

ASA

ASSOCIAZIONE SOLIDARIETÀ ADOZIONI

O N L U S



STATISTICAL REPORT 2021

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Being a child means... by Maria Virgillito

Also this year, ASA publishes the data of the international adoption procedures carried out by the Body in reference to 2021: a year still characterized by its distinctive trait, dictated by the pandemic situation, still ongoing.

Despite the difficulties, ASA was able to give 34 children a family. A result that gives us joy and makes us aware of the excellent teamwork done, in constant collaboration with the Commission for Intercountry Adoption.

To date, since 2001, 1167 smiles have been given to the children we have met, as many as the stories we have told, welcoming life from all over the world. Taking care of children means, for us, taking care of their future, ensuring a family and the warmth of a hug.

As an association that protects, defends and promotes the rights of children, we are committed to supporting the growth of all those children and young people who, today, live with many difficulties.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20, 1989, and ratified by Italy on May 27, 1991 with Law No. 176) was the first tool of protection to highlight the rights of a civil, political, social and economic nature that must be recognized to every child in order to ensure a harmonious growth in a climate of respect and love.

*Fifty-four are the articles focusing on the fundamental principles of the protection of the rights of children and adolescents, and four are the **core principles** of the Convention.*

Being a child means not to be subject to any form of discrimination, ensuring that the rights set forth in the Convention are guaranteed to all children, without any distinction of race, language, religion, sex and opinion of the child or adolescent, or their parents (art.2).

Being a child means that the child 's interests must be absolute priority in all decisions within the competence of public and private institutions (art.3).

Being a child means to have the right to life, survival and development, and every State must commit itself to ensure a harmonious development, also implementing policies of cooperation with other States (art.6).

Being a child means to be listened to, to feel that one's opinions are taken into account in situations that affect them personally (art.12).

Protection of the best interests of the child, right to life and physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Moreover, the child's right to participate and being listened to, freedom of expression and thought, protection from exploitation and discrimination.

Supporting children and adolescents means also, and above all, **supporting families** with adequate **welfare policies**, to ensure the growth of their children.

However, due in part to the pandemic, we are now witnessing a substantial increase in child and educational poverty, which is precisely why serious investment is needed in services for young people and families.

There is a lot to do to really see the core principles of the Constitution implemented and we, as an Association operating at the national and international level, also through the Proximity and Distance Support Programs and cooperation projects, will always continue to work ensuring what is fundamental and necessary to protect any child.

ASA Onlus President

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Maria Vigillito". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'o'.

The right to happiness of all children in the world *by Fulvio Giardina*

We also spent this second Christmas under the heavy atmosphere of concern for our health and that of our loved ones due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We sincerely hope it's the last one. We hope to be able to live as soon as possible, and safely, our daily routines, our relationships, our spaces of affection.

Certainly, the world scientific community deserves a big thank: in a few months, close to a true miracle of science, it has achieved real and concrete protection for our health with vaccines.

However, it comes to mind that this undoubted success of science, this protection, these vaccines, are mainly aimed at securing those few rich countries, compared to the vast majority of the world's population.

It is a half-hearted miracle until it is possible to guarantee a decent state of health for everyone, and especially the weakest and most fragile ones (children and the elderly).

In Italy the infant mortality rate under the first year of life is equal to 4 out of 1000 births, in Madagascar it is 50 out of 1000 births, in Nigeria it is 74 out of 1000 births, in Somalia and Afghanistan it is over 100 out of 1000 births: that is, one child out of 10 dies within the first year!

We cannot, we must not ignore, or pretend not to know, that real suffering grips millions, billions of people and that children, primarily, are more exposed than others to lack of joy, interest, happiness in their lives.

In our country, 9 out of 1000 children are taken care of by social services (11 out of 1000 in the North, 9 out of 1000 in the Centre, 5 out of 1000 in the South); 40.7% suffer from pathologies of care (neglect, etc.), 32.4% from witnessing violence, 14.1% from psychological violence, 9.6% from physical abuse, 3.5% from sexual abuse (Authority Guarantor of Childhood and Adolescence, 31/12/2018).

We hope that governments finally address the problems globally, overcoming the prejudice of unnecessary geographical boundaries, now outdated since we can buy products online from all over the world.

ASA, as a body authorized by the Commission for Intercountry Adoptions, has always put before the physical and psychological well-being of every child, wherever in the world they were born, favouring, also through adoption, the construction of their future.

We hope that the reform of the justice system, thanks to the significant European funding with the PNRR (National Recovery and Resilience Plan), will put the individual at the centre of the adoption procedure, especially when it comes to children, with their stories and lives, facilitating, rather than complicating, the procedure more than necessary, especially by overcoming the rigid territorial vision with which today each Juvenile Court intervenes in the evaluation of the couple available for adoption, completely ignoring the evaluation of the same couple by other courts.

"We can no longer wait for empty and useless talks, it's time to really listen to our voice, of those fighting for the future against those who try to take it away from us, to bring about an ecological shift, following the climate and social justice. Starting from schools, going through universities and

to research, it is necessary to invest in a radical change of system, because another world is not only possible but it is necessary and urgent” (Fridays for Future, Milan, 2021).

ASA Onlus' Psychology Service Supervisor

Former President of the Council of the National Association of Psychologists

Fulvio Gardino

1. Who are we?

ASA - Associazione Solidarietà Adozioni - Onlus has as its main purpose the pursuit of social solidarity, with particular reference to the protection of childhood and adolescence.

It was established on May 6, 1999, following a voluntary social commitment in favour of children in a state of distress both in Ukraine and Romania.

The Commission for Intercountry Adoption (CAI), on May 8, 2001, authorized ASA to operate as an agency for intercountry adoptions, in accordance with Law no. 476/98 (law ratifying the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation on Adoption of May 29, 1993).

The Association relies on the professionalism of psychologists, social workers, legal advisors, foreign contact people and other specialized operators present across all offices in Italy and abroad.

ASA is authorized to operate on the whole national territory with offices in Catania, Palermo, Roma, Forlì, Taranto, Milano, Reggio Calabria, Bolzano and Lucca.



According to Law n. 476/98, the Association is authorized to carry out practices related to international adoption in:

- **Europe** (Bulgaria, Moldova, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary);
- **Latin America** (Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Peru);
- **Asia** (Philippines, India);
- **Africa** (Benin).



2. Activities

2.1 International adoptions

ASA deals with the training of couples who are approaching adoption through thematic meetings and workshops, which are important moments of analysis of the topics linked to adoptive parenting and the construction of family ties.

The Association organizes in presence and *on line* meetings, for groups and couples, led by psychologists, in which the typical themes of international adoption are addressed, such as: the reality of the child's country of origin, the management of the waiting period, the meeting with the child.

All the procedural aspects related to the adoption *process* are managed by communicating with CAI and the competent Italian and foreign authorities; post-adoption *reports* are drawn up by providing updates on, according to the requirements provided by each country, the adopted children's family, school and social integration.

In addition, a counselling service is guaranteed to contain any problems of the *post*-adoption phase, and moments of meetings and gatherings between families and children are organized.

ASA carries out information activities across the territory for those interested in adoption, providing guidance on procedures and services competent for the territory, through the support of information desks and the distribution of informative material.

The Association fulfils the regional protocols for collaboration between local services, authorized Bodies and the Juvenile Court, in the field of national and international adoption; maintains ongoing relations with CAI and participates in institutional coordination tables.

2.2 International adoptions

ASA develops international cooperation projects to improve the condition of children and adolescents in the world.

ASA is currently engaged in Bolivia with the project “STARTING FROM THE NEST: From Birth, Identity, Rights, and Opportunities”, aimed at safeguarding orphans, abandoned children or children coming from families and contexts of extreme vulnerability; with actions aimed at reception, health protection and education.

The project is carried out in collaboration with Amici dei Bambini, Amici Trentini, Associazione Ariete, Il Conventino, Istituto La Casa, Spai, financed with funds from the Commission for Intercountry Adoptions.

2.3 Awareness-raising and training activities

As part of the awareness raising and training activities, ASA participates in the “*Post-Adoption Regional Project*”, funded by Lazio Region, for the strengthening of *post*-adoption services.

Gil Adozioni ASL Roma 2, Authorized Bodies for Intercountry Adoption, among which ASA as a member of the scientific committee, and Lazio Region are members of it.

2.4 Support Programs

2.4.1 Distance Support Program (SaD)

With the Distance Support (SaD), also this year, ASA supported in the Philippines, in collaboration with the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Sacrament (AMSS), the children in Mindoro Island, particularly in the villages of Tilaga and Paluan. These are very poor villages, with frequent cases of violence, abuse and kidnapping due to political and financial reasons. The situation, already critical in its nature, was further aggravated by the pandemic.

Below is the letter sent by Sister Rosanna Favero and the AMSS sisters from the missions in the country.

We often ask "how are you doing?" It's a question we always ask with a certain amount of fear, since it's difficult to answer that it's going well right now, but it's also true that we do that carrying in our hearts the desire that everything goes on in the best way possible, soon coming to the end of this long pandemic. These two years will remain imprinted in our memory mainly for the Covid-19 pandemic that managed to cross every border and enter every reality silently, quietly and when we realized it, the virus was already the great enemy to defend against. So much suffering and loss it brought about! Yet, even in this time of great difficulty for all, the Lord has continued to sustain us through the generosity of so many people who have made the choice to remain in solidarity with those most in need.



Thanks to the contribution of Distance Support, we have continued to guarantee the children of 8 villages their daily lunch: sometimes it was eaten together at the canteen, other times it was delivered to their homes. The pandemic exacerbated the already poor health care, priority was given to Covid-19 patients and unfortunately this cost the lives of sick people who under normal circumstances could have been treated.

In addition to these difficulties, this year there was also no lack of typhoons which damaged the scarce crops.

This year our community and the Home for Girls in Need and Children, which we take care of, have experienced continuous flooding due to heavy rains, typhoons and the unevenness of the ground due to new construction in the neighbouring area. Of course, if the country had a water drainage and discharge system, this serious problem would not exist.

Local authorities have visited the area and noted the severity of the problem, however they have informed that they cannot take any action due to lack of funds, and priorities dictated by the pandemic. For five months the environment was flooded, the well water could not be used and it was not easy to manage the situation, especially when the rains were continuous. The girls were moved to the second floor; dysentery and skin allergies were common to almost all of them. We are now in the dry season and the soil has finally dried up, also due to the addition of a good amount of gravel and soil that has absorbed the water.



It has rained infrequently since November and, thanks to the addition of soil, the water has been fairly well absorbed. However, the problem still remains, and hopefully we can do something to solve it on a permanent basis. Drinking water was also lacking often, and it was impossible to use well water because it was polluted by stagnant water. However, during the rainy season flooding is normal, but this year it lasted for months and the consequences were disastrous. An attempt was made to reduce stagnant water through a

pump, but it did not help because of the continuous rains and the impossibility to find adequate means in Mindoro.

Ms. Rosanna Favero and AMSS sisters

2.4.2 Proximity Support Program (SaV)

ASA has been implementing for years a Proximity Support Program (SaV) aimed at safeguarding the rights of children on the Italian territory, through the realization of the fundraising campaign “Adopt a story”, whose proceeds are entirely donated to projects in favour of children, youth and families in difficult conditions.

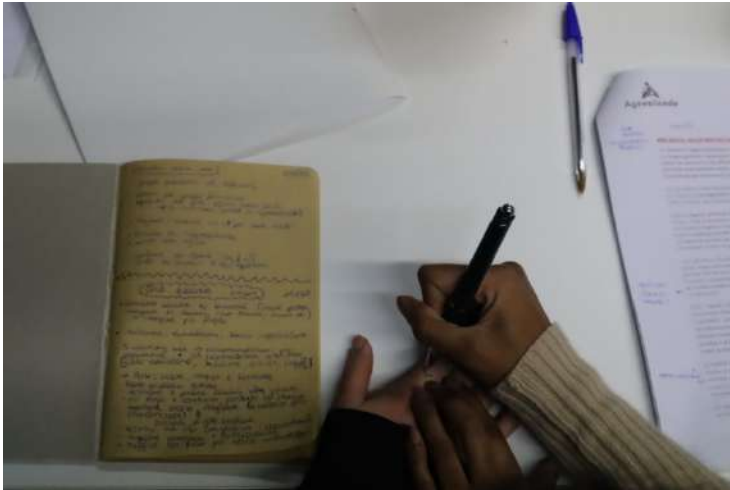
For the realization of the projects, the collaboration with other associations and parishes of the territory has been of fundamental importance.

Below is a contribution from Federico Zullo, President of Agevolando.

The collaboration between ASA and Agevolando, the Association of, and for, care leavers in Italy, both operating at the national level, was born and grew in Taranto in recent years, and has been possible due to shared purposes and approach that distinguishes the two realities. For 11 years, Agevolando has been committed to providing concrete help to care leavers - young people who have lived “outside the family” during childhood and adolescence, or who have experienced migration - but above all, to freeing them from the veil of invisibility. In the territories in which it operates, Agevolando establishes solid collaborative relationships with public and third sector entities involved in the social field. As part of ASA's SaV Program - Proximity Support Program, in 2019, through the creation of a calendar, a fundraiser was launched in favour of Agevolando, the Christmas “Adopt a Story” campaign. In Agevolando, such stories are evidence of resilience and generosity: for a care leaver, sharing his or her story means giving a future to other boys and girls, getting involved by creating virtuous circles. Adopting a story, even with a very small contribute within a Christmas fundraiser, means valuing resilience, and generating a virtuous circle. Promoting a campaign like “Adopt a Story” creates a bridge between those who live and write the story, and those who read and understand it.



Since December 2019, after a careful evaluation shared between the local offices of the two associations, the money raised during the campaign was allocated to a scholarship awarded in the fall of 2021 to Katia, a care leaver grown up in an educational community for children in the province of Bari, in Terlizzi, who is using it to support her university studies. For us, at Agevolando, being able to offer boys and girls who grew up “outside the family” the possibility of self-determination and choosing how to build their future is very important. Often, because of their difficult life stories or lack of support, they give up on enrolling in college and achieving their dreams. Being able to count on the help of realities such as ASA and the wonderful SaV program in carrying out projects like this, it really makes a difference, helping us to offer concrete support to deserving boys and girls with a great desire for redemption: we can't let, and don't want, them to feel alone anymore.



Moreover, we are convinced that networking with other realities is the best way to realize quality projects and have a real impact on the territory and the lives of boys and girls. In fact, the project has involved, in addition to ASA and Agevolando, the Zorba of Terlizzi cooperative, as well as social workers in the area. We believe that this is only the first step of a collaboration for the benefit of children that we would like to push forward to even greater results, and in this

context, the start of the fundraising campaign of ASA for Christmas 2021 epitomizes the sense of continuity that we hope to achieve for this important initiative.

Federico Zullo

2.5 Institutional Relations

ASA is member of:

- the Scientific Committee of the Commission for Intercountry Adoptions - Istituti degli Innocenti (former art. 15, Law n. 241/90), which deals with Distance Learning of operators
- LIAN - Life in Adoption Network, a partnership made up of 5 authorized Bodies for international adoption, aimed at starting a common path, sharing methodologies and competencies, to provide support to Italian couples who intend to adopt a child in another country
- CEA - Coordination of Authorized Agencies - a non-profit association, born on the initiative of some authorized Bodies, which promotes collaboration between all parties involved in the adoption process; Dr. Virgillito is the spokesperson.
- The Board of Directors of ForumSaD, the Permanent Forum for Distance Support, which deals with the promotion of SaD as tool of cooperation and solidarity among peoples
- the Regional Coordination for Childhood and Adolescence, in the Emilia Romagna Region, where a regional technical table on adoption has been set up
- the Council of Family Associations, at the Municipality of Forlì, which has advisory and representative functions, and participates in the development of municipal family policies, in close contact with the Administration

The Association has also entered into an agreement for Training and Guidance internship with the University of Catania (Centre for Training Guidance and Placement) and the University of Bari "Aldo Moro".

3. Presentation and analysis of couples and children's data related to 2021 adoption procedures

3.1 Introduction

In order to highlight the work of ASA, based on the human, scientific, legislative, and professional dimension, it is hereby presented, with specific graphs, and analysed, the data of couples and children across the adoption procedures, related to 2021.

Relevant aspects are covered, and for each one some points of particular importance are more deeply examined.

Couples who conferred the assignment in 2021: number of conferrals of assignment, conferrals by location, years of birth, educational qualification, profession, country choice.

Family-children matching: number of matches, matches per country.

Mandate revocations: number of mandate revocations, reasons for mandate revocation.

Children adopted in 2021: number of children, children by location, age, gender, number of children adopted per couple, country of origin.

Couples who adopted in 2021: number of couples who adopted, couples who adopted by location, years of birth of couples, countries of origin of children by couple.

This work also provides a meta-reflection on all the phases related to the adoption procedures carried out.

The 2021 pandemic also had an impact, but the entire *staff* of ASA was able to find optimal solutions that largely overcame the obstacles posed by the ongoing emergency situation.

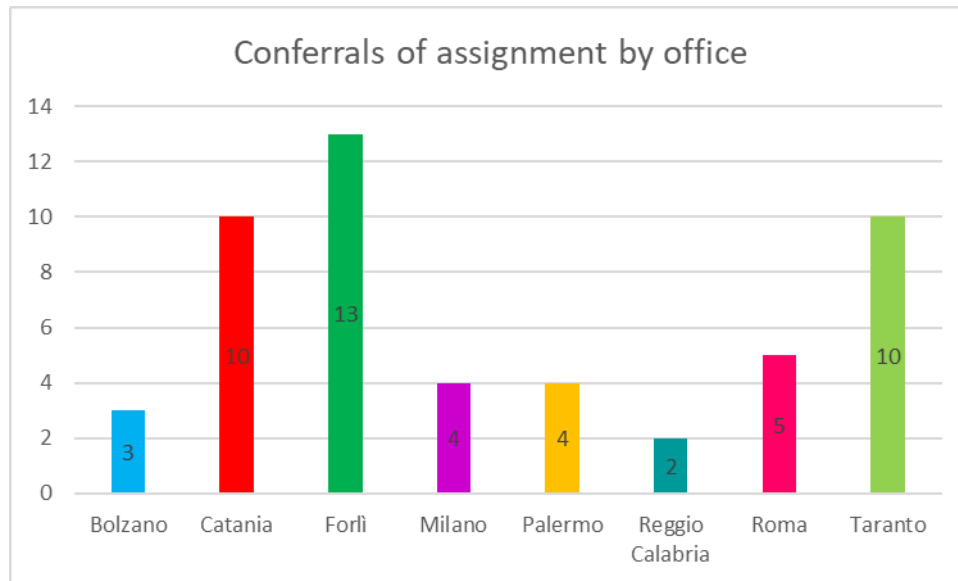
Determining were: the skills, the culture, the scientifically based action, the relevant attention to the specific dimensions of the person, the care for communication and relationship, the productive local, national and international relationships, the consistency, the cohesion, the sharing, the co-responsibility, the synergy, the cooperation, the deontology, the careful planning, the accurate implementation, the targeted monitoring and evaluation actions, the fundamental meta-reflection.

3.2 Couples who have conferred the assignment in 2021

3.2.1 Number of conferrals of assignment

51 couples have conferred the assignment on ASA.

3.2.2 Conferrals of assignment by office

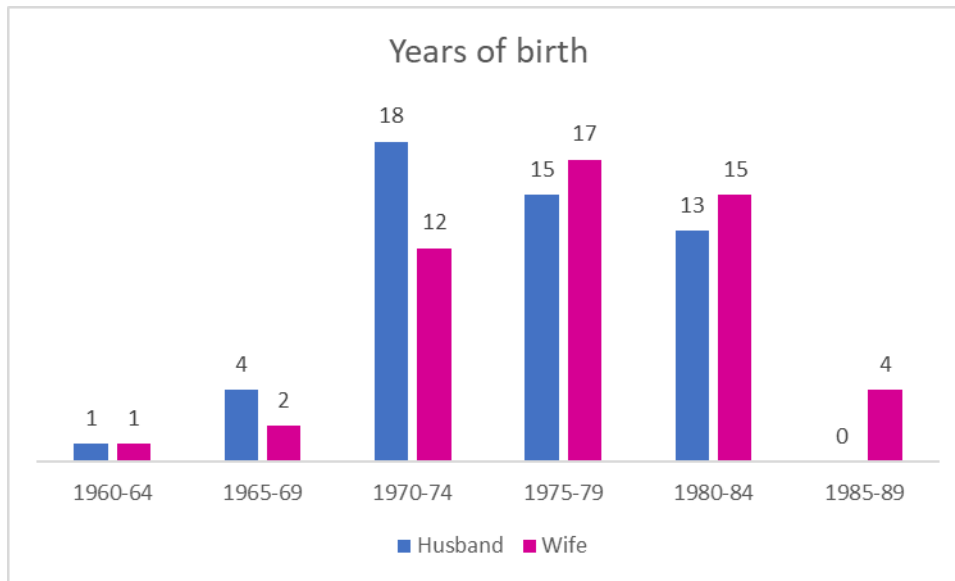


Graph 1

The office that has registered the highest number of assignments is Forlì with 13, followed by Catania and Taranto with 10.

Roma has registered 5 assignments, Milano and Palermo 4, Bolzano 3 and, finally, Reggio Calabria 2.

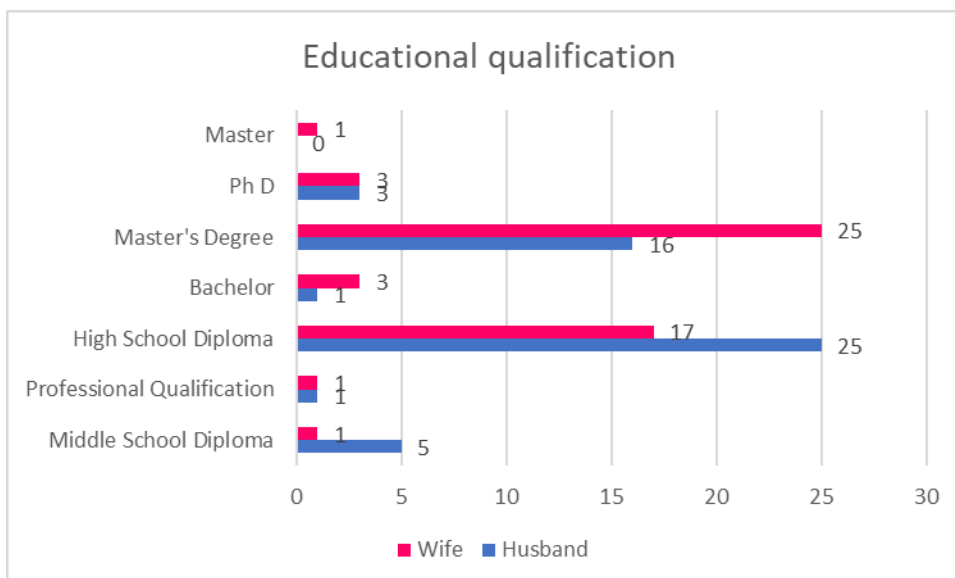
3.2.3 Years of birth



Graph 2

For both husbands and wives, the most represented birth year ranges are 1970-74, 1975-79, and 1980-84.

3.2.4 Educational qualifications



Graph 3

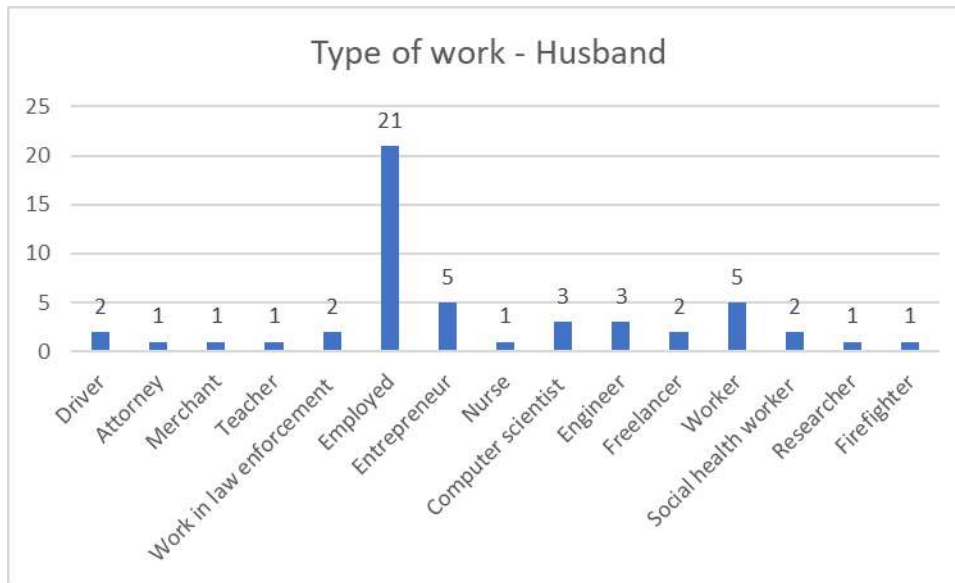
Data are drawn from the information provided by spouses.

Analysing the data concerning the wives, it is possible to see that master's degree (25) prevails over high school diploma (17).

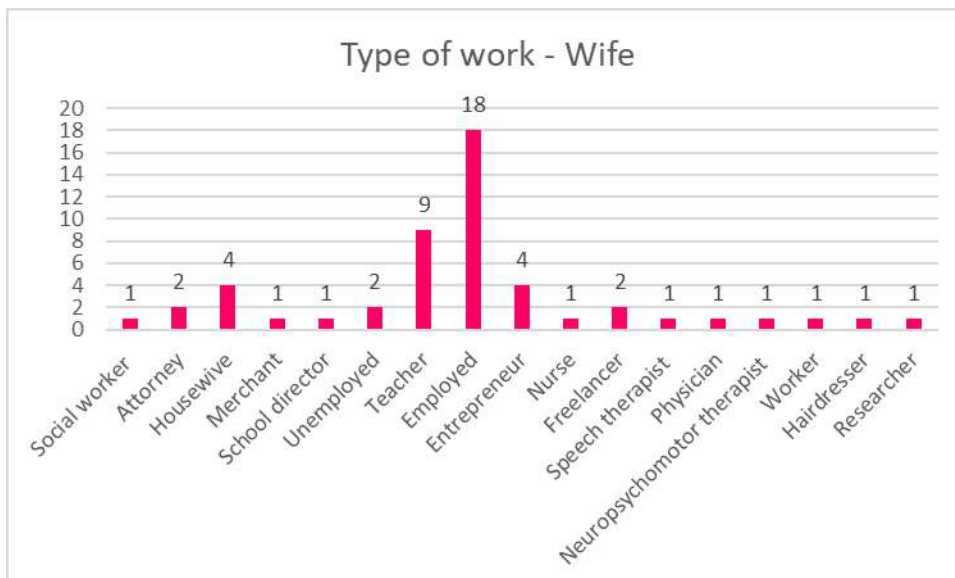
For husbands, on the other hand, the most represented qualification is high school diploma (25), followed by master's degree (16).

For both, at a considerable distance, other qualifications follow.

3.2.5 Type of work



Graph 4



Graph 5

Data are drawn from the information provided by spouses.

The analysis of the data shows that the majority of husbands and wives are respectively employed, (21) and (18).

The comparison of the data shows a significant difference for teachers, 9 wives and 1 husband.

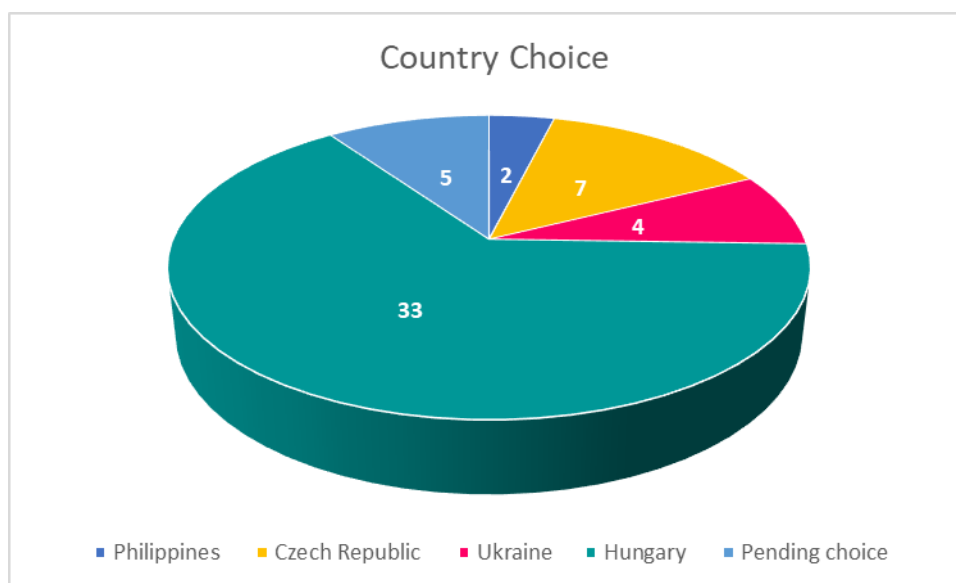
Also significant is the inequality as worker between women and men, 5 husbands and 1 wife.

A substantial balance can be noted with respect to respectively men/women attorney (1) (2) and entrepreneur (5)/(4).

The number is the same regarding respectively men/women merchant (1), nurse (1), freelancer (2), and researcher (1).

Only husbands are driver (2), computer scientist (3), engineer (3), social health worker (2), firefighter (1), and work in law enforcement (2); only wives are social worker (1), school director (1), speech therapist (1), physician (1), neuropsychomotor therapist (1), hairdresser (1), housewife (4), and unemployed (2).

3.2.6 Country Choice



Graph 6

As of December 31, 2021, out of 51 total couples who have conferred the assignment, 46 couples have chosen as Country:

- 33 Hungary
- 7 Czech Republic
- 4 Ukraine
- 2 Philippines

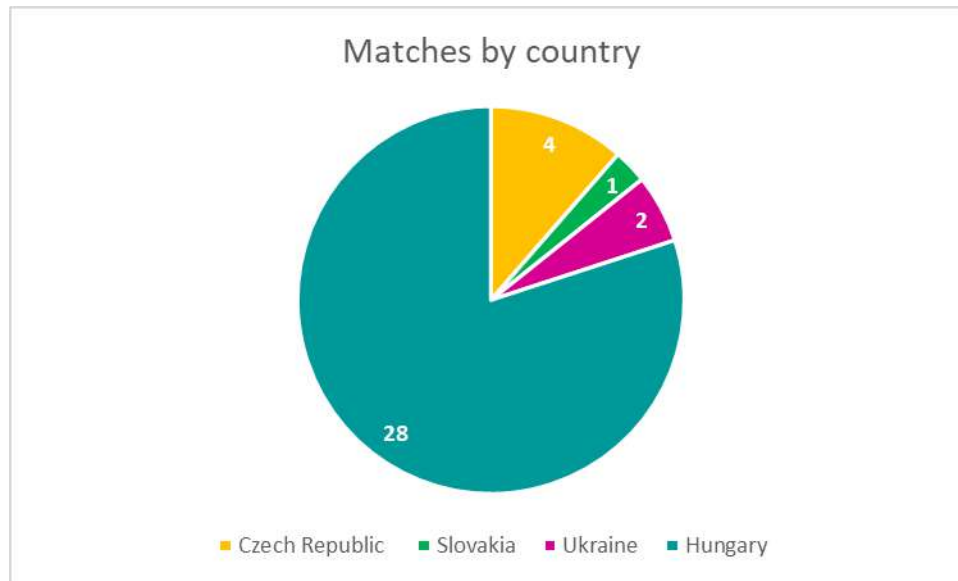
The other 5 couples have not decided yet which country to submit the procedure to.

3.3 Matches

3.3.1 Number of matches

A total of 35 family-children matches were recorded in 2021.

3.3.2 Matches by country



Graph 7

Out of the total 35 matches, 28 concern Hungary, 4 the Czech Republic, 2 Ukraine and 1 Slovakia.

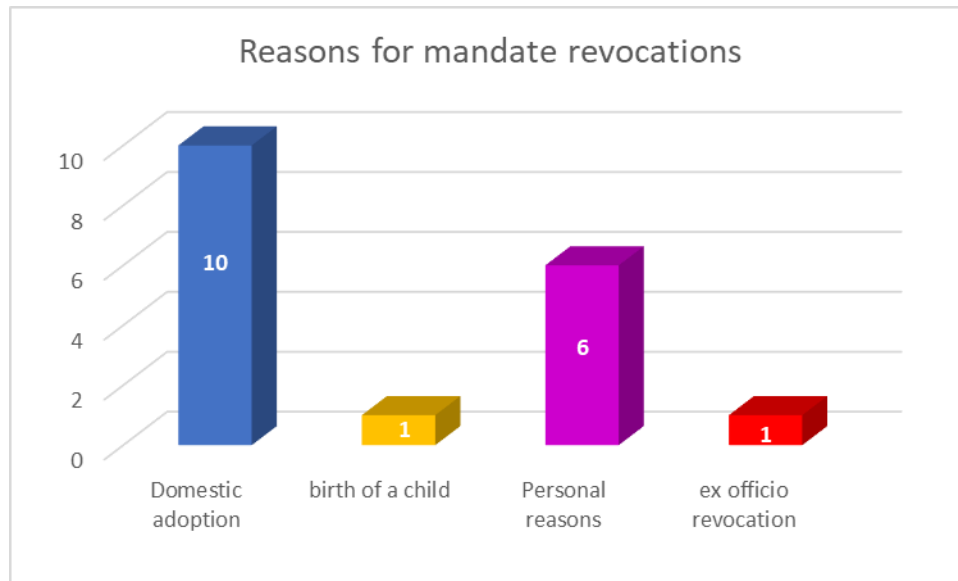
Two of these couples did not complete the procedure.

3.4 Revocation of the mandate

3.4.1 Number of mandate revocations

There were 18 revocations of the mandate.

3.4.2 Reasons for mandate revocations



Graph 8

Ten couples revoked the mandated for domestic adoption, 6 for personal reasons, and one for the birth of a child.

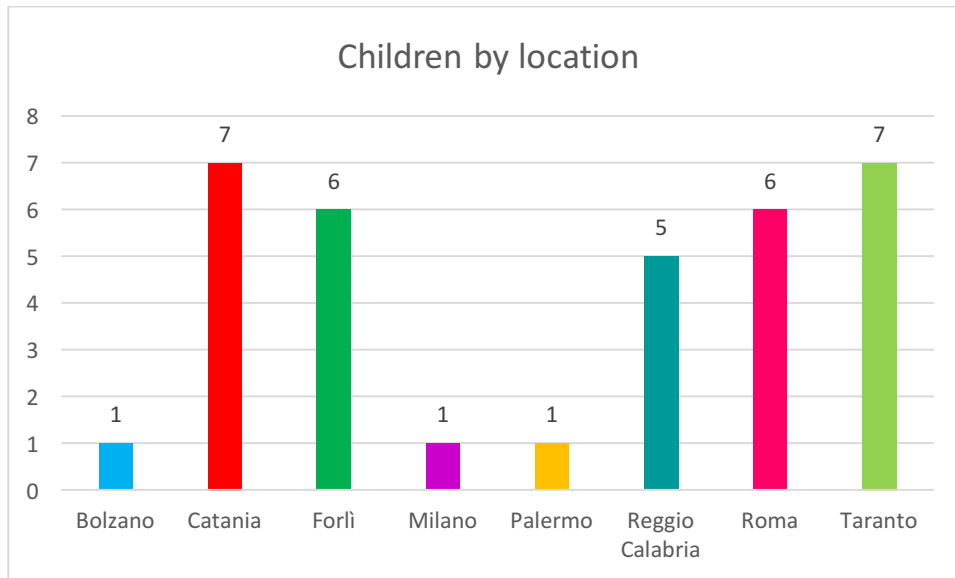
There was also an *ex officio* revocation from ASA.

3.5 Children adopted in 2021

3.5.1 Number of children

Authorizations to enter Italy were issued for 34 children.

3.5.2 Children by location

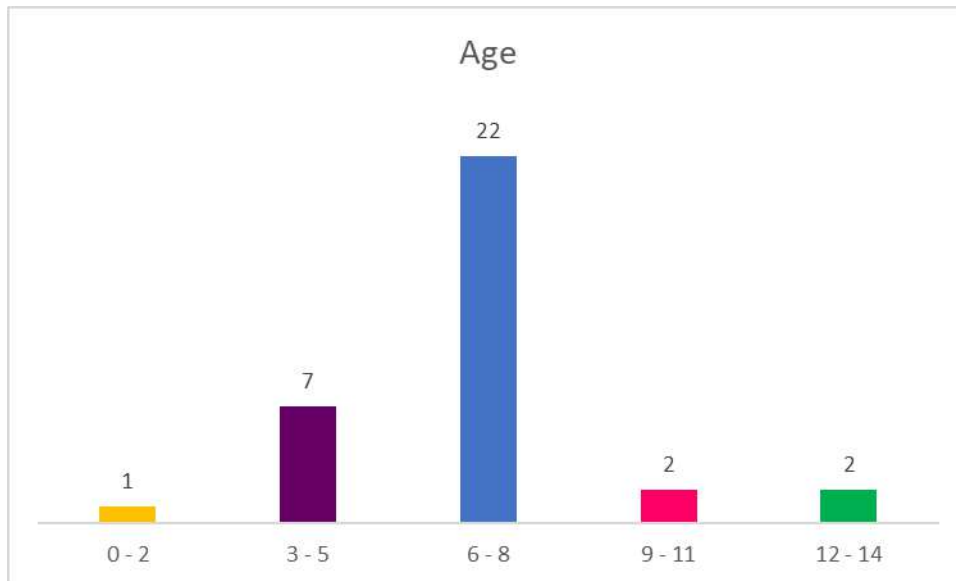


Graph 9

The breakdown by location of the 34 children is as follows:

- 7 in Catania and Taranto
- 6 in Forlì and Roma
- 5 in Reggio Calabria
- 1 in Bolzano, Milano and Palermo.

3.5.3 Age



Graph 10

The most represented age group is 6-8 years old with 22 children.

There are 7 pre-schoolers in the 3-5 year range and 1 in the 2 and younger range.

The 9-11 and 12-14 *ranges* both record 2 children.

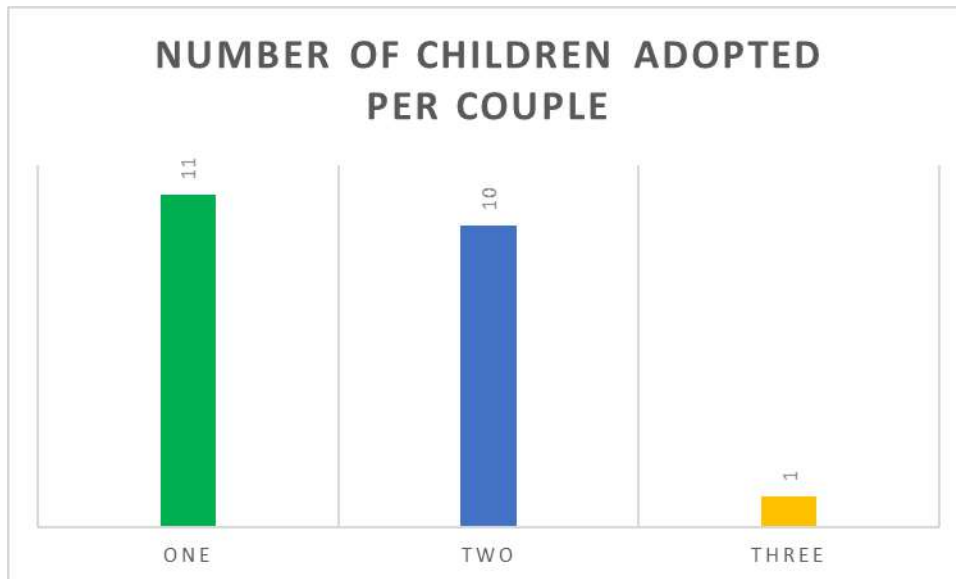
3.5.4 Gender



Graph 11

In 2021, 17 boys and 17 girls were adopted.

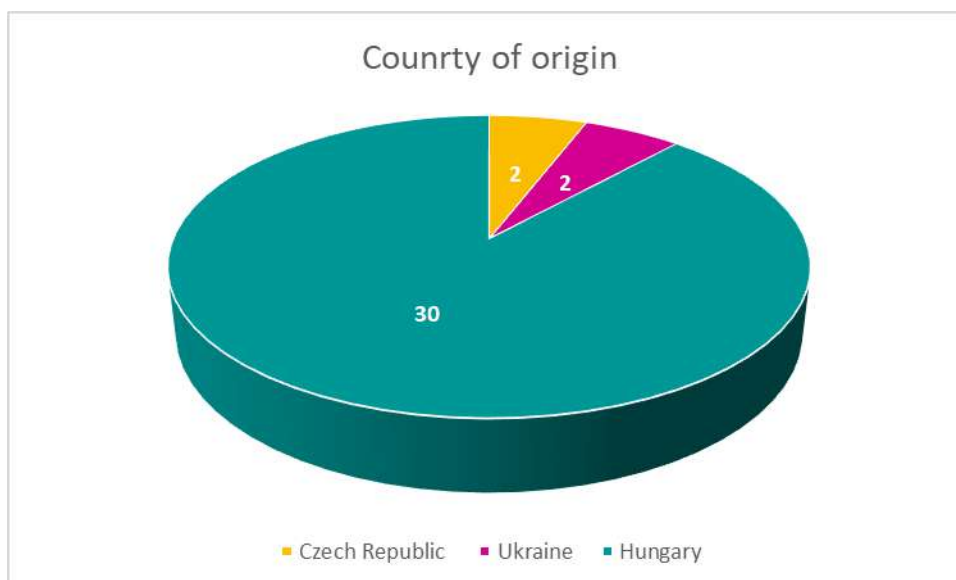
3.5.5 Number of children adopted per couple



Graph 12

11 couples adopted one child, while 10 couples adopted two children. One couple adopted three children.

3.5.6 Country of origin



Graph 13

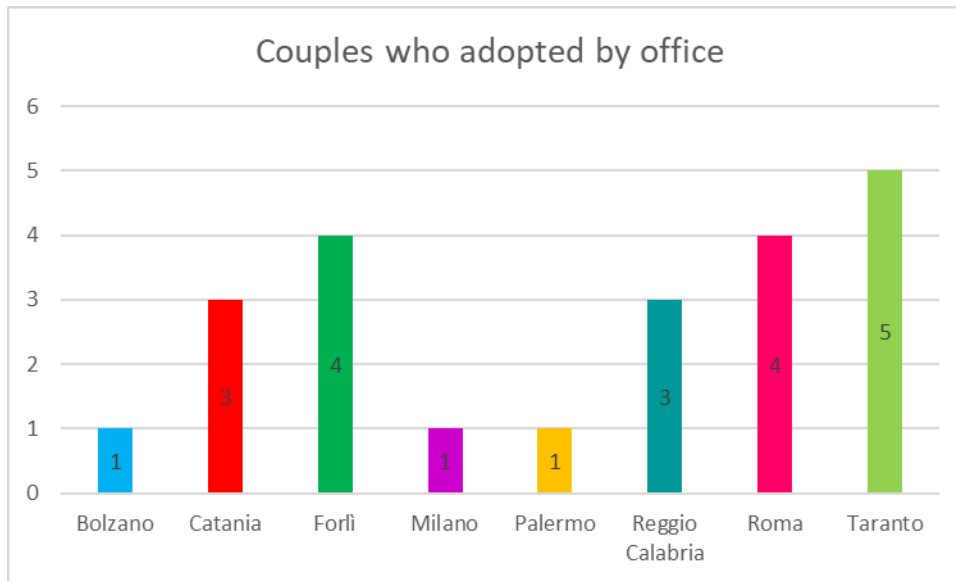
The most represented country is Hungary with 30 children. From the Czech Republic and Ukraine come, for both, 2 children.

3.6 Couples who adopted in 2021

3.6.1 Number of couples who adopted

Couples who adopted are 22.

3.6.2 Couples who adopted by office

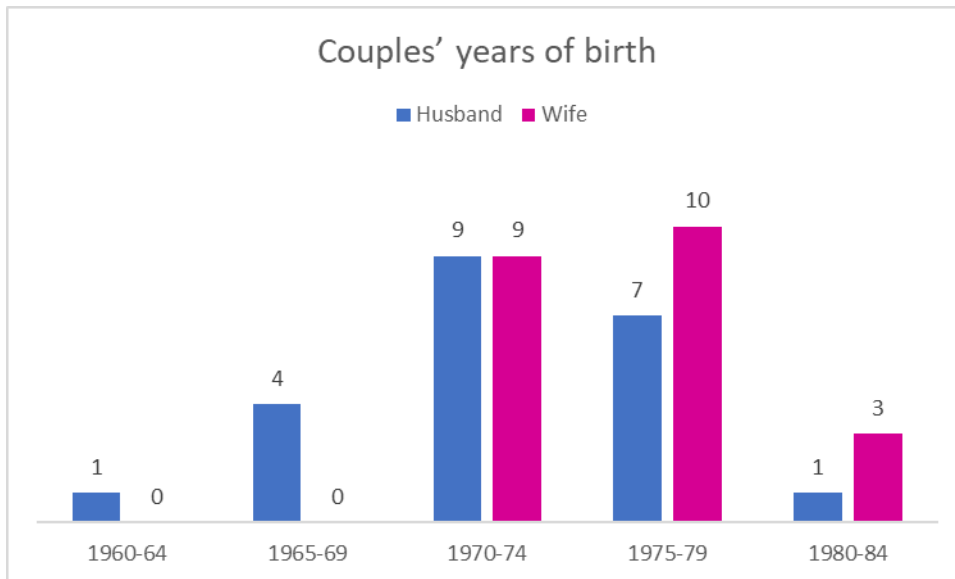


Graph 14

The breakdown by office of the 22 couples who adopted is as follows:

- 5 in Taranto
- 4 in Forlì and Roma
- 3 in Catania and Reggio Calabria
- 1 in Bolzano, Milano and Palermo

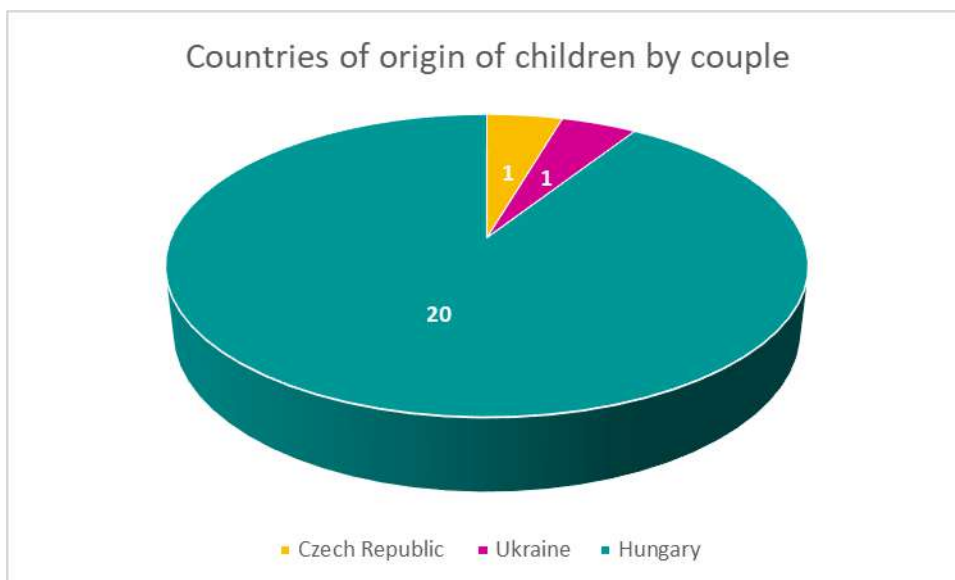
3.6.3 Couples' years of birth



Graph 15

For both husbands and wives, the most represented birth year ranges are 1975-79, and 1975-79.

3.6.4 Countries of origin of children by couple



Graph 16

20 couples in Hungary and 1 in the Czech Republic and Ukraine, respectively, have adopted.

4. Conclusions

ASA, through a constructive and proactive action, has achieved its goals of solidarity with different activities; in Italy with the Proximity Support, and abroad with the Distance Support in the Philippines, and participating in an international cooperation project in Bolivia.

The Association strongly believes in awareness-raising and training activities, and has taken part in specific initiatives in Italy.

Thanks to institutional relations and the collaboration with other Authorized Bodies and Associations, it has established over the years a productive operational network, which carries out, in the perspective of cooperation, a significant service to implement the fundamental objectives of social solidarity, and for the full realization of the rights of children and adolescents, affirming the founding principles of the human dimension. It has always operated according to cultural and scientific standards, and following the principles of the Constitution, specific legislation, and international agreements.

Looking at the data, it is possible to state that the pandemic, even in 2021, has not affected the conferral of assignments, thanks to the professionalism, commitment and dedication that distinguish all ASA's *staff*, and the level of the establishment in the territory of the Association.

The number of entry authorizations demonstrates how our contacts and operators have consolidated the already excellent relations with the institutions of the countries in which we operate.

During the pandemic, ASA strengthened its support for couples and families in Italy and abroad.

Couples and families were guaranteed constant psychological support also through the use of *online* platforms. All meetings have been scheduled and the *staff* has ensured its maximum availability.

During all phases of the adoption process, the Association's professionals provided constant advice.

Abroad, the Association has been continuously engaged in dialogue with Italian Embassies of the countries in which it operates, adjusting the *pre-departure procedure*, the *in loco* stay and the post-adoption processes to the regulations in force.

In 2021 there were 51 appointments and 34 adoptions.

The most represented age groups for couples who adopted are 1970-74 and 1975-79; for couples who conferred the assignment in 2021, the 1980-84 range is at the third place.

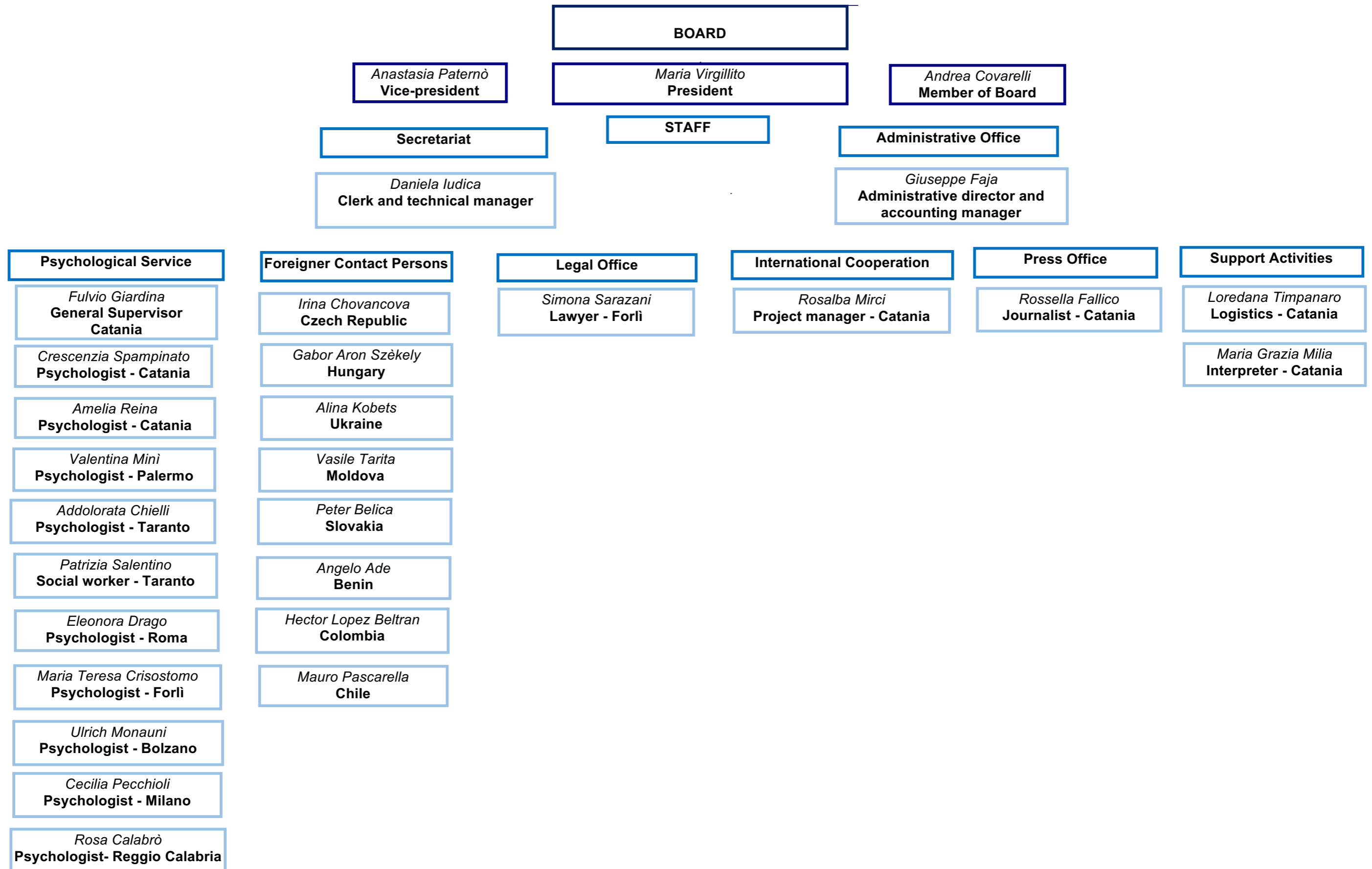
For the majority of couples who have conferred the assignment in 2021:

- the level of the qualification is high and medium-high, master's degree and secondary school diploma;
- the profession is that of a clerk.

With respect to the age of the children, the most represented age group is 6-8 years old.

From the analysis of the data it is possible to see, therefore, a fruitful work carried out by ASA's *staff*, with targeted interventions culturally and scientifically based on the enhancement of personal and community dimensions, on the affirmation of life as a relationship of love, respect and gift.

ASA Onlus Organizational Chart





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