Supporting Associazione Pianoterra's Lo Spazio: a community hub for early childhood and families in Naples

Grantee: Associazione Pianoterra ETS
Location: Italy, Europe
Grant Cycle: 2026 - 2029
Type of Grant: three-years program support, Human Welfare & Rights
Website: wisedana.org

Associazione Pianoterra is an Italian non-profit organisation founded in Naples in 2008 to support families and promote the wellbeing of children from pregnancy through early childhood. Its work combines educational activities, family support, and community-based services to advance equal opportunities and social inclusion, with particular attention to families experiencing social and economic vulnerability.

Over the years, Associazione Pianoterra has expanded its activities across several locations, including Naples, Rome, and Castel Volturno, developing a wide range of programmes that have reached more than 10,000 children and 12,000 adults. Working closely with public institutions, healthcare services, and civil society organisations, it has developed an integrated approach to supporting children and families during some of the most formative years of life.

In line with its commitment to child wellbeing and social inclusion, the Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation (NaEPF) has maintained a strategic partnership with Associazione Pianoterra since 2015. Over more than a decade, the collaboration has evolved in response to changing needs: from maternal and infant support through "1000 Days", to integrated community-based services through the "NEST" project, and targeted child protection interventions through "Inviolabili". This continuous support has contributed both to the development of Associazione Pianoterra's programmes and to its capacity to provide accessible early childhood services in urban areas affected by poverty and social fragmentation.

In 2026, the NaEPF renewed its support through the launch of "Lo Spazio", a new community hub in the historic centre of Naples dedicated to children aged 0–6 and their families. The initiative represents a further step in the partnership, moving beyond time-limited interventions towards the creation of a permanent space bringing together early childhood education, parenting support, and community participation.

Lo Spazio will be housed in a 900-square-metre building on the site of a former historic textile company, owned and recently restored by project partner Fondazione Beta. Environmental sustainability was central to the renovation, which incorporated eco-friendly materials, energy-efficient systems, and furnishings designed to encourage more sustainable everyday behaviours.

The historic centre of Naples, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of Europe's most densely populated urban areas, currently undergoing significant social transformation. Traditionally characterised by strong neighbourhood ties and informal networks of mutual support, the area is being reshaped by increasing tourism and the rapid growth of short-term rentals, which are reducing the presence of resident families and placing pressure on established community connections. At the same time, access to early childhood education remains limited: across Campania, available childcare places

cover only 13.2% of children aged 0–2, leaving many families without adequate services during an important stage of their children's development.

These challenges are particularly significant for families experiencing poverty, insecure living conditions, migration, social isolation, or limited support networks. In such circumstances, reduced access to educational opportunities can intersect with broader economic and social vulnerability, affecting both children's development and parents' wellbeing. Lo Spazio responds by creating an accessible environment where education, relationships, and family support can come together.

With NaEPF's support, children will have access to a daily educational programme for ages 18–36 months, creative and play-based workshops for children aged 0–6, parent-child activities, outdoor and cultural experiences, and inclusive activities for children with additional educational needs. Together, these opportunities are designed to support learning, creativity, social relationships, and cognitive and emotional development from the earliest years of life. Alongside its work with children, Lo Spazio will accompany parents and caregivers from pregnancy through early childhood. Parenting programmes, peer-support groups, individual counselling, and guidance will help families strengthen their confidence, reduce isolation, and connect with services and resources available within the community. Cultural mediation will further facilitate access for families with migrant backgrounds.

The project will also extend beyond individual children and families. Through cultural events, workshops, seminars, exhibitions, and community initiatives, Lo Spazio will bring together residents, schools, local organisations, and public services. In this way, the hub is conceived not only as a place where services are provided, but as a shared meeting point capable of strengthening neighbourhood connections and encouraging collective responsibility for children's wellbeing.

Over three years, 600 children aged 0–6 and 600 parents and caregivers are expected to benefit directly from the project, with priority given to families experiencing socio-economic vulnerability, single-parent households, women who have experienced violence, families with migrant backgrounds, and those with limited support networks. The wider community will also be engaged through cultural and public activities.

At the heart of Lo Spazio is a simple idea: a city that cares for its youngest children is a city that cares for its future. By creating opportunities for children, supporting families, and rebuilding connections within the community, the project seeks to strengthen the historic centre of Naples as a place where families can not only live, but also belong, grow, and build their future.