



150TH
ANNIVERSARY

From Caring Places to Caring Societies

1875 - 2025

Celebrations for the Closing of the Grated Window

Days of Dialogue and Reflection

Istituto degli Innocenti
30 June - 1 July 2025

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"Celebration of Historical
Personalities of Tuscany"



REGIONE TOSCANA
Consiglio Regionale



30 June 2025

150th Anniversary of the Closing of the Grated Window

The old Ospedale degli Innocenti was founded over six centuries ago as a place for the youngest children: an investment by the Florentine community to guarantee a future for the many children without family care.

This vocation of caring for the rights of the first, fundamental age of humanity, which originated in the Renaissance period and found its “home” in Brunelleschi’s splendid and innovative architecture, has been cultivated with exceptional continuity to the present day.

Adjusting its activities and services over time to align with changing cultures and needs, what is now the Istituto degli Innocenti has always worked to concretely implement and promote the rights of children and adolescents. Today, this mission takes shape in a dynamic and lived reality, one with a complex identity that finds unity through the virtuous interaction of care, education, knowledge, and cultural promotion.

In **2025** we celebrate an important anniversary: **150 years since the closing of the grated window, what can be considered the “wheel” of the Innocenti’s waifs**, i.e., the physical place, looking out towards the city under the splendid Brunelleschi loggia, where, from its origins until 30 June 1875, children were left with the Institute by those who could not take care of them. A symbolic and concrete date that marks the transition to more dignified and modern forms of “fostering” children in the community.

The Institute intends to celebrate this significant moment in its history with an organic and participatory reflection on the cultural and social changes that have marked the transition from “caring places” to “caring societies”, highlighting the community’s long path of commitment and assumption of responsibility towards all its members, including the youngest ones. And not only from a perspective of protection and reparation but, increasingly, with changing awareness in terms of social, prevention and promotional attitudes to ensure suitable conditions of inclusion, well-being or welfare and equal opportunities for all children.

From **Caring Places to Caring Societies (30 June - 1 July 2025)** is an initiative of international significance with which the Istituto degli Innocenti intends to retrace the main historical stages that have led to the current care policies. At the same time, the Institute wants to start a reflection on the future and the challenges that await societies in the broad and increasingly complex task of supporting the welfare of new generations in a universal perspective.

We will do so through the contributions of experts, a comparison between Italian and foreign experiences, listening to the young people, in what we wish to define as **Caring Days**. These days will shine a spotlight on the value of caring and taking charge of others responsibly, its implications and possible applications.

How has the reception system changed over time? What significance and values has it acquired in this new century and in which direction is it evolving?

In today’s ever-changing and increasingly unpredictable social scenario, what should the new generations expect and what would they like in the near future? What commitments are societies called upon to make in order to fully guarantee their rights? What role can young people themselves take on?



Historical Background

The Istituto degli Innocenti was founded in the 15th century to care for abandoned children. In 1445, its reception activities began. The physical place where the children were left was initially a basin, placed under the outside loggia, later replaced by a grated window. The latter was closed on 30 June 1875, when a delivery office was established, changing the rules of reception at the Institute forever.

The delivery office helped to curb the abandonment of children, a crime for the young Italian state. It also gave priority to illegitimate children or those who had no one to take care of them. In the 20th century, the Institute developed maternity support activities to prevent abandonment.

The social and legal transformations that revolutionised Italy from the 1970s onwards also affected the functions of the Institute. The number of abandoned children decreased, as did the number of mothers being cared for. The Institute's role shifted from assistance to the promotion of initiatives to improve the living conditions of children and adolescents and the development of educational and universal services.

The Institute opened up to new local actors, and started collaborating with the City of Florence, the Tuscany Region, the national government, international institutions, and organisations and associations supporting children, young people and families. In 2004 the Institute was transformed into a public sector company providing care services.

The protection and promotion of the rights of new generations are the guiding light of all the activities that the Institute currently carries out, in compliance with the principles of the 1989 UN Convention. The Institute no longer does this just through reception centres, but with a broad and complex system of opportunities that intertwines services in the educational and cultural fields, still directly aimed at children and families, with documentation, research, study and training activities on the phenomena concerning new generations, to support those involved in the planning and implementation