

Scirocco - Latest News from Italy

30.09.2026: Italys Placementsystem for unaccompanied minors violates ECHR

On September 3rd, Italy was yet again [convicted](#) by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) for depriving a minor of his liberty. The 15-year-old boy from Côte d'Ivoire arrived in Italy on August 3rd 2023. There he was put in the Extraordinary Reception Centre in Southern Italy, where he was officially recognized as a minor. However, from October 6th to December 22nd, he was detained at the reception center in Restinco for over two months without being able to leave the center. Although the center had been converted for minors, it seemed like a prison for the minors there. The ECtHR considered this to be [arbitrary deprivation of liberty](#). In addition, the 15-year-old had neither access to legal support nor was he informed about his rights. Italy was therefore convicted of violating Article 5 §§ 1, 2, 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

This is not an isolated case. In recent years, there have been repeated similar judgments against Italy. Just a few months earlier, in April 2026, Italy was convicted in a [similar case](#). A 17-year-old from Burkina Faso who was detained in a reception center in Southern Italy for 5 months, also without being able to leave the premises. In 2023, the [ECtHR](#) found Italy guilty in a case involving 13 minor refugees, of violating the Article 5 of the ECHR. The recurrent convictions suggest the deprivation of liberty of minors is not an isolated case but a structural problem.

Therefore, it is important to understand [the integration system of unaccompanied minors in Italy](#). According to the organization "Save the Children", the Italian system is formally one of the best in Europe. Once unaccompanied minors have arrived in Italy, they should be taken to a special reception centre for minors and provided with a legal guardian within 48 hours. In May 2026, the length of stay in the initial reception center, according to "Save the Children", was between 45-150 days. Afterwards, the minors are to be put into an integration and socialization system, where they will be supported until the age of 18. However, there are serious problems in the real implementation of the system. "Save the children" is heavily criticizing it. Not only are the current cases before the ECtHR unacceptable, but in addition, minors far too often spend significantly longer in the initial reception centers than originally planned. Furthermore, the centers are often overcrowded, with precarious conditions, which is particularly unacceptable for children. The legal guardianship is often provided to persons who are neither trained nor qualified to do so, such as the head of the reception center or the mayor of the place of arrival. Integration is also functioning inadequately. Support ends on the 18th birthday. If no permanent job, education or foster family can be shown by then, the person who has only just reached adulthood risks losing his or her residence permit. Many minors therefore often leave the integration system voluntarily before they reach the age of majority, which leads to them being victim of exploitation and violence.

This verdict of the ECtHR is not an isolated case. The Italian reception system for unaccompanied minors has serious problems. It is only to be hoped that such court decisions will be used as a precedent in the future to force Italy to improve the situation.

