Title of the project:	GROW – Where to grow a child?
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Area:	Social services, care & wellbeing, social investment, policy assessment

What?

#GROW, titled "Where to grow a child? Spatial inequalities in ECEC and its impact on women's labour market participation," is a research project that addresses the spatial inequalities in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Italy and its impact on women's participation in the labor market. The project is led by Alessandra Guglielmi from Politecnico di Milano and employs a mixed-method approach that integrates social policy analysis with advanced statistical techniques. The aim is to develop policy recommendations for the efficient and effective expansion of ECEC services.

The primary objectives of #GROW are:

Investigate the Influence of ECEC on Women's Labor Market Participation: Analyze how the levels of ECEC influence women's participation in the labor market across different Italian provinces.

Identify Spatial Clusters: Find spatial clusters of provinces with similar relationships between ECEC levels and women's labor market participation.

Determine Optimal Childcare Provision Levels: Predict the optimal level of childcare provision that maximizes positive outcomes for women's labor market participation and children's involvement in education.

Evaluate ECEC Management Models: Assess which management models are most effective and efficient in expanding ECEC services to meet EU targets.

Who?

The project involves collaboration between two main institutions: Politecnico di Milano (Polimi) and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). **Polimi**, led by Alessandra Guglielmi, will focus on the statistical analysis and development of predictive models, and **UAB**, represented by Lara Maestripieri, will conduct qualitative case studies and contribute to policy analysis.

Why?

#GROW is important for several reasons. The project aims to address territorial, gender, and educational inequalities by improving access to ECEC services, which are essential

for both child development and women's employment. By providing empirical evidence and developing predictive algorithms, #GROW will support policymakers in effectively allocating resources and designing policies to expand ECEC services. The project will also have a significant societal impact by ensuring that ECEC services are available where they are most needed, fostering a more equitable society and supporting women's participation in the labour market. Additionally, #GROW will invest in training young researchers, equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute to future policy development and research in this field.

How?

#GROW will be executed through a series of work packages (WPs) that include:

1. **Systematic Literature Review (WP1)**: Conduct a comprehensive review of existing research on the impact of ECEC on women's employment and children's cognitive development.

2. **Bayesian Statistical Models (WP2)**: Develop and apply Bayesian regression models to analyse the spatial distribution of ECEC services and their impact on women's labour market participation.

3. **Case Studies (WP3)**: Conduct in-depth case studies of Milan and Barcelona to compare different ECEC management models and their effectiveness.

4. **Policy Recommendations (WP4)**: Integrate findings from the previous WPs to develop clear and actionable policy recommendations.

5. **Project Management and Coordination (WP5)**: Ensure smooth project management, coordination, and self-evaluation.

6. **Communication and Dissemination (WP6)**: Develop a communication strategy to disseminate the project's findings to stakeholders, policymakers, and the general public.

When?

The project is scheduled to run for 36 months, starting from September 2025.