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Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), an operational tool for psychologists

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Lombardy Regional Board of Psychologists

Objectives

Basing its work on the principle established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Lombardy Regional Board of Psychologists (OPL) conducted its "Psychology for Children's Rights" project in 2016 with the aim of clearly and incisively studying and disseminating the responsibilities, competencies and organisation of psychologists' work in the area of children's rights. Starting from our knowledge of the current state of application of the CRC in Italy (based on the ninth monitoring report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Italy 2015 - 2016), the association focused specifically on the way the "children's rights and psychologists" topic is represented in society within the Lombard professional community. In this work, we present the main results of explorative research in collaboration with UNICEF, Save The Children, AIAF Associazione Italiana Avvocati di Famiglia Lombardia "Milena Pini" and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano, aimed at determining the level of knowledge and application of the CRC by psychologists working in facilities dealing with minors in Lombardy.

Phases and methodology - The research was divided into three phases

PHASES	OBJECTIVES	METHODS	SAMPLE	RESULT
PHASE 1 Mapping of the facilities dealing with minors	To quantify the presence of psychologists in the facilities dealing with minors	Analysis of databases and existing agreements with Lombard public institutions dealing with minors, such as: residential care facilities, youth centres, clinics, protection services.	1400 residential facilities 640 residential care facilities 460 residential care facilities for minors 300 facilities for unaccompanied minors (MNA)	A professional psychologist is present in 50% of these facilities
PHASE 2	To study the type of training, the role played and the degree of knowledge of children's rights	Online questionnaire sent to all of the facilities above.	157 psychologists	Graph
PHASE 3	To study the extent and depth of knowledge of the CRC, as a working tool of the psychologist.	Semi-structured interview and focus groups	67 psychologists	Graph

PHASE 1

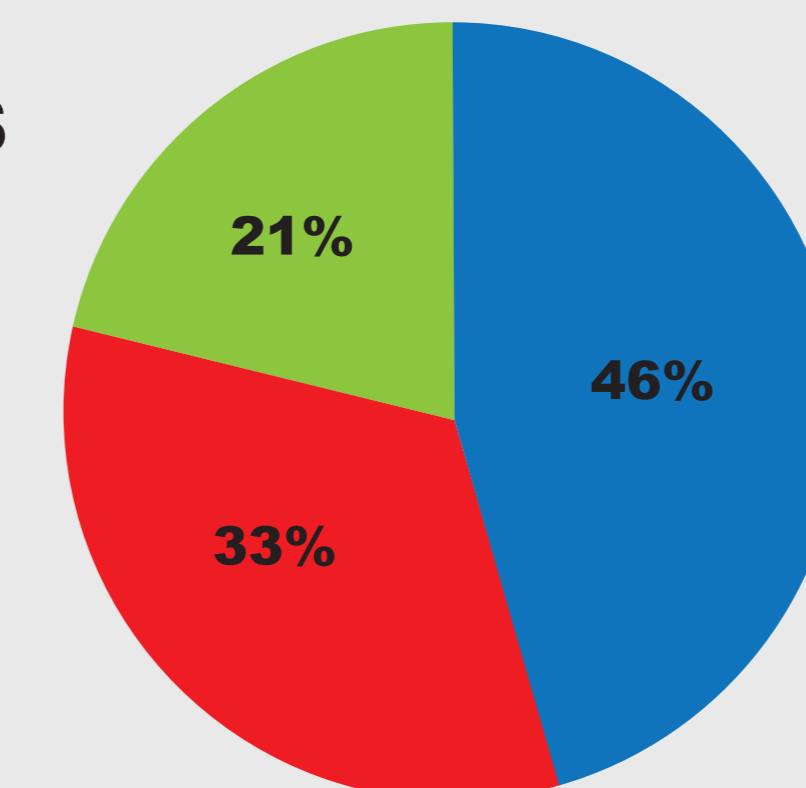
Through our analysis of databases and existing conventions with public institutions in Lombardy, we identified 1400 residential facilities in order to determine how many psychologists work in these facilities dealing with minors.

MAPPED RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES 1400

Residential care facilities	640
Residential care facilities for minors	460
Facilities for unaccompanied minors	300

RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

- Residential care facilities for minors
- Residential care facilities
- Facilities for unaccompanied minors



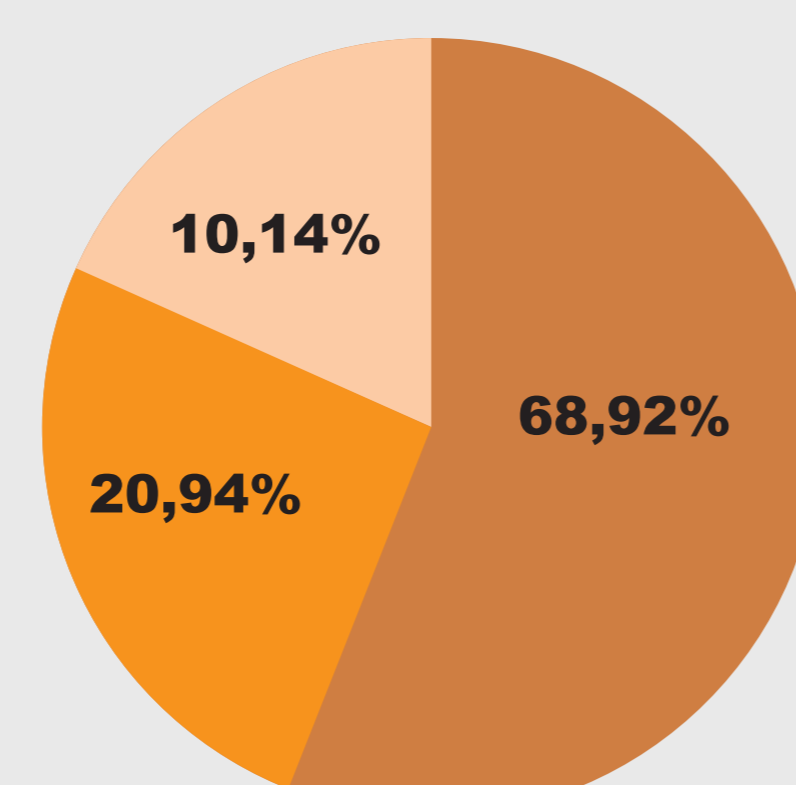
Based on our analysis of the data we collected by contacting the facilities, we estimated that a professional psychologist is present in only 50% of these facilities.

PHASE 2

We interviewed a sample of 157 psychologists working in facilities with minors using a brief questionnaire, in order to determine the area and sector of operation, training, knowledge of children's rights legislation and literature.

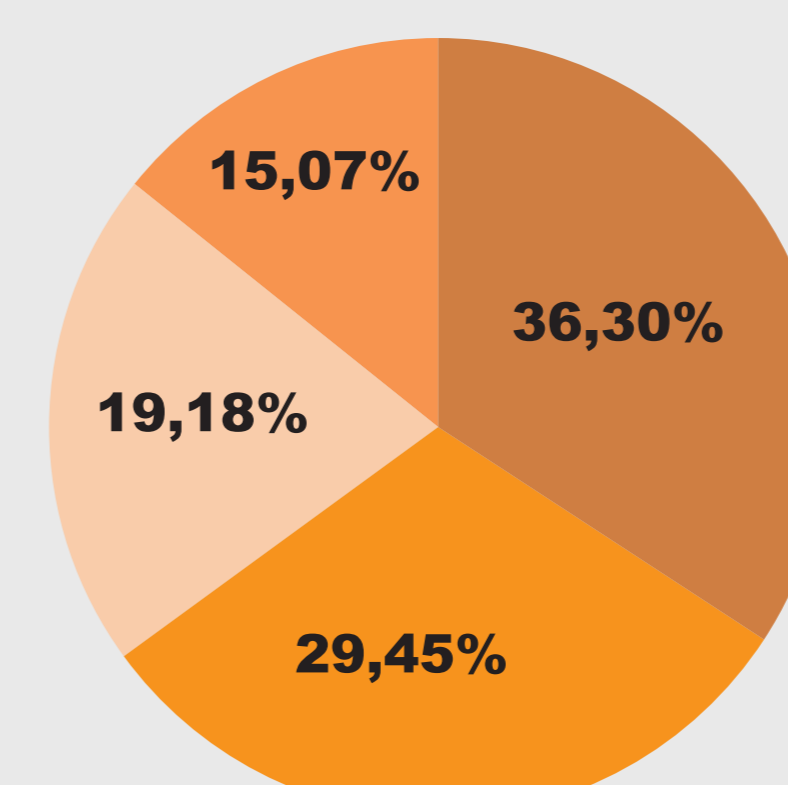
AREA IN WHICH THE PSYCHOLOGIST WORKS

- Residential facilities
- Residential care facilities
- Residential care facilities for minors



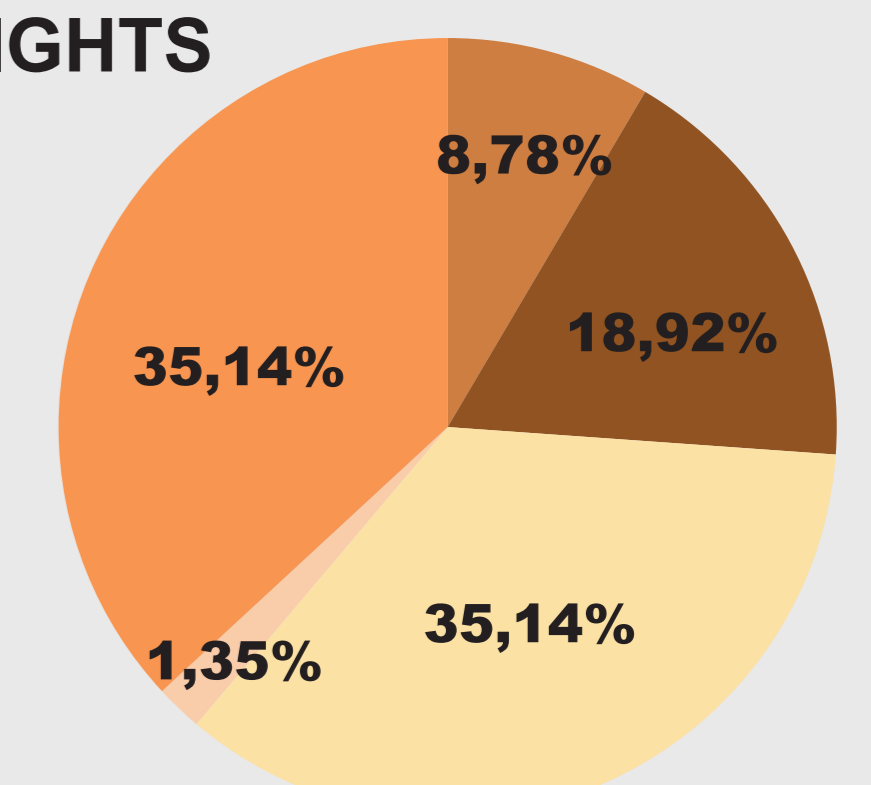
WHERE THE PSYCHOLOGIST WORKS

- Public sector
- Private sector
- Not for profit
- Other



TRAINING IN PSYCHOLOGY AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

- Master's degree
- Unstructured courses and seminars
- Field experience
- Foreign training programmes
- Other



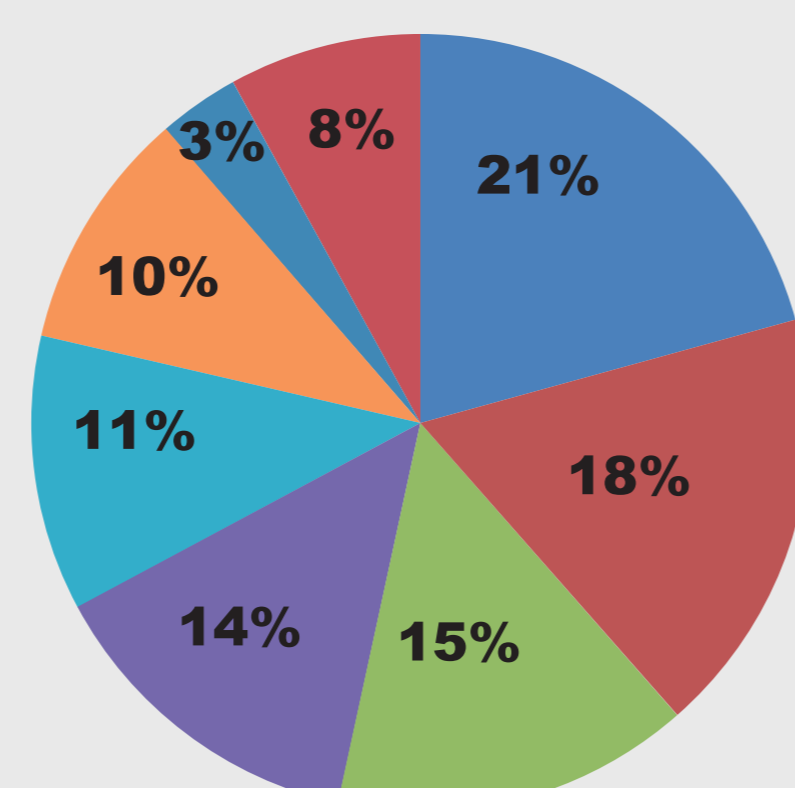
Another important datum showed that 8.78% have a Master's degree in children's rights, 18.92% have attended unstructured courses, 35.14% have acquired training through field experience, 1.35% have received training abroad, and just 35.81% have received other forms of training.

PHASE 3

Through the focus groups, we discussed further the areas and types of work done by the psychologists

AREAS OF WORK

- Abuse
- Right to a family
- Right to education
- Protection



- Migrant minors
- Right to health
- Emergency
- Other

N.B. Many subjects provided more than one answer to the same question

In the third phase, we obtained the following data on knowledge of the CRC, update reports on its monitoring in Italy and optional protocols. This was confirmed by experience with minors and the sharing of data with other stakeholders forming the Children's Rights Protection System.

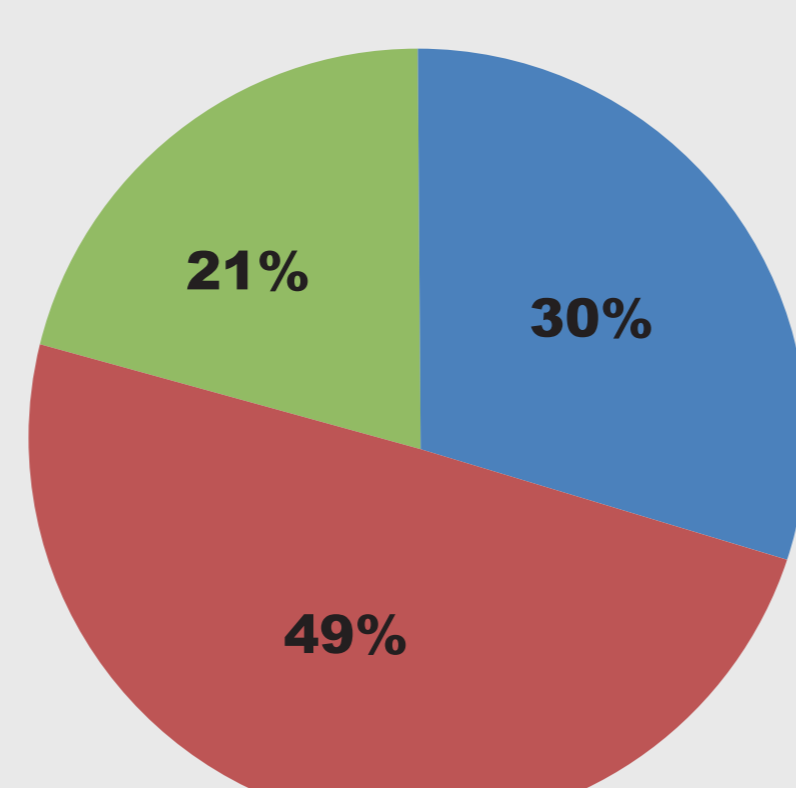
Following the questions asked in the focus groups, we found that

100%

of the sample interviewed believed they required more training on the CRC, acknowledging it to be an essential tool for psychologists.

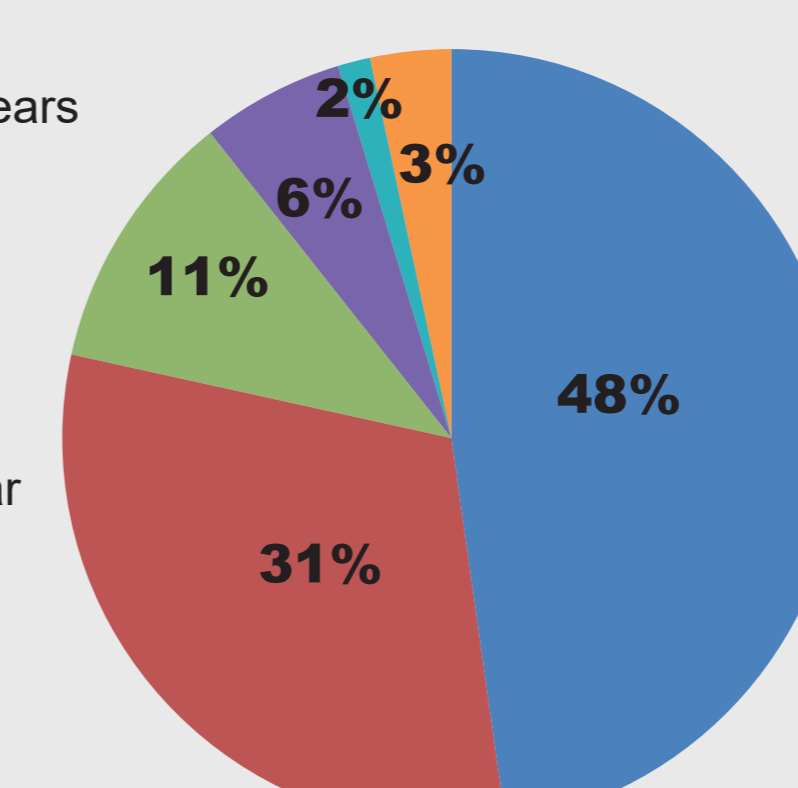
KNOWLEDGE OF UPDATE REPORTS ON CRC MONITORING IN ITALY AND OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS

- Yes
- No
- No answer



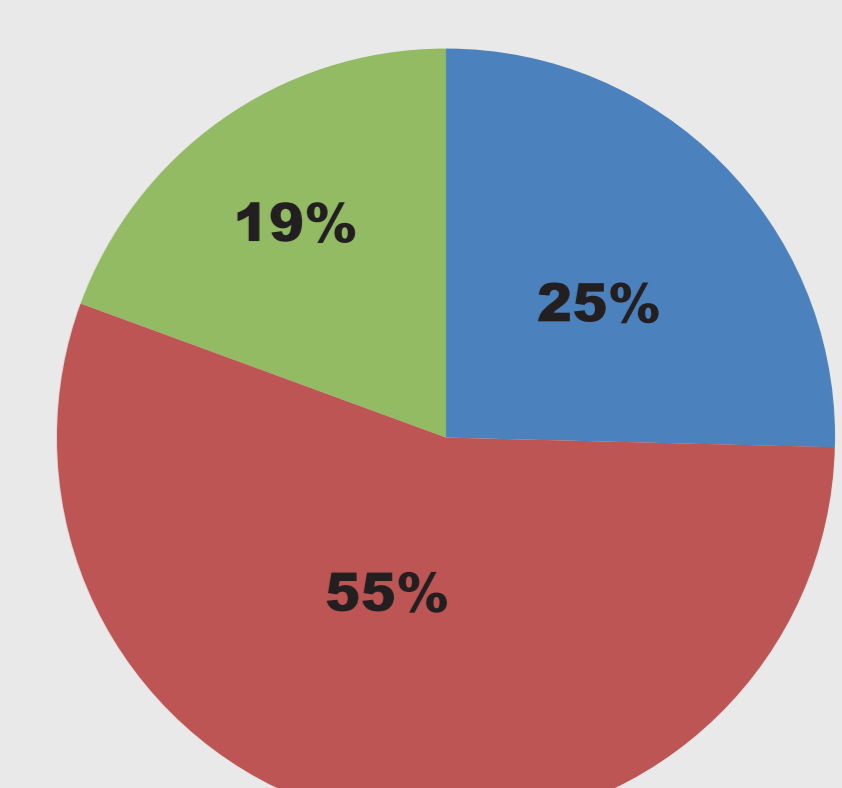
EXPERIENCE IN CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

- More than 10 years
- 5 to 10 years
- 2 to 3 years
- 1 to 2 years
- Less than 1 year
- No answer



DATA SHARED WITH OTHER PROTECTION SYSTEM STAKEHOLDERS

- Yes
- No
- No answer



DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The results show that knowledge of children's rights is lacking and distributed heterogeneously throughout Lombardy, despite representing an essential and guiding reference tool for our colleagues' work in the field, as explicitly established by the CRC. When considered against the Italian reality of a country hard at work and at the forefront of receiving unaccompanied minors, the results of our research strengthen our determination to develop knowledge and expand cross-disciplinary skills on children's rights both inside and outside our profession.

The focus groups revealed that, in addition to the aforementioned need for education, another very important element is the need to improve the dialogue between professionals working in the field, local facilities and institutions working with minors and families, in order to form a regional and national protection system where the value and specific nature of psychologists' work is acknowledged and valued for their specific skills and their contribution to the fulfilment of the principles expressed in the CRC.