr 41/R/2013) introduced a regulatory framework for childcare quality that constrains *outsourced* and *accredited* provision to follow the same rules valid for municipal public childcare. These rules included the level of qualifications that staff professionals have to hold to be hired in a childcare service. In line with transformation of childcare from a social assistance to a socio-educational service, the minimum level of qualifications required for staff professional changed from nursery diploma to socio-educational degree or specialized

diploma on socio-educational subjects. Also, the regional government established and funded pedagogical coordination and mandatory staff training courses for professionals working in the public, outsourced and accredited childcare provision.

If on the one hand the outsourced and accredited private providers have to follow strict rules to ensure the delivery of childcare quality, on the other hand, they are left free to set their preferred childcare fees which in Tuscany are established at the lower level of childcare implementation. As a result childcare fees are high and variable across the regional territory. The attempts to harmonize childcare fees in the territorial educational areas or to provide *Conciliation Vouchers* in the context of the regional activation policy resulted too weak to control childcare price. Importantly, the *Conciliation Vouchers* adopted by regional government are not sufficient to cover the whole or at least a large amount of childcare fees paid by families (Confalonieri and Canale 2013). Against this backdrop, social investment, which is one of the aims declared by regional policy-makers when they pursued childcare development, resulted actually fragmented in Tuscan regional childcare system. The public regulation constrains childcare providers either public or private to deliver high quality services but an effective measure that makes childcare more affordable is lacking. As a result, the *explicit marketization* pattern of childcare expansion in Tuscany is associated with a *partial* social investment outcome as childcare quality was privileged whereas childcare affordability received little attention by regional policy-makers.

In Piedmont, childcare expanded from 10,7% in 2000 to 25,4% in 2014. However, the extent of childcare expansion in Piedmont was moderate compared to the most developed regions of the Italian Center-North. In the last two decades, childcare coverage rate in Piedmont increased of 15 percentage points, the same percentage increase of the national average in the same period (figure 5.8 chapter 5). By contrast, the percentage increase of childcare coverage rate in other Center-Northern regions was higher than the those of the national average (table 5.3 chapter 5). Such moderate expansion in Piedmont coincided with the growth of different forms of childcare supply and provision and a decrease of traditional *chrèches* delivered by municipalities. Firstly, the integrative services, introduced by right-wing government in the early 2000s, increased definitely more than traditional *chrèches*. Indeed,

differently from Tuscany where the supply of integrative services remains marginal, the integrative services in Piedmont represent a relevant share of the total childcare supply. Secondly, the childcare coverage rate in the services provided by the private sector increased from a rate of about 20% in 2000 to almost 50% in 2014 (figure 5.10 - chapter 5).

Private providers expanded their presence in the childcare system in Piedmont through different models of delivery: pure private, outsourcing and accreditation. The latter expanded in the absence of a common regional regulatory framework. Indeed, in the early 2000s, right-wing government only adopted the regulatory framework that authorize private providers, by extending to childcare the same minimum health and sanitary requirements needed to authorize the set up of health-care services. Between 2005 and 2010 the attempts of left-wing government to adopt a regional regulatory framework for accreditation failed. Nevertheless, left-wing government at least managed to orient some resources towards the development of public childcare. However, in 2010, when the right-wing came back to regional government disregarded again the development of public childcare, by focusing only on small projects of company crèches in the rural areas. In sum, the moderate childcare expansion in Piedmont occurred through a pattern of *implicit marketization* due to the scarce resources invested on public childcare and the lack of regional regulatory framework for accreditation procedure that left quality requirements, such as staff qualifications, unchanged from the 1970s. The only regional regulation adopted for childcare - the authorization procedure - was taken from health care regulation (regional law on health care 1/2004). As a consequence, the authorization procedure for childcare complies only with social assistance and health-care criteria rather than also with socio-educational principles. The qualifications required for the professionals of traditional crèches remain those established by the law 3/1973. The latter does not require qualified staff for delivering socio-educational service. Indeed, law 3/1973 requires only the diploma of nursery for childcare staff, reflecting the care principles that shaped childcare provision in that period. Also, the municipalities, that decide to engage on accreditation or outsourcing of childcare in the absence of a regional regulatory, establish the rules for accreditation and outsourcing through single contracts

with private providers. Therefore, such rules may vary both within and across municipalities leading to a wide variability of quality outcomes in the childcare services of Piedmont. Finally, the regional governments did not deploy any measure to contrast the high childcare fees reported by the study of Davico and Gullino (2016). The *Conciliation Vouchers* adopted by left-wing government were too weak to guarantee affordable childcare fees. Also, *Coinciliation Vouchers* were retrenched by right-wing government between 2010 and 2013. The lack of regional legislation on common quality standards and the high childcare fees make childcare policy in Piedmont very far from social investment achievements. As a result, the *implicit marketization* of childcare provision in Piedmont is associated with *failed* outcomes on social investment.

In sum, in the last two decades childcare expanded more in Tuscany than in Piedmont. Both regions departed from their legacy of public delivery of childcare provision. Indeed, in both regions childcare expansion was driven by the increase of market provision that displaced a fully public model previously dominant. However, patterns of marketizations were different in Tuscany and Piedmont. The former pursued an *explicit marketization pattern* by establishing regulatory framework for the entry of private providers and by supporting *outsourced* and *accredited* provision with regional funding. By contrast in Piedmont, the marketization pattern was *implicit* as the private provision grew, in the absence of a regional regulation, to meet the growing childcare demand. The latter was hardly met by municipal public childcare that, besides the phase of left-wing regional government between 2005 and 2010, was left with scarce or absent regional resources. The two marketization patterns were associated with different social investment outcomes. The *explicit marketization* pattern in Tuscany did not prevent to constrain private proviers to follow specific quality rules when setting childcare services. Overall, the improvements on staff qualifications, a differentiated but contained staff-child ratio and the provision of staff training and pedagogical coordination have ensured that childcare system in Tuscany is at least partially shaped by social investment. The lack of a strong regional intervention that harmonizes childcare fees and foster childcare affordability prevented the achievement of *robust*

social investment outcomes for childcare in Tuscany. By contrast, in Piedmont, the *implicit marketization* pattern implied the stickiness of old childcare legislation that remains anchored to social assistance principles. The lack of improvements of regional regulations on quality combined with the absence or weakness of policy measures to make childcare more affordable prevented the achievement of minimum social investment objectives in Piedmont.

3. Childcare Expansion through a Greater Public Involvement in the Spanish Regions

The childcare expansionary trajectory of Andalusia and Rioja is very similar. At the beginning of 2000s, both Autonomous Communities shared a legacy of underdeveloped childcare both in terms of expansion and regulation. Prior to the expansionary trajectory of the last two decades, the few childcare services in the two Autonomous Communities were delivered by private providers - often no-profit charitable institutions - and mainly inspired by social assistance principles. Quality regulations and mechanisms to make childcare affordable were underdeveloped. In the last two decades, both Autonomous Communities expanded childcare provision by supporting public childcare and by "*publicizing*" private provision. In both cases, the childcare expansionary trajectory has been accompanied by the improvement of quality regulations and the development of measures to foster childcare affordability. As we will see below, patterns, timing and actors of childcare expansion are slightly different in the two cases.

Childcare coverage in Andalusia was very low at the beginning of 2000 while reached 37% in 2014/15, above the national average (figure 6.5 chapter 6). Since 2000, under increasing functional pressures - such as growing female employment - the PSOE regional government started promoting childcare development. The first step towards childcare reform actually took place in 2002, when regional government adopted the *Plan for Family Support* that included measures to discount childcare fees in order to promote more affordable childcare. This first step contributed to increase childcare

coverage as families that previously were unable to afford externalised childcare begun to use childcare services. However, from 2007, two more steps undertaken by PSOE regional government gave a stronger impulse to childcare expansion and regulation. Firstly, the regional government invested massive public resources on municipal public childcare (table 6.11 chapter 6). As a result, the percentage of enrolled pupils in public childcare provision passed from around 5% at the beginning of 2000 to almost 40% in 2014/15 (figure 6.6. chapter 6). Secondly, the regional government between 2007 and 2012, adopted regulation that transformed childcare from a social assistance to a socio-educational service under the competence of regional DG responsible for Education and, more importantly, introduced new regulations on quality and price valid for public and accredited private providers. Indeed, the main innovation brought by the childcare reforms adopted by PSOE in Andalusia was to constrain accredited private providers to follow same rules of public childcare in terms of quality and price. Indeed, private providers that aims at entering in the childcare system through accreditation has to guarantee that staff professionals have the same qualifications and training required for public childcare. Furthermore, once private providers complies quality requisites for accreditation had to set a fixed price (a monthly amount of 278 euros with lunch and 209 euros without lunch) on childcare fees. The regional administration provides a fees discount from 25% to 100% of the total price according to the household income scales. In the childcare accreditation system of Andalusia, private providers hold the centres and the staff while public administration constrains accredited private providers to follow precise rules quality and price. By defining a maximum fee threshold for accredited private providers, regional policy-makers limit the room of accredited private providers to shift some costs into users. In turn, access for low-income families is highly promoted as well as discounted. The percentage of accredited private services over the total private provision reached 80% in 2014/15 (figure 6.7 chapter 6). In sum, the childcare expansionary trajectory in Andalusia transformed childcare delivery from a full private model to a mix of public childcare and accredited provision. Indeed, in 2014/15 about 87% of children aged 0-3 are enrolled in childcare services delivered by either public or accredited private providers (table 6.14 - chapter 6). In sum, in the last two decades, the regional governments in

Andalusia pursued childcare expansion through a “*publicization*” strategy by investing massive public resources that contributed to increase public childcare and by extending strong public control and rules over accredited childcare provision, which represents the high majority of the private childcare supply. Since more than the 80% of the children enrolled in childcare services in Andalusia enjoy the same high requirements on quality and childcare affordability, childcare in Andalusia is delivered through policy highly compatible with a social investment strategy. In sum, the very high childcare expansion in Andalusia has been pursued through a “*publicization*” pattern that achieved *robust* social investment outcomes.

Similarly to Andalusia even in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja childcare policy was undeveloped for long time. Prior to expansionary trajectory, childcare in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja was characterized by a dual system that included childcare centre (*guarderías*) shaped by social assistance aim under the competence of DG Social Service and few educational centres under the competence of DG Education. Since 2009, such dualism ended and the old *guarderías* were transformed into proper socio-educational services under the competence of DG Education. Such choice has been accompanied by regional policy decisions on childcare investment and regulation. The regional decree 49/2009 established the requirements that public and private providers have to comply in order to run a childcare services in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja. Also, the regional decree 49/2009 allocated a series of financial resources to the creation of public childcare especially in the municipalities of the rural areas. To this aim, also the budget regional law from 2009 to 2015 allocated high regional financing for public childcare development (table 6.15 chapter 6). As a result, the overall childcare provision in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja expanded from a very low rate in 2000 to almost 34% in 2014, in line with national average and slightly above the Lisbon Target agreed at the EU level (figure 6.8 chapter 6). The percentage rate of enrolled pupils in public provision increased from 14,6% in 2010/11 to 50,6% in 2014/15, whereas the percentage of enrolled children in private provision shrunk to 49,4% in 2014/15 (figure 6.9 chapter 6). Almost all the private childcare provision of the Autonomous Community of La

Rioja is concentrated in Logrono, the region capital city (table 6.20 chapter 6). In the other municipalities there are mainly public childcare places created with regional funding. Regional legislation and funding do not support the supply of accredited private provision, which in La Rioja is basically absent. The private childcare supply present in Logrono is pure private childcare provision subsidized with municipal demand subsidies. Therefore, basically in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja childcare is mainly provided through: pure public provision, pure private but municipally subsidized childcare provision and public outsourced provision. The regional government of La Rioja in the first ten years of the expansionary trajectory financed the creation of public municipal childcare and defined requirements to authorize childcare provision run by private providers, however, the latter do not received regional financial resources. More recently, the regional government approved an aid program for childcare affordability called “Bono Infantil” that provides a universal and almost total discount of childcare fees either or private services. Once families choose the childcare centres for their children, the regional government, instead of the families, pays childcare fees to childcare centre. Such fees discount is almost total as concern only the socio-educational activities of the childcare centre excluding lunch or extra activities.

In sum, by providing high regional funding for public childcare and strong regulation on marketization, the right-wing regional government of La Rioja pursued childcare expansion through a “publicization” strategy, mainly in two steps. Firstly, it channelled high share of regional funding only to the creation of public municipal childcare, defining also a common regulatory framework for the entry of private providers in the childcare supply. Secondly, in 2019, the action of regional government focused on childcare affordability of public and private services that complies with quality requirements set by the regional decree 49/2009. In this context, regional financing might indirectly support also the private provision but with explicit aim of making childcare more affordable. To conclude, the emphasis on quality regulation, that was extended also to private provision, and the recent measures to ensure an affordable childcare supply demonstrate that right-wing regional government in La Rioja expanded ECEC system in congruence with *robust* social investment objectives.

4. Expansion, Marketization and Social Investment: Partisan Preferences, Political Competition and “Exchanges” Dynamics in Italy and Spain

From the empirical analysis in chapter 5 and 6 and the analytical description in paragraph 7.2 and 7.3 of this chapter we have seen how childcare expansion can be strongly promoted and supported by regional governments as occurred in Andalusia, Rioja and Tuscany. Also, a moderate childcare expansion can implicitly result by the increase of private provision that meet the growing childcare demand, with limited or absent public intervention as it happened in Piedmont. This leads to the question: why regions expand childcare? Also, the empirical analysis shows that childcare policy change is much more than expansion alone. Regions in Italy and Spain departed from their familistic legacy by pursuing a childcare expansion through different ways of delivery. Italian regions supported more consistently marketization whereas Spanish regions provided new resources for public childcare and, at the same time, strongly regulated private provisions in terms of quality regulations and price.

Such empirical variation raises another relevant question: why regions support public or private delivery of childcare? Finally, the way in which regional governments shaped childcare reforms impacted on two dimensions such as childcare quality and childcare price, that are key to achieve social investment aims. We have seen that *robust* social investment outcomes have been achieved in Andalusia and Rioja. By contrast, in the Italian regions social investment outcomes were only *partial* in Tuscany and even absent in Piedmont. Due to such empirical variations on childcare and social investment, in this section we aim at answering a third research question: why regions do (or do not) shape childcare reforms in congruence with social investment aims?

To answer these questions we interpret empirical findings by integrating the role of partisan preferences, the political competition dynamics and the “agency” of some relevant interest groups.

4.1 Political Conditions for the Promotion of Childcare Expansion

In order to explain path departure towards childcare expansion, the extent of problem pressure should be seriously taken into account. Indeed, the higher level of female

employment, in contexts in which family care was traditionally performed by the unpaid work of mothers, leads to the emergence of new social needs related to the combination of work and family life. The four regional cases had a medium-high level of female employment that acted as a functional pressure for childcare development. More precisely, during 2000s, Piedmont, Rioja and Tuscany shared similar level of female employment (20-64) that increased from 45-50% in 2000 to 60% in 2014 (table 1.1 and 1.2 chapter 1). Andalusia showed actually one of the lowest female employment rate in Spain but this rate grew from 33% in 2000 to 43,7% in 2014 (table 1.2 chapter 1). Moreover, in Andalusia female employment grew particularly among the younger age cohorts (25-44 years old) which are potentially more interested on childcare development.

Even though the four regional cases experienced similar high level of problem pressure, they had different childcare expansionary trajectory. For instance, childcare coverage in Piedmont increased definitely less than Tuscany and Rioja which share similar female employment rates of Piedmont. Interestingly, childcare coverage in Andalusia, that have lower female employment rates than Tuscany, Piedmont and Rioja was very high. The different extent of childcare expansion in regions with similar functional pressures accounts for the limited role of functional pressures to fully explain childcare policy change. However, as we will see below, functional pressures are a powerful trigger for policy-makers to promote childcare expansion.

As expected, in Andalusia and Tuscany once functional pressures became more stringent, the regional government - traditionally held by centre-left parties - promoted childcare development that led to high childcare expansion. The latter in Andalusia was impressive. The interviews with left-wing regional policy-makers in Andalusia and Tuscany remarked that the promotion of childcare expansion started when functional pressures became increasingly higher. Also, left-wing electoral political program in Andalusia and Tuscany identified the development of extensive childcare as the main support for maternal employment. Furthermore, PSOE in Andalusia increased its interest towards childcare policy development to face political competition both from the left and the right of political spectrum. The small party United Left (IU), at the left of the PSOE, proposed childcare expansion already during

the 1990s when the PSOE and PP electoral programs did not even mention childcare development yet. In the regional parliament IU contributed to raise the political salience of childcare even in the first decade of 2000s. On the right side of the political spectrum, between 2007 and 2008, the regional delegation of PP presented a bill proposal that supported the development of externalised childcare as a response to the new and increasing family needs.

In Tuscany, differently from Andalusia, the development of externalised childcare received little or scarce attention on the right side of the political spectrum. When the left-wing governments presented its bill proposals 373/1998 that started childcare reform process in Tuscany, the right-wing opposed the development of a wide network of externalised childcare and proposed the strengthening of integrative services as family crèches. The cases of Andalusia and Tuscany confirm our expectations with regard to the positive association between the left-wing government and the promotion of childcare expansion. However, in both cases emerged the differences between Italian and Spanish right on the promotion of childcare expansion. Indeed, even though right-wing was an opposition party in Tuscany and Andalusia, its approach towards childcare expansion was different. On the one hand, in Tuscany right-wing embraced traditional conservative views on family policy. On the other hand, in Andalusia the position of PP towards progressive views on childcare contributed to raise political competition with PSOE. The partisan differences on childcare expansion between Italian and Spanish right are more visible and striking in Rioja and Piedmont where right-wing parties held governmental office.

In 2009, the right-wing regional government of the Autonomous Community of La Rioja promoted expansion of public childcare to face the decreasing fertility rate especially in the rural areas (Interview 19 – PP Rioja). By contrast, right-wing coalition in Piedmont considered family as the first care provider. Between 2000 and 2015, right-wing coalition composed by moderate right parties (*UDC, Forza Italia* and *Alleanza Nazionale*) and a radical right party (Northern League) held regional government in Piedmont for two times (2000-2005 and 2010-2014) for a total of almost ten years.

In the early 2000s, in Piedmont, the center-right coalition government strongly opposed a wide diffusion of externalised traditional crèches and only focused on the

development of integrative services, particularly *family crèches* corroborating its traditional preference towards the support of family care rather than the development of externalised care. However, in line with the expectations, when left-wing parties held regional government in Piedmont (2005-2010) provided new resources for the strengthening of public childcare as well as new initiatives – such as the *Conciliation Vouchers* - to make childcare more affordable. In 2010, the center-right coalition came back to government with Roberto Cota, a member of Northern League, as a president. In his first presidential discourse he remarked the role of the family as main care provider, confirming the conservative views of center right coalition in Piedmont. Also, the regional government in Piedmont under the Cota presidency promoted small initiatives to support the development of company crèches in the rural areas. Overall, in the period between 2000 and 2015, most of which governed by right parties, childcare development was very limited in Piedmont. By contrast, in the same period, the regional Popular Party in Rioja promoted a very high childcare expansion.

The different partisan preferences and the related political competition dynamics over childcare in Italy and Spain are incentivized by a different party system configuration. In Spain, the right side of the political spectrum is mainly represented by Popular Party as a one catch-all party. In a context of de-alignment of female voting and weakening of traditional beliefs, PP finds convenient to increase political competition with left parties by promoting new progressive policies traditionally supported by left-wing (Leon et. al. 2019). By contrast, the presence of *fragmented pluralism* characterizes party system configuration in Italy. Here, as a consequence, political competition is shaped by additional within-pole political cleavage. In this context, the moderate right (Forza Italia) promotes conservative views over childcare to remain competitive with the radical right party (Northern League).

Our empirical analysis confirms that in a party system characterized by *moderate pluralism*, as Spain, partisan convergence between left and right parties towards childcare development is more likely to occur. This would explain why Popular Party in Spain either when it is an opposition party (Andalusia) or ruling party (Rioja) promotes childcare development. By contrast, the Italian right-wing in Tuscany and Piedmont did not prioritize a wide program of externalised childcare. In a party

system characterized by fragmented pluralism as in Italy, the moderate right-wing has less political incentives to converge on progressive positions over childcare, corroborating what already identified by Scwlander (2018) and Leon et. al. (2019).

In sum, the strength of left-wing governments together with the presence of *moderate pluralism* that prompts partisan convergence over childcare expansion are favourable political conditions for the promotion of childcare expansion. However, once a party government promotes childcare expansion establishes allocation of funding that may or may not support new ways of childcare delivery. Also, childcare expansionary reforms is often linked with the introduction of childcare regulations that may - or may not - be shaped by new policy approaches such as social investment. The empirical analysis shows that regional cases that expanded childcare pursue different path with regard to childcare delivery and social investment. In the next two sections we will see wheter the political colour of party government and the political competition dynamics are sufficient to explain also changes on childcare delivery and policy shift towards social investment approach.

4.2 Beyond the Partisan Ambivalence on Childcare Delivery: the Key Role of "Exchange" Dynamics and Political Competition

The theoretical literature shows a partisan ambivalence with regard to the childcare delivery promoted by left and right-wing government. Left parties are traditionally associated with public provision of childcare whereas right-wing parties with a privatization of welfare services, including care provisions (Huber and Stephens 2000). However, Gingrich (2011) shows that left parties can also approach market reform to achieve distinct political aims of the right-parties. The latter, also, under a precise political condition – that is the absence of a radical right competitor – might find convenient to promote public childcare to increase political competition with left parties (Schwander 2018).

In this paragraph, we will assess and compare the strategies of left parties in the two cases in which they traditionally held regional government such as Andalusia and

Piedmont. Similarly, we will interpret the strategies of right-wing in Rioja and Piedmont, in which right-wing mainly ruled regional government between 2000 and 2015.

Left-wing government in Andalusia pursued childcare expansion through a “publicization” pattern which consisted of higher regional resources for municipal public childcare and stronger regulation for private provision. A childcare expansion pursued by left-wing government through a spending increase on public childcare is in line with the literature that found a positive association between spending on public childcare and left-wing governments (Huber and Stephens 2000; Busemeyer and Seitzl 2017). However, in the case of Andalusia it is interesting to point out how also political competition contributed to the propensity of left-wing government to invest on public childcare. Indeed, PSOE in Andalusia had to face an increasing political competition not only for childcare expansion alone – as seen above - but also for the strengthening of public childcare. At the left of the PSOE, IU campaigned for long time for the universalization of public childcare. Also, in 2008, the same year of regional political elections, PP presented a bill to foster childcare expansion that proposed the creation of municipal public childcare especially in municipalities with less than 500 inhabitants. The interviews with regional councillor for Education remarked how at the time PSOE was pressed between the higher functional pressures and the increasing political competition over childcare. To this aim, the electoral programme for the regional election of 2008 proposed the creation of 100.000 childcare places within the legislature 2008-2012. PSOE won regional election of Andalusia in 2008 and in the same year the new elected left-wing regional government started its expansionary reform process that implied not only the development of public childcare but also the redeployment to new use for private provision that was previously dominant in the childcare system of Andalusia. Indeed, the regional government of Andalusia established the accreditation system by constraining accredited private providers to follow the same rules of public childcare on quality and price. Therefore, the Andalusian case shows that as argued by Gingrich (2011) - that informed our hypothesis - left-wing government supports market reform of care provision with the aim to extend public control over quality and

price delivered by private providers in order to limit the possibility for the latter to shift some costs into users. Indeed, in Andalusia, the accredited providers, that are the large majority of total private providers (figure 6.7 chapter 6), cannot set childcare fees over the threshold established by public administration. In this way the possibility for private providers to shift some costs into users is undermined.

Differently from Andalusia, left-wing government in Tuscany pursued different path of childcare expansion. In Tuscany, where left-wing traditionally held regional government and public sector was dominant in the provision of childcare services, we would have expected a further strengthening of public childcare. By contrast, the childcare expansionary trajectory brought a displacement of public model of childcare. The left-wing government in Tuscany followed an *explicit marketization* by devolving few resources to public childcare and higher resources to the accredited providers, mainly no-profit cooperatives. Already in the introductory remarks of the regional law 22/1999 – that gave impulse to childcare reform process in Tuscany – the regional councillor for Education expressed the willingness to open childcare supply to provision delivered by no-profit cooperatives. Left parties, that traditionally held regional government in Tuscany had often relied on no-profit cooperatives, reckoned as “preferred providers” of social services (Benassi and Mussoni 2013: 176). Indeed, at that time in Tuscany, no-profit cooperatives had a strong policy legacy on the social assistance field by providing different kind of social assistance services which targeted elderly care or the fight against drug addiction (Benassi and Mussoni 2013). Overall, no-profit cooperatives played a key role in the economic environment of Tuscany and, over time, they built a direct and consolidated relationship with the political forces that traditionally governed regional government (Fargion 1997; Pavolini 2003). In 1998, the regional government invited no-profit cooperatives in the formal consultation for the approval of the regional law 22/1999 that took place within the regional parliamentary committee of Education. In this occasion, no profit cooperatives welcomed the opening of childcare supply to non-state actors as they claimed to have the appropriate institutional resources (staff professionals, buildings, educational curriculum) to deliver high quality childcare services. Moreover, they proposed that a specific share of

regional funding should have been addressed to outsourced and accredited services delivered by no-profit providers. As seen in table 5.15 chapter 5, during 2000s the regional government allocated higher financial resources to outsourced and accredited services compared to those devolved to municipal childcare. Therefore, regional governments pursue childcare expansion by empowering no-profit cooperatives that have both a strong legacy in the provision of regional social services and a privileged political relationship with regional government. In other words, the left-wing regional government supported the entry of no-profit provision in the childcare supply in “exchange” for political legitimacy and support.

The entry of no-profit cooperatives in the childcare supply in Tuscany was regulated by implementing regulations 47/R/2003 and 41/R/2013. Such regulations constrain no-profit cooperatives to follow the same quality requirements of public childcare in terms of high staff qualifications, the presence of educational curriculum, staff-child ratio, staff training to be held with other public childcare within a specific municipality and both horizontal and vertical pedagogical coordination. However, regional regulations and policy measures did not provide any mechanism to control the price of childcare fees set by no-profit cooperatives. As a consequence the marketization reforms adopted by left-wing in Tuscany contrasts with what concluded by Gingrich (2011). She argues that left-wing governments converge with right parties on marketization reforms to achieve a distinct policy aim that is: extending public control and supervision on quality and price delivered by private providers. Nevertheless, if the marketization reform adopted in Tuscany extended public supervision over quality delivered by private providers, it lacked a measure to control the price of childcare fees set by private providers. The latter, as a consequence, are let free to shift some cost into users by establishing their preferred childcare fee.

In sum, partisan preferences and political competition are not decisive to explain the shift towards marketization in Tuscany. Political exchange dynamics are more appropriate to explain why left-wing government in Tuscany pursued childcare expansion through *explicit marketization*.

In the Autonomous Community of La Rioja right-wing government promoted childcare expansion through the development of public childcare as expected by our hypothesis being party system in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja a typical case of *moderate pluralism* characterized only by left-wing political cleavage. Indeed, the centripetal political competition incentivized the Popular Party to converge towards the development of public childcare, that, in La Rioja, as seen in the empirical chapter, was advocated by PSOE for long time. However, in order to explain the right-wing shift towards publicization in La Rioja, the role of partisan preferences and political competition should be complemented with “exchange” dynamics.

Indeed, when right-wing regional government showed its willingness to invest on childcare as a response to the growing functional pressures, the association of Riojan municipalities claimed, in informal consultations with regional government, that the new regional fundings should have been directed to small municipalities in the rural areas where childcare was barely existent and the municipalities alone could not afford costs for new investments. As confirmed by interviews with a PP member in La Rioja, the main aim of regional investment on public childcare in La Rioja was to avoid depopulation of rural areas (Interviews 19 and 21 – PP Rioja). The association of municipalities in La Rioja was highly homogenous in political terms as the majority of municipalities was governed by the same party that ruled regional government. Against this backdrop, when regional government planned childcare expansion decided to empower small municipalities in the rural areas in exchange for the maintenance of political legitimacy and support in those areas.

The case of Rioja is particularly striking if compared with the case of Piedmont which share the same extent of problem pressure. Indeed, both regions experienced around a 10-15% increase of female employment rates during 2000 and have low fertility rates. Most importantly, Rioja and Piedmont share the presence of a high number of small municipalities in the rural areas. Right-wing regional governments in Rioja and Piedmont addressed the challenge of the sustainability of childcare development in the rural areas in the opposite ways. As seen, regional government in Rioja promoted public investment on childcare in the rural areas to avoid that childcare supply would

have been let to the uncertainty of the market. By contrast, regional government in Piedmont promoted smaller initiatives such as the development of company crèches through partnerships with the associations of farmers. In Piedmont a limited progress towards public childcare supply occurred only during the phase of left-wing regional government between 2005 and 2010 (Interview 33 – Public Official, DG Education, Piedmont). Overall, political competition over childcare in Piedmont was very low. Partisan divergence over childcare delivery, with left-wing in favour of the strengthening of public supply and right-wing advocating the development of company crèches, prevailed. By contrast in Rioja, political competition was more centripetal and right-wing finally converged on the development of public childcare that was advocated by PSOE for long time in Rioja. More importantly, in Piedmont the “exchange” dynamics that favoured new investment on public childcare in Rioja were undermined by the weaknesses of actors of the demand side of the political arena, particularly the regional association of municipalities (ANCI Piemonte). Differently, from Rioja where association of municipalities was strong and cohesive, the association of municipalities in Piedmont was very weak and characterized by territorial and political cleavages. Indeed, ANCI Piemonte was divided between the few number of urban cities and the high number of small municipalities especially in the rural areas. Such two groups of municipalities had different childcare needs related to the completely different level of childcare development. As a consequence, it was difficult to aggregate a unique and strong socio-political demand. Moreover, ANCI Piemonte is politically fragmented as the various municipalities are governed either by right-wing or left-wing coalition with none of them emerging as a leading coalition over the regional territory. In turn, the different political coalitions that administer municipalities in Piedmont tend to reproduce the polarized position over childcare promoted by their correspondent regional party. In a context of weak socio-political demand for public childcare, partisan and electoral logic prevails and shapes the path of childcare delivery in Piedmont. Childcare delivery in Piedmont was influenced by the partisan divergences as expected in a party system characterized by *fragmented pluralism*. Right-wing governments preserved their traditional views over childcare delivery by supporting the development of company crèches. By contrast, progresses

over public childcare, even though very limited, occurred mainly under left-wing regional government.

In sum, we showed that a mix of political competition and exchange dynamics explains why regional governments supported specific models of childcare delivery rather than others. More precisely, the explanatory power of different partisan preferences of left and right still hold to explain the “publicization” pattern in Andalusia and marketization in Piedmont. By contrast the explicit marketization in Tuscany resulted from political “exchange” dynamics between strong no-profit cooperatives, which aimed at increasing their presence in the provision of social services in Tuscany, and regional government looking for political legitimacy and support. Also, in Rioja the publicization patterns was favoured by political “exchange” dynamics between the association of municipalities, which demanded higher regional resources to support municipal childcare of the rural areas, and the right-wing regional government interested to maintain political power and control over the rural municipalities, the majority of which were governed by right-wing.

4.3 Childcare and Social Investment: the Relevance of Political Competition

As widely explained throughout the thesis the development of childcare policy does not automatically mean that a social investment agenda is pursued. Indeed, in order to pursue a childcare expansion through an effective social investment approach, childcare reforms should focus not only on the increase of childcare availability but also on the improvements of childcare quality and childcare affordability (Bonoli 2017; West. al. 2019). The empirical analysis shows both a within and cross-country variation with regard to the way in which the four empirical cases approached these two policy dimensions. The theoretical literature that informed our hypothesis linked the effective achievement of social investment to the political colour of the government that promote childcare expansion. More precisely, Morgan (2011a) argued that a childcare policy shaped by a social investment agenda is promoted more by left parties than

right-wing. The latter even when promoted childcare expansion, failed to deliver childcare reforms inspired by effective social investment aims (Morgan 2013).

Indeed, as expected left parties in our empirical cases promoted the shift from a social assistance to social investment approach on childcare policy. However, there are some interesting cross-country differences with respect to the approach to social investment on childcare pursued by left parties in Italy and Spain. By comparing the two cases of Andalusia and Tuscany, which share similar political tradition, it emerged a different outcome on social investment: *partial* in Tuscany and *robust* in Andalusia.

In Tuscany, interviews with regional policy-makers from left-wing coalition emphasized the improvement of quality as one of the main aims of their childcare reforms. However, they did not mention specific initiatives to make childcare more affordable. Also, electoral programs of left-wing coalition in Tuscany focuses definitely more on childcare quality rather than childcare affordability. Indeed, the reform initiatives that were aimed at improving quality on childcare in Tuscany were stronger than those devolved to childcare affordability. The regional government tried to address childcare affordability by adopting *Conciliation Vouchers* for unemployed women. Such instrument had two weaknesses. Firstly, it was only addressed to unemployed women excluding other relevant target groups such as dual-earner couples with low income or single parents. Secondly, the amount of *Conciliation Voucher* was not sufficient to cover the whole share of childcare fees (Confalonieri and Canale 2013). If left-wing policy makers devolved scarce attention to childcare affordability, their interest towards childcare quality was more intense and contributed to deliver a childcare policy shaped by a *partial* social investment in Tuscany. Nowadays in Tuscany, pure public, outsourced and accredit private providers follows the same quality requirements. The latter were defined through bargaining platforms with associations of public and private providers and trade unions as representatives of staff professionals. In this occasion trade unions advanced their demands in favour of the improvements of staff qualifications for staff professionals.

“After intense negotiations our demands to increase staff qualifications needed to work on childcare centres were accepted. Since these requirements were valid either for public than for accredited private providers, that represented a majority of private supply in Tuscany, we prevented private providers from hiring underqualified staff” (Interview 25 – CGIL Toscana).

Therefore, the combination of the strength of left-wing government together with mobilisation of trade unions ensured that at least a *partial* social investment shaped childcare reforms in Tuscany.

By contrast, in Andalusia left-wing politicians pursue childcare reforms through *robust* social investment aims. PSOE in Andalusia promoted childcare expansion by targeting explicitly *“the development of high quality childcare service affordable for all”* (PSOE 2008). The education law 17/2007 adopted by PSOE shifted the competence of childcare from DG Social Policy to DG Educaion. The latter steered the formal consultation of the Childcare Platform that led to the adoption of *decree 149/2009* aimed at establishing rules valid for accredited and public service. In this occasion, the claims advanced by trade unions and CEI-A were successful to introduce higher requirements on the qualifications needed for staff professional of pure public, outsourced and accredited providers. As in Tuscany, trade unions played a key role for the introduction of social investment aims. However, differently from Tuscany, regional policy makers targeted also childcare affordability as one of their main objectives. The interviewed public official of DG Education declared that she steered the workings of Childcare Platform with the explicit aim of establishing a fixed price for childcare fees to prevent accredited private providers from shifting some costs into users (Interview 11 – Public Official, DG Education - Andalusia). The fixed childcare price was then established in the Agreement between DG Education and DG Budget on the 7th July 2009.

In sum, in line with the theoretical literature childcare reforms shaped by either partial or robust social investment were promoted by left-wing government. The latter in Piedmont, between 2005 and 2010, also tried two times update the old regional legislation in order to shift childcare from a social assistance to a socio-educational childcare service. The bill prososals were very similar to those adopted in Tuscany and implied the introduction of common regional regulation for accreditation. The first

time that regional government presented its bill proposals, engaged in formal consultation with stakeholders within the Educational committee in the regional parliament. For the second bill proposal, regional government had informal exchanges with the associations of service providers and trade unions. The reform process became highly contentious on the definition of staff-child ratio. Indeed, since staff cost represents the highest expenditure to set up and maintain a childcare service, the definition of staff-child ratio might become highly contentious. Private providers are often in favour of a staff-child ratio that minimizes their costs. In other words, less staff for more children might positively influence the staff costs, which are the higher costs when investing on childcare centres. On the other hand, trade unions traditionally advocate a ratio that implies more staff with less children in order to ensure quality as well as to maximize job creation in childcare field. Thus, a political decision without the necessary equilibrium between those positions might displease one of the stakeholders. In a context of highly political competition as in Piedmont the displacement of part of the stakeholders of childcare policy arena might have consequences for political support. In both cases, the bill proposals contained two age differentiated staff/child ratio. While private providers mostly agreed on governmental proposals, trade unions rejected it proposing a unique and low staff child/ratio. Left-wing government did not manage to overcome such political stalemate and both proposals had not been transformed in adopted legislation. As a result, regulative inertia in Piedmont persisted with the consequence of a growing and little regulated private supply.

In sum, in Andalusia and Tuscany, the presence of left-wing regional government combined with a strong socio-political demand for social investment aggregated by trade unions favour the adoption of childcare reforms shaped by social investment. We argue that in Piedmont the way in which left-wing regional government proceeded for the adoption of new childcare reforms prevented the two conditions – presence of left-wing government and trade unions socio-political demands – from resulting favourable for the achievement of similar social investment outcomes of Andalusia and Tuscany.

Indeed, in Andalusia and Tuscany stakeholders were involved in formal consultation (Andalusia) or bargaining platforms (Tuscany) in which trade unions managed to advance their claims towards the introduction of social investment elements in regional childcare policy. The inclusion of stakeholders in childcare reform process in Piedmont was weaker. When the first left-wing proposal to reform childcare was presented, stakeholders were formally consulted within parliamentary committee. Then, in the second attempt pursued by left-wing government to adopt a comprehensive childcare reform, stakeholders were only informally consulted.

According to the literature (Ebbinghaus and Hassel 1999; Molina 2011), if stakeholders consultations are formal or binding childcare reform emerges from a bargaining process in which all the party involved have the chances to successfully advance their claims. Against this backdrop, the stakeholders involved will be less incline to oppose a reform and the political stalemate is less likely to occur. By contrast, the more informal is consultation the higher is the risk to cause a political stalemate (Ebbinghaus and Hassel 1999; Molina 2011) as happened in Piedmont.

However, the failed social investment outcome in Piedmont is associated also with right-wing governments that, as expected, preserved the social assistance character of childcare without promoting any shift to social investment. Differently from left-wing government that in Piedmont at least tried to update the old legislation on childcare inspired by social assistance principles, right-wing policy-makers did not prioritized any legislation changes. They limited their childcare regulative action to the adoption of new authorization requirements which were “borrowed” from regulation on health-care services. As a consequence, right-wing parties in Piedmont, in line with our expectations, demonstrated a view of childcare still anchored to the delivery of a social assistance service rather than a socio-educational one.

By contrast, in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja, contrary to our expectations, right-wing government promoted childcare expansion with a strong emphasis on two policy aspects related to social investment: quality and affordability. Firstly, the right-wing regional government regulated public and private childcare supply by improving

the quality requirements necessary to run a childcare services (regional decree 49/2009). Secondly, more recently in 2019, the regional government introduced an aid program called “Bono Infantil” to support childcare affordability by providing an almost total discount of childcare fees for public and private services that meet the quality requirements established by regional decree 49/2009. The adoption of a universal and almost free access for childcare took place in 2019 at the end of the last governmental mandate of PP and very close to the regional elections that were announced as highly competitive. In the last two decades, PSOE in La Rioja presented for at least two times a bill proposal on universal and free childcare then rejected by PP. In 2019, once a highly competitive round of regional election was getting closer, the Popular Party decided to complement its *publicization* strategy with the adoption of the “Bono Infantil”. Therefore, the shift towards social investment promoted by right-wing in La Rioja shows that in a context of a party system characterized by moderate pluralism – as it is in Rioja – the dynamics of centripetal political competition incentivize PP to adopt social investment reforms to remain competitive with PSOE.

To conclude, the presence of left-wing government and strong trade unions are favourable political conditions to achieve social investment on childcare as showed by the cases of Andalusia and Tuscany. Also, the presence of moderate pluralism increases centripetal political competition and favours partisan convergence of right-wing not only on childcare expansion and the support of public childcare but also on the adoption of measures that make childcare congruent with social investment aims as emerged from the case of Rioja.

Conclusions

The starting point of our work was the identification of an empirical and theoretical research puzzle with regard to the childcare policy trajectory in Italy and Spain. Childcare in the two countries – traditionally considered as laggards on the development of childcare policy - has undergone relevant transformations in the last two decades.

Childcare coverage rate in 1992 in Italy and Spain was very low around 5%. In 2000, this rate raised to 8.9% in Spain and 7.4% in Italy. Since 2000 childcare coverage expanded in both countries but with different intensity and patterns. In 2014, Spanish childcare coverage rate reached 34%, above the common European target set at 33%. In the same year, in Italy childcare coverage rate reached 22,8% remaining the lowest in Western Europe. In parallel to the increase of total childcare coverage rate, in Spain the share of coverage rate within public childcare shifted from 44,7% in 2000 to 51% in 2014. By contrast, in Italy the smaller – compared to Spain - childcare expansion coincided with an outstanding growth of services provided by private sector that passed from 11,7% in 2000 to 49,4% in 2014. Last but not least, OECD data in 2016 showed that the childcare enrolment rates of children coming from family among the lowest tertile of income in Spain, it is the double than in Italy, and it is even higher than in France and UK. Thus, the OECD data tell us that the level of inclusiveness, which is crucial to achieve social investment aims, is definitely higher in Spain than in Italy. Overall, these data lead us to an empirical puzzle. Two countries with similar level of undervdoped childcare and traditionally characterized by strong familism in the provision of care showed an expansionary as well as divergent childcare trajectory in the last two decades. In Spain, an high childcare expansion coincided with the increase of both public provision and inclusiveness of children coming from low-income families. By contrast, childcare expansion in Italy was moderate, driven by the growth of private services and overall less inclusive than in Spain.

Such empirical puzzle shows that policy changes take place even in welfare states characterized by strong policy legacy. This lead us to a theoretical puzzle. Since both countries departed from their familistic legacy in the provision of care, a focus on

policy legacy, that has been crucial to explain the traditional childcare policy inertia of the two countries, is no longer suitable to explain recent changes in the childcare policy trajectory. Therefore, we aimed at identifying which factors allow us to explain path departure and policy divergence between the two countries.

More precisely, Italy and Spain diverged along three analytical dimensions: the extent of expansion, the ways childcare is delivered (public vs. private) and social investment (the level of inclusiveness of high-quality childcare services). Since Italy and Spain have a decentralized policy setting, the regional level hold key competences with regard to these three dimensions. Indeed, regional governments in Italy and Spain distribute both national and regional resources to the lower level of childcare implementation, that is local government. The extent to which regional governments invest new resources on childcare impacts on the overall childcare development. Also, regional public funding may target the development of municipal childcare or alternatively, may support the development of profit or no-profit provision of childcare services. Finally, regional governments define quality regulations that public and private providers have to follow to run childcare services and may introduce mechanisms to control the price of childcare fees contributing to make childcare more affordable for families. Therefore, an analysis of regional policy-making on childcare is crucial to understand whether childcare expansionary reforms are shaped by social investment aims. Since, the regional level of government impacts on the three analytical dimensions of our interest it appears more suitable to solve our puzzle, which is focused on the following set of research questions: how and why regions expand childcare? How and why regions supported a specific model of childcare delivery? And finally how and why regional government set childcare reforms in congruence with social investment aims?

To answer these questions we built hypothesis on theoretical strands that links the government colours and political competition to policy change along the three analytical dimensions. In order to verify the explanatory power of partisan politics and political competition we conducted a qualitative process tracing analysis in four regional cases (*Andalusia, Rioja, Tuscany and Piedmont*) – two for each country – that

share similar extent of functional pressures and different political tradition with regard to regional government.

We found that the two Spanish regions promoted childcare expansion through “publicization” patterns and *robust* social investment. As for the Italian cases, childcare expansion was promoted through *explicit marketization* and *partial* social investment in Tuscany, whereas in Piedmont a moderate expansion resulted from *an implicit marketization* with absent social investment.

Our empirical analysis showed that the political colour of regional government alone is not sufficient to fully explain childcare policy change. The latter resulted from the combination of political competition and “exchange” dynamics with interest groups.

In Spain, the political colour of regional governments has a marginal explanatory power for childcare expansion, only related to Andalusian case. In Andalusia, once functional pressures became higher, the left-wing government promoted high childcare expansion through “publicization” and *robust* social investment, as expected by the literature that links the expansion of public childcare inspired by social investment aims with the strength of left-wing government (Bonoli and Reber 2010; Busemeyer and Seitzl 2017; Morgan 2011a and 2013). However, in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja political competition and “exchange” dynamics - rather than government colour - are more suited to explain childcare policy change. Political competition over childcare in La Rioja was quite high. Between 2000 and 2010, PSOE, that in Rioja was traditionally an opposition party, presented two bill proposals on childcare development based on the strengthening of public services and the universalization of free access for childcare. The PP regional government in 2009 started a childcare expansionary pattern by empowering the small municipalities of the rural areas with new resources to expand their public services in order to face the increasing depopulation of the rural areas. The focus on the strengthening of public childcare in the rural areas was an explicit demand of institutional stakeholders - the municipalities gathered in FEMP - that were unable to face childcare demand by relying only on local resources. Against this backdrop, the expansion of public delivery of childcare was driven by *political exchange* dynamics between institutional

stakeholders - which demanded higher financial support - and the regional party government (PP) interested in the maintenance of a well established political support in the rural areas. Also, more recently in 2019, just before a very competitive round of regional elections, the PP adopted the program “Bono Infantil.” The latter by providing free childcare access – promoted for long time by PSOE – contributed to achieve *robust* social investment outcomes. Contrary to the literature that links the achievement of social investment aims on childcare to the presence of left-wing government (Morgan 2011a, 2013), the case of Rioja showed that political competition dynamics in a party system characterized by *moderate pluralism* incentivize right-wing parties to adopt childcare reform shaped by a social investment agenda.

In Italy, differently from the Spanish cases, political competition dynamics are less relevant to explain childcare policy change.

In Tuscany and Piedmont, the divergent – rather than convergent – partisan preferences of regional government combined with *political exchange* dynamics contribute to explain childcare policy change.

In Tuscany, left-wing government promoted childcare expansion to respond to the increase of functional pressures, as expected in a region with high functional pressures and strong tradition of left-party government. Also, in line with the literature on childcare and social investment, left-wing government shaped childcare reforms according to social investment aims. However, left-wing government in Tuscany promoted only a *partial* social investment by focusing more on the definition of quality regulation rather than on the control of childcare fees to improve childcare affordability. The colour of regional government does not fully explain the changes occurred in the childcare policy trajectory of Tuscany. Firstly, the role of trade unions in the bargaining for the definition of quality regulations was crucial to improve quality requirements such as staff qualifications. Secondly, and more importantly, the shift from a full public model to an *explicit marketization* in Tuscany was driven by *political exchange* dynamics between no-profit cooperatives - which aimed at expanding their presence in the provision of regional social services - and regional government looking for political support and legitimacy.

In Piedmont, the right-wing coalition which ruled regional government for nine years between 2000 and 2015 promoted traditional views on childcare by emphasizing the role of family as main care provider, relegating externalised childcare as a measure to be developed within the companies to support already employed mothers rather than to activate unemployed women. Indeed, right-wing coalition in Piedmont did not prioritize childcare expansion and the strengthening of municipal childcare. Childcare policy initiatives promoted by right-wing in Piedmont were limited to the development of integrative services, such as family crèches, and to the support of company crèches. Due to scarce investment on the development of traditional crèches, the latter expanded only moderately and through *implicit marketization*. In other words, childcare delivery in Piedmont shifted from a fully public model to an *implicit marketization* as the private sector grew to satisfy childcare demand unmet by municipal public childcare left with scarce resources by regional governments. Also, right-wing initiatives in Piedmont to improve childcare quality and affordability were scarce. In 2004, right-wing regional government in Piedmont extended to childcare the same authorization requirements valid for health-care services, echoing a view of childcare as a social assistance rather than a socio-educational service in line with social investment aims.

The explanatory factors of childcare regional trajectories diverge between Italy and Spain. The key role of government colour to explain childcare policy change is less relevant in Spain where childcare policy change along the three dimensions was favoured by an high political competition due to the increased partisan convergence between left and right. In Spain, childcare expansion, the strengthening of public services and the emphasis on social investment were not only left-wing policy preferences. The Spanish right either when it was an opposition party (Andalusia) or ruling party (Rioja) promoted childcare expansion through the strengthening of municipal public childcare. Also, political competition dynamics turned to be highly relevant to explain why PP in La Rioja, contrary to the expectations, promoted social investment reforms. By contrast, political competition over childcare in Italy was very low. Italian right, as shown by the case of Piedmont, remained anchored to its

traditional views on childcare by promoting: *i*) family as main care provider; *ii*) limited development of externalised childcare through company crèches; *iii*) the persistence of a social assistance rather than a social investment approach.

In sum, this work confirmed what already identified by Schwander (2018) and Leon et. al. (2019) about the divergent childcare policy preferences promoted by Italian and Spanish right. In Spain, the party system configuration characterized by *moderate pluralism* increased political competition between left and right favouring the convergence of right-wing over childcare expansion and the promotion of public childcare (Schwander 2018). This work showed that the high political competition in Spain incentivizes left and right parties to converge not only on the development of childcare through public delivery – as already identified by Schwander (2018) - but also on the promotion of childcare reforms shaped by social investment aims as happened in the case of Rioja.

It is interesting to notice also the emergence of some differences between Italian and Spanish left with regard to the promotion of social investment for childcare. Italian left, in Tuscany and Piedmont, focused more on the development of quality regulation and less on the introduction of mechanisms to make childcare more affordable. It can be argued that, since childcare fees are set the municipal level, regional governments cannot control its price. However, there are different measures that regional governments can adopt to foster childcare affordability without undermining the local autonomy to set childcare fees. For instance, recently the regional government in Emilia-Romagna transferred regional resources to the lower level of childcare implementation with the explicit aim to finance the reduction of childcare fees for low-income families (Baldini and Barigazzi 2019). In Spain, left parties in Andalusia and Rioja combined the promotion of quality improvements on childcare regulation with the necessity to make childcare more affordable in order to guarantee a wider enrolment especially among low income families. Therefore, different social investment outcomes between Italy and Spain resulted not only from the different policy preferences between Italian and Spanish right but also from a different emphasis that Italian and Spanish left put on childcare quality and affordability. In Spain, there has been a partisan convergence on social investment and, overall, the

political salience of the necessity to intervene on childcare quality and affordability to achieve a robust social investment agenda has been higher than in Italy. Only recently, in Italy, national and regional policy debates on childcare are shaped by an increased awareness on childcare affordability as showed by the proposal that the Italian national government made in autumn 2019 to guarantee free childcare access (Baldini and Barigazzi 2019).

If political competition resulted significantly different across the two countries, actors strategies, interactions and exchange dynamics are more dependent on each regional context. However, some cross-country comparisons on the role played by actors to influence the content of childcare policy change can be drawn. In both countries trade unions when mobilized were crucial to achieve improvements on staff qualifications, a quality requirement that contribute to shape childcare policy according to social investment aims. More importantly, institutional stakeholders such as the association of municipal providers differed in their capacity to aggregate a strong socio-political demand to attract regional resources for the support of municipal public childcare. In Spain, the regional association of municipalities were quite homogenous and strong to influence changes towards the “publicization” of childcare delivery both in Andalusia and Rioja.

By contrast, in Italy childcare development had a very low political salience within the regional association of municipalities. The association of municipal providers in Piedmont was divided by political and territorial cleavage whereas in Tuscany it did not manage to oppose the *explicit marketization* prompted by *political exchanges* between no-profit cooperatives and regional government.

Overall, this work provided three important contributions on the empirical, analytical and theoretical side. Empirically we went beyond methodological nationalism by focusing on regional politics that, traditionally underresearched, turns to be crucial in the two country under scrutiny due to their decentralized policy setting. Indeed, we shed a light on the actors that shape childcare reforms, and the processes that lead to reform adoption at the sub-national level. By focusing on regional politics we gained

empirical insights about the scope and direction of childcare policy reforms since many policy issues of childcare institutional design are established at the sub-national level. Therefore, the empirical analysis of sub-national policy-making allow us to focus on analytical dimensions of childcare policy change that are not well covered by comparative welfare state literature. The latter has often conceptualized childcare policy change as quantitative expansion of available childcare places or public spending on childcare (Huber and Stephens 2001; Bonoli and Reber 2010; Madama 2010; Andrenescu and Carnes 2015; Busemeyer and Seitzl 2017; Blome 2017). Beyond childcare expansion, we focused on changes of childcare delivery to understand whether childcare expansion is associated with a change of institutional organization and design. Also, we focused on changes of childcare regulation to understand wheter social investment paradigm effectively shape childcare reforms. The expansion of childcare coverage by itself is often considered as one of the main aim of a social investment agenda (Vandenbrouke et. al. 2011). However, social investment aims on childcare are effectively met if childcare expansionary reforms are shaped by improvements on quality regulation and childcare affordability (Bonoli 2017; West. al. 2019). By providing detailed description of processes that lead to reform adoption we were able to understand whether, how and why policy-makers designed childcare quality and affordability in congruence with social investment aims.

By identifying factors that allowed childcare policy changes in countries characterized by familistic policy legacy we contributed to theoretical literature on the explanations of childcare policy change. More precisely, in line with Schwander (2018) we confirmed that childcare trajectory in Spain is characterized by a partisan convergence towards the promotion of childcare expansion through public delivery, whereas partisan divergence still persist in Italy. Also, we innovated partisan literature on childcare by showing that the same political competition dynamics emphasized by Schwander (2018), to explain the Spanish partisan convergence over the development of public childcare, hold also to explain the shift towards social investment in Spain. Importantly, we showed that government colour and political competition dynamics are not sufficient to explain changes on childcare delivery. The latter, in Tuscany and Rioja, resulted as a product of *political exchanges* between interest groups which

aggregated strong demand to shape the content of childcare reforms and regional government looking for political support and sharing responsibilities on childcare policies. Particularly, the demand aggregated by the associations of municipal and no-profit providers respectively in Rioja and Tuscany turned to be decisive to orient changes on childcare delivery in both regions.

From our empirical analysis it emerged a different politics of childcare according to different regional political context. Therefore, it is difficult to derive assumptions on the politics of childcare that are generalizable to other cases. This limit is also related with the methodological choice made to develop our research. A qualitative process tracing maximizes internal validity but it does not guarantee external validity. As a consequence, further research is needed to control for the relevance of generalizations. Indeed, further research on regional cases in Italy and Spain would tell us to what extent such results are generalizable. Also, beyond Italy and Spain further research can be extended to other regional cases in country characterized by a regionalist/federalist policy setting such as Germany. Already two quantitative studies identified a positive association between the number of available childcare places (Busemeyer and Seitzl 2017) or enrolled children (Andronescu and Carnes 2015) and the colour of regional government. However, a qualitative analysis on the deviant cases of both quantitative studies can tell us whether political competition and “exchange” dynamics are crucial to explain changes on childcare expansion, delivery and social investment in Germany. Importantly, due to the latest political novelties, the four empirical cases analysed in this dissertation deserve a new empirical analysis to control whether our findings are further corroborated or even contrasted. On the one hand, in the Italian regions the national decree *d.lgs n. 65/2017* allocated new childcare funding for regional and local authorities (Arlotti and Sabatinelli 2017). The effective allocation of this funding have been so recent and slow that is not part of our empirical analysis. Further empirical research on how Tuscany and Piedmont manage this funding would tell us whether the political dynamics emerged in this work are crystallized or changed. On the other hand, political novelties in the last regional elections in Andalusia and La Rioja are particularly interesting for the implications on welfare, and more specifically

on childcare policy. Indeed, in the regional elections held in 2018 in Andalusia, the PSOE was the first party with the 28% of consensus but it lost the political majority in the regional parliament. As consequence PSOE was not able in Andalusia to form a regional government. This was a real political “heart quake” for mainly two reasons. Firstly, for the first time since 1982 the PSOE does not hold a governmental position in Andalusia. Secondly, and more importantly, a radical right party (VoX), that traditionally gained an irrelevant political consensus, made a political exploit by gaining the 10.9% that corresponds to 12 seats. The latter were useful to form a coalition majority with Popular Party that took the 20,6% and Ciudadanos, which gained the 18,2% of votes. So for the first time Popular Party in Spain have to face a within-pole competition with a radical right competitor. It would be interesting to control empirically whether the Spanish Popular Party due to the within-pole competition changes its favourable position towards childcare development and retrenches childcare expenditure and measures.

In the last 2019 regional elections in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja the PSOE was the party most voted with the 38,7% of votes, overcoming the consensus of Popular Party stuck at 33 %¹⁹ . As a result, the 20th of August 2019, the PSOE formed a left-wing coalition government with Podemos which took the 6,6% of votes²⁰ . The new left-wing regional government ended an uninterrupted political dominance of Popular Party over the regional government in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja. Against this backdrop, further empirical research on the Autonomous Community of La Rioja will tell us whether left-wing regional government will continue and strengthen the “publicization” approach followed by previous PP government or, alternatively, it will opt for a strictly public expansionary strategy with no direct or indirect support towards non-public supply.

As already said, an important contribution of this thesis is the identification of political conditions and dynamics that led to a childcare reform shaped by social investment agenda. To this regard, two dimensions are important: childcare quality and access. If the regional government has a full competence on quality regulation, the competences on childcare affordability are shared with municipal level, which define access criteria,

¹⁹ <https://resultados.elpais.com/elecciones/2019/autonomicas/16/>

²⁰ <https://resultados.elpais.com/elecciones/2019/autonomicas/16/>

and, in the majority of cases, also childcare fees. As a result, further research should focus on the policy decisions over childcare taken at the local level, which has been little investigated. Indeed, a new research agenda on the sub-national childcare policy making should be focused on the political factors that shape local decisions on childcare access criteria and fees. Such research focus would complement the findings on childcare and social investment included in this thesis.

List of Abbreviations

ACADE:	Asociación Español de Centros Privado de Enseñanza
ACES:	Asociación Andaluza de Centros de Enseñanza de la Economía Social
ALMPs:	Active Labour Market Policies
ANCI:	Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani
AN:	Alleanza Nazionale
ARPE:	At-risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion Indicator
CEI-A:	Coordinadora de Escuelas Infantil de Andalucía
CGIL:	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro
CISL:	Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori
CCOO:	Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras
DC:	Democrazia Cristiana
EU:	European Union
FAMP:	Federación Andaluza de Municipios y Provinces National Social Report
FEMP:	Federación Española de Municipios y Provinces
FETE:	Federación Española Trabajadores de Enseñanza
FEUSO:	Federación de Enseñanza de Unión Sindical Obrera
IDI:	Istituto degli Innocenti
LRAs:	Local and Regional Authorities National Action Plan for Social Inclusion
NGOs:	Non-Governmental Organizations
PCI:	Partito Comunista Italiano
PLI:	Partito Liberale Italiano
PRI:	Partito Repubblicano Italiano
PSDI:	Partito Social Democratico Italiano
PSI:	Partito Socialista Italiano
PSIUP:	Non-Governmental Organizations
PSOE:	Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol
NGOs:	Non-Governmental Organizations
OECD:	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UGT:	Union Generales Trabajadores
UIL:	Unione Italian del Lavoro Right to Social Integration

List of Figures and Tables

Chapter 1

Figure 1.1 – Childcare Coverage in Italy and Spain, % Rate, 1992-2014.....	12
Figure 1.2 – The Share of Public and Private Childcare Provision in Italy, 2000-2014.....	12
Figure 1.3 - The increase of available childcare places in Public, Private and Total Provision between 2000 and 2014, Absolute Numbers, Italy.....	13
Figure 1.4 – The Share of Public and Private Childcare Provision in Spain, 2000-2014.....	13
Figure 1.5 – Participation % Rates in formal ECEC by Equalised Disposable Household Income Tertile, Children Under Age Three, EU countries, 2014.....	14
Figure 1.6 –Participation % Rates in Formal ECEC for Children with Unemployed or Working Mothers, EU Countries, 2014.....	15
Table 1.1 – Female Employment (20-64) % Rates, National and Regional Trends, Italy, 2000-2014.....	21
Table 1.2 – Female Employment (20-64), % Rates and Number of Years of Left-Wing Government in Spain and Spanish Autonomous Communities, 2000-2015.....	21
Table 1.3 – Total Formal Childcare Coverage % Rate, Public Childcare % Rate, 2000-2014 and Number Center Left Government, 2000-2015, Italian Regions.....	22
Table 1.4 – Total Formal Childcare Coverage % Rate, Public Childcare % Rate, 2000-2014 and Number Center Left Government, 2000-2015, Spanish Autonomous Communities	23

Chapter 2

Figure 2.1 – Real GDP Growth Rate, % changes over previous period in some selected EU Countries, 1972-2015.....	29
Figure 2.2 – Unemployment % Rate, OECD Countries average, 1972-2014.....	30
Figure 2.3 – Women (15-64) Employment Rates, % values, 1970-2012, EU-28 and some EU countries.....	30

Figure 2.4 – Life Expectancy by Age, EU 28 and Some Selected Countries, 1972-2012.....	30
Figure 2.5 - Public Spending on in Kind-Benefits for Family as % of GDP, in some selected countries, 1980-2013.....	37
Figure 2.6 - Coverage Rates of Childcare (0-3) in Some Selected EU Countries, 1986 and 2014...38	
Figure 2.7 - Childcare Competences in a Decentralized Policy Setting.....	48
Figure 2.8 – Patterns of Childcare Expansion.....	50
Table 2.1 - Fertility Rates in EU-28 and some selected EU countries, 1960-2015.....	31
Table 2.2 - Four Models of Childcare Delivery.....	40
 Chapter 4	
Figure 4.1 – Public Expenditure for Cash and In-Kind Family Benefits as a Percentage of GDP, Italy, 1995-2015.....	83
Figure 4.2 – Total Fertility Rates in Italy, 1970-2015.....	84
Figure 4.3 – Female Employment Rates (15-64) in Italy, 1977-2015.....	84
Figure 4.4 - Female Employment Rates by Different Age Cohorts, Italy, 2000-2015.....	84
Figure 4.5 – The Share of Public and Private Childcare Provision in Spain, 2000-2014.....	91
Figure 4.6 – Public Expenditure for Cash and In-Kind Family Benefits as a Percentage of GDP, Spain, 1995-2015.....	92
Figure 4.7 - Female Employment Rates by Different Age Cohorts, Spain, 1990-2015.....	93
Figure 4.8 – Total Fertility Rates in Spain, 1990-2015.....	93
Table 4.1 – Childcare Coverage, Absolute Numbers and Percentage Rates, Italy, Italy, 1992.....	74
Table 4.2 – The Distribution of Childcare Policy Competences in Italy.....	77

Table 4.3 - The Annual Share of Funding of the “Piano-Nidi” (2007-09).....	78
Table 4.4 – Total National Resources Allocated to Each Region for 2007-2008-2009, U.C. Agreement of 2007, Piano Nidi.....	79
Table 4.5 – National Funding for Childcare after Piano Nidi, 2010-2015.....	81
Table 4.6 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Italy, 1986-2014.....	82
Table 4.7 – The Distribution of Childcare Policy Competences in Spain.....	88
Table 4.8 – The Share of National Funding Devolved to Spanish Autonomous Communities in 2008 and 2011.....	90
Table 4.9 – Childcare Coverage Rate, Children Aged 0-2, Spain, 1986-2014.....	91
Table 4.10 – Female Employment 20-64 in Italy, Spain and EU-28, 1995-2015.....	94
Table 4.11 - Public Expenditure for In-Kind Benefits in Italy, Spain and EU-28, 1995-2015.....	95
Chapter 5	
Figure 5.1 – Female Employment Rates by Different Age Cohorts, %, Tuscany, 2000-2015.....	108
Figure 5.2 - Female Employment Rates by Different Age Cohorts, %, Piedmont, 2000-2015...	109
Figure 5.3 – Childcare Coverage Rate, Italy and Tuscany, 2000-2014.....	134
Figure 5.4 - The Total Childcare Supply in Tuscany, Absolute Numbers, 1999-2015.....	134
Figure 5.5 – Childcare Coverage in Public and Private Services, % Rates, Tuscany, 2000-2014.....	135
Figure 5.6 – The Increase of Public, Private and Total Childcare Coverage, Absolute Numbers, Tuscany, 2000-2014.....	135
Figure 5.7 – Childcare Coverage Rate in the Accredited Private Provision over the Total of Private Provision, % Rates, Tuscany, 2004-2013.....	136
Figure 5.8 – Total Childcare Coverage, % Rates, Italy and Piedmont, 1992-2014.....	151
Figure 5.9 – Absolute Number Traditional Crèches, Micro-Chrèches and Integrative Services, Piedmont, 2007-2015.....	152

Figure 5.10 – Childcare Coverage by Public and Private Provision, % Rates, Piedmont, 2000-2014.....	152
Figure 5.11 – The Increase of Childcare Coverage in Public and Private Services between 2000 and 2014, Absolute Numbers, Piedmont.....	153
Table 5.1 – Female Employment (20-64) Rates, %, Italy, Italian Regions, EU-19, EU-28, 2000-2015.....	99
Table 5.2 – Fertility Rates in Italy, Italian Regions and EU-27, 2000-2015.....	100
Table 5.3 – Childcare Coverage Rate, Italian Regions, 1992-2014.....	101
Table 5.4 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Public Services, Italian Regions, 2000-2014.....	103
Table 5.5 – GDP (million of euros) in Italy and selected Regions, 2000-2015.....	106
Table 5.6 – AROPE Rates, Total Employment Rates, Female Employment (20-64) Rates, %, EU-27, Italy, Tuscany and Piedmont, 2000-2015.....	107
Table 5.7 – Total Fertility Rates, EU-27, Italy, Tuscany, Piedmont and EU-27, 1990-2015.....	109
Table 5.8 – Population in Tuscany: total, people aged less than 2 years old and over 65, 1995-2015.....	110
Table 5.9 -Total Population, 0-2 years old and over 65 years old in Piedmont, 1995-2015.....	110
Table 5.10 - Childcare Policy Legislation in Tuscany from 1970s to date.....	117
Table 5.11 – Main Elements of Bill Proposal 373/1998.....	122
Table 5.12 – Financial Resources Allocated for Childcare in Tuscany, 2000-2014.....	130
Table 5.13 – Piano Nidi (2007-2009), National and Regional Funding.....	131
Table 5.14 – Childcare Arrangements Financed through Regional Funding.....	132
Table 5.15 – Financial Resources Allocated by Regional Government for Specific Actions in the Public and Accredited Private Childcare Services, 2014.....	132
Table 5.16 – The share of Public Services, Directly and Indirectly Managed,%, Tuscany, 2004-2014.....	136

Table 5.17 - Average of Childcare Fees for Formal Public and Private Childcare in Tuscany, 2014.....	138
Table 5.18 – Average Price (Euros) of Childcare Fees in the Main Tuscan Cities.....	138
Table 5.19 – Childcare Policy Legislation in Piedmont from 1970 to date.....	141
Table 5.20 – Requirements for Staff-Child Ratio and Staff Qualification Valid for Integrative Childcare Services in Piedmont.....	144
Table 5.21 – Piano Nidi (2007-2009), National and Regional Funding in Piedmont.....	146
Table 5.22 – Absolute Number of Public and Private Centres for Formal Childcare in Piedmont, 2000-2015.....	153
Table 5.23 - Number of Municipalities with at least One Childcare Centre, % Rates, Piedmont, 2011-2015.....	154

Chapter 6

Figure 6.1 – GDP growth rate, % change over previous period, Andalusia and Spain, 1996-2015.....	163
Figure 6.2 – GDP growth rate in La Rioja, % change over previous rate, 2001-2015.....	164
Figure 6.3 - Female Employment Rates by Different Age Cohorts, %, La Rioja, 2000-2015.....	166
Figure 6.4 – Female Employment Rates by Different Age Cohorts, %, Andalusia, 2000-2015...166	
Figure 6.5 – Childcare Coverage Rate, %, Spain and Andalusia, 2002-2014.....	187
Figure 6.6 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Public and Private Services, %, Andalusia, 1998-2014.....	188
Figure 6.7 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Accredited and Full Private Provision, %, Andalusia, 2012-2015.....	189
Figure 6.8 – Childcare Coverage Rate, %, Spain and Autonomous Community of La Rioja, 2002-2015.....	202
Figure 6.9 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Public and Private Services, %, Autonomous Community of La Rioja, 2002-2015.....	203

Table 6.1 – Female Employment (20-64) Rates in EU-28, Spain and Spanish Regions, 2000-2015.....	159
Table 6.2 – Fertility Rates in EU-27, Spain and Spanish Regions, 2000-2015.....	159
Table 6.3 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Spain, National and Regional Trends, %, 2000 and 2014.....	160
Table 6.4 – Childcare Coverage in Public Services, %, Spain and Spanish Regions, 2000-2014.....	161
Table 6.5 – AROPE Rates, Total Employment Rates, Female Employment (20-64) Rates, %, EU-27, Spain, Andalusia and La Rioja.....	165
Table 6.6 - Total Fertility Rates, Spain, Andalusia, La Rioja and EU-27, 1995-2015.....	167
Table 6.7 – Total Population in La Rioja, 1995-2015.....	167
Table 6.8 - Total Population, population aged below 2 and over 65 years old, Andalusia, Absolute Numbers, 1995-2015.....	167
Table 6.9 - Childcare Policy Legislation in Andalusia.....	174
Table 6.10 – Main Requirements Valid for Public and Accredited Private Childcare Services in Andalusia.....	182
Table 6.11 – Regional Expenditure for Childcare, Andalusia, 2003-2015, Millions of Euros.....	185
Table 6.12 – Criteria for Allocation of Educa 3 resources, Orden 25/11/2008.....	186
Table 6.13 – Absolute Numbers of Enrolled Children in Public and Private Services, Andalusia, 2005-2014.....	188
Table 6.14 – Childcare Coverage Rate in Public, Accredited Private and Full Private Services, %, Andalusia, 2012-2015.....	189
Table 6.15 – Childcare Policy Legislation during 2000s in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja.....	192
Table 6.16 – Opening Hours, Staff-Child Ratio and Staff Qualifications for Childcare in La Rioja.....	194
Table 6.17 – Financial Resources for Childcare allocated by Regional Government, La Rioja, 2009.....	196

Table 6.18 – Public Expenditure for Childcare (0-3) in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja, 2006-2015, Euros.....	197
Table 6.19 – Main Elements of the Aid Program for Childcare Fee “Bono Infantil”, Autonomous Community of La Rioja.....	200
Table 6.20 – Private Childcare Centres, Childcare Units and Enrolled Children in Private Centres, Absolute Numbers, The Autonomous Community of La Rioja, 2014/15.....	203
Table 6.21 – Childcare Coverage in Public Services, Absolute Numbers, The Autonomous Community of La Rioja, 2014/15.....	204

List of Interviews

The Autonomous Community of Andalusia

Interview 1: Public Official, Department of Education, Regional Administration of Andalusia

Interview 2: Member of Socialist Party and Former Ministry of Education of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia

Interview 3: Member of Regional Parliament of Andalusia, Socialist Party

Interview 4: Member of Regional Parliament of Andalusia, Popular Party

Interview 5: Member of Regional Parliament of Andalusia, Ciudadanos

Interview 6: Representative of Trade Union, CCOO

Interview 7: Representative of Trade Union, UGT

Interview 8: Representative of ACADE, Spanish Association of Private Education Centres

Interview 9: Representative of Asociacion Andaluza de Centros de Ensenanza de Economia Social (ACES)

Interview 10: Representative of CEI-A

Interview 11: Public Official, Department of Education, Regional Administration of Andalusia, Former Director (2008-2015) of the Unit Responsible for Childcare (0-3)

Interview 12: Representative of Trade Union, FEUSO

Interview 13: Representative of FAMP (Federacion Andaluza Municipal y Provinces)

The Autonomous Community of La Rioja

Interview 14: Former Secretary of FETE-UGT La Rioja

Interview 15: Member of Regional Parliament of La Rioja, Socialist Party

Interview 16: Member of Regional Parliament of La Rioja, Ciudadanos

Interview 17: Member of Associations of Parents and Municipal Councilor PSOE, City Council of Logrono

Interview 18: President of Associations of Private Providers of Childcare Centres

Interview 19: Member of Regional Parliament, Partido Popular La Rioja

Interview 20: Public Official Responsible for Childcare (0-3), Department of Education, Regional Administration of Rioja

Interview 21: Representative of Association of Municipalities (FEMP Rioja)

Tuscany

Interview 22: Public Official, Department of Education, Regional Administration of Tuscany

Interview 23: Member of Regional Parliament, Democratic Party

Interview 24: Representative of CISL Toscana

Interview 25: Representative of CIGL Toscana

Interview 26: Representative of Legacoop Toscana

Interview 27: Representative of FISM Toscana

Interview 28: Member of Regional Parliament, Sinistra Italiana

Interview 29: Head of Unit Research, Istituto degli Innocenti

Interview 30: Former Regional Councilor for Education (1995-2005), Tuscany Region

Interview 31: Representative of KOINÉ Cooperative, Legacoop Toscana

Interview 32 – Representative of AGE Toscana (Associazione Genitori Italia – Rete Toscana)

Piedmont:

Interview 33: Public Official Responsible for Childcare (0-3), Regional Administration of Piedmont

Interview 34: Member of Regional Parliament and former delegate for ANCI PIEMONTE, Democratic Party

Interview 35: Regional Ministry for Education and Member of Regional Parliament, Democratic Party

Interview 36: Former Public Official and External Consultant on Social Policy for Forza Italia Piemonte

Interview 37: Representative of CIGL Piemonte

Interview 38: Representative of CISL Piemonte

Interview 39: Representative of Private Providers Regional Association (API Piemonte)

Interview 40: Representative of AGE Piemonte (Associazione Genitori Italia – Rete Piemonte)

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