From the 'White Paper' of the Tuscany Region to Replicable Best Practices in the Reception of Persons in Need of International Protection

edited by Ivana Acocella, Giorgia Bulli

Sociologia

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Introduction

by *Ivana Acocella* and *Giorgia Bulli*[*]

The *White Paper on Reception Policies for Asylum Seekers and International or Humanitarian Protection Holders*[1] is a key strategic document developed within the #Accoglienza Toscana project[2]. Launched in 2017 by the Regione Toscana in collaboration with ANCI Toscana[3], this participatory project brought together the main reception organisations in Tuscany, alongside institutions and academics. The goal was to map local experiences in the reception and integration of migrants and to facilitate a discussion among stakeholders.

The "White Paper" consolidates principles, guidelines and best practices, providing a fundamental framework to improve reception services and integration policies for migrant citizens, with particular attention to asylum seekers and refugees. These guidelines have become a crucial reference for designing effective regional responses for migrants' integration. According to the Tuscany regional administration, the "White Paper" represented a critical step in planning integration processes that transcend emergency responses, aiming to strengthen social cohesion. Based on the principles and recommendations of the "White Paper", the Tuscany Region aimed to promote a regional governance model capable of addressing the reception, protection and integration needs of third-country nationals, refugees, women and children, and victims of trafficking, aligning with local welfare policies through an integrated local services system.

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[*] University of Florence.

[1] Original Italian title: *Libro Bianco sulle politiche di accoglienza di richiedenti asilo politico e protezione internazionale.*

The English version of the "White Paper" can be downloaded here: https://accoglienza.toscana.it/-/english-version-of-the-white-paper-on-reception-policies-is-now-published.

[2] #Accoglienzatoscana, accessed 21 August 2024, https://accoglienza.toscana.it/.

[3] ANCI is the National Association of Italian Municipalities.

The European project "Global Social Work and Human Mobility: Comparative Studies on Local Government and Good Social Work Practices in the Euro-Mediterranean Region" (Global-ANSWER)[4] has recognized the identification of good practices as a priority objective. The Global-ANSWER project promotes the exchange of knowledge, transfer of expertise and dissemination of good practices in social work and human mobility in Europe. Consequently, Global-ANSWER identified the "White Paper" as a useful model for mapping good practices in reception and integration projects in Tuscany. With its emphasis on prioritizing integration dimensions and involving local stakeholders, the "White Paper" model is well-suited for use within the framework of an international project focused on identifying and analysing social protection models for immigrants in a vulnerable condition.

In this context, the present report *From the "White Paper" of the Tuscany region to replicable best practices in the reception of persons in need of international protection* was developed. The report adopts the framework of the "White Paper" to identify initiatives promoted at the regional level for the reception and integration of migrants. The report's ultimate goal is to identify good practices, analyse the context of their application, describe their nature, and assess their potential for replication in other contexts.

The report is divided into two sections. The first section provides an overview of the evolution of reception measures for asylum seekers and refugees in Italy, then focuses on the Tuscan context, highlighting the governance of migrant integration policies at the regional level, within which the recommendations of the "White Paper" were formulated. The second section of the report analyses projects promoted at the regional level that adhere to the principles and guidelines of the "White Paper". In addition to proposing an overall design for the reception model, the "White Paper" also addresses specific dimensions of the migrants' integration process. Based on these premises, the report reviews the main dimensions of reception and integration identified in the "White Paper", such as language training, training work-supply chain, social and health needs, citizenship and community, while also addressing the equally central aspects of legal support and housing autonomy.

For each of these dimensions, the report identifies projects in line with the guidelines, orientations and recommendations of the "White Paper". The text does not claim to be exhaustive. Most of the projects included were discussed in collaboration with the Regione Toscana and the ANCI Toscana immigration office. In selecting the projects included in this report, priority

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[4] Global-ANSWER Project, accessed 10 July 2024, https://proyectos.ugr.es/global-answer/.

was given to the conceptual and methodological issues that the Global-AN-SWER project developed and used to identify actions that can be considered "Best Practices".[5]

The Global-ANSWER project adopted a definition of "good practice" in social work with migrants that includes four key dimensions: *coherence, awareness, reflexivity* and *sustainability*. The report specifically assessed and analysed projects whose actions met these criteria and the indicators outlined for their identification within the Global-ANSWER framework.

The projects included in the report are particularly valued for their *coherence*, as they align with and build upon the definition of social inclusion provided by the "White Paper". According to the 2017 text, interventions that promote social inclusion are those aimed at ensuring a cohesive society by maintaining continuity between policies, programs, and projects. To be considered relevant and necessary, social inclusion interventions must prioritize providing "community" solutions to address vulnerability, thereby fostering a civil society that avoids abandonment and marginalization. This objective should be pursued by supporting individuals, including foreigners, who are in vulnerable conditions or phases of helplessness. Rather than confining them to a disadvantaged condition, these interventions should enhance their skills and resources, enabling them to contribute to the growth of the entire community.

The actions identified as good practices also adhere to the criteria of *awareness* and *reflexivity*. During their implementation, these projects emphasised intervention methodologies that foster respect for human rights, taking into account the intersectionality of vulnerabilities within this population segment, including factors such as origin, gender, age, and social class. The selected projects prioritized enhancing the capacity of local services to effectively identify and address the needs of the foreign population in a flexible manner. They also promoted multi-professional and multidisciplinary approaches to ensure a holistic response.

Finally, the highlighted actions adhere to the criterion of *sustainability*. In line with the integrated governance model promoted in the "White Paper", the implementation of these actions emphasised the importance of synergistic relationships between public and private actors, the integration of funding sources, and the coordination of territorial efforts in planning interventions. This approach aims to ensure the adequacy of resources, avoid unnecessary

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[5] See "Guide on conceptual and methodological issues in social work research in the field of human mobility": https://proyectos.ugr.es/global-answer/sites/proy/global-answer/public/inline-files/Guide_Global_Answer_2023_0_1.pdf, (pp. 85-96).

duplication and overcome the compartmentalization and fragmentation of services.

The identification of criteria that define good practices is also valuable for an empirical reflection on the potential replicability of migrant integration measures and actions. Each intervention is designed and implemented within its specific context, and it rarely functions effectively when simply replicated in a different setting. However, adhering to the general principles that define a good practice in social work allows for the extraction of certain overarching dimensions that are useful for cross-cutting and comparative evaluation. Therefore, for each good practice identified and included in this report, an "Analytical Box" is presented in order to outline the main procedures for implementing social protection interventions for migrants.

The volume aims to reflect both theoretically and empirically on the methods of reception and integration for various categories of foreign citizens: asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, women and unaccompanied foreign minors, vulnerable individuals, or victims of exploitation. The study is therefore presented as a useful tool for a broad community of readers, including social workers, educators, policy evaluators and implementers, European Commission institutions, political stakeholders, students, the academic community, citizens with a migrant background, and anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding on the integration of migrants.

Reconstructing the actions and interventions related to the reception and integration of migrants in a region with a strong tradition of solidarity, such as Tuscany, is a challenging task. Mapping the numerous initiatives undertaken by each municipality, along with their programming and collaborations with the third sector, is further intensified by the difficulty of identifying the extensive network of efforts by volunteers and individual supporters. Against this complex backdrop, the report focuses on the institutional dimension, specifically examining the model established by the "White Paper".

Following the guidance provided by the 2017 document, the identification and analysis of the selected projects would not have been possible without the valuable collaboration of a broad network of institutional and third sector organisations. We extend our gratitude to the Department of Health, Welfare, and Social Cohesion of the Tuscany regional government, particularly to Stefano Ciuoffo (Councillor for Migration Policies), Riccardo Trallori (Head of the Secretariat Office) and Alessandro Salvi (Head of the Welfare and Social Innovation Sector). Special thanks are also due to the Immigration Office of ANCI Toscana, especially Giuditta Giunti, Giulia Boldrini

and Elisa Viti. We are also grateful to the individuals responsible for the SAI projects who were interviewed. Additionally, we would like to thank the organisations that contributed to this report, including the Centro di Salute Globale of the Regione Toscana, Azienda USL Toscana Centro, Oxfam Italia and Fondazione Caritas Firenze.

Section 1: Context Analysis

Immigration and asylum policies in Italy:
A focus on the Tuscan context

1. *Reception measures for asylum seekers and refugees in Italy: policies and evolutionary dynamics*

by *Ivana Acocella**

Introduction

The right to asylum is a "border right" (Sciurba 2017). Indeed, refugees are forced to cross borders to flee their own country and seek protection in another. Moreover, in order to be enjoyed, this right requires recognition by the State where asylum is sought, which decides whether a specific migration phenomenon is voluntary, or political and forced. Recognition of refugee status is, therefore, the result of a process of bureaucratic "fractioning" (Zetter 2007, 174), in which persons in need of protection are distinguished from other categories of migrants.

It is difficult to provide a fixed meaning for the condition of refugee because of how the phenomenon fluctuates over time. Nonetheless, in the institutional context, the definition of "refugee" has acquired considerable performative power, since it not only describes a (presumptively) objective condition, but also delineates the boundaries of the category and resulting status. Undoubtedly, the need for States to intervene in the movements of incoming persons in order to discern those in need of protection from other categories of foreigners is a legitimate one. However, it should be noted that this bureaucratic "fractioning" is the result of government choices that are affected by the political context and social recognition practices within which these choices are generated. This produces an extension or narrowing of the formal modalities and substantive possibilities of benefitting from this form of protection.

In this contribution I will explore how, in Italy, in recent years, this bureaucratic "fractioning" seems to have become more exclusionary, especially with reference to the category of "asylum seekers". In detail, the analyses that follow will reconstruct the evolution of the "Protection System for Asylum

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Seekers and Refugees" (Italian acronym: SPRAR) into the progressively weaker "Reception and Integration System" (Italian acronym: SAI), alongside the expansion and institutionalization of the "extraordinary reception centres" (Italian acronym: CAS) as the "ordinary" place to host asylum seekers.

The onset of the "refugee crisis" and the attempt to move beyond an "emergency" approach

Starting in 2011, and especially since 2014, within a profoundly changed international framework, Italy has begun to address the issue of asylum seekers more stringently. Although this phenomenon was not new to the country at that time, there had been a change in the qualitative and quantitative dynamics compared to previous years.

In 2002[1], Italy set up a national system of international protection, initially called the "Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees" (SPRAR) and now renamed the "Reception and Integration System" (SAI). The system is characterised by the centrality given to the intervention and planning of local authorities. To activate reception places in the territory, local authorities (generally the municipalities) have to prepare a project to access the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services, established and managed by the Ministry of the Interior. The role of the Central Service, established by the Ministry of the Interior but entrusted to the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), is to provide coordination and guidance on reception standards, host structures, and the type of personnel and internal services.

However, in the years following its establishment, the number of asylum applications in Italy, and consequently the number of funded places in the national international protection system, was negligible. Indeed, rather than asylum seekers, the migratory presence in Italy mainly consisted of immigrants seeking employment or family reunification (Berti, Nasi & Valsania 2017).

The situation changed, even abruptly, with the onset of the Arab uprisings in 2011 and, shortly thereafter, following the so-called "refugee crisis" of 2014. In 2011, Italy was unprepared to face the "North African Emergency", during which more than 62,000 people from African countries arrived by sea, highlighting the weaknesses in the Italian reception system. An emergency

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[1] Article 1-sexies of Legislative Decree no. 416/1989 (converted by Law no. 39/1990) introduced by Article 32 of Law no. 189/2002.

approach was taken to address this crisis, with the government entrusting the Civil Protection with the implementation of an extraordinary reception plan aimed at distributing migrants across Italy (Campomori & Ambrosini 2020).[2] During 2014, against an extraordinary new flow of arrivals by sea (170,100 people compared to 42,925 the previous year), asylum applications increased from 26,620 to 63,456.[3] However, the government again gave an emergency response to the situation, opening extraordinary reception centres (CAS), as the capacity of the national system of international protection once again proved insufficient. Indeed, the priority to rapidly distribute the newly landed asylum seekers throughout the country led the government to entrust emergency reception facilities to social cooperatives as well as private individuals (e.g., hoteliers). Contracts were awarded through tendering procedures set up by the prefectures (the government's territorial offices), based on the contractors' capacity to provide shelter and meet basic needs (Marchetti 2016). «Once again, it is evident that no comprehensive plan was put together to strengthen the ordinary protection system. Instead, the necessity to respond to contingencies through the activation of extraordinary places led to the implementation of an emergency system […], resulting in a spurious and heterogeneous system with highly uneven standards of service for asylum seekers and refugees» (Giovannetti 2020, 830).[4]

The critical issues of those years «gave a boost to policymakers to reframe the refugee issue at the national level: from an emergency to be coped with using *ad hoc* interventions to a phenomenon that needs to be managed using a longer-term perspective» (Campomori & Ambrosini 2020, 7). Indeed, the Understanding reached in the Unified Conference of the Government, Regions and Local Authorities on 10 July 2014 adopted a "National Plan to cope with the extraordinary flow of non-EU citizens, adults, families and unaccompanied foreign minors", also agreeing on the establishment of national and regional coordination tables.[5]

This agreement found a regulatory basis in Legislative Decree no. 142/2015, the transposition of the new EU "Reception" Directive (Directive 2013/33/EU). In detail, in line with the provisions of the agreement, Legislative Decree no. 142/2015 structured the reception system on three levels. The initial level focused on providing first aid and identifying migrants at

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[2] Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers (D.P.C.M.) of 12 February 2011.
[3] Data source: Statistical dashboard of the Ministry of the Interior (as of 31 December 2014).
[4] Translation into English by the author.
[5] Intesa Conferenza Unificata 10 July 2014, Record of Acts no. 77/CU.

governmental centres near disembarkation points (Article 8). This was followed by reception measures, which included a "first" phase at governmental centres, primarily aimed at initiating asylum applications (Article 9), and a "second" phase at facilities managed by local authorities distributed throughout the territory, then still referred to as the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), aimed at the reception and integration of the people received (Article 14).

Hence, while the initial rescue and reception would take place in government-run centres, secondary reception was to be provided within a network of facilities promoted by local authorities. In this way, Legislative Decree no. 142/2015 formally established a distribution of responsibilities within a multi-level governance framework, with the aim of bringing reception interventions into an ordinary and programmable management system (Giovannetti 2020).

A "multi-level" management approach that is difficult to implement

From the outset, the implementation of the theoretical model outlined in Legislative Decree no. 142/2015 revealed some crucial shortcomings. Specifically, the primary obstacle to implementing the three-phase design has proved to be gaining the local authorities' consent to take part in the regular network of the reception system. Indeed, the municipalities' resistance to joining the network has prompted the government to expand the extraordinary reception centres, which can be opened without the consent of the municipal administrations. This also undermined the previously envisaged structure of collaboration between levels of government (Campomori 2018).[6]

It should be noted that in the first years following Legislative Decree no. 142/2015, the Italian government tried to adopt "corrective" tools and incentives to encourage the local authorities' voluntary participation in the national reception network. With the 2016 Stability Law (Legislative Decree no. 93/2016), a sum of 500 euros was allocated to the municipalities that adhered to this network for each foreigner received. In addition, the National Allocation Plan of Asylum Seekers and Refugees was drawn up jointly by

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[6] In fact, it should be noted that Article 11 of Legislative Decree no. 142/2015 provides for the possibility of opening new extraordinary reception centres – defined as "temporary facilities" – when availability in the ordinary first or second reception facilities is temporarily exhausted, albeit only for the time strictly necessary to transfer the asylum seekers to the ordinary facilities. Between 2015 and 2017, the percentage of migrants received in the CASs increased from 62% to 78% (ANCI Toscana-Regione Toscana 2017).

the Ministry of the Interior and ANCI in order to foster the equitable distribution of migrants based on the sustainable impact on the various municipalities.[7] A "safeguard clause" was also introduced as part of the Plan's implementation, stipulating that no new extraordinary reception centres would be opened in municipalities that had guaranteed a sufficient number of places to accommodate their allocated quota of asylum seekers (Giovannetti 2020).

Although this strategy expanded the number of municipalities that joined the network of the ordinary reception system from 2,800 in December 2016 to 3,386 in December 2017 (Ministry of the Interior 2017), these incentives did not prove sufficient. Indeed, again as of 31 December 2017, with reference to the 183,681 persons hosted in the international protection system, 80.8% were accommodated in extraordinary reception centres, 13.5% in the network of the international protection system under the responsibility of local authorities, and 5.7% in other governmental centres (*Ibidem*).

This situation has led to significant differences in reception methods. Indeed, ever since its inception, the two guiding principles of the reception network entrusted to local authorities have been: to design a reception system consisting of small facilities located in residential areas and integrated with local services; to develop intervention projects aimed at fostering the autonomy and integration of the hosted persons (Marchetti 2016). Alternatively, as previously mentioned, the government entrusts extraordinary reception centres to private actors, which are mainly social cooperatives but also private citizens such as hoteliers, based on their ability to provide accommodation and meet the migrants' basic needs. This approach differs from the ordinary system, which focuses on a reception and integration project. Indeed, these facilities receive a daily rate for each person accommodated. Consequently, the priority given to quickly finding reception places in the local area risks overlooking other needs more directly related to the migrants' integration (Campesi 2018). Indeed, large facilities can be set up within the extraordinary reception system. For this reason, they can be difficult to locate in urban centres and the daily activities may require a more centralised and hetero-directed management. Moreover, the regulations for these centres do not include actions aimed at integrating migrants into the labour market, which are instead provided for in the local authority-run reception system (Acocella 2022).[8]

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[7] Directive of the Ministry of the Interior dated 11 October 2016.
[8] For this period, see Decree of the Ministry of the Interior dated 7 March 2017.

Paradigm shift: from a single system divided into phases to differentiated pathways based on asylum seeker and protection beneficiary status

In the following years, the Italian international protection system underwent further changes. Indeed, since 2018, both the categories of individuals accommodated and the services offered by the national reception system have been profoundly altered.

Originally, the network of reception centres managed by local authorities was tasked with accommodating both asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection (hence the name SPRAR). However, in recent years, it has become the norm for asylum seekers to be housed in government reception centres or, when places in these facilities are temporarily exhausted, in the extraordinary reception centres set up by the prefectures.[9] As a result, hospitality in reception centres managed by local authorities has been exclusively reserved for beneficiaries of international protection and unaccompanied foreign minors. This led to the change in the system's name from "Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees" (SPRAR) to "Reception and Integration System" (SAI). Currently, the only asylum seekers that can be received in the SAI reception system are Afghans and Ukrainians, people arriving as a result of humanitarian evacuation operations, and vulnerable groups (Giovannetti 2023).[10]

In recent years, there has also been a change in the categories of people with protection status who can be accommodated within the reception network managed by local authorities. Initially, this network hosted political refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary or humanitarian protection.[11] Since 2018, humanitarian protection has been abolished and replaced by other forms of safeguard (for "medical care", "natural disasters", "acts of particular civic value" and "special protection") aimed at granting complementary but more specific protection.[12] Moreover, while guaranteeing access to the

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[9] Law no. 132/2018 (converting Decree-Law no. 113/2018) and Law no. 50/2023 (converting Decree-Law no. 20/2023), amending Article 1-sexies of Legislative Decree no. 416/1989 and Articles 8-11 of Legislative Decree no. 142/2015. Note that Law no. 50/2023 restores the logic of differentiated and selective treatment for asylum seekers. In Italy, this had already been introduced by Law no. 132/2018 but was eliminated two years later by Law no. 173/2020.

[10] Law no. 50/2023.

[11] Article 1-sexies of Decree-Law no. 416/1989 (converted by Law no. 39/1990) introduced by Article 32 of Law no. 189/2002.

[12] Article 1 of Law no. 132/2018 which amends Article 5 of Legislative Decree no. 286/1998 and introduces paragraph d-*bis* to Articles 19, 20-*bis* and 42-*bis* of Legislative Decree no. 286/1998, as well as Article 32 of Legislative Decree no. 25/2008. Note that "special protection" is granted if there is a risk of persecution or torture in the event of return to the

SAI reception system network[13], the new forms of protection (except for "acts of particular civic value") only last for the duration of the exceptional conditions allowing the asylum seeker to enter Italy, without transforming into the guarantee of a longer stay (Favilli 2019).

Reception services have also changed in both government-run centres and those managed by local authorities, particularly with regard to measures for asylum seekers.

Indeed, recent regulatory changes, introduced by the Italian government, have led to a distinction between the services to be guaranteed in the SAI system to asylum seekers (who "can" still access the network of local authorities' reception projects) and the services offered to other categories of persons received.[14] As a result of these government interventions, asylum seekers only have access to first-level "reception" services, which include material, health, social, legal and linguistic assistance, while second-level "integration" services, which include labour and housing inclusion actions, are only guaranteed to the remaining categories of people hosted in the SAI. This "binary" logic, which separates the pathways of asylum seekers from the other persons received in the system, thus modifies the overall structure of the network of reception centres managed by local authorities. Until that point, as discussed in detail, the system had established that "reception" and "integration" are inseparable elements in a process leading to a person's autonomy (Giovannetti 2023).

The services provided in the government-run reception centres have also changed. Indeed, while in the current state of affairs, extraordinary reception centres appear to have become the "ordinary" places for housing asylum seekers[15], new ministerial guidelines have also been introduced for their management. Since 2018, the Italian government has reduced the daily reimbursement allocated to the contractors of extraordinary reception centres for each person accepted, lowering it from 35 euros to between 21 and 26

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country of origin but the conditions for a form of international protection are not met (pursuant to Article 19 of Legislative Decree no. 286/1998.

[13] Law no. 173/2020 converting Decree-Law no. 130/2020 and amending Article 1-sexies of Decree-Law no. 416/1989 and Article 8 of Legislative Decree no. 142/2015.

[14] Law no. 173/2020 and Law no. 50/2023.

[15] It should also be noted that, according to data released last March by the Minister of the Interior, the network of government centres committed to reception measures consisted mainly of extraordinary reception facilities. In fact, the hearing at the Chamber's Constitutional Affairs Committee on 1 March 2023 stated that: «as of 21 February 2023, there were 9 First Reception Centres active, in which a total of 3, 248 migrants were accommodated; in addition, there are 5,408 extraordinary reception centres (CAS), housing 69,650 migrants» (p. 8). Translation into English by the author.

euros depending on the size of the facility.[16] In recent years, there have also been changes to the services offered. Indeed, before 2018, these centres were also able to offer health and psychological assistance, social and legal assistance, linguistic-cultural mediation, territorial guidance and Italian lessons.[17] Instead, since 2018, the extraordinary reception centres have only been required to ensure health, social and linguistic-cultural mediation services, with no actions aimed at integration, such as teaching Italian or services giving guidance on the local area. Psychological assistance has also been eliminated.[18] In short, today these places merely provide basic and essential reception measures (Accorinti & Spinelli 2019; Acocella 2022; Giovannetti 2023).

Conclusions

In Italy, as highlighted in the historical reconstruction, the measures for asylum seekers and refugees have changed significantly over time. Undoubtedly, in the early years of the "refugee crisis", the aim was to move beyond an emergency approach by investing in a unified system that gave local authorities a priority role in promoting reception measures for asylum seekers and refugees. However, since 2008, reception policies have become more restrictive, especially for asylum seekers. Indeed, the system has become more centralised for these categories of people, making their reception in government centres or temporary facilities the norm, while simultaneously reducing these centres' capacity to implement measures beyond mere rescue and basic assistance. «This demarcates a very clear boundary between reception at a national level, intended to manage the hospitality of migrants awaiting the definition of their status, and reception at a local level, aimed at the integration of status holders» (Giovannetti 2023, 850).[19]

This evolution is undoubtedly influenced by the political debate of recent years, which, against the backdrop of the "ongoing" emergency, has fuelled

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[16] Decree of the Ministry of the Interior issued on 20 November 2018; Directive of the Ministry of the Interior of 23 July 2018.

[17] See, for those years, Decree of the Ministry of the Interior dated 7 March 2017.

[18] Decree of the Ministry of the Interior dated issued on 20 November 2018 and Law no. 50/2023, amending Article 10 of Legislative Decree no. 142/2015. See also: Circular of the Ministry of the Interior of May 19, 2023, No. 14100/113(14). It should be noted that Law no. 173/2020 (converting Decree-Law no. 130/2020) reinstates the services offered before 2018 in the "extraordinary" reception centres, while Law no. 50/2023 returns to the approach pursued in 2018.

[19] Translation into English by the author.

the so-called stigma of "bogus asylum seekers" (Zetter 2007, 184) who exploit the privileged asylum channel to gain entry into an EU country, often only for economic reasons. «The direct consequence of this categorization process has been the shift of the figure of asylum seeker from a 'person in need of protection' to a person who must 'prove' the authenticity of his or her requested protection status» (Acocella 2022, 201). The replacement of humanitarian protection with more specific forms of safeguards also appears to be the result of the need to provide a more precise interpretation of the category of asylum seeker, in order to achieve a clearer demarcation between "economic migration" and "forced migration".

However, in this way, the "exceptional" right for asylum seekers to cross state borders, even irregularly, in order to seek protection, and not be sent back to a country where their lives could be in danger (Article 33 of the Geneva Convention of 1951), seems to have lost ground, overtaken by the condition of presumed "illegality until proven otherwise" (Sciurba 2017).

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2. *The governance of policies for the integration of immigrant citizens in Tuscany*

by *Costanza Gasparo* and *Stella Milani*[*][1]

Introduction

Since the last decade of the 20th century, research has emphasised the need to move beyond State-centric approaches in the analysis of immigrant integration policies.[2] Especially in Europe, there has been an increasing focus on the role played by local and regional governments in the implementation of such policies and, equally, on the influence exerted by the supranational level (Scholten *et al.* 2015; Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx 2016; Weinar *et al.* 2018). This shift in perspective, facilitated by the increasingly widespread adoption of the *multi-level governance* paradigm[3] in the study of migration policies, has made it possible to trace a far more complex landscape than the one intended to be portrayed through national models of integration, showing affinities and inconsistencies between national and local policies and between local policies implemented in different cities (Jørgensen 2012;

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[1] The Chapter is the result of collaboration between the authors. For the purposes of attribution of the text, Costanza Gasparo wrote paragraph 2 and the conclusion, Stella Milani the introduction and paragraph 1.

[2] In continuity with the now classic typology elaborated by Tomas Hammar (1985), by *immigrant integration policies* or *immigrant policies* we refer to the sub-sector of migration policies related to the set of civil, political and social rights of foreigners legally admitted to the territory. This sphere is analytically distinct from *immigration policies*, which refer to the regulations that establish the conditions of entry of foreign citizens into the national territory.

[3] Although it is difficult to find an unambiguous definition of the concept of *multi-level governance*, the most commonly adopted one accounts for how the policy-making process, being articulated on several levels of government, can be characterised by the dispersion of the authority of the central government of the nation-state, both upwards, in favour of the supranational level of government, and downwards, with an increasing relevance assumed by regional and local administrations. At the same time, the term governance emphasises that, at the different levels of government, the policy process is likely to involve, to varying degrees, non-institutional actors, delineating public-private networks (Marks & Hooghe 2004).

Dekker *et al.* 2015; Scholten & van Ostaijen 2018). At the same time, the plurality of actors, both governmental and non-governmental, involved at various levels of government in the ongoing process of implementing and enacting immigrant integration policies has clearly emerged (Caponio & Borkert 2010; Campomori & Caponio 2013). This has underscored the leading role of the third sector which, despite its heterogeneous characterisation and the variable intensity of its interactions with local institutions, has revealed itself in many contexts as the main repository of field expertise, a frontline actor in advocacy actions, and, more generally, as an area animated by forces that promote rethinking and innovation in local forms of social cohesion (Garkisch *et al.* 2017). Following the previously mentioned approach, the focus of this contribution is to analyse the particularities that the governance of policies for the integration of foreign nationals in the Tuscan regional context assumes. To contextualise this experience, the paragraph that follows will look at the primary national regulatory actions that have made regional governments relevant in implementing this area of policy in a setting where the growing tension between the State and the Regional Councils has been a defining feature since the mid-2000s. Through the analysis of Regional Law no. 29/2009, *Norme per l'accoglienza, l'integrazione partecipe e la tutela dei cittadini stranieri nella Regione Toscana* (Rules for the reception, participatory integration and protection of foreign citizens in the region), the basic principles of the proposed integration model and the characteristics assumed by territorial governance will be explained. In the next paragraph, the provisions of Law no. 29/2009 will be analysed in detail with specific reference to the following areas of intervention: orientation to services in the territory; social-health inclusion; labour inclusion; teaching Italian L2; housing inclusion and cultural pluralism. A number of projects recently promoted by the Tuscany Region will also be examined, which, by giving substance to the same provisions, stand out for their innovative character in the fields of socio-healthcare inclusion, employment, housing, training, and more generally the intercultural dimension. In conclusion, the main aspects that characterise the governance of the Tuscany Region in the context of the "conflictual decentralisation" characterising immigrant integration policies in Italy will be summarized (Barberis 2009).

The role of the Regions in the governance of immigrant integration policies

Italy shows a clear specificity in the European context, both for the development of migratory flows entering the national territory and for the central government's late intervention in migration policies.[4] Solidaristic initiatives supported by local social actors have helped the practices of immigrant reception and integration to take shape in the long-standing absence of national provisions defining the social rights guaranteed to foreigners present on national territory (Ambrosini 2006). This protagonism of civil society and local institutions has manifested in markedly heterogeneous ways across different territories, delineating what has been described as a "localism of rights" (Zincone 1994).

The leading role played by local actors was already acknowledged in the first Italian legislation on immigration (Law no. 943/1986) but it is especially with the *Testo Unico delle disposizioni concernenti la disciplina dell'immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero* (Consolidated Text of the provisions concerning the discipline of immigration and norms on the condition of foreigners, Legislative Decree no. 40 of 1998) that the governance of integration policies will be structured according to the principles of vertical subsidiarity, between levels of government, and horizontal subsidiarity, between institutions and private social actors (Zincone 2000). By establishing the *Fondo Nazionale per le Politiche Migratorie* (National Fund for Migration Policies) with the objective of subsidising programmes that can be implemented by institutional actors at different levels of government, the Consolidated Act has however reserved a leading role for the regional governments in the decision-making processes of integration policies, leaving primarily implementation functions to the municipalities (Caponio 2006). Law no. 189 of 2002, also through the establishment of the *Protection System for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Foreigners with Humanitarian Permits* (SPRAR), further incentivised the establishment of governance networks between local administrations and third sector actors. Regarding immigrant policies, it substantially confirmed the division of competences between levels of government as provided for by Legislative Decree no. 40/1998. The relevance of the regional governments remains, which, through the preparation of social integration plans, «assume the role of policy entrepreneurs,

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[4] These characteristics, sharing the experiences of various Southern European countries, seem to corroborate the hypothesis of a Mediterranean migration pattern (Boffo 2003).

through the stipulation of programme agreements with the ministerial level, with individual provinces and with municipalities» (Campomori 2005, 421).[5]

To understand the centrality of the role assumed by the Regional Councils in the field of immigrant policies, it is appropriate to contextualise the specific competences deriving from immigration legislation in the broader reform processes implemented in Italy since 2000. In particular, with the approval of Law no. 328/2000 *Legge quadro per la realizzazione del sistema integrato di interventi e servizi sociali* (Framework Law for the Implementation of the Integrated System of Interventions and Social Services) a governance of social policies was established, which recognises specific functions of planning, coordination and orientation of the integrated system of social services on the territory to the regions. In 2001, the reform of Title V of the Constitution (Constitutional Law no. 3/2001), subverting the structure of relations between the State and the territorial authorities, increased the autonomy of the Regional Councils, which, in addition to having full legislative power with reference to all matters not expressly reserved for State legislation, became responsible for determining which lines of intervention to favour in the field of social policies. As a consequence of the constitutional reform, the *National Fund for Migration Policies*, established by Legislative Decree no. 40/1998, will be merged with the *Fondo Nazionale per le Politiche Sociali* (National Fund for Social Policies) without any destination constraints. This resulted in greater autonomy and, at the same time, increased discretionary power of the regional governments in choosing to allocate funding to support the integration of immigrants within the broader framework of territorial welfare planning (Ambrosini 2006). At the same time, a "conflictual decentralisation" takes shape around immigrant policies, characterised by repeated divergences between State and regional governments in reference to the declination of foreign citizens' social and political rights (Barberis 2009).

This conflict must also be understood in light of the resurgence of assimilationist orientations observed in various European Countries since the late 1990s and in Italy since the mid-2000s. In the context of an increasingly common semantic association between immigration and security, central governments' political will to re-centralize immigrant integration policies manifests primarily through the implementation of "civic integration" programmes and agreements aimed at verifying immigrants' knowledge of the host countries' history, culture, values, and constitutional norms (Goodman 2010). If in the political narrative such measures are presented as necessary

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[5] Translation into English by the author.

to safeguard social cohesion, it is clear that integration takes on the connotation of a "task" that resident foreign citizens must perform to prove themselves worthy of reception and access to welfare benefits (Carrera & Wiesbrock 2009). In Italy, the introduction of the *Accordo di Integrazione* (Integration Agreement)[6] represents one of the clearest manifestations of the Italian government's political will to regain influence in this policy area. The distance between the securitarian and neo-assimilationist measures promoted at the national level and the programmatic orientations of regional governments, which, in line with the legislative competences reserved to them, are committed to giving substance to immigrants' integration processes through provisions guaranteeing full enjoyment of civil and social rights, thus appears increasingly clear. As observed, the result is a decoupling between national and regional policies, which often contradict or conflict with each other (Campomori 2015). Around the *issue* of immigrant integration takes shape a conflict between the State and the regional governments, punctuated, starting in the 2000s, by the central government's challenge of almost all regional immigration regulations, punctually challenged for constitutional illegitimacy (Ronchetti 2011).

In the Italian panorama, the Tuscan experience is emblematic of the desire to claim regional political autonomy in defining a model of immigrant integration whose underlying principles are in substantial opposition to the increasingly restrictive national guidelines (Passaglia 2013; Gori 2019). The promulgation of Regional Law no. 29/2009, *Norme per l'accoglienza, l'integrazione partecipe e la tutela dei cittadini stranieri nella Regione Toscana* (Rules for the reception, participatory integration and protection of foreign citizens in the region), constitutes one of the passages that most clearly manifest this orientation.[7] Considering that the law was approved shortly before the introduction, in the same year, of the so-called "crime of clandestinity" by the central government (Mosconi 2010), it is not surprising that the challenge for constitutional illegitimacy concerned, among other things, the pro-

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[6] This measure, introduced by Law no. 94 of 2009 – part of the so-called "security package" – adds Article 4-*bis* to the Consolidation Act on Immigration, which stipulates that when applying for the first residence permit, the immigrant must undertake to meet specific integration requirements within two years (Gargiulo 2012; Cuttitta 2013).

[7] The same statute of the Tuscany Region, approved in 2004, has been challenged for unconstitutionality by the central government because it expresses the regional government's desire to promote the extension of the right to vote to foreign citizens. Since it is a declaration with no actual legal consequences, the appeal for unconstitutionality was deemed inadmissible by the Constitutional Court (Gori 2019). However, this is a clear explication of the regional government's political will in reaffirming its orientation on the matter.

visions recognising social and health care rights to foreigners without a residence permit (Ronchetti 2011). However, the Constitutional Court declared the inadmissibility of this appeal in light of the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution and the provisions of Article 35 of Legislative Decree no. 286/1998 (Judgment 269/2010).

The divergence of orientation with respect to the national level of government is already tangible in the preamble to Law no. 29/2009 which, contrary to the emergency and securitarian visions typical of the period, describes immigration as a structural phenomenon, emphasising the contribution of foreign citizens to the social and economic development of the territory. The proposed model of implementation and management of integration policies aims to «realise the solidarity-based reception of foreign citizens, according to the principles of cultural pluralism, mutual respect and participatory integration through norms inspired by the principles of equality and equal opportunities for foreign citizens on the regional territory» (Regional Law no. 29/2009, Article 1, c. 1).[8] The idea of "participatory integration" is at the heart of the law and underpins both the measures to support the exercise of active citizenship by immigrant citizens and the establishment of governance mechanisms that see a broad involvement of local stakeholders in the implementation of policies.[9] With reference to the first aspect, recalling the responsibility of territorial governments in giving substance to integration processes, the preamble to the law emphasises that «interventions aimed at fostering the participatory integration of foreign citizens must first and foremost be aimed at removing substantial inequalities» (preamble, c. 7).[10] Consistently, it is envisaged that territorial services must be adapted to "multicultural users" (preamble, c. 9). The governance model established by the legislation provides for the active involvement, in the phase of drawing up the programmes and actions to be implemented, of the various sectors of the regional administration, local authorities, State and international organisations, social bodies and the third sector, foreign associations, and the Councils and Councils of Foreigners (preamble, cc. 5-6). The *expertise* of private social actors in the field of the social integration of migrants is already widely valorised in the planning of interventions regulated by the law.[11] Thus, the

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[8] Translation into English by the author.

[9] The participatory dimension also characterised the debate on the content of the draft law through a series of meetings that, starting in May 2006, involved a total of over fifty thousand Italian and foreign citizens in the region.

[10] Translation into English by the author.

[11] It seems appropriate to recall that Tuscany was among the first regions to transpose, through Law no. 58/2018, the changes introduced to the third sector code. Practices of co-

Regional Government of Tuscany is expected to promote regional conferences in collaboration with institutional and third sector bodies (Article 6, par. 7). The *Piano di indirizzo integrato per le politiche sull'immigrazione* (Integrated Policy Plan for Immigration Policies) represents the planning tool that defines objectives and priorities for intervention, consistent with the guidelines elaborated in the *Programma regionale di sviluppo* (Regional Development Programme). Although it represents a sectoral plan, which makes it possible to bring "all the numerous forms of regional, national and European funding" in the field of immigrant policies into "the same programming design", it refers first and foremost to actions of a transversal strategic nature, according to a logic that aims to overcome the sectorial nature of interventions and instead to prepare actions that see the synergy between various spheres and services.[12]

Citizenship rights for foreigners in the legislation of the Tuscany Regional Council

As we deepened, the legislation of the Tuscany Regional Council on immigration proposes a model of integration that recalls the responsibility of the territorial authorities in promoting, in collaboration with the territorial actors, measures capable of effectively removing the substantial inequalities that migrant citizens may encounter in exercising their rights. In this direction, it seems useful to analyse the provisions and interventions that the regional legislation envisages with reference to some neuralgic spheres of social integration processes, such as: orientation on the territory, social and health care, work, L2 teaching, housing and linguistic-cultural mediation.

Territorial orientation

Explicitly referring to a plural society, Law no. 29/2009 promotes numerous actions that bear witness to the orientation of promoting a revision in a multicultural key of the territory's interventions and services. Among the various measures envisaged, the law establishes a regional network of information desks aimed at supporting foreign citizens in the procedures for the

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programming and co-planning that had already been widely adopted in the local structuring of policies for immigrants thus found formalisation.

[12] See Regional Law no. 29/2009 – Intervention Plan for the year 2019, p. 2.

issuance, renewal or conversion of residence permits, and for applying for citizenship, full access of foreign citizens to the network of territorial services, and the strengthening of cultural mediation and interpreting services.

At the same time, the PAeSI (Public Administration and Immigrant Foreigners) project, born from a collaboration between the Tuscany Region, the Prefecture of Florence and the other Prefectures in Tuscany, with the scientific support of the CNR's Institute of Theory and Techniques of Legal Information (ITTIG), has created a portal for the networking of complete and updated information on the procedures and regulations concerning the legal status of foreign citizens, including specific training programmes for passing the Italian language test required to obtain the EC long-term residence permit. Through this platform a mapping of Italian language courses for foreigners at the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA) in Tuscany (timetables, locations, contacts and enrolment methods) by teaching level (PRE-A1, A1, A2, B1) and province was prepared.

Social and health inclusion

With specific reference to the exercise of social rights, it should be noted that the Tuscany Regional Council had already provided for measures to protect immigrant citizens even before Law no. 29/2009, with Law no. 41 of 2005, *Sistema integrato di interventi e servizi per la tutela dei diritti di cittadinanza sociale* (Integrated System of Interventions and Services for the Protection of Social Citizenship Rights). The integrated system of interventions and services is aimed at all residents in the region who find themselves in situations of need and difficulty. At the same time, foreign women during pregnancy and in the six months following childbirth, foreigners with residence permits for subsidiary protection or medical treatment, or with specific permits listed in the legislative decrees, asylum seekers and refugees, and minors of any nationality present in the territory of the region may access these services. The promotion of social citizenship rights is achieved through collaboration between institutional levels, public and private actors, including those of the third sector. In a perspective of multi-level governance, the municipalities manage local social services, the provinces support the job placement of disadvantaged people, the region promotes social citizenship rights, and the third sector actively participates in the planning and delivery of services.

As we have seen, Law no. 29 of 2009 stipulates that all persons living on regional territory, even if they do not have a residence permit, may take advantage of *urgent and unpostponable* social-welfare interventions, necessary to guarantee respect for the fundamental rights recognised to each person according to the Constitution and international norms, according to the modalities defined in the plan. With regard to access to services for foreigners with a regular residence permit, there is parity with Tuscan citizens, taking into account that all residents in Tuscany have the right to access the interventions and services of the integrated system, referred to by Regional Law no. 41/2005.

In order to promote a more fruitful collaboration for the wellbeing of migrants settled on the territory and inspired by the "principle of social subsidiarity" enunciated in the Statute of the Tuscany Region, the *Integrated Policy Plan for Immigration Policies 2012-2015*, a program tool of Law no. 29/2009, set out to facilitate a close synergy between health, social, and socio-health strategies, orchestrating the work of various institutional entities such as municipal administrations, Local Health Authorities, and Health Associations (Passaglia 2013). With the reform and simplification of the regional programming tools introduced by Regional Law no. 1 of 2015, the *Integrated Policy Plan for Immigration Policies 2012-2015* finds further connection with the Regional Development Programme, adopted at the beginning of the legislature and updated annually through the *Regional Economic and Financial Document*, and with the *Regional Integrated Social Health Plan*. There is therefore a clear desire to include measures to protect the social and health rights of immigrant citizens in the broader framework of the regional welfare system (Gori 2019).

Finally, Regional Law no. 45 of 2019 – *Disposizioni per la tutela dei bisogni essenziali della persona umana. Modifiche alla l.r. 41/2005 e alla l.r 29/2009* (Provisions for the protection of essential human needs. Amendments to l.r. 41/2005 and l.r. 29/2009), modifies and strengthens some provisions of the two previous laws. Leaving intact the passage of Regional Law no. 41/2005 that recognises the right of all persons residing in Tuscany to access the interventions and services of the integrated system, Law no. 45/2019 expands, however, the range of services available to all persons *residing in* the region of Tuscany, regardless of their certificate of residence. While the 2005 law recognised them only *first assistance interventions*, the new law intervenes by modifying these provisions and guaranteeing access to persons residing in the territory the «right to the effective enjoyment of

the fundamental rights of the human person» (Article 4).[13] It also integrates with Article 4-*bis* that all persons residing in the territory have access to the interventions provided for by the *Regional Integrated Social Health Plan* and to the relevant information tools. Referring to Regional Law no. 29 of 2009, the 2019 law guarantees all persons living in Tuscany, even without a residence permit, access to the social-health interventions of the *Regional Integrated Social Health Plan.* Referring to Regional Law no. 29 of 2009, it reaffirms the right to the social-welfare interventions necessary to guarantee fundamental rights. It also specifies access to urgent medical care, preventive medicine programmes, socio-welfare services, education and childcare, and confirms interventions for initial reception and integration, such as the monitoring of the migration phenomenon, the training of operators and the coordination of reception facilities.

If, on the one hand, this brief examination highlights the regional authority's commitment to promoting an authentic and not merely superficial integration of foreign citizens, on the other hand, it emphasises the need to flank these regulatory acts with initiatives, programmes, and support measures that can translate the legislative provisions adopted into reality and concreteness. It is also evident that the issue of socio-health care is a crucial element in the context of Tuscan regional legislation, both in terms of the management of competencies within the complex integrated system and in terms of service provision. The regional government's commitment concerns the health of migrants, who are exposed to multiple risks during their migratory journey. From the causes of flight, such as conflicts and political violence, to the journey itself, characterised by traumatic events and precarious conditions, to settlement in new contexts, with socio-economic and linguistic challenges (Maccari, Gonnelli & Corridori 2019). The integrated approach that lies at the heart of Regional Law no. 41 of 2005 and that is confirmed by subsequent regulations highlights the need to deal with complex structural, organisational and functional transformations in the social-health field. These evolutions imply an increase in co-planning and collaboration between public institutions and the Third Sector, together with an in-depth analysis of shared objectives to foster further integration between health and social policies (*Ibidem*).

Multidisciplinarity emerges as a distinctive feature in the organisational models of the Tuscan health sector, highlighting the importance of integrating various competences for individual well-being and mental health (Zorzetto 2019). The strategies implemented are aimed at reducing inequalities,

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[13] Translation into English by the author.

with interventions to improve access, appropriate use of services and quality of care. For public social and health services and practitioners, it becomes crucial to promote significant advances in both organisation and professional training in order to meet the health needs of people who are vulnerable and at risk of marginalization. At the same time, a comprehensive social and health policy includes care as an integral part of a comprehensive approach to individual empowerment and the promotion of community development. This policy involves a variety of actors, services and interventions at local and regional level. This approach is also confirmed in the *Libro Bianco sulle politiche di accoglienza di richiedenti asilo politico e protezione internazionale* (White Paper on Reception Policies for Asylum Seekers and International or Humanitarian Protection Holders)[14], which refers to the need to ensure the coordination of socio-health services for migrants' health. This objective is promoted through various actions that include the recognition of the role of the Global Health Centre of the Tuscany Region[15] in the regional coordination of migrants' health, the strengthening of the Network of referents of the Local Health Authorities for migrants' health and the organisation of meetings and coordination between the managers of the reception centres and the referents of the Local Health Authorities.

Work inclusion

The link between migration and employment plays a crucial role in the analysis of current social dynamics (Greve 2012). Migration often coincides with the search for better educational and employment opportunities, with individuals moving from regions or countries with limited resources to places where they aspire to realise their professional and personal goals. Thus, work reflects global economic changes and changes the composition of host communities. Although migrants play a key role in the host countries' economies, this can also generate tensions (Calafà 2012). Consequently, understanding this relationship is crucial for designing policies to promote the social and economic integration of migrants.

Regional Law no. 29 of 2009 promotes access to employment, training and vocational guidance in Tuscany and introduces measures to foster job placement, improve qualifications through vocational training, the provision

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[14] For more details on the project, see Chapter 3 by Ivana Acocella on the "White Paper".

[15] The Centro di Salute Globale (Global Health Centre) is the Tuscany Region's structure for the coordination of international health cooperation and migrant health protection initiatives.

of vocational guidance services and the protection of workers' rights. In the last few years, the regional authority's commitment in this area has taken the form of the creation of an intervention model that has favoured an integrated approach to facilitate social and labour insertion, especially through the territorial services dedicated to employment and training. This model also sought to respond to the specific needs of the local labour market. Formal agreements and understandings were also set up that strengthened links with sectoral organisations, social partners, businesses and third sector organisations, in order to develop and strengthen the link between training and migration. The aim was also to strengthen and improve cooperation between the various institutions involved, with particular emphasis on the involvement of local authorities.

Among the initiatives that can be configured as effective tools for planning the entry and socio-occupational integration of migrants, asylum seekers and holders of international protection in the destination society, it seems appropriate to mention the project "COMMIT – Competenze migranti in Toscana" (COMMIT – Migrant Skills in Tuscany) and the project "SATIS – Sistema Antitratta Toscano Interventi Sociali" (SATIS – Anti-treatment system Tuscany Social interventions). The COMMIT project focused on the improvement of employment guidance services, on the collaboration between public bodies, on the enhancement of migrants' skills in line with the labour market needs, involving various actors, including the Employment Centres, and implementing language mediation services and support in accessing services. The SATIS project involved public and private partners to create an integrated system of interventions in Tuscany, assisting victims of trafficking and exploitation and gradually integrating anti-trafficking services into the regional social and health context. Also in the area of socio-occupational inclusion, actions were set up to develop the skills of local authorities and meet the support needs of the foreign population.

L2 teaching

Language competence is a key element in facilitating the social and professional integration and inclusion of immigrants (Minuz 2007; Caon & Cognigni 2022). At the same time, it is essential to ensure that basic language skills are acquired quickly and effectively. To achieve this, it is imperative to design tailor-made language training services, carefully considering the individual needs and abilities of users.

In Tuscany, the panorama of Italian language teaching is articulated and rich in initiatives aimed at fostering the integration of foreigners into the regional social and labour fabric. The Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA), active on the territory, represent one of the main channels through which an integrated training offer is realised, in collaboration with the various school institutions. These centres act as a hub for adult education in the education system, offering targeted and coordinated programmes to facilitate Italian language learning and vocational training. At the same time, the Third Sector plays a significant role in the educational offer, offering complementary initiatives that are characterised by flexibility and territorial proximity to users. These initiatives, often managed by non-governmental organisations and associations, contribute to enriching the regional training panorama, responding in a targeted manner to the needs of the immigrant population (Minuz 2007).

Housing inclusion

The housing challenge for citizens with a migration background is complex and multidimensional, as they are a group in a particularly vulnerable socio-economic position. This vulnerability is reflected in multiple difficulties in obtaining adequate housing. In addition to socio-cultural obstacles, represented by the persistence of discrimination and the absence of an established social network, there are in fact also structural problems, especially for those who leave the reception system, making access to both the public and private housing market difficult (Fravega 2018).

Regional Law no. 29 of 2009, recognising these specific difficulties that foreign citizens may encounter in accessing housing, recalls the objective of promoting social housing to safeguard social cohesion. A concrete manifestation of this orientation is to be found in the fairness of the procedures for identifying housing solutions for foreign citizens, as well as in access to calls for tenders for the allocation of public housing, in accordance with the relevant regulations. The *Regional Integrated Social Health Plan 2012-2015* and subsequently the *Regional Integrated Social Health Plan 2018-2020* also refer to the right to housing, emphasising the importance of public housing assistance as an immediate solution for those who cannot independently secure housing. In this regard, Agenzie Sociali per la Casa (Social Housing Agencies) collaborate with public and third sector entities to increase access to housing for the most vulnerable segments of the population, including im-

migrants. These agencies facilitate access to the rental market, manage guarantee funds, provide linguistic and cultural support and acquire housing for temporary or permanent rentals at subsidised prices. Furthermore, an *Osservatorio Sociale Condizione abitativa* (Observatory on housing needs and conditions in Tuscany) is established to monitor and evaluate the impact of the housing policies adopted. Lastly, Regional Law no. 29 of 2009 provides for regional support to organisations that provide housing solutions, including temporary ones, for foreign citizens with a regular residence permit but without autonomous housing, as well as for the management of residences and boarding houses.

Among the projects promoted in the Tuscan territory in this specific *policy* area, it is worth mentioning "INCLUD-EU – Regional and local expertise, exchange and engagement for enhanced social cohesion in Europe" financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and partnered with ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities). The project, led by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), is the implementation of a pilot project led by ANCI Toscana to create a permanent territorial network, addressing the housing needs of vulnerable migrants in an integrated and sustainable way. Through a participatory approach and public-private partnerships, the project focuses on the definition of a model that favours an effective housing transition and promotes collaborative living solutions, enhancing housing autonomy and supporting the creation of social networks and collective action capacities.

Cultural pluralism

In a society that promotes cultural pluralism and fosters integration, it is essential to adopt policies that foster a mutual understanding and appreciation of different cultures. This means not only protecting and celebrating cultural diversity, but also actively encouraging intercultural dialogue (Passaglia 2013). Regional Law no. 29 of 2009 enhances multiculturalism and intercultural communication, recognising the need to promote a series of diverse and interconnected actions that embrace heterogeneous sectors of society. Among these initiatives, we highlight the dissemination of multilingual reception protocols in educational institutions and workplaces, in order to foster integration and dialogue between people of different linguistic and cultural origins. It also emphasises the importance of the training and qualification of the linguistic and cultural mediator, who plays a crucial role in facil-

itating communication and facilitating access to services for all citizens, including first access to health services, regardless of their origin.[16] Another significant aspect of the law is the strengthening of intercultural competencies in public and private services, in order to ensure a welcome and care that is sensitive to the cultural diversity present in society. In the context of healthcare, Regional Law no. 29 of 2009 promotes training programmes for medical and paramedical personnel on healthcare regulations for foreigners and on the intercultural approach. In addition, a customisation of socio-health services is promoted to meet the needs of a culturally diverse target group. Turning to the school sphere, Regional Law no. 29 of 2009 establishes agreements with the regional school authorities and local authorities, aimed at fostering the inclusion of foreign students in the school environment, promoting staff training through intercultural initiatives and coordinating cultural and linguistic support services. Finally, in recalling a necessary recognition of religious pluralism, the legislation promotes interventions to encourage religious assistance in places of care or detention, the allocation of space for funeral ceremonies, the practice of worship, ritual slaughter, respect for religious traditions in public canteens and the observance of ritual prescriptions and religious holidays in the workplace.

Conclusions

In Italy, there are unique features related to the arrival of migrants and the definition of a particular model of integration. The national regulatory framework, initially characterised by the 1998 Consolidated Text on Immigration and subsequently shaped by constitutional and legislative reforms, has supported a vertical and horizontal subsidiarity approach. However, the recent trend towards centralised and security-oriented policies has led to conflict with the more inclusive and participatory visions promoted by the Regions, as in the emblematic case of Tuscany with Regional Law no. 29/2009. The central government has thus shown a significant delay in the development of a coherent integrative framework, pushing reception and integration initiatives to concentrate mainly at the local level, with the regional governments assuming a crucial role. In this context, the third sector, despite its heterogeneity and various relations with local institutions, has emerged as the main

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[16] The Tuscany Region, at the urging of ANCI, established with Regional Decree no. 17375 of 31 October the figure "Technician for the design of cultural orientation and integration interventions for foreign citizens, accompaniment for access to services and linguistic-cultural mediation-Intercultural mediator".

holder of practical expertise and a key actor in advocacy and innovation of local forms of social cohesion.

Tuscany, in particular, has distinguished itself for its determination in defining a model of integration that counters the restrictive guidelines of the national government. An analysis of the Tuscan legislation highlights an approach that emphasises the responsibility of local authorities in counteracting inequalities through close cooperation with local actors and by focusing on socio-health, labour, educational, and housing rights and the promotion of multiculturalism. In the idea of participatory integration, a distinctive feature of Regional Law no. 29/2009, there is a clear overcoming of a welfarist vision with the recognition of the contribution that migrant citizens themselves can make in the policy-making process. It must be said, however, that actions to support the representation and participation of foreign citizens have so far shown little effectiveness in promoting forms of active citizenship that have an effective influence on decision-making processes. While in recent years the reception sector has represented an area of intense experimentation in the region (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017), it would be desirable to resume a similar reflection on possible measures to support the political and social participation of migrant citizens.

Moreover, there is a clear need for concrete initiatives and support measures that can translate legislative provisions into reality. In particular, the socio-health care sector emerges in Tuscany as a crucial and complex area, requiring structural, organisational, and functional transformations that imply greater collaboration between public institutions and the third sector. Although the role of the third sector is fundamental, it is characterised by heterogeneity and variable relations with local institutions, which can make structured and coordinated collaboration difficult. This complex dynamic highlights the difficulties of action by the regions in a context where working in the field of migration is very much affected by national legislation, which is currently adverse. The limitations imposed by the national regulatory framework often hinder local efforts, underscoring the importance of effective coordination between the different levels of governance. Despite everything, this integrative model, with all its specificities, can serve as a reference point for other regions and countries facing the challenges of immigration and integration, offering an example of how local policies can effectively respond to the needs of social cohesion and inclusion.

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3. The "White Paper" of the Tuscany Region: principles and proposals to promote "best practices" for reception and integration and foster social cohesion

by *Ivana Acocella**

Introduction

The *Libro Bianco sulle politiche di accoglienza di richiedenti asilo politico e protezione internazionale* (White Paper on Reception Policies for Asylum Seekers and International or Humanitarian Protection Holders)[1] is a programmatic document developed within the framework of the #Accoglienza Toscana. This participatory project was promoted in 2017 by the Tuscany Region in collaboration with ANCI Tuscany.[2] It involved the main organisations engaged in reception in the region, as well as institutional and academic stakeholders. During the project, 200 reception projects were analysed to map local experiences and transform the knowledge gained by the different entities into capital shared by the entire system. In addition, 12 working tables were organised to discuss the standards and services to be guaranteed in the reception pathways. The "White Paper" summarized the principles, guidelines and best practices that emerged during the extensive consultation process.

In this contribution, I will present the principles and guidelines outlined in the "White Paper" and discuss how they have become crucial benchmarks in designing regional interventions aimed at providing effective, quality responses to the migration phenomenon. In detail, I will delve into how, even in the face of a national context that is becoming more exclusionary regarding immigration and asylum rights, the Tuscany Region is committed to soldering an integrated governance model of local welfare systems capable of

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[1] For the English version of the "White Paper" see:
https://accoglienza.toscana.it/documents/2362619/0/White+Paper+on+immigration+policies.pdf/67cbcbad-cd33-f051-f146-f8de7cd6281d?t=1642585526331.
[2] ANCI is the National Association of Italian Municipalities.

addressing the demands for reception, protection and integration of migrants, as well as consolidating social cohesion in the region.

The "White Paper": principles and proposals

The "White Paper" consists of innovative proposals for the overall design of the reception model, as well as its "complementary" dimensions, such as language training, the training-work supply chain, social and health needs, citizenry and social cohesion (Giannelli 2019).

Overall, the "White Paper" is based on six principles that outline a long-term perspective for reception and integration interventions. Taking up the vision of the migration phenomenon already present in Regional Law no. 29 of 2009, the first principle is based on *Recognising that migration is structural and not an emergency*. This principle also paves the way to the promotion of a different approach to defining reception and integration measures. Indeed, it implies *Seeing the migrant as a person first of all* (second principle), thereby shifting the focus «from the initial 'rescuing' action to the complex needs of migrants as people in a state of vulnerability» (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017, 9). This also implies not simply looking at migrants as people «who need to be 'helped' and 'assisted', delegating meeting their needs and requests to the host community, but considering the needs of the Community in its complexity and each of its members as a potential bearer of need as much as value» (*Ibidem*). Based on this principle, the way to strengthen services aimed at vulnerable individuals is to promote actions aimed at «considering migrants as potential bearers of value and skill» capable of contributing to the growth and well-being of the community as a whole.

Overcoming an emergency approach to migration also implies: *Promoting a system based on widespread and shared responsibility* (third principle), *Recognising the central role of public entities as a guarantee of system quality and fairness* (fourth principle) and *Putting local institutions and actors at the centre of the governance system* (fifth principle). These principles emphasise the need to build «new governance structures where the public part can perform a role of coordination, direction and above all monitoring the quality and fairness of the actions implemented by the different actors involved, including when it comes to extraordinary reception» (*Ibi*, 10-11). Shared and widespread responsibility also means supporting interventions and projects for reception and integration based on "optimal territorial areas", represented by supra-municipal aggregations (which in Tuscany are

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mainly translated into the so-called Zone-Districts and Health Societies)[3], in order to overcome "particularistic municipal visions" in favour of joint action between public actors to take care of the migrant. Similarly, they imply the importance of promoting reception and integration actions in a virtuous synergy between institutional bodies and social private entities, with the aim of combining «quality and shared responsibility as key elements of social cohesion and security» (*Ibidem*).

Finally, reception and integration involve not only meeting the basic needs of migrants but also addressing all the conditions that enable them to build a dignified life. To this end, it is necessary to *Ensure uniform and coordinated procedures and services* (sixth principle), promoting the progressive raising of the reception measure quality standards in a "supply chain" system of government and local public authority-run first and second reception centres. At the same time, «immigration policies must be considered in all respects an integral part of local welfare systems, [as] only in this way will it be possible to plan and implement integrated projects and actions, which will take into account the social needs of the migrants and provide answers in terms of local policy makers providing services» (*Ibi*, 12).

Integrated governance of local welfare systems

The principles and guidelines of the "White Paper", approved by regional resolution no. 1304/2017, have become an important benchmark in designing regional interventions to provide effective, quality responses to the phenomenon of migration.

Undoubtedly, Law no. 132 of 2018 has made a portion of what was outlined in the document unfeasible, particularly with regard to proposals concerning the overall design of the reception model (Maccari, Gonnelli & Corridori 2019). However, even though the institutional relationship with state forms of reception is becoming more problematic, the Tuscany Region has

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[3] Remember that the Tuscany Regional Council has invested heavily in an integrated approach between social policies and health policies (Regional Law no. 41 of 2005 – Integrated System of Interventions and Services for the Protection of Social Citizenship Rights), where a significant role is played by the Zone-Districts and Health Societies to ensure greater coordination in integrated social and health care planning (Chapter 2 by Gasparo and Milani). Health Societies (in Italian "Società della Salute"; Italian acronym: SDS) are non-profit public entities, established through the voluntary participation of municipalities within the same Zone-District and the territorially competent Local Health Authority (Italian acronym: AUSL), for the joint management of integrated territorial health, social-health, and social services activities (Gori 2019).

initiated a planning process that, in line with the principles of the "White Paper", aims to move beyond emergency approaches to the migration phenomenon, with a view to strengthening social cohesion. The objective is to promote regional governance capable of addressing the needs for reception, protection and integration of third-country nationals, refugees, women, minors and victims of trafficking, within an integrated system of local services and, thus, in coherence with local welfare policies.[4]

Thus, the regional plan sets out to encourage a stronger connection between interventions and services for foreign nationals and the planning of policies for social and healthcare inclusion, employment and training, with the goal of favouring effective solutions to address vulnerability. This strategy is also pursued by combining European and national funding with regional resources[5], through an integrated planning approach that fosters a process-based service chain rather than individual needs-based interventions, thus avoiding unnecessary duplications (Gori 2019). The Tuscany Region implements these lines of intervention in close connection with private social actors, building on the third sector expertise that emerged during the participatory process leading to the drafting of the "White Paper". Indeed, the goal is to provide effective, sustainable, and non-emergency responses, based on the sharing of political and administrative responsibilities between public and private actors in a horizontal subsidiarity framework, which in the "White Paper" is described as the best possible deployment of value to meet the needs of the entire community.

It is in this framework that the Tuscany Regional Council has approved the so-called "Samaritan Law" (Regional Law no. 45 of 2019 setting out "Provisions for the protection of the essential needs of the human person"). Indeed, one of its main objectives is to avoid «situations undermining the peace and public order arising from the difficulty of accommodating the many people who already and will find themselves, even for a long time, outside the reception system [...] and guarantee them continuity of care, social welfare, education for minors and social inclusion interventions» (preamble of Law no. 45/2019).[6]

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[4] Note that these objectives are included in the Regional Development Programme 2016–2020. The Regional Development Programme 2021–2025 also highlights "the fundamental importance of developing activities related to the guidelines of the 'White Paper on Reception Policies for Asylum Seekers and International or Humanitarian Protection Holders', inspired by the general principle that immigration policies are, in every respect, an integral part of local welfare systems (RPS 2021–2025, 211). Translation into English by the author.

[5] See, for example, the Regional Economic and Financial Documents of 2019, 2020 and 2021.

[6] Translation into English by the author.

Based on the law's premise to support initiatives with positive impacts on social cohesion in the region, four million euros were also allocated to support actions to reduce the risks of marginalization of those people, including foreigners, who lack means of subsistence and social and employment integration networks.[7] The funds were allocated to promote community welfare models based on public entity-third sector collaboration, in line with what is expressed in the "White Paper". This model had already proven to be «particularly effective in managing the reception and social inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees who, at this moment in history, and in light of the new regulations on international protection and immigration, represent a category of people particularly exposed to risks of marginalization and social deprivation» (Annex A of Tuscany Regional Decree no. 12595/2019)[8]. Therefore, these funds have also been purposed to support interventions and services for people in need of international protection within the regional territory. Indeed, the Italian government's decision, in 2018[9], to drastically reduce the daily allocation per person for contractors of extraordinary reception centres has weakened their operational capacity to promote inclusion (Acocella *et al.* 2021; Giovannetti 2023).

Similarly, within the framework of the "White Paper", the Tuscany Region participated in the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (FAMI) 2014–2020 public call for action. Its bid included the launch of the projects "SPRINT – Sistema di PRotezione INTerdisciplinare per la salute mentale di richiedenti asilo e rifugiati" (SPRINT – Interdisciplinary Protection System for the Mental Health of Asylum Seekers and Refugees), "TEAMS – Tuscany Empowerment Actions for Migrant System" and "COMMIT – Competenze migranti in Toscana" (COMMIT – Migrant Skills in Tuscany).

The aim of these projects has been to continue the process of building and sharing the "White Paper" principles. Specifically, the Tuscany Region's goal has been to strengthen and integrate services for the orientation and support of foreign citizens – not only asylum seekers and refugees but the entire population with a migrant background – within the territorial offer of social and healthcare inclusion. The main areas of intervention have been language and vocational training, employment, healthcare and housing autonomy,

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[7] Tuscany Regional Decree no. 12595/2019 and regional resolution no. 841/2019, "Public call for the presentation of projects for integration and social cohesion in Tuscan communities and for the protection of essential human needs in the regional territory". Translation into English by the author.

[8] Translation into English by the author.

[9] Decree of the Ministry of the Interior dated 20 November 2018 (Chapter 1 by Ivana Acocella).

while seeking the closest, most virtuous collaboration and synergy between public entities, third sector organisations and other resources at the territorial and regional level. Ultimately, the goal has been twofold. On one hand, the Tuscany Region has set out to improve access to services for foreigners and expand the local actors' capability to take on these responsibilities. On the other hand, the goal has been to establish pathways to autonomy and integration, based on valuing the contributions that migrants can make to the entire community, as well as leveraging the potential offered by the local context. All of this has been done by putting together an increasingly complex network and strengthening the collaboration among the regional actors involved in interventions in support of the foreign population.

Conclusions

Against the context of a national situation that is becoming more exclusionary regarding immigration and asylum rights, Tuscany presents a different scenario. Even though the institutional relationship with state forms of reception is becoming more problematic, the Tuscany Region is committed to supporting projects and initiatives for the reception and integration of migrants – not only asylum seekers and refugees but the entire population of citizens with a migratory background. This commitment is in line with the principles of the "White Paper" and aims to promote a non-emergency approach to the phenomenon, as well as overcome the compartmentalization and fragmentation of the interventions.

The aim is to prioritize "community" solutions and integrated interventions against vulnerability. These solutions strive to create a civil society that avoids the abandonment and marginalization of foreigners, even in light of the evolution of national measures on international protection which risk further exposing asylum seekers and refugees to conditions of social deprivation.

The importance of the regional level is emphasised both in fostering the exchange of knowledge, practices and learning, and in creating a connecting space to promote synergies between territories. It also highlights the importance of an approach to planning interventions and services shared by public and private actors in the region as an effective tool for providing appropriate responses to vulnerable individuals and simultaneously fostering interaction between society and the institutions.

While this governance strategy has brought about many good practices that will be highlighted in the second part of this contribution, it is worth

mentioning here the response of the regional administration to the most recent challenges at the level of reception policies. For example, following the EU Council of Ministers' Decision no. 2022/382 to offer temporary protection for Ukrainians displaced because of the armed conflict, the regional authority's response has been to try to guarantee the same standards of reception provided on the territory for people in need of international protection. To this end, the regional authority set up a Regional Crisis Unit while also drawing up a Memorandum of Understanding with the civil protection body (in charge of outlining a national plan for the assistance of Ukrainians in Italy), the prefectures and the local authorities, in order to coordinate a shared action plan for the reception of Ukrainian citizens in Tuscany.[10] At the same time, the Tuscany Region has reproposed the same integrated public-private approach to provide adequate and dignified reception, accommodation distributed throughout the territory, and effective services in the fields of health, training support and labour market insertion. Once again, the Tuscany Region has affirmed the integrated governance of local welfare systems outlined in the "White Paper". The interventions have aimed to favour a synergistic approach shared among the various actors involved, combining the right of the displaced Ukrainian population to be received and the duty to provide suitable, quality responses capable of making the place of arrival – Italy – a "safe" destination where they can find protection.

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[10] Tuscany Regional Ordinance no. 25/2022 and Commissioner's Ordinance no. 26/2022.

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Section 2: "Best Practices"

*Reception and Integration measures
for migrants in the Tuscany region*

"Reception" and "Integration".
Integrates Governance for Social Inclusion Interventions

by *Ivana Acocella**, *Maria Grazia Krawczyk*** and *Giovanna Tizzi****[1]

"Reception" and "integration" refer to designing measures for asylum seekers and refugees that extend beyond the concept of "first aid" and instead emphasise "empowerment". This is «understood as an individual and organised process through which people can regain a sense of their own value, potential and opportunities» (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018, 6-7).[2] The aim is to avoid forms of welfarism that often lead to chronic dependence on institutional assistance, in addition to essentializing the idea of refugees – typical of the concept of the reception "camp" (Pinelli 2014) – as mere "victims in need of protection" (Fassin 2010; Agier 2011). Therefore, the primary goal of reception measures should be to offer a series of services designed to reduce the migrants' condition of vulnerability by boosting their capacity to make choices and autonomously plan their lives (Campomori & Ambrosini 2020). This approach was also at the basis of the establishment of Italy's protection system for asylum seekers and refugees in 2002 (initially named the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees – SPRAR).[3] Indeed, the SPRAR prioritized the creation of a network of local services, emphasising the close interconnection between reception and integration measures as inseparable elements of a path to autonomy (Giovannetti 2023).

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[1] Although the article is the result of a joint reflection by the authors, the first section was written by Ivana Acocella; Sheet 1 (PROJECT TEAMS) was written by Ivana Acocella with the contribution of ANCI Tuscany Immigration Office; Sheet 2 (SOCIAL PROTECTION) was written by Maria Grazia Krawczyk and Giovanna Tizzi.

[2] The translations into English of the text "Operational Manual for the Activation and Management of Integrated Reception Services" are by the author.

[3] Article 1-sexies of Decree-Law no. 416/1989 (converted by Law no. 39/1990) introduced by Article 32 of Law no. 189/2002.

The *Operational Manual for the Activation and Management of Integrated Reception Services for Asylum Seekers and Beneficiaries of International Protection* (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018)[4] emphasises the need to foster a holistic, multidisciplinary approach that is as integrated as possible with local resources, as a key element in interconnecting reception and integration measures.

Indeed, in addition to providing shelter and meeting basic needs, it is necessary to care for individual persons in their entirety and complexity, starting by making the most of their personal resources. The reception "projects" must therefore not just respond to single needs or to the evident condition of "emergency" of the persons received, but should be designed on the basis of an overall analysis of the migrants' conditions, in order to bring out their specific subjectivities in process-based, strategic and situational interventions (Campomori 2018).

In addition to healthcare and protection, attention must also be paid to legal aspects, providing information on national immigration legislation, and supporting the migrants in bureaucratic procedures (such as getting on the public register of resident persons, or contacting the local asylum application assessment commission). Similarly, tools need to be provided to improve migrants' ability to navigate the arrival context autonomously, such as Italian language lessons or various forms of guidance enabling their direct use of local institutions and services. To foster social inclusion, activities can also be promoted to increase direct relationships with the local community (Radice 2008). This includes the endorsement of awareness-raising activities with members of the local context and the migrants' participation in associative life (cultural, sports, social events, etc.). By thereby strengthening the two levels of relationship – institutional and social in a broad sense – the aim is to increase the migrants' networks and social capital (Marchetti 2016). Finally, the reception project must also pay attention to how the migrants will integrate into the local area after leaving the reception system, offering them the chance to look towards the future, beyond the momentary condition of emergency (Faso & Bontempelli 2017). These activities may include recouping their previous educational and professional background (e.g., through the recognition of qualifications gained in the country of origin) or acquiring new skills (through enrolment in professional training courses), in order to foster their gradual insertion in the labour market.

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[4] The Italian title of the text is: *Manuale operativo per l'attivazione e la gestione di servizi di accoglienza integrata in favore di richiedenti e titolari di protezione internazionale e umanitaria*. In this and the following essays, we will refer to the text by its English title.

In the *Operational Manual for the Activation and Management of Integrated Reception Services* (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018), this holistic approach is also emphasized for vulnerable individuals (victims of violence or torture, trafficking, mental distress, psychological fragility). In these situations, the – fundamental – psychological and psychiatric assistance should be combined with socio-economic integration pathways and other legal and social guidance services (Caroselli 2018). «In this context, emphasis is placed on the capacity of the reception project to 'wait' for the individual's timeline, especially for those with specific vulnerabilities in their inclusion process. However, it is crucial to recognize that residency within a reception project must necessarily be temporary. Prolonged stays without clear exit planning risk undermining the effectiveness of any interventions» (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018, 7).

The management of "integrated" reception interventions requires teamwork and the development of multidimensional and multi-professional case management models. Indeed, it is unequivocally recognized that «the inadequacy of individual knowledge and individual professionals must necessarily be put together, from the outset, into a functional, transversal organisation» (Maccari, Gonnelli & Corridori 2019, 285).[5] Furthermore, «this group must evolve into a work team whose individual members share objectives and integrate their tasks, responsibilities, skills and expertise […]. By valuing the differences among its members, the work team defines its professional and methodological characteristics, as well as its identity. A work team functions effectively when everyone feels a sense of belonging» (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018, 9-10). Therefore, strategies should be implemented to build resilient teams capable of developing participatory and shared working methodologies, so as to empower all the professionals involved (Acocella 2021).

Similarly, integrated taking charge implies that the reception system engages in dialogue with the local context in which it operates. Indeed, in a holistic and multidisciplinary approach, networking and collaboration with the institutional actors, associations, and both public and private services on the territory are crucial to making migrants' social inclusion paths effective (Radice 2008; Tarsia 2018). Indeed, this networking is indispensable in order to share resources and integrate professional skills that are lacking within the project teams. In the same way, it is functional to not consider the interventions for asylum seekers and refugees a "parallel system", but «an integral part of local welfare and complementary to other public services to citizens guaranteed on the territory» (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018, 7). In this

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[5] Translation into English by the author.

way, even when activated for asylum seekers and refugees, these services can be considered an «added value for the area, capable of driving change and boosting the network of services available to both the native and migrant communities» (*Ibi*, 8). Therefore, it is necessary to promote coordination and collaboration between public and private actors providing these services, in order to share resources, information and expertise in a synergistic manner. This approach should also align and integrate operational processes to avoid duplication and improve the efficiency of caring for this segment of the population, who face numerous vulnerabilities due to the traumas suffered and the journeys undertaken to escape peril (Maccari, Gonnelli & Corridori 2019; Lattarulo 2024).

Ultimately, "reception" and "integration" refer to the promotion of an integrated approach to the management interventions aimed at supporting pathways to social inclusion. However, it should be noted that while an integrated approach was present in the guidelines that shaped the initial development of Italy's national system of international protection, the situation has since changed, particularly concerning measures for asylum seekers. Indeed, as detailed in Chapter 1 by Acocella, the progressive transformation of the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) into the Reception and Integration System (SAI) has led to governmental and extraordinary reception centres becoming the ordinary facilities for hosting asylum seekers. Furthermore, it is stipulated that these centres must provide only health, social and linguistic-cultural mediation services.[6] Currently, the only asylum seekers that can be received in the SAI reception system are Afghans and Ukrainians, people arriving as a result of humanitarian evacuation operations and vulnerable groups. These individuals only have access to first-level "reception" services, which include material, health, social, legal and linguistic assistance, while second-level "integration" services, which include social, labour and housing inclusion actions, are only guaranteed to the remaining categories of people hosted in the SAI.[7] Thus, while the "reception" and "integration" binomial in an integrated approach to the management of interventions aimed at supporting pathways to social inclusion remains intact for beneficiaries of international protection, the "binary" logic that has prevailed in Italy in recent years seems to have significantly undermined the achievement of this objective for asylum seekers (Giovannetti 2023).

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[6] Law no. 50/2023.
[7] Law no. 173/2020 and Law no. 50/2023.

Good governance practices in the region of Tuscany

Sheet 1: TEAMS PROJECT – Tuscany Empowerment Actions for Migrant System

The creation of an integrated governance model – centred on multi-professional teams and networking with various services in the area – is also emphasised as a strategic objective in the Tuscany Region's *White Paper on Reception Policies for Asylum Seekers and International or Humanitarian Protection Holders*.[8] In detail, it emphasises that «[f]or the reception process to take place in accordance with personal needs and those expressed by the host area, taking charge procedures must be managed in a perspective fully integrated with welfare policies» (Regione Toscana-ANCI 2017, 18) and within a more general planning of territorial policies for immigration. Therefore, the objective is to overcome fragmented and emergency approaches to the migration phenomenon, with a view to strengthening social cohesion, by favouring "community" solutions and promoting integrated intervention models on the territory to combat vulnerability (Giannelli 2019; Gori 2019). The need to create a civil society that, in line with the principles of the "White Paper", excludes the abandonment and marginalization of foreigners, has become even more relevant in the face of evolving national measures on international protection which risk exposing asylum seekers and refugees to greater social deprivation.

From the path of construction and sharing of the "White Paper", arose numerous projects within #AccoglienzaToscana, a project carried out by the Tuscany Region in collaboration with ANCI Toscana.[9] The aim has been to strengthen the integrated service of orientation and accompaniment of foreigners, specifically third-country nationals, asylum seekers and holders of protection status. In detail, the lines of action have aimed to develop "new models of integrated taking charge" to appropriately respond to the needs of «fragile subjects and those at risk of marginalization, while minimizing the

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[8] The Italian title of the text is: *Libro Bianco sulle politiche di accoglienza di richiedenti asilo politico e protezione internazionale*. In this essay and the following ones, we will refer to the text by its English title. For the English version of the "White Paper" see:
https://accoglienza.toscana.it/documents/2362619/0/White+Paper+on+immigration+policies.pdf/67cbcbad-cd33-f051-f146-f8de7cd6281d?t=1642585526331.

[9] ANCI is the acronym for the National Association of Italian Municipalities.

differences between territories and between user groups in terms of timeliness, appropriateness and quality» (Maccari, Gonnelli & Corridori 2019, 285)[10].

These actions include the "TEAMS Project – Tuscany Empowerment Actions for Migrant Systems", funded under the 2014-2020 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (FAMI) call. Implemented between 2018 and 2023, the partners of the project were ANCI Toscana, the Municipality of Florence, the Municipality of Prato, the Pisa Health Society[11], the Institute of Legal Informatics and Judicial Systems (IGSG) and 3 high schools from Grosseto, Lucca and Prato.

The main purpose of the project was to propose an integrated system of actions to strengthen and provide high-quality services aimed at third-country nationals. Therefore, the actions were not only designed for asylum seekers and refugees but all foreigners in a vulnerable condition on the territory. Indeed, the main objective of the regional authority was to favour a greater connection among reception and integration services for persons with a foreign background and the planning of social inclusion policies, with a view to promoting integrated intervention and take-charge models on the regional territory to combat vulnerability.

The project actions were co-planned with and participated in by the main public and private actors in the territory working in the field of immigration.

Among the various activities promoted, here we would like to point out Work Package 2 "Promoting Access to Integration Services". The purpose of the WP was to test pilot projects to ameliorate the access to services for migrants and the effectiveness of the foreign national integration processes, by improving the capabilities of public services with particular reference to socio-occupational inclusion.

In particular, the work package designed a new model of integrated social and labour caretaking: single access points (Italian acronym: PUA), which were tested in three intervention programmes in various parts of the territory. The single access points were divided into two levels: "first-level PUAs" providing information and orienting migrants towards services in the area, thanks also to communication channels interconnecting different administrative offices; and "second-level PUAs" carrying out individual assessments

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[10] Translation into English by the author.
[11] In Italian "Società della Salute" (Italian acronym: SDS). In Tuscany, SDSs are public consortia formed by the municipalities of a social-health area and the Local Health Authority. Their main goal is to ensure the integration of local health, social, and welfare services (Regional Law no. 60/2008, amending Regional Law no. 40/2005).

and providing an integrated social and labour response, thanks to the involvement of a multidisciplinary team (composed of municipality and employment centres, social workers and active labour policy experts) and the identification of a complex network of services in the area (involving municipality migration offices, social services, Local Health Authorities, employment centres, adult education centres and third sector entities). The aim of this integrated action was to design, monitor and evaluate more articulated intervention pathways, with a focus on social and labour integration, also thanks to the coordination with the activities of another FAMI project managed by the Tuscany Region, "COMMIT – Competenze migranti in Toscana" (COMMIT – Migrant Skills in Tuscany), implemented in the same years.[12] Attention was also paid to pathways for learning the Italian language, access to social services and housing issues. The project stood out in particular for its emphasis on bolstering the figure of the cultural mediator who worked in close collaboration with the migrants, the multidisciplinary team and the service providers.

Ultimately, in line with the principles and guidelines of the "White Paper", the aspects that distinguish the three intervention programs in terms of "best practices" can be summarized in three points. The first is the realization of a facilitated access, designed to respond to the specific needs of foreigners but inserted within the generalist one, which could accompany the foreigner, in perspective, to acquire the ability to access and use services independently. The second element relates to improving the local services' ability to take charge of foreigners, helping them acquire the necessary capacity and flexibility to "read" migration issues and deal with them effectively. Finally, the third strong point was that it put together an integrated network of services able to provide complex responses and work in synergy to design integration paths for migrants in vulnerable conditions.

In relation to this third, most sensitive point, explored in detail above, the Tuscany Region, in collaboration with ANCI and the project partners, carried out two actions that are worth pointing out.

The first action was to map the various systems of integrated caretaking of foreign nationals in 21 of the (at that time) 26 socio-sanitary districts of Tuscany Region, with a special focus on the territories of Florence, Prato and Pisa. The purpose was to explore and analyse the governance networks present in the areas in order to identify aspects that could be of use in carrying

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[12] The COMMIT project will be dealt with below. For more information see Annalisa Tonarelli's contribution in this text.

forward Action 2 of the TEAMS project. In detail, in the absence of comprehensive and homogeneous information at the regional level on the actors that make up the territorial networks or on the different models of integrated care-taking, it was decided to collect information through a questionnaire addressed to the public actor as a privileged witness. The questionnaire was made up of three sections: the first related to the compiler's data and role in the network; the second related to the existing relationships with various actors in the area in correspondence to the different stages of the taking-charge process; and the third related to the types of taking charge promoted in the area and the governance tools (e.g., multidisciplinary teams, network agreements/protocols and coordination tables), as well as perceptions of the effectiveness and responsiveness of the network. The survey output consisted of ego-network schemes, obtained on the basis of a Social Network Analysis (SNA), for each area, that is, sociograms with the respondent public in the centre showing the interconnections with the macro-categories of actors identified in the different stages of caregiving. The sociograms made it possible to visualize and examine the structure of the network, the presence (or absence) and density of the connections, the characteristics of the macro-categories (e.g., number and type of actors involved and areas of intervention), and the opinions expressed on the relational dynamics (e.g., intensity or usefulness). Sociograms were also made for the various stages of the care-taking process – orientation, needs assessment, design, intervention implementation and monitoring – for each area. It should be pointed out that the displayed networks represent a "partial", albeit informed, point of view, since they only highlight the perspective of the public actor. The assessments of other actors and their interactions remained unknown. Creating a database on the subjects of the various identified networks could provide a basis for further research to integrate the missing perspectives.

The second action was to draft an "orientated network agreement model" linking the services taking charge of foreign nationals in order to strengthen and standardize these actions in the regional territory. In detail, also on the basis of the experience gained with the PUAs, the main objective of the orientated network agreement was to strengthen the ties between public services, private social services and third sector entities in an integrated taking-charge system with more closely shared objectives and operating methods. Hence, this could boost the appropriateness, equity and sustainability of the interventions. Tools for periodic confrontation between the actors involved could be, for example, multidisciplinary teams, coordination tables, training workshops, and co-programming and co-planning activities. In the orientated network agreement model, it is reported that the integrated care pathway can

be divided into various stages, such as orientation of the migrants to the local services and, where necessary, assessment of their needs in order to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate appropriate shared interventions within the network. Furthermore, according to this orientated network agreement, the actors in the network will be committed to sharing a generative welfare approach and systematizing the territorial resources in order to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the actions undertaken in a participatory and collaborative perspective of intervention.

For further information see:
https://www2.immigrazione.regione.toscana.it/?q=progetto-teams.
Work Package 2:
https://www2.immigrazione.regione.toscana.it/?q=node/5340

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Model of Integrated Social and Labour Caretaking: Single Access Points

- **Coordination table between regional and municipal levels**: Establish a platform for dialogue and coordination to ensure alignment and efficiency in managing services for foreign nationals.
- **Building a collaborative network with the third sector**: Engage non-profit organisations, NGOs, and other civil society actors to enhance the scope and effectiveness of services.
- **Research observatory**: Develop a system to map and monitor various systems of integrated caretaking for foreign nationals at the local level.
- **Breakdown of network actors**: Define roles and responsibilities for different stages of the caretaking process, including orientation, needs assessment, design, intervention implementation, and monitoring.
- **Aggregation of territories**: Combine resources and services across multiple territories to provide comprehensive care.
- **Multidisciplinary teams**: Form teams with diverse expertise to address the complex needs of foreign nationals.
- **Linguistic-cultural mediators**: Employ mediators to bridge language and cultural gaps, ensuring effective communication and understanding.
- **Training for service providers**: Enhance the capacity of local services to care for foreign nationals through specialized training programs.

- **Oriented Network Agreement Model**: Establish agreements linking various services (e.g., health services, social services, language teaching centres, employment centres) to standardize and strengthen actions across the regional territory.
- **Promotion of governance tools to implement the model**: Implement multidisciplinary teams, network agreements/protocols, and coordination tables.
- **Database of all actors**: Create a comprehensive database of all actors involved in the networks across municipalities and different areas within the regional territory.

Sheet 2: SOCIAL PROTECTION – Providing support for newly adults who arrived in Italy as unaccompanied minors

The presence of unaccompanied foreign minors (MSNA in Italian) in Italy, though fluctuating, represents a significant phenomenon. In Italy, the rights and procedures concerning MSNAs are governed by civil law regarding minors (Civil Code, Law no. 184/83), as well as immigration and asylum legislation, such as Legislative Decree no. 286/1998 and Legislative Decree no. 142/2015, which outline the reception system for MSNAs (De Filippo, Iermano & Tizzi 2024, 42).

Law no. 47/17, known as the Zampa Law, is the first comprehensive law addressing the protection of unaccompanied foreign minors. It aims to overcome the lack of coordination between various regulations, strengthen the protection system, and ensure uniform application across the country. Law no. 47/2017 introduced the role of the voluntary guardian, who provides legal representation and support for unaccompanied foreign minors. This role ceases when the minor turns 18. However, the need for support and social orientation for newly adult boys and girls often continues, as they are generally not yet fully autonomous.

As one former MSNA stated, «I still need someone who understands how the job market works and how to renew documents» (Oxfam 2023). A former volunteer guardian added, «I couldn't assist him at the police station because I no longer had an institutional role. He didn't need my presence for the signature, but he would have appreciated my support, even for the language» (Oxfam 2023).

Most unaccompanied minors arriving in Italy are already 17 years old, and the path to social inclusion requires time and careful attention during the

transition to adulthood. The European Commission's 2020 Integration and Inclusion Plan emphasises the importance of this transition for minors who lack a familial and social support network in the host country. When a minor becomes a legal adult, losing the protections afforded to minors, the presence of a guardian can be crucial. A social guardian can facilitate effective inclusion, ease communication with institutions and services, and ensure continued support beyond the age of majority.

Since the enactment of Law no. 47/2017, the roles of guardians and voluntary guardians have gained recognition among institutions. However, legitimizing their role as social guardians remains a challenge. A partial solution has been to include the name of the voluntary guardian in administrative continuation decrees (in Italian: prosieguo amministrativo)[13], allowing them to continue supporting the newly adult individuals who request it. Indeed, advocacy efforts under the "Never Alone – for a Possible Tomorrow" initiative have led some Juvenile Courts to include the title of "social guardian" in administrative continuation decrees.

The Juvenile Court of Messina was the first to do so with a decree on March 10, 2021, recognizing the continued support role of a former guardian in the socio-cultural integration process. This practice has since expanded, including at the Juvenile Court of Florence, where from May 2021 to June 2023, 56 administrative continuation decrees included this recognition.

We can classify this procedure as good practice, as it protects the human rights of vulnerable individuals, such as unaccompanied foreign minors, during their delicate transition to adulthood. Indeed, this practice provides formal acknowledgment of a relationship that, while no longer legally representative, continues to assist in social and employment integration.

The successes in Tuscany, particularly by the Juvenile Court of Florence, have facilitated collaboration between institutions and the third sector. A Memorandum of Understanding, approved by the regional resolution no. 125/24 on February 12, 2024, involves several stakeholders, including the

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[13] Article 13 of Law no. 47/2017 establishes the provision for "administrative continuation" (in Italian: prosieguo amministrativo), allowing social services to continue supporting unaccompanied foreign minors beyond the age of 18 and up to, at most, 21 years old. This law grants the territorially competent Juvenile Court the authority to order such administrative continuation. It may be ordered in cases where an unaccompanied foreign minor, upon reaching adulthood, requires extended support to ensure successful social integration and autonomy. The request for administrative continuation must be submitted to the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Juvenile Court or directly to the Juvenile Court before the minor turns 18. This request can be made by social services, the voluntary guardian, or the minor themselves, who may be represented by a lawyer or supported by reception centre operators or child protection organisations.

Tuscany Region, the Juvenile Court of Florence, ANCI Toscana, the Istituto degli Innocenti[14], the Regional Guarantor for Children and Adolescents, and the Association of Volunteer Guardians of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors in Tuscany. This document legitimizes the role of the social guardian as a continuation of the voluntary guardian, serving as a mediator and facilitator with institutions and services. The signatories commit to ongoing training and support for voluntary and social guardians, promoting shared practices and joint planning.

The Memorandum establishes a regional coordination conference to foster collaboration among local institutions and develop concrete support for voluntary and social protection. This network aims to promote the personal, economic, and housing autonomy of newly adult individuals through participatory and co-designed pathways, balancing the need for educational support during the transition to adulthood with the need for independence and self-determination.

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

*Support Tools for Young Adults Who Arrived in Italy
as Unaccompanied Foreign Minors*

- **Tools for transition to adulthood (18-21 years)**: Implement support tools like administrative continuation decrees to assist unaccompanied foreign minors as they transition into adulthood.
- **Formalising the role of the "voluntary guardian"**: Establish and formalise the role of a specially trained citizen, not necessarily a lawyer, who provides legal representation for minors and facilitates their social inclusion within the local community.
- **Coordination and liaison tools**: Develop coordination and liaison mechanisms between the regional government and local actors (e.g.,

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[14] The *Istituto degli Innocenti* in Florence is one of the oldest public institutions in Italy dedicated to the care, education and protection of children. It also conducts studies, research, and training activities on the conditions of children and young people to support national, regional, and local policies. In relation to this activity, the Institute manages the documentation and monitoring activities of the National Centre for Documentation and Analysis for Childhood and Adolescence, as well as the Regional Centre for Childhood and Adolescence Documentation.

social services, juvenile courts, asylum application assessment commissions, third sector) to standardize practices and ensure consistency at the regional level.

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Healthcare

by *Sara Albiani**, *Maria José Caldés Pinilla***, *Giuseppe Cardamone****, *Laura delli Paoli*****, *Barbara Mamone****** and *Sergio Zorzetto*******[1]

International protection applicants and refugees are entitled to rights guaranteed by national, European, and international laws. Among these rights, the request for international protection and any subsequent approval guarantee the right to healthcare through mandatory enrolment in the National Health Service (Italian acronym: SSN) under the same conditions as Italian citizens[2]. This assistance is also guaranteed in the case of reception within the national reception system for asylum seekers and refugees without means of subsistence. However, as detailed (Chapter 1 by Acocella), Law no. 50/2023 eliminated psychological assistance in governmental reception centres and extraordinary reception centres. These centres are now the standard places for the reception of asylum seekers, except in the case of vulnerable individuals who are still allowed to be received in the SAI network.[3]

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[2] The complex structure of registration methods and timelines, along with related exemptions, has significant implications. For detailed information, refer to the regional guidelines for the application of the regulations on healthcare for non-Italian citizens present in Tuscany, revised and updated in accordance with Tuscany regional resolution no. 1146 of August 3, 2020.

[3] The reference norm defining vulnerabilities within the Italian reception framework, in accordance with Directive 2013/33/EU, is Article 17, c. 1 of Legislative Decree no. 142/2015.

International protection applicants and holders (hereafter referred to as RTPI), despite being mostly young in age, often have specific and complex socio-health needs and suffer from significant illnesses at higher rates compared to the local population. The first WHO Global Report on the Health of Refugees and Migrants, launched in July 2022, highlights that "migrant status itself can be a health determinant that plays a role and makes them particularly vulnerable from a health perspective".[4] It is estimated that 33% of refugees are diagnosed with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, while anxiety disorders are estimated to affect 15% of them.

As confirmed by the WHO Report, the RTPI population represents a high-risk group (especially women) for the onset of health and mental health issues, due to the frequent occurrence of extreme trauma in their life history, often visible in physical outcomes or sometimes latent and requiring careful observation. The effects of torture and other inhumane and degrading treatments unfortunately manifest both physically and psychologically.

In particular, the RTPI women, who are fewer in number than men, are at even higher risk. Sexual violence against women is a constant practice, both in their countries of origin and in transit countries, becoming a recurring and deliberately used weapon during conflicts.[5] Historically, in cases of conflict, violence against women and girls is a widespread practice that manifests in all its forms, from gang rapes to those committed in front of family members, to rapes perpetrated by military personnel, as well as forced marriages. Such acts are recognized, even under international law, as a weapon used to terrorize the enemy, to uproot or defame an ethnic group by targeting the symbolic significance associated with femininity and the female body within specific human groups. Women are not only physically and morally destroyed, but by shattering their identity, the aim is to harm and humiliate the entire community. Women are universally symbolling motherhood and wifehood,

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This Article stipulates: "The reception measures provided for in this decree take into account the specific situation of vulnerable persons, such as: minors, unaccompanied minors, persons with disabilities, the elderly, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of human trafficking, persons suffering from serious illnesses or mental disorders, persons who have been found to have suffered torture, rape, or other forms of serious psychological, physical, or sexual violence or related to sexual orientation or gender identity, victims of female genital mutilation". This provision ensures that the reception system in Italy considers the particular needs of vulnerable persons, providing them with appropriate assistance to address their conditions and support their integration process.

    [4]   https://www.who.int/teams/health-and-migration-programme/world-report-on-the-health-of-refugees-and-migrants.

    [5] It is emphasized that sexual violence has been recognized by the United Nations as a "war tactic", and this recognition has been endorsed by both the International Criminal Tribunals established for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (Cassese 2005).

but also as the bearers of future generations. As Rivera (2010) claims, hance, rape is intended to target the potential bearers of future enemies, to contaminate them with one's own seed, forcing them to procreate 'bastard' children, and to humiliate and subjugate the men on the enemy side.

Only in recent years has Italy begun to grapple with the phenomenon of significant waves of forced migrants, who present clinical conditions compatible with those of victims of extreme and intentional violence. Empirical data collected through specific interventions carried out in recent years in Tuscany indicate that 50% of the RTPI population shows signs of torture, rape, or other forms of psychological, physical, or sexual violence (Mamone & Zorzetto 2024). Not all of them exhibit psychological issues (as highlighted by the WHO Report); sometimes the consequences may result in physical problems, leading to the onset or chronicization of other conditions, including sexual and reproductive health disorders.

In this complex context, two main levels of intervention are required: that of reception operators and that of public socio-healthcare service providers. To ensure adequate healthcare that considers the specific problems described above, several factors must be taken into account.

Firstly, it is important to recognize that understanding the health conditions of asylum seekers cannot be separated from the legal process concerning them. On the one hand, their general health conditions – or illness – and/or the specific causes that have led to them can contribute to determining the recognition of some form of protection (Ministero della Salute 2017). On the other hand, international literature shows that legal certainty helps promote the mental health of this population, at least mitigating the symptoms of their suffering (Cleveland, Rousseau & Guzder 2014).

A second set of factors that healthcare for refugees and asylum seekers must consider involves the social determinants of health, which also include ecological and historical-political factors related to the country of origin, transit countries, and the more or less definitive destination country (Inglese 2024). At this level of analysis, environmental and ecological stressors (pollution, climate change, etc.), political violence (wars, permanent conflict for control over local or national power in collapsed States, official or unofficial discrimination and abuse against individuals or groups seen as others in terms of politics, ethnicity, or religion, torture, and so on), and structural violence exercised by social and institutional contexts must be considered. These factors may affect the country of origin of asylum seekers and refugees but exert their weight throughout the migratory journey, during which additional stressful and traumatic factors are added: predatory and extortionate

violence by local criminal groups, logistical violence by traffickers, imprisonments linked to migration and border policies in various countries, the risk of death, and physical consequences resulting from specific travel conditions and the places crossed (extreme dehydration, freezing, hunger, falls from means of transport, shipwreck, etc.) (Crepet *et al.* 2017; Rossi 2021).

The social determinants of health related to the reception context must also be considered. Indeed, the experience within the reception system creates a specific type of institutionalized life that endures for a long time and can reactivate and/or induce specific experiences of suffering, with risks to individual and collective mental health (Zorzetto 2022). This reactivation or induction may be linked, for example, to the barriers or obstacles that the reception system directly or indirectly imposes on the achievement of urgent objectives by the asylum seeker or refugee (e.g., sending remittances to the family for the repayment of pre-existing debts or debts related to the escape from the country) (Alderighi & Sbriccoli 2024; Almagioni *et al.* 2024). On the other hand, the reactivation or induction may simply result from the repetition of the experience within the reception structures of that condition of dependence, infinite waiting, and the inability to access an adult and autonomous social self, which had been one of the driving forces, or the driving force, of the escape from the country of origin (Cutolo 2019).

Finally, to be effective, health care must also be culturally sensitive. Cultural sensitivity concerns first and foremost the anthropopoietic effects of the enculturation processes (i.e. the ways in which human beings are reproduced within their original groups since primary socialization). However, it must be able to grasp and consider the positive and negative effects of acculturative processes. These later processes occur during the migration journey, in the host country and ubiquitously through social media. With respect to the country of origin, it is appropriate to consider the cultural factors underlying specific or general pathological conditions (e.g., cultural violence linked to values or norms of the reference group), as well as those influencing the experience of illnesses, specific clinical configurations and care-seeking behaviours (Devereux 2007; Inglese & Cardamone 2010; Inglese & Cardamone 2017; Inglese & Cardamone 2022). Taking into account the cultural dimension of suffering and care means considering the fact that the pathological process and the experience of illness originate and develop in specific cultural worlds. These worlds are reproduced in the historical processes of the respective human groups, which may involve cultural inertias, continuities, innovations and hybridisations. These specific worlds have their own ontological structuring connected and intertwined with specific visions of the person – of his or her constituents, social and cosmic relations (Sahlins 2022)

– and with equally specific visions of what is health, illness, disease and, finally, cure. People who come from other geographical contexts, even when fleeing from them, never represent "naked life". They are always traversed by all the aforementioned cultural elements, and – even more so – they embody them. Consequently, the interaction with them, in the first instance, doesn't simply mean meeting people as individuals but as representatives of groups and vectors of cultural visions. For the host society this necessarily entails continuous mediation during care processes, at linguistic and cultural level. Both levels of mediation proved necessary for mental suffering and disorders and for strictly medical conditions (Nathan 1996; Nathan & Lewertowski 1998; Bouznah & Lewertowski 2017). Similar methodological indications concerning the need for linguistic and cultural mediation continue to prove their clinical usefulness with respect to health issues arising from intentional political violence affecting individuals or groups (Sironi 2007; Zorzetto 2019; Mamone & Zorzetto 2024).

In this complex framework concerning the health needs of RTPI, the strategies that the health service is called upon to implement, and the social and cultural determinants that influence them, the national reception system plays a key role that requires a continuous relationship of collaboration and dialogue with local health and social services. As stated in the *Operational Manual for the Activation and Management of Integrated Reception Services* (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018), the reception project must include a section dedicated to the health area within each beneficiary's file, which must be kept constantly updated to ensure traceability of the health interventions performed, even after the beneficiary exits the project. The multidisciplinary team is required, with the support of local services, to ensure healthcare is provided as part of the personalized reception plan, through a holistic approach that takes into account both the complexity and the needs of each individual. Within the team, it is important to identify one or more health focal points for each beneficiary, who will become the reference point for the shared healthcare strategy, gathering the necessary information emerging from the individual interviews the beneficiary has with different operators. The health focal point is also responsible for: 1) deepening their knowledge of regional healthcare regulations; 2) defining a mapping of local health and social services available to beneficiaries and the necessary care.

Among the key health figures is the psychologist, who, as mentioned, is no longer provided for in first reception facilities. In the SAI system, the psychologist is not necessarily a permanent member of the team, but plays a key role in taking charge of the beneficiary, also establishing a peer-level dialogue and collaboration with local psycho-social health services. In this

way, the psychologist facilitates these services' understanding of the RTPI's complex psychological and social needs. This institutional mediation between the reception system and public services can also help the beneficiary understand the relevance and appropriateness of psycho-social health interventions for their situation and condition. Given that the reception involves people from different countries and contexts, the psychologist must include specific training pathways to develop cultural sensitivity and professional skills in transcultural clinical contexts. These skills are even more essential when reception services are provided for people with specific vulnerabilities, such as support for victims of torture or extreme violence, or survivors of a serious risk of death during their journey by sea or land, due to particular dangers faced (shipwrecks, hypothermia, etc.). In such cases, where signs and symptoms of acute anxiety or post-traumatic stress may be recognized and specific interventions may be activated, the psychologist must consider how these are embedded in the beneficiary's specific conceptions of the self, illness, and care, and is therefore called upon to adopt appropriate cultural mediation strategies.

Special attention should be given to all situations requiring specialized measures due to specific vulnerabilities. To address these, it is important to build a network of collaboration capable of activating local public and no profit private services as needed. In managing more complex cases, the Ministry of the Interior coordinated an inter-institutional Working Group that led to the drafting of a *Handbook for the Identification, Referral and Care of Persons Living with Vulnerabilities Entering Italy and within the Protection and Reception System*, an operational tool aimed at proposing uniform procedures and tools to be used at all stages of the reception process.[6]

Specifically, the organisational and methodological elements useful in cases of accommodating vulnerable individuals are:
- Having one or more healthcare focal points (Local Health Authority personnel) on the team for a more comprehensive and shared strategy within the team, and ensuring registration with the National Health Service (SSN), if not already done.
- Regular staff training on guiding principles, tools, and reference standards regarding special needs (e.g., psychological first aid, types and forms of gender-based violence).

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[6] https://www.interno.gov.it/it/stampa-e-comunicazione/pubblicazioni/vademecum-rilevazione-referral-e-presa-carico-persone-portatrici-vulnerabilita-arrivo-sul-territorio-ed-inserite-nel-sistema-protezione-e-accoglienza. For the English version see: https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2023-11/vademecum_vulnerabilities_31-web-eng.pdf.

- Preparation of culturally appropriate and accessible informational material (e.g., informative brochures, pocket leaflets, and/or digital information tools) on special needs, available services, and access rights.
- Linguistic-cultural mediation services, respecting gender differences wherever possible, both in the guest's multidisciplinary relationship with social and health services, and in any processes of support, rehabilitation, care, and certification of violence, torture, or other forms of severe physical, psychological, or sexual violence.
- Structured networking with other local services, both public and no profit private, to complement the team's skills with external expertise (for example, in cases of victims of gender-based violence and/or trafficking, or suspected cases), and when the health conditions of those accommodated require targeted care, support, and rehabilitation measures (involvement of the Local Health Authority, Mental Health Centres, hospitals, etc.).

Finally, «some vulnerabilities (e.g., in case of victims of torture) must be attested by a certification issued by public health service personnel. This certification is a valuable support for the Territorial Commission in the process of recognizing international protection» (*Handbook on Vulnerabilities* 2023, 9).

The elimination of psychological assistance services in first reception centres, established by Law no. 30 of 2023, eliminates or at least makes it extremely difficult to identify and support psychological vulnerabilities. In this regard, at least two critical issues should be raised. First, this represents a reduction of services that should be guaranteed based on EU directives in order to protect the fundamental rights of RTPI, including mental health (notably, Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 26 June 2013). Second, Secondly, although the transfer of vulnerable asylum seekers to the SAI network is foreseen, the elimination of the psychologist role makes it more difficult to identify individuals with special needs, risking the denial of access to SAI project even to those who are entitled to it.

Good practices related to healthcare in the Tuscany region

Sheet 1: The Regional Center for Global Health (CSG)

The Global Health Center (CSG) of the Tuscan region, operationally part of the AOU Meyer IRCCS[7], functions as the regional coordination structure for global health, international health cooperation, and migrant health, as established by Article 7-*bis* of Regional Law no. 84 of 2015, which pertains to the "Reorganisation of the institutional and organisational structure of the regional health system – amendments to Regional Law no. 40/2005" under the title "Global Health and the Fight Against Inequalities". The strategic goal of the CSG is to facilitate access to social and health services for migrants and to ensure improved prevention and care pathways through targeted and coordinated interventions at the regional level to guarantee equity and appropriateness in healthcare provision.

Since 2016, the CSG has coordinated a network of referents for migrant health, appointed by the General Directors of the Local Health Authorities (territorial and hospital) to which they belong. The creation of an active network was in response to the need to address issues related to the protection of migrant health from a multi-level and inter-institutional perspective, promoting a unified strategy, shared practices, and standardizing procedures. For this reason, the Tuscan network of referents for migrant health and its relationship with the CSG and the Tuscany Region has become a recognized national model/best practice. On these premises, the "White Paper" emphasises the need to recognize the role of the CSG «in the regional coordination of migrant health care in connection with the competent directorates of Regione Toscana» (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017, 29).[8]

Starting in 2018 with regional resolution no. 1000, a process was initiated to strengthen the role of the network of AUSL[9] referents for migrant health

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[7] AOU Meyer IRCCS is the Italian acronym for: Azienda ospedaliera Universitaria Meyer – Istituto di ricovero e cura a carattere scientifico. In English: Meyer University Hospital – Scientific Hospitalization and Treatment Institute.

[8] For the English version of the "White Paper" see:
https://accoglienza.toscana.it/documents/2362619/0/White+Paper+on+immigration+policies.pdf/67cbcbad-cd33-f051-f146-f8de7cd6281d?t=1642585526331.

[9] AUSL is the Italian acronym for: Azienda Unità Sanitaria Locale. In English: Local Health Authority.

as an interface between the regional level and the District Zone/Health Society level[10], including in terms of human resources. Leveraging the experience gained over the years, the projects tested, the professional expertise and relationships developed, as well as the challenges encountered, this strengthening of governance has led the CSG to outline and propose a structure to the regional authority capable of best addressing the aforementioned needs. According to this proposal that is under assessment by the Tuscany Region Health Directorate, referents will be required to maintain constant dialogue with the CSG, acting as a liaison within the territories. The CSG, through its expertise and institutional role, and the referents, due to their presence and position within the Local Health Authorities, will represent a reciprocal resource. Effective interaction between these two entities will allow them to address the concrete needs of social and health operators and administrators, as well as those involved (no profit sector and other institutional entities). This collaboration will also help to highlight and value best practices and professional expertise within the Local Health Authorities, and ultimately, to find shared solutions and engage with the regional level. The efficient functioning of this mechanism will also provide the regional authority with elements for the development of policies supporting operational proposals aimed at reducing barriers to access and standardizing and enhancing interventions for the migrant population, as well as recognizing and valuing the skills of the involved operators.

Since its creation, the work of the CSG has covered a broad range of activities, including project development, support activities for the Tuscany Region, and interactions with various levels, from universities to the Florence Court, territorial commissions for the evaluation of asylum applications, other regional entities, and the Ministry of Health.

In 2020, the regional authority, with resolution no. 1007, adopted three national guidelines concerning the protection of migrants: 1) Guidelines for the treatment of psychiatric disorders in refugees and those with subsidiary protection who have suffered torture, rape, or other forms of severe violence; 2) Health checks upon arrival and protection pathways in reception centres; 3) Multidisciplinary protocol for age determination of unaccompanied foreign minors (Italian acronym: MSNA). At that time, the regional government also mandated the CSG to coordinate inter-agency working groups to develop operational procedures for their implementation.

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[10] Health Society: in Italian "Società della Salute" (Italian acronym: SDS). In Tuscany, SDSs are public consortia formed by the municipalities of a social-health area and the Local Health Authority. Their main goal is to ensure the integration of local health, social, and welfare services (Regional Law no. 60/2008, amending Regional Law no. 40/2005).

As the CSG, in agreement with the Tuscany Region, it was decided to start with the examination of the document for the age determination of MSNA. Through discussions with a working group established ad hoc, consisting of professionals from the involved Local Health Authorities (AUSL Toscana Centro, AOU Meyer, AUSL Toscana Sud Est, and AUSL Toscana Nord Ovest), the *Regional Guidelines for the Development of Procedures for Age Assessment of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors* were developed, approved by Director's Decree no. 11229 of 7 June 2022. Once this document was approved, the involved Local Health Authorities adopted it fully, identifying the Social Services Department as the point of contact with the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Juvenile Court and other members of the teams. In practice, the case manager in all involved Local Health Authorities was identified as the social worker.

Regarding the *Guidelines for Planning Assistance and Rehabilitation Interventions, as well as for the Treatment of Psychiatric Disorders in Refugees and Those with Subsidiary Protection Who Have Suffered Torture, Rape, or Other Forms of Severe Psychological, Physical, or Sexual Violence*, published in the Official Journal of the Italian Republic no. 95 on April 3, 2017, in implementation of Article 27, c. 1-*bis* of Legislative Decree no. 18/2014 and adopted by the Tuscany regional resolution no. 1007, the CSG was tasked with coordinating a working group composed of professionals from health facilities to "define uniform operational procedures at the regional level for the implementation and practical application of the aforementioned national provisions, taking into account the specifics and organisation of services in the Tuscany region". By appointment of the General Directors of the Local Health Authority of Tuscany, professionals were identified to form the "Steering Committee", responsible for developing the operational model in compliance with the Guidelines, under the coordination of the CSG. To implement them efficiently and effectively, the model includes a mechanism for identifying, reporting, managing, and caring for individuals with vulnerabilities related to violence suffered, and presupposes the establishment of a structure that can serve as a regional reference point, identifying already available and competent resources in the local health services.

In May 2020, the CSG also contributed to drafting the Guidelines for Reception Centres for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection (governmental centres and centres run by local authorities) during the COVID-19 health emergency, approved and disseminated by the regional government. This document aimed to provide the Local Health Authority of Tuscany, prefectures, local authorities, and managers of reception facilities with recommendations on how to best organise prevention and containment

actions for SARS-CoV-2 and manage symptomatic or confirmed COVID+ guests. To facilitate the implementation of the provisions contained in the Regional Ordinance no. 54 of 5 May 2020, the document also included indications for conducting serological screening for operators and guests of reception centres and managing positive tests. Additionally, it provided guidance for managing suspected or confirmed asymptomatic, mildly symptomatic, or symptomatic cases, emphasising the need for close collaboration between reception entities and local Public Health services and General Practitioners. Considering linguistic difficulties and cultural differences, to facilitate communication, the document referred to the institutional website of the region of Tuscany containing informational material, also available in the most common migrant languages.

Finally, in line with the initiatives undertaken by the regional government – also based on the guidelines outlined in the "White Paper" (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017) – through the SPRINT and I.C.A.R.E. projects (see below), the Tuscany Region, through the CSG, has developed the project proposal "PROSIT-PROMote Interdisciplinary Territorial Services for the Health of Asylum Seekers and Refugees". The project, presented under the Call for Proposals funded by the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund 2021-2027[11], has been approved for funding. During its implementation, the project aims to strengthen the specific resources and competencies within territorial social and health services, the multidisciplinary approach to care, and multi-level synergies – inter-institutional and inter-sectoral – among local actors. The project also seeks to enhance dialogue between social and health services and the reception system to improve the identification of needs, assessment, management, and rehabilitation, not only to ensure adequate health conditions for vulnerable individuals but also to improve their inclusion in the territory. Specifically, PROSIT provides for the establishment by each AUSL of at least one territorial multidisciplinary team (ETM) with the goal of supporting mental health services and the consulting network in the care and rehabilitation of RTPI and MSNA, and creating synergies with the reception system (local authorities, prefectures, territorial commissions for the evaluation of asylum applications, courts, and third-sector organisations) in pursuit of the aforementioned specific objectives. The ETMs will be composed of: ethnopsychologists, obstetricians, social workers and/or professional educators, cultural mediators, and anthropologists.

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[11] Specific Objective 1 Asylum – Implementation Measure 1.b) – Scope of Application 1.d) – Intervention e) – "Regional Plans for the Protection of Health for Asylum Seekers and Holders of International Protection in Vulnerable Conditions".

On this occasion, social and health professionals will be provided by the AUSL, either as contracted personnel selected through a specific procedure or with their own staff working additional hours, aiming to facilitate multi-disciplinary teamwork and the impact of the project on social and health services in terms of skill enhancement and long-term sustainability.

Throughout all these actions, the CSG has consistently paid great attention to developing training pathways for social and health staff, healthcare personnel, and administrative staff of the Local Health Authorities, as well as operators and cultural mediators from the third sector in Tuscany. Training is viewed as an opportunity for mutual understanding, meeting, and team experimentation with a culturally oriented approach, and as a tool capable of initiating changes in practices and relationships with "the Other" from an inclusion perspective.

For further information see: https://www.centrosaluteglobale.eu/.

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Regional Coordination Structure to Implement and Standardize Migrants' Health Services

- **Regional structure for health protection**: Establish a regional structure to coordinate activities related to the health protection of migrants, adopting a multi-level and inter-institutional approach.
- **Network among Local Health Authorities**: Create a network among various Local Health Authorities to enhance collaboration and facilitate the exchange of information.
- **Guidelines and protocols**: Develop guidelines and protocols to promote a unified strategy, shared practices, and standardization procedures. This aims to facilitate access to social and health services for migrants and ensure improved prevention and care pathways.
- **Dedicated guidelines for vulnerabilities**: Provide specific guidelines for identifying, reporting, managing, and caring for individuals with vulnerabilities related to violence they have suffered.
- **Access points at Local Health Authorities**: Establish access points within Local Health Authorities staffed by qualified and dedicated personnel to support migrants' health needs.

- **Training courses for staff**: Offer training courses for both medical and administrative staff of local health services to improve their ability to care for migrants effectively.
- **Linguistic-cultural mediators**: Employ linguistic-cultural mediators to assist in communication and foster cultural understanding between healthcare providers and migrants.

Sheet 2: I.C.A.R.E. PROJECT – Integration and Community Assistance for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Emergency

The I.C.A.R.E. Project – Integration and Community Care for Asylum and Refugees in Emergency – funded by the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund of the European Union (direct financing by the EU Commission to regional body), aimed to improve access to local health services for holders or applicants of international protection. It focused on the second phase of reception, which involved the integration of asylum seekers and holders into the SAI system, promoting uniform and systematic assistance, with particular attention to women, through an integrated multidisciplinary intervention conducted by a multi-professional team with medical, psychological, and social expertise. ICARE involved Tuscany, Lazio, and Sicily as partners, with Emilia-Romagna as the lead region, and lasted a total of 3 years, from 2019 to 2022. In the following year, a second phase of the project, ICARE2, was funded by the Ministry of the Interior through the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund, which concluded in February 2024. ICARE2 differed from ICARE by targeting all non-EU foreigners legally residing in Italy and by expanding services to include the Regional Mental Health Departments.

In detail, the main objectives of the ICARE project were:
- To improve the reception phase and optimize access to local health services by providing multidisciplinary interventions that considered best practices implemented in various regions. This was the macro-objective from which all activities developed and, more generally, from which the entire project framework took shape.
- To ensure the implementation of cross-cutting interventions and national monitoring of project activities, ensuring as uniform and integrated a response as possible to create a model nationwide, establishing timely, specific, and targeted reception and care processes for holders and/or applicants of international protection in health vul-

nerability conditions. The objective concerned the interregional governance mechanism that was established with the project and materialized in constant dialogue between partner regions through participation in the national project board.

- To create ad hoc multidisciplinary pathways to adequately and promptly address the various health needs of holders or applicants of international protection. The services involved in implementing the project activities have strengthened and, in many cases, created multidisciplinary teams with specific professional skills and ad tailored pathways for RTPI with specific vulnerabilities.
- To implement digital tools for collecting health data on holders or applicants of international protection, to ensure continuity of care provided by the National Health Service during the various phases of the reception process and to record activities related to the early identification of vulnerabilities and health assessments, thereby avoiding duplications and resource waste.
- To activate training programs to improve the skills of public service professionals, no profit social workers, and associations both at the organisational and professional levels.
- To establish multidisciplinary and multi-professional teams within the Local Health Authorities, including linguistic-cultural mediation support, providing services based on user needs.

The project targeted holders or applicants of international protection, particularly women and minors, vulnerable subjects who have often been victims of abuse and mistreatment during the migration process, in conditions requiring appropriate attention and care from our local health services. However, the project also concerned men, who were evaluated by multidisciplinary team professionals and, if necessary, taken into care based on their level of psychological and physical vulnerability. «All refugees should be considered as potentially vulnerable individuals, as exile is inherently a traumatic experience. The particular vulnerability and suffering that each refugee carries do not necessarily and automatically translate into psychopathological disorders. RTPI victims of torture, rape, abuse, or extreme traumas of other types (prolonged solitary confinement and/or in inhumane and degrading conditions, shipwrecks, witnesses of violent deaths, etc.) may present manifest, latent, or sub-clinical psychopathological clinical pictures. This type of refugee should be considered high vulnerability and specific actions and procedures must be implemented to identify these individuals early. Identification is a crucial prerequisite for ensuring that as many as possible of the survivors of extreme violence receive a correct and timely clinical-diagnostic

evaluation, which leads to appropriate and prompt medical, psychological, and social care. Several studies indicate that about 25-30% of refugees have experienced torture, rape, or other forms of extreme violence. These are forms of traumatic experiences that fall into the category of *extreme traumas*. Extreme traumas are interpersonal traumas, repeated or prolonged over time, experienced under coercion or impossibility of escape. It is currently estimated that 33-75% of survivors of extreme traumas develop, in the period following the traumatic experience, a clear psychopathological disorder, which will also impact future generations (transgenerational torture)» (Guidelines for the care of refugees who are victims of torture, rape, or other forms of severe violence 2017, 44-45)[12].

Within the project, various training pathways were also implemented to improve the skills of public service operators, non-profit social workers and associations. These paths were activated with the objectives of: 1) increasing professional knowledge and skills of socio-healthcare operators in managing "diversity" in migrant health, with a specific focus on the maternal-child area; 2) promoting the development of communication strategies between health services and migrant reception structures; 3) facilitating access to care and health assistance for vulnerable subjects; 4) supporting the full and effective involvement of no profit sector operators and linguistic-cultural mediators in adequate assistance to vulnerable subjects.

In collaboration with the Centre for Studies and Research in International and Intercultural Health (CSI – Department of History, Cultures, Civilizations) at the University of Bologna, an anthropological training activity was organised and conducted in the "on-the-job" mode. The "on-the-job" formula, understood as field-based training and learning, was developed in response to the needs identified by operators and operators regarding difficulties in understanding, relating, and communicating in daily work with a heterogeneous migrant clientele, continually changing and carrying specific ideas, needs, and expectations related to health and illness processes. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant changes in the functioning, organisation, and access to services, as well as in living conditions, needs, and perceptions of users. This radical change in scenario, developed in the initial phases of the training pathway, led to the need to review work methodologies, as well as to expand the overall sense of the initiative

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[12] Ministero della salute (2017). *Linee guida per la programmazione degli interventi di assistenza e riabilitazione nonché per il trattamento dei disturbi psichici dei titolari dello status di rifugiato e dello status di protezione sussidiaria che hanno subito torture, stupri o altre forme gravi di violenza psicologica, fisica o sessuale*, approved by Ministerial Decree on April 2017. Translation into English by the authors.

related to new objectives and actions within the overall framework of project interventions. From the early weeks of the pandemic emergency, when all non-essential activities, including in-person training pathways, were halted, the entire work setup was reconsidered. In this sense, five different training pathways were planned, which were adapted during the project in both content and execution methods following the COVID-19 pandemic: the first for the staff identified and dedicated to project activities; the second for no profit operators and linguistic-cultural mediators; the third for the managers of the three Tuscan Local Health Authorities (project team); the fourth for the socio-healthcare staff of the Regional Health Service; and the fifth for administrative staff of the Local Health Authorities. The importance of training is primarily related to the need to expand the knowledge and skills of our healthcare operators, but also as a moment of knowledge and discussion among them, in favour of creating networks, and lastly as a form of «protection of the health of operators working with victims of torture, to prevent and intervene promptly on work-related stress, particularly in relation to burnout syndrome and 'vicarious traumatization'» (Guidelines for the care of refugees who are victims of torture, rape, or other forms of severe violence 2017, 60)[13].

In general, following the pandemic and the related containment measures, the European Commission approved the redefinition of some activities and expanded the target group to all foreign citizens, focusing on actions aimed at preventing SARS-CoV2 infection.

ICARE represented, in line with the guidelines indicated in the "White Paper" promoted by the Tuscany Region (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017), an opportunity to consolidate an integrated governance system of socio-health services dedicated to the migrant population with a view to strengthening the entire reception system, both at the regional and interregional levels. Furthermore, the interregional and multi-level governance system created by the project was considered a national best practice, so much so that it was cited in the Public Notice published by the Ministry of the Interior for the presentation of projects to be financed from the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund 2021-2027 "Regional Plans for the Protection of the Health of Asylum Seekers and Holders of International Protection in Vulnerable Conditions", within which the CSG, on behalf of the Tuscany regional administration, presented the PROSIT project proposal.

For further information see: https://www.progettoicare.it/home.

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[13] Translation into English by the authors.

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Interregional Governance Tools to Improve Access to Health Services for Asylum Seekers and Refugees with Health Vulnerabilities

- **Interregional coordination tools**: Develop tools to promote the exchange of information and best practices across regions, enhancing the care provided to asylum seekers and refugees with health vulnerabilities.
- **Guidelines for reception and care processes**: Create guidelines to ensure timely and appropriate reception and care processes for international protection holders and applicants with health vulnerabilities.
- **Collaboration network**: Establish a network between Local Health Authorities and reception centres to ensure uniform and systematic assistance for asylum seekers and refugees.
- **Specific pathways for vulnerable individuals**: Implement specific pathways to identify and intervene in cases of vulnerable individuals, with a focus on women and minors who are victims of abuse and mistreatment during migration.
- **Multi-professional team**: Ensure the presence of a multi-professional team with medical, psychological, and social skills within Local Health Authorities to address the complex needs of refugees and asylum seekers.
- **Linguistic-cultural mediation services**: Provide linguistic-cultural mediation services to facilitate communication and understanding between health professionals and patients.
- **Digital tools for health data collection**: Implement digital tools for the collection of health data for international protection holders or applicants, ensuring continuity of care provided by the health service.
- **Training courses for health authority managers**: Offer training courses for managers of Local Health Authorities, focusing on organisational aspects to improve service delivery.
- **Training courses for administrators**: Provide training for administrators of Local Health Authorities, covering legal and bureaucratic aspects to enhance their effectiveness in managing health services.
- **Training for medical personnel and reception service operators**: Conduct training courses focused on professional development and reducing burn-out risks for medical personnel and reception service operators.

- **Specific training for linguistic-cultural mediators**: Offer specialized training courses for linguistic-cultural mediators to improve their effectiveness in supporting migrants.
- **Anthropological training in "on-the-job" format**: Implement a teaching methodology that enhances anthropological training activities through practical, "on-the-job" experiences.

Sheet 3: SPRINT PROJECT – System of PRotection INTerdisciplinary for the Mental Health of Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Reception facilities, particularly first-level ones (such as government reception centres and extraordinary reception centres), which are the primary and main places of interaction between incoming migrants and local areas, are generally poorly prepared for early identification and management of mental health vulnerabilities due to general organisational factors and limited specific expertise. Conversely, local mental health services often lack both staff and ethnoclinical skills among their healthcare professionals. In this context, the Tuscany Region promoted the SPRINT Project – System of PRotection INTerdisciplinary for the Mental Health of Asylum Seekers and Refugees, funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (FAMI) 2014-2020. The project involved the three Local Health Authorities (Center, Northwest, Southeast) and the Regional Center for Global Health. The project started in 2017 and concluded at the end of 2018.

The project's goal was to promote a targeted and coordinated strategy to support the mental health of asylum seekers and international protection holders, involving a wide range of qualified professionals (psychologists, cultural anthropologists, professional educators, and linguistic-cultural mediators) and offering listening, assessment, intervention, and consultancy services to improve the psychological well-being and mental health of migrants.

Project Objectives:
- Increase cultural sensitivity among healthcare and reception service operators towards people and groups from different contexts who may have experienced traumatic events related to war, torture, persecution, and discrimination that have marked their biographies.
- Disseminate and promote technical knowledge and skills within the Regional Health Service to address the mental health needs of this population segment. This involved extensive training for Local Health Authority operators and the reception system, both through

face-to-face courses and e-learning (FAD), organised by the Regional Center for Global Health of Tuscany. The training covered different disciplines – such as epidemiology, global health, migration law, cultural anthropology and ethnopsychiatry – aiming to acquire more knowledge about migrant health and fundamental skills for assessing psychopathological vulnerabilities.

- Improve collaboration between the healthcare system and the reception system for asylum seekers and international protection holders, facilitating the early identification and assessment of potential psychopathological issues.
- Establish a multidisciplinary project team operating in integration with the Regional Health System, structured into a Regional Interdisciplinary Group (with coordination and second-level intervention functions for more complicated ethnoclinical situations and severe torture trauma) and Mobile Multidisciplinary Teams (one for each Province in the Region).

The SPRINT project targets were:

- Asylum seekers and international protection holders, allowing them to directly request listening from project personnel, assessment of emerging issues, and appropriate intervention according to their needs.
- Public Health Services in Tuscany, to refer their asylum seeker and international protection holder users for direct intervention by project personnel, particularly for torture victims and situations requiring specific cultural analysis in diagnostic and therapeutic processes; to request consultancy and supervision regarding diagnostic and therapeutic issues of their asylum seeker and international protection holder users; and to request coordination and connection with local and national reception system entities (organisations managing reception facilities, local authorities, prefectures, Central Service of the Asylum Seekers and Refugees Protection System).
- Local authorities and other public entities (municipalities, Health Societies, prefectures, territorial commissions for the evaluation of asylum applications, etc.) to request intervention to evaluate, monitor, and certify the care process of torture victims; perform a liaison role with Public Health Services.
- Civil Society organisations involved in reception and assistance to asylum seekers and international protection holders, as well as the reception structures where this population is accommodated, to re-

quest intervention to assess and care for the people they follow, accommodate, or assist; perform a liaison and coordination role with Public Health Services; and receive consultancy and supervision regarding reception and assistance to this population.

The project continued with the approval of a "second edition", SPRINT 2, which started in 2019 and concluded in 2023. SPRINT 2 continued and deepened the clinical and community mental health promotion activities of the first edition and expanded training activities not only to social, health, and reception operators but also directly to asylum seekers and refugees. This aimed to increase the health literacy of people in the Tuscan reception system. The health literacy service included activities to raise awareness about available health services and healthy lifestyles.

SPRINT and SPRINT 2 projects are the result of a regional project logic aimed at implementing the principles and guidelines of the "White Paper" promoted by the Tuscany Region: «Social-health care services taking charge of the most vulnerable cases is a widely reported need, but also one of the most delicate aspects of refugees and asylum seekers reception. Improving and standardizing how the services deal with the most vulnerable people (suffering from forms of mental distress, victims of torture, women victims of violence and minors), while working on strengthening the network of local services, is therefore a central objective of the qualification of the social and health care reception system» (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017, 31). In particular, these projects have implemented best practices in a design logic that has evolved over time but has always responded to two basic objectives. The first short-term objective was to support public health services – especially mental health services – with specialized professional resources and innovative working methodologies to enhance their daily actions and capacity to respond to the health needs of asylum seekers and refugees. From this perspective, these projects have also allowed for the inclusion of difficult-to-structure professional figures (legal consultants specialized in migration and cultural anthropologists) in the ordinary operations of the services. The second medium- and long-term objective was to continually equip public mental health services through the development of competencies and knowledge of their operators.

For further information see:
- https://www.centrosaluteglobale.eu/progetti-corsi/sprint/.
- Zorzetto S. (a cura di), *Richiedenti asilo fra clinica e territorio*, Colibrì, Paderno Dugnano, 2019.

- Mamone B., Zorzetto S. (a cura di), *Comunità dialoganti e sistemi inclusivi. Il progetto FAMI SPRINT 2 della Regione Toscana*, Colibrì, Paderno Dugnano 2024.

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Support Tools for the Mental Health of Asylum Seekers and Refugees

- **Vademecum for vulnerable individuals**: Develop a vademecum for the detection and referral of vulnerable individuals arriving in the area to ensure timely and appropriate care.
- **Multidisciplinary team collaboration**: Establish a multidisciplinary team that collaborates with the local health system to implement guidelines and ensure uniformity in mental health services across the region.
- **Training for health and reception service operators**: Provide training courses aimed at increasing health literacy and improving the ability of operators to detect psychosocial disorders, particularly those related to traumatic experiences such as war, torture, persecution, and discrimination.
- **Training focus areas**: Include key areas such as epidemiology, global health, legal frameworks, anthropology-cultural aspects, and ethnopsychiatry, to enhance understanding of migrants' mental health and develop essential skills for assessing psychiatric vulnerabilities.
- **Access points for mental health**: Establish access points at Local Health Authorities staffed by qualified personnel specifically trained to address psychopathological issues among asylum seekers and refugees.
- **Ethnoclinical intervention methodologies**: Implement ethnoclinical intervention methodologies within health sectors and promote the role of the cultural anthropologist to better address the mental health needs of migrants.
- **Linguistic-cultural mediation service**: Provide a linguistic-cultural mediation service to support communication and understanding in mental health care.
- **Collaborative network**: Build a collaborative network between the health system and the reception system for asylum seekers and international protection holders to facilitate early identification and assessment of potential psychopathological problems.

- **Training on local services**: Offer specific training to asylum seekers and refugees about local health services to increase their confidence and autonomy in accessing and utilizing these services.

Sheet 4: The Centre for Clinical and Community Ethnopsychology of the Complex Functional Unit of Adult Mental Health in Prato, Tuscany Health Authority

The first edition of the SRINT project fostered institutional awareness and created the organisational and operational conditions for the internal structuring of clinical and community ethnopsychology competencies within the U.F.C. S.M.A. of Prato[14], through a competition for an outpatient specialist with particular skills in this field. The SPRINT project promoted a broad convergence of evaluations and favourable opinions at the corporate management level, departmental management, trade unions, and so on, regarding the usefulness and necessity of such competencies, also in light of the city's multicultural landscape.

The introduction of such competencies into public service allowed for the establishment of an internal Clinical and Community Ethnopsychology Centre within the Functional Unit. The aim was not to create a specialized centre dedicated solely to foreign users, but rather to form a nucleus of initiative within the service capable of promoting increasing cultural sensitivity and widespread specialist skills. Moreover, its operational viability is based on and permitted by its integration with other corporate activities and functions: the linguistic-cultural mediation service and community mental health activities aimed at the homeless. The Mental Health Service has, in fact, long been involved in weekly group interventions at the Municipality of Prato's day centre for the homeless, also in collaboration with the street operator project of the same local entity.

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[14] Each Local Health Authority has a Mental Health Department (DSM) with the task of guaranteeing a global response to the mental health needs of citizens and ensuring all-encompassing care pathways and prevention interventions. The DSM is structured into Functional Units (U.F.) divided hierarchically between simple and complex and organizationally between those dealing with adults and those dealing with children and adolescents under 18. The U.F. is an organisational structure that implement in a specific territorial area the mission of DSM through the integrated and multi-professional contribution of psychiatrists (or child neuropsychiatrists), psychologists, professional nurses and rehabilitation therapists, social workers, professional educators and administrative staff.

The Clinical and Community Ethnopsychology Centre carries out a series of activities organised along four main lines.

The first line is clinical. At this level, care is provided to economic and forced migrants, with particular attention to victims of torture. The basic operational form of this care is constituted by the multi-professional teams of the U.F. S.M.A. The Service as a whole performs psychological and psychiatric clinical activities, both individual and group, for first and second-generation migrant users through common access channels. This clinical activity is complemented by the assistance, rehabilitation, and habilitation activities carried out by nurses and professional educators (home visits, socio-therapeutic placements, integration into internal and external groups – Polisportiva Aurora, Gruppo Ciclicamente, Musical Laboratory, Youth Group, etc.). Additionally, the basic clinical activity has been increasingly enriched and integrated by linguistic-cultural mediation, which has become an indispensable element of daily activities, thanks to periodic training organised internally by the service. The Clinical and Community Ethnopsychology Centre integrates this widespread activity with clinical interventions that consider both psychological dimensions and cultural and historical-political aspects, as well as systematic use of linguistic-cultural mediation (except in cases where it is refused by the user). These interventions are directed towards users, with diagnostic or psychotherapeutic value, or they take the form of consultations for other clinicians or operators of the Service, in territorial or hospital settings, to support the management of users they are responsible for.

The second operational line of the Clinical and Community Ethnopsychology Centre consists of consultancy activities for private social organisations involved in the reception system. This activity aims to support the care and reception work of operators in these non-profit organisations and has a general preventive purpose regarding the mental health of asylum seekers and refugees. In particular, the Centre conducts a monthly supervision activity for the SAI project team of the Municipality of Prato (since 2021) and for a group of health referents for various extraordinary reception centres in the area (since 2023), concerning the reception paths of individuals followed by the Mental Health Service. Overall, these supervision and consultancy activities have created a highly collaborative and in-tune intersectoral context, more competent in identifying and managing situations of asylum seekers and refugees with mental health issues and capable of managing and containing internal conflicts within reception structures.

These consultancy and preventive activities constitute the operational foundation of collaborations with the third sector, which flows directly into

the third line of activities of the Clinical and Community Ethnopsychology Centre, represented by inter-institutional and intersectoral activities. The focal point of this activity is the Planning and Coordination Table on vulnerabilities during economic or forced migration, which includes not only a psychologist and a social worker from the Centre but also operators from the Immigration Office of the Municipality of Prato, a representation of Social Workers from the municipal service (including the social worker from the Multidisciplinary Disability Evaluation Unit), the Coordinator of the SAI Project, and representatives from private social organisations managing extraordinary reception centres in the area. The Table targets international migrants regardless of their legal status and aims to: discuss and analyse high-complexity socio-health cases to identify shared and coordinated intervention paths; analyse general socio-health issues concerning migrant populations to propose coordinated responses, including specific funding lines at the local, national, or European levels; provide training and professional development paths for public and private social and health operators; promote public discussion and reflection on issues related to the target population (seminars, conferences, etc.). The Table recognizes and values collaboration between reception systems for asylum seekers and holders of international or national protection and the U.F. SMA of Prato of the Azienda Sanitaria Toscana Centro (Local health authority), to support the work of reception operators and the relevant managing entities and to implement what is outlined in the ministerial guidelines for the assistance and rehabilitation of torture victims. In parallel, there is constant collaboration with the prefecture of Prato, through ad hoc meetings involving private social organisations that manage extraordinary reception centres, to identify the most coordinated and shared strategies for managing health issues related to emergency situations (such as the reception of people fleeing Ukraine) or vulnerabilities present in these reception structures.

The final operational line consists of activities aimed at training and research. Public mental health services have a clear and explicit healthcare mandate. Clinical practice, in its various forms and manifestations, is their primary and central task. However, services cannot forgo the training of operators (which is also required by law and ethical statutes) and the conduct of research activities. Clinical practice, training, and research constitute the vertices of a functional triangle necessary for maintaining operational effectiveness and efficiency, operator motivation and well-being, and understanding of social, political, and cultural transformations and their implications for individual and collective health. In line with this cultural approach, various training sessions have been organised for operators of the U.F. SMA of Prato

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(or also from other areas of the health company) and for psychotherapy and psychiatry trainees attending the Service, on topics such as ethnopsychology, ethnopsychiatry, migration psychopathology, and linguistic-cultural mediation in mental health. For this purpose, internal professional resources from the Clinical and Community Ethnopsychology Centre have been used, as well as ethnopsychologists and cultural anthropologists available from specific project activities (particularly the SPRINT 2 project) and reception operators. Specific training paths have been organised for linguistic-cultural mediators and for a small group of Ukrainian women with various backgrounds involved as interpreters in the reception system at the beginning of their country's invasion. For the linguistic-cultural mediators of the Azienda Sanitaria Toscana Centro, an annual course was set up with monthly meetings. The course included a first part focusing on training in mental health mediation and a second part providing supervision regarding the practical exercise of mediation. For the Ukrainian interpreters, three training sessions were organised on the methodological and ethical fundamentals of translation and mediation work.

Finally, the Clinical and Community Ethnopsychology Centre has carried out reflective and research activities through collaboration with the Psychiatry Clinic of the University of Florence (Prof. Valdo Ricca), and exchanges with the Clinical Psychology of Groups and Organizations Course of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan and Brescia (Prof. Caterina Gozzoli). For example, with the University of Florence, a study was conducted on the access patterns of migrant populations (D'Anna *et al.* 2022).

The experience underway in Prato represents an organisational and operational innovation, indicating for public mental health services the need to structure within them professional skills and specific projects aimed at migrant populations and asylum seekers and refugees, in particular. The Centre for Clinical and Community Ethnopsychology gathers the regional indications deriving from the SPRINT and SPRINT 2 projects, proposing a strategy that has already found feedback and some confirmation of its validity in other regional contexts. In particular, a similar experience has been underway at the Grosseto Mental Health Service of the AUSL Toscana Sud Est. Moreover, a pathway aimed at replicating the experience is underway in the Complex Functional Unit of Adult Mental Health of Firenze Nord Ovest, in particular in the areas of Sesto Fiorentino and Campi Bisenzio.

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Centre for Clinical and Community Ethnopsychology

- **Clinical activity**: Provide assistance to economic and forced migrants, with a special focus on victims of torture, offering psychological and psychiatric care. Diagnostic and psychotherapeutic interventions are tailored to consider psychological, cultural, historical, and political dimensions.
- **Multi-professional Team**: Assemble a team of psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, and professional educators, integrated with linguistic-cultural mediation to offer comprehensive care.
- **Consulting activities**: Offer consulting services to organisations involved in the reception system, supporting the care and reception work of operators. The aim is to create a collaborative and competent intersectoral environment.
- **Inter-institutional and cross-sectoral activities:** Establish a Planning and Coordination Table with representatives from the municipality, social, and health organisations, focusing on vulnerabilities during economic or forced migration. This includes discussing and analysing complex socio-health cases to identify shared and coordinated intervention paths.
- **Training activities**: Organise training sessions for mental health workers and linguistic-cultural mediators, covering topics such as ethnopsychology, mediation in mental health, and practical supervision to enhance skills and knowledge.
- **Research activities**: Collaborate with universities for research projects aimed at updating the understanding of social, political, and cultural transformations and their implications for individual and collective health.

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Social Assistance

by *Stella Milani**

This contribution aims to provide an analysis of social assistance services for migrants provided by SAI projects aimed at single adults and families[1]. The first part offers a summary of the relevant provisions, emphasising the specific roles assigned to social workers in SAI projects ("Ordinari" and "DM-DS"[2] categories). It then explores the practices related to the intake of migrants into SAI projects by territorial social services and the varying access to social benefits depending on the residence permits. The second part, based on an exploratory survey conducted in Tuscany, presents reflections on the critical issues emerging in the implementation of social assistance within SAI projects.

The social worker is an integral part of the multidisciplinary team in SAI projects. The *Operational Manual for the Activation and Management of Integrated Reception Services* acknowledges the prominent role of this professional, describing it as «important for the definition/individuation of the reception intervention» (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018, 11).[3] It specifies that «by professional skills, the social worker is able to put the beneficiary in the condition to be able to express his/her needs» (*Ibidem*). Furthermore, since "he/she facilitates the relationship with the territorial services, knowing the reference regulations and the possibilities (and modalities) of access by the beneficiaries" the social worker is seen as the expert who can support the integration of SAI initiatives into territorial welfare (*Ibi*, 12). The "key role"

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[1] In the case of unaccompanied foreign minors, specific measures are provided for their early takeover by the territorial social services, as stipulated in Law no. 47/2017 (*Provisions on protection measures for unaccompanied foreign minors*).

[2] DM-DS projects are reserved for people with psychological or socio-medical distress.

[3] Translations into English of the text "Operational Manual for the Activation and Management of Integrated Reception Services" by the author.

of the social worker in building an integrated network system of social services (Campanini & Fortunato 2008) is thus confirmed in the reception system. This professional figure becomes a fundamental link in the complex network of actors responsible for ensuring the social rights of the beneficiaries (Pattaro & Nigris 2018).

If SAI interventions aim to integrate with local social services, this integration is deemed crucial for addressing the needs of individuals with specific vulnerabilities (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018). The involvement of territorial social services is always anticipated when beneficiaries – whether individuals or households – enter an SAI project and possess formally recognized vulnerabilities.[4] To ensure a specialized intake procedure by territorial services, the multidisciplinary team also plays a pivotal role in identifying vulnerabilities that have not yet received formal certification.[5] The intake process by territorial services is often started early for women and families, whose paths to social integration and autonomy restoration are often more complicated.

While access to social services is guaranteed both to asylum seekers and to beneficiaries of international protection, it should be noted that the type of residence permit and its duration correspond to different opportunities for access to social benefits provided by social services (Boccagni & Righard 2020). Article 41 of the *Testo Unico sull'Immigrazione* (Consolidated Law on Immigration, Legislative Decree no. 286/1998), in promoting the equality of non-EU citizens with Italian citizens «for the enjoyment of social welfare benefits and services, including economic ones», still binds the full recognition of social rights to the possession of a «residence permit of no less than one year's duration» (ASGI 2020, 9).[6] In this context, holders of a permit to apply for asylum and beneficiaries of permits for medical treatment and natural disasters[7] under current legislation are not entitled to some social benefits. It should be noted, however, that recent court rulings have recognized

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[4] According to Legislative Decree no. 142/2015, vulnerable categories include: minors, unaccompanied minors, people with disabilities, the elderly, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of human trafficking, individuals with severe illnesses or mental disorders, and those who have suffered torture, rape, or other severe forms of violence, including violence related to sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as victims of genital mutilation.

[5] As specified by the *Handbook for the identification, referral, and care of persons living with vulnerabilities entering Italy and within the protection and reception system*, «activities aimed at identifying 'non-explicit or non-objective' vulnerabilities may become more precise during the course of reception» (Ministry of the Interior 2023).

[6] Translation into English by the author.

[7] Residence permits for medical treatment and natural disasters, as provided for by Legislative Decree no. 286/1998 (Articles 19 and 20-*bis*, respectively) and introduced by Law no.

the right to the monthly disability allowance for foreigners holding permits for medical treatment[8], thereby exceeding the limits imposed by Article 41 of the Consolidated Law on Immigration.

As for the other professional figures that comprise the multidisciplinary team, the regulation for the activation and management of SAI projects foresees two ways to include social workers in the multidisciplinary team. Specifically, the social worker may be an internal figure within the project, hired with project funds, or an employee of the local social service with whom systematic and continuous collaboration is envisaged. As a result, two very distinct modes of classification arise, which, while serving the same responsibilities, tend to associate professionals with a public function with social workers who work for third-sector organisations. Theoretically, the possibility of hiring new social workers through SAI project funds can be seen as a way for reception centres to reinforce local services. However, there is a risk that reception centres and local services will delineate two lines of social intervention that do not intertwine (Boccagni 2017).

Given the centrality of the social worker's role in the integration processes of asylum seekers and refugees, and considering the specific focus of the Global Answer project on social services, this Chapter presents excerpts from interviews conducted with Tuscan SAI project managers. Between March and April 2024, an exploratory study was carried out with the goal of investigating the various configurations assumed by SAI projects in the regional territory, as well as the working methods used and the projects activated to support the beneficiaries' integration processes. The study included six case studies chosen based on a diversity criterion, with the goal of maximising variation across several independent variables of interest (Gerring & Cojocaru 2016). These variables included the type of local authority that promoted the project (n. 2 municipalities, n. 2 Union of Municipalities and n. 2 Health Society), the project's territorial location (n. 2 in the metropolitan area and n. 4 in inland areas), and the type of the reception project (n. 4 category "Ordinary" and n. 2 category "DM-DS").

The desk analysis allowed us to reconstruct the history of the various SAI projects using institutional documents, press reviews, and the websites of the managing bodies. For each case study, qualitative interviews were conducted with project referents (n. 5 with project coordinators of the managing body and n. 1 with contact persons of the local authority that promoted the project)

132/2018, are valid for six months. Following the amendments made by Legislative Decree no. 20/2023, these permits are no longer convertible into residence permits for work.

[8] For more details see https://www.asgi.it/discriminazioni/tribunali-di-perugia-e-di-lucca-il-permesso-per-cure-mediche-da-diritto-alla-pensione-di-invalidita/.

to reconstruct in detail the activities carried out in favour of the beneficiaries. The interview guide was organised around the following themes: the composition of the network of public and private subjects involved in the project; the characterisation and operation of the local governance of reception and integration; partnerships formed and professionals employed in the project (composition of the multidisciplinary team). Particular attention has been dedicated to social assistance activities and the strategic role that the social worker can play as a liaison between SAI interventions and territorial welfare services. This allowed for the identification of best practices and critical issues specific to the SAI projects' various areas of action.

The exploratory study conducted in Tuscany provides useful insights into the critical issues emerging in the implementation of an integrated reception system that substantiates the recognition of the social rights of the beneficiaries. As a primary and noteworthy element, it emerges that the different ways in which social workers are incorporated into SAI projects have significant implications for the integration between SAI projects and territorial social services. Given the structural shortage and ongoing reduction of national funds for social policies, it is not surprising that hiring a social worker through SAI projects risks delegating local welfare responsibilities to the third-sector organisations managing these projects.

> The fact that we have social professionals on the project is good, but it is also an excuse. When I report that individual X is in difficulties to the [territorial] social service, they reply, 'Well, you have two in-house social workers; we have forty cases!' (Int. 2)

> We decided to have a project social worker, so the project recruited one. But we found out this caused a problem because the local social services we asked to help would say, 'But you already have a social worker; why should we take care of them?' (Int. 3)

When a project social worker is provided, interviewees report difficulties in obtaining support from local social services. At the same time, critical issues emerge in ensuring beneficiaries have access to the local services they are entitled to. The project social worker, lacking a public function, faces limitations when it is necessary to activate processes through the local welfare system. In the absence of integration with local social services, there is a risk of creating parallel and weakened social assistance within SAI projects. The concern, as one interviewee points out, primarily pertains to the consequences for vulnerable individuals upon their exit from the project.

What happens if people's support isn't coordinated before they leave the SAI project? If I have this person who today has a vulnerability at level 3, I report her (to social services) so they know, and then we from the SAI project follow up on her, but they already know her. When she comes out of the SAI project, I call social services and say, 'This person is leaving; they have a level 3 vulnerability'. If this step isn't taken, social services don't know her, and when she comes to them, their vulnerability, which was at level 3, has escalated to level 14. (Int. 2)

On the other hand, if the social worker on the SAI team works for local social services, as required by the SAI System's implementing regulations, she can effectively become the glue between the SAI project and local welfare.

The SAI should reach out and integrate with everything the local area has to offer. A social worker, as a professional with a public mandate, can bridge the gap between these two worlds: the third sector, with all of its vast potential, and the public sector, with all of its great potential, whether it's health care, education, socialization activities, or specific interventions required in cases of violence. (Int. 4)

The exploratory study also highlights how the different integration capacities between SAI projects and local welfare are linked to the different capacities of territorial social services to respond effectively to the demands of migrants leaving reception projects. The interviews reveal diametrically opposed viewpoints that, while in some cases demonstrating the excellent competence of the municipality's social worker, in others highlight the shortcomings of local social services in caring for migrants leaving SAI projects.

Fortunately, we have C. [name of social worker], who has been with us since the beginning of the project. Besides her professionalism, the relationships she has formed make her a mainstay. Sometimes, when interacting with other territories, you realise just how very, very lucky we are! (Int. 1)

There is a difficulty [of local social services] in taking charge of people within the SAI projects in a functional and structured way. Last year, we even did ethno-clinical training specifically to give social workers more tools. Honestly, I have to tell you that I am still not seeing the fruits. (Int. 3)

As revealed by several studies, the knowledge of immigration laws and intercultural skills of social workers remains largely circumscribed (Tarsia 2010). The effectiveness of integration between SAI projects and territorial social services, therefore, requires an investment in the training of social

workers to provide tools capable of addressing the increasing diversification of the client population (Barberis & Boccagni 2014).

Good practices related to social assistance in the Tuscany region

Sheet 1: Integration model of Mugello SAI and local social services

In light of the findings from the exploratory study conducted, it seems useful to highlight an initiative implemented in the Tuscan territory aimed at facilitating coordination between SAI projects and local social services to offer integrated social assistance services. This initiative was carried out in Mugello, where the SAI project promoted by the Unione Montana dei Comuni (Mountain Union of Municipalities) included social workers hired with project funds as part of the multidisciplinary team. To ensure integrated governance of social services and address the outlined criticalities, the Mugello Health Society[9] approved the "Modello di integrazione servizio sociale integrato Mugello SAI".[10] The objective of this initiative is the creation of a «Social Network for the reception and accompaniment of asylum seekers and holders of protection hosted in the SAI project, through the definition of integrated social and socio-health pathways capable of interconnecting and integrating with the organisational structures of the Azienda Sanitaria Toscana Centro (Local health authority) and the municipal administrations» (SDS Mugello 2023).[11]

After a phase of experimentation with various organisational methods, it was decided to establish a stable organisation within the local social services structure to support the social workers who facilitate relations with the SAI project and assist the beneficiaries in accessing territorial pathways. This decision aims to strengthen the function of accompanying SAI beneficiaries through these pathways. At the same time, the tasks, functions and methods

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[9] In Tuscany, SDSs (Società della Salute) are public consortia formed by the municipalities of a social-health area and the Local Health Authority. Their main goal is to ensure the integration of local health, social, and welfare services (Regional Law no. 60/2008, amending Regional Law no. 40/2005).

[10] The act was adopted by resolution of the SDS Assembly no. 29 of August 1, 2023 (SDS Mugello 2023). It should be noted that the Shareholders' Meeting of the SDS has planning and management functions. It is composed of the General Manager of the Local Health Unit, the Mayor or a member of the Council of each member municipality.

[11] Translation into English by the author.

of the operational connection between local social services and SAI operators were systematically defined.

New organisational strategies were developed to promote the systematic integration of social services with reception pathways implemented in the SAI. One of these is the creation of an Integrated Network Coordination Unit at the local health and social authority with reference functions. It is anticipated that this organisational level will be integrated with other units within the local social services, such as the Agency for Hospital-Territorial Continuity (ACOT), the Social Emergency System (SEUS), and the Codice Rosa network.[12]

The general objectives of the "Modello di integrazione servizio sociale integrato Mugello SAI" are to ensure the continuity of the project with the person and resignation from the SAI project; the containment of emergency interventions; the promotion of the appropriateness of resources, both home-based parenting support and orientation to work and living.

In order to accomplish these goals, particular reference figures are assigned. Managers from the socio-healthcare integration area and child protection are involved in the organisational structure that the Health Society envisions, which is led by the Social Services Coordinator. Personnel from the Agency for Hospital-Territorial Continuity, Codice Rosa, and housing emergency contacts are added to the team as needed. Effective operational coordination is ensured by the Health Society staff in collaboration with social workers from the local services. They determine the specific expertise needed to address each case individually.

During the weekly coordination meetings, the SAI project team is expected to evaluate potential referrals to the territorial Social Service at the end of the fifth month of an individual's participation and before they leave the project. The SAI project may make a referral before the fifth month of receipt if serious, urgent problems occur. Sending an email with a written report is one of the specific protocols set forth for reporting to the social service area contact person. The social worker assigned to the case will then be named by the contact person. To ensure improved coordination during the exit phase of beneficiaries referred to the social service from the SAI project, the designated social worker is anticipated to attend the SAI project coordination team meeting. This participation will allow it easier to present the case and get to know the operators.

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[12] The Codice Rosa (Pink Code) project started in Tuscany and spread to many other regions of the country. The service consists of a path dedicated to victims of violence in the hospital's emergency rooms, where specially trained operators conduct an initial assessment and activate the local anti-violence network.

The following professional figures within the SAI project are designated for coordination with the Health Society: the Project Coordinator, who serves as the direct liaison with the Social Services Coordinator, and the Project Social Worker, who acts as an operational link between the assessments conducted and projects implemented by the internal Project Teams and the social workers identified for ongoing care in the territory. It is important to note that the proposed model emphasises the Project Social Worker's role in maintaining continuity in the protection and social integration pathways. However, it is stated that «this professional role, within the SAI project, lacks professional, evaluative, and decision-making autonomy regarding case intakes» (SDS Mugello 2023)[13] as these responsibilities remain under the purview of the territorial social.

The integration model between local social services and SAI Mugello was implemented less than a year ago, and its impact on migrants' care pathways must be assessed over time. However, it should be noted that this initiative can be considered a good practice because it aims to address two well-known problematic aspects of the reception system: the creation of 'parallel' and disempowered forms of social assistance, which are confined within the SAI projects and do not engage with local services, and the territorial variability in the provision of services, which can foster localism in the social rights granted to migrants. Indeed, the initiative seeks to develop new organisational strategies to promote systematic integration of SAI projects and local social services. This approach is in line with the guidelines expressed in the "White Paper", which stress: «an integrated governance system of social and health services, dedicated to the migrant population, is the first objective for improving the reception system's quality and management efficiency» (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017, 29).[14] Furthermore, this goal is pursued through municipal cooperation, which has the potential to be productive in realising projects that transcend local particularisms, thus favouring joint and coordinated actions between public actors «to define and promote uniform standards and shared procedures for taking charge of asylum seekers and refugees» (*Ibi*, 13).

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[13] Translation into English by the author.

[14] For the English version of the "White Paper" see:
https://accoglienza.toscana.it/documents/2362619/0/White+Paper+on+immigration+policies.pdf/67cbcbad-cd33-f051-f146-f8de7cd6281d?t=1642585526331.

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Integrated Governance Model Between Territorial Social Services and the Reception System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

- **Reception projects**: Promote initiatives by multiple municipalities or territorial aggregations (such as District Zones or Health Authorities in Tuscany) to integrate the resources and services of each area synergistically.
- **Structured connections**: Establish connections between social services, local social-health services, and the reception system to ensure immediate care for asylum seekers and holders of international protection, and to maintain continuity of support after they leave the reception project.
- **Protocol of understanding**: Formalise the integrated governance system between local social services and reception facilities through a protocol of understanding.
- **Multi-institutional team**: Create a coordinating unit involving social workers from social services, social-health services, and the third sector engaged in reception projects.
- **Guidelines and continuity**: Develop guidelines to systematically define tasks, functions, and operational coordination methods between local social services and reception system operators. Ensure continuity in reception pathways between different phases or facilities within the same territorial area.
- **Training for social workers**: Provide specific training for social workers in territorial services on migration-related topics, focusing on intercultural skills and administrative and bureaucratic aspects.

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Intercultural Linguistic Mediation

by *Lorenzo Luatti* and *Giovanna Tizzi*[*]

Cultural, intercultural, linguistic or linguistic-cultural mediation refers to a particular type of intervention-system that is part of social and territorial contexts characterised by the presence of migrant populations, where people who do not share the same language and the same cultural affiliations come into contact.

Mediation that takes inspiration from the reality of migratory phenomena is one of the many existing forms of cultural/intercultural mediation. And it is perhaps one of the most recent in chronological order. It must be understood "as a dimension of all integration policies", according to an effective expression of the National Council of Economy and Labour (2009). This type of mediation has existed as a concrete, cultural, social, historical phenomenon in Italy for at least twenty years and in many other European countries for even longer.

Mediation is an intervention system, and not just a professional figure. In mediation interventions, the mediator is one of the transformative resources to be activated. Mediation is an intervention tool that contributes to the construction of the relationship, rather than focusing on the individual mediator. Producing mediation interventions means first of all building devices (spaces, places, teams, relationships, dynamics, additional times) so that communication can circulate between different subjects who bring with them different logics, experiences, and often different powers. Mediators know very well that it is difficult to implement satisfactory mediation interventions, in complex situations, without the collegiality of the intervention. Insisting always and only on the role of the mediator as a "bridge" between cultures leads to strengthening the idea that the entire burden of the mediated relationship falls to a single subject and leads the mediator to think of his/her work as something detached and separate from that of others.

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[*] OXFAM Italia.

If we want to describe the mediator's activity more effectively, rather than the metaphor of the "bridge" between social actors and migrants, we should prefer the image of the "ford", that is, of a passage characterised by mobility, which requires comings and goings, non-linear and predefined crossings: «the ford is that area of shallow water, usually found in a river bed. Comparing crossing the bridge with that of the ford, the greater physical effort required is absolutely clear» (Lavanco & Di Giovanni 2009, 32-33). Intercultural mediation is a profession focused on linguistic and relational skills, performed by a specially trained professional in mediated communication: the intercultural mediator.

The mediator's intervention has as its central aim the overcoming of linguistic and cultural communication barriers that can arise in the interaction with migrants, in the awareness and knowledge of the important aspects that make up a "migrant identity" (migration project, family reunification, acculturation process, cultural changes etc.). The mediator carries out not only a linguistic and cultural interpreting activity, but also a socio-cultural activity of accompanying and facilitating relationships; however, he or she is not an expert in "cultures", nor even an expert in intercultural studies: he/she is an "athlete" of encounters and mediated communication, he/she is an "agent" of recognition of the other as a person – of his/her history, of his/her cultural references, of his/her rights – and through his/her intervention allows us to open spaces and passages for more conscious participation.

The presence of an intercultural mediator is already a sign of awareness on the part of the host country and the organisation/service of the needs, specificities and cultural, linguistic, religious differences, etc. expressed by individuals, families and minority groups. Indeed, the demand expressed by migrants for services is often a complex, multiple demand, which hides a wide-ranging need for care, concerning a plurality of interconnected aspects (health, social, relational, professional).

The linguistic-cultural mediation service is mandatory for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection who are welcomed in government centres and in the SAI network. It is to be considered transversal and complementary to the other services provided and the mediator's work does support the entire team. As a result, the mediator does not replace the operators, but his/her work supports the other professionals involved in the various integrated reception measures (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018).

We are witnessing a strong occupational mobility within the profession in mediation services. Today there are women and men with over twenty years of experience, who have gone through the different and fluctuating seasons of this service. "They are temporary workers, poorly paid, forced to

continuously train, subject to a very strong turnover, [mediators] have always carried out a 'weak' profession in which the required skills, even gained through long training courses, are not adequate professional and remunerative recognition", observed Tarozzi (2006, 136)[1] fifteen years ago, with words that unfortunately retain all their relevance today. "Weak" are all the professions in the mediation area, as they "serve" other professions, that is, at "service" and useful for other social and educational functions. The mediator's action seems not very tangible and not easily assessable, as it is always functional to the success of another action (care, teaching, job orientation, etc.).

Mediation is a "service within a service" and, to emerge from the invisibility in which it seems inexorably confined and to legitimize itself in the eyes of participants and institutions, it requires a clear and solid methodology, capable of guiding action effectively and with potential effects of change. It therefore tends to be underestimated, perhaps little understood, sometimes "tolerated". Due to this "fragile" position, the mediator suffers from little public recognition compared to the other figures with whom he/she finds himself sharing physical and relational spaces at work.

Today, however, mediators are calling for renewed attention, greater institutional recognition, to thus resume that path of professional development that has been lost in the long past years.

At a European level, the figure of the intercultural mediator is not yet a clear figure present in all countries, with a certain profile recognized by national legislation and does not yet find a defined and adequate place in local services. The fragmented and indefinite nature of the directives and rules at the national level has corresponded to a marked heterogeneity and differentiation of the provisions at the regional and local level, regarding access requirements, training courses, mandates, locations in relation to the structure of the services. However, the presence of a university perspective on intercultural mediation (in training and research) is proving to be an important element of renewal and contamination.

The perspectives of (and on) mediation, therefore, have multiplied and intersected in recent years, and even the fields of research are experiencing important changes, favoured by the fact that mediation is a frontier professionalism, which makes use of and enriches different knowledge and experiences.

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[1] Translation into English by the author.

The silent work in services, in the reception system and lastly, the extraordinary contribution provided during the months of the Covid-19 pandemic must emerge from invisibility and silence. But a relaunch of intercultural mediation must start from a dual awareness. There cannot be a relaunch of the service without a real resumption of integration policies in Italy, which have been at a standstill for countless years. This requires political will supported by economic resources, and resources require growth and development of the country. The theme of social and territorial cohesion and integration, as a factor in the development of local communities, must return to the national political agenda. The future of mediation fits into this more general framework. Thirty years of experience also teaches that a relaunch of intercultural mediation necessarily involves a "bottom-up" mobilization, fuelled by ideas and proposals, of the mediators called to speak again on the issues of integration and their professional future.

Good practices relate to intercultural linguistic mediation in the Tuscany region

Sheet 1: The new figure of the intercultural mediator

During the years of the so-called "refugee crisis", the Tuscany Region, within the #AccoglienzaToscana path, laid the foundations for redefining the role of the intercultural mediator in order to include him in the regional repertoire of professional figures. This objective is in line with the guidelines of the "White Paper" (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017), which explicitly states the need to promote the recognition of this professional figure.

The practices of these years see the presence and intervention of linguistic and intercultural mediators at several times and places: at the time of rescue at sea in the boats of the coast guard and NGOs, at the time of disembarkation (ports and airports), in centres first reception facilities (e.g. governmental reception centres or extraordinary reception centres), in second reception facilities (e.g., SAI network and centres for minors), as well as in the Immigration Offices of the Police Headquarters. In recent years, intercultural mediators have supported Italian operators in the pre-identification and photo-signalling procedures and in filling out the identification card; in the work of recognition, identification and verification of the suitable conditions for granting the status. Furthermore, they supported the operators in conversations with users, facilitating communication with the foreign minor, or in the

reconstruction of their migration project and in the creation of a social-work inclusion project in the host country. We have seen them operate alongside reception operators, police, medical and paramedical personnel, operators from international agencies, legal operators, with the guests themselves, with other operators/professionals (psychologist, social worker, etc.), in territorial commissions for the evaluation of asylum applications, in courts, at school in relation to families and so on.

The National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) of Tuscany started the process of defining this professional figure in 2018, involving the main players in the regional reception system, including municipalities, managers, voluntary associations and sector professionals. The topic was addressed within the well-attended conference "Intercultural mediation and migrant citizens: a new professional figure for a changing society" which brought together the major experts in the sector in October 2018 in Florence. The new professional figure was approved with Regional Decree no. 17375 of 31 October 2018. With respect to the professional figure of the "Technician for activities/services facilitating the socio-cultural integration of foreign citizens", the regional administration has defined a profile more suited to the current migratory context.

In line with what is expressed in the "White Paper", in this framework, in fact, it is underlined that the cultural mediator has the task of:
-   Facilitate the social, cultural and working integration of migrant citizens, promoting mutual understanding between the local community and service operators.
-   Help in the provision of services, understanding user needs, facilitating communication and managing conflicts.
-   Collaborate with public and private operators, participating in the planning of integration interventions that require linguistic and communication skills, as well as ethno-anthropological knowledge.

For this reason, the "White Paper" recommends that the figure of the mediator be included in every project involving migrants, to ensure greater respect for their rights and opportunities for social integration, as well as to serve as a key figure in fostering ongoing dialogue with the community in which the person is progressively placed.

As regards the training of this figure, the new qualification plans to include fundamentals of immigration law and international protection, ethno-anthropology, intercultural education, psychology, verbal and non-verbal communication, conflict management, geopolitics, contemporary history and theories and techniques of linguistic-cultural mediation.

Moving on to the activities within his/her competence, these have been divided into:

- *Linguistic and cultural mediation* through understanding languages and cultural languages to facilitate communication between migrant individuals and operators of public and private services, interpreting and translating both verbal and non-verbal signals.
- *Accompaniment in access to services with reference to users with a migratory background* through the implementation of mediation interventions between institutional bodies, the private social sector and users, facilitating relations between the parties and access to socio-territorial services and the reception/integration process of citizens with a migratory background.
- *Design of interventions for orientation and intercultural integration*, based on personalized support plans, in collaboration with local social and cultural services to adapt them to different life contexts.

During the TEAMS ("Tuscany Empowerment Actions for Migrant System") and COMMIT ("Migrant Skills in Tuscany") projects financed under FAMI 2014-2020 and coordinated by the Tuscany Region, the figure of the cultural mediator was tested with the aim of promote a unified model for job centres, communities and schools. For this reason, guidelines have been outlined for the definition of the professional figure of mediator and the same unified tender procedure has been prepared for both projects in order to create a regional control room and prevent fragmented responses.

The *Guidelines for the Definition of the Professional Figure of the Intercultural Mediator* detail the three functions listed above – Linguistic and cultural mediation, Support in accessing services with reference to users with a migratory backgrounds and Design of interventions for orientation and intercultural integration – with the specific knowledge and skills that the mediator must possess. Among these, for example, for the function referring to "linguistic and cultural mediation", it is underlined for the mediator to have the ability to provide interpretations and translations that are not merely linguistic but capable of translating the content and meaning of the message; in a similar way, the relational skills of the mediator are underlined, who must know how to collaborate with the various service operators as well as promote effective relationships between operators and service users. In reference to the "accompaniment to services" function, it is underlined that the mediator must be well informed about the network of local services in order to orient users with a migratory background by providing information on the models and functioning of the services in the context of arrival. Finally, in relation to the function "Planning of orientation and intercultural integration

interventions", the ability to collaborate with experts in the sector to conduct an accurate analysis of individual needs and to be able to plan personalized itineraries of social integration, interpreting cultural signals to facilitate communication between the parties involved.

As we know, over the years the mediation device has become a widespread practice, but not yet stable and organic in services. The path taken by the Tuscany Region certainly represents a good practice in line with the principles of the "White Paper" as it leads to substantial legitimation and professional recognition. Indeed, it aims to clearly define the training profile, skills, and knowledge required for this professional figure, as well as to envisage their active role in designing interventions for the orientation and integration of migrants. Alongside this, it should not be forgotten that it is a profession that has been affected more than others by the radical social changes of recent decades and which must now turn to fixing its profile. Rethinking and reinventing itself in new conditions and on a different scale.

In this context, the Community Health Educator Model is inserted as a good practice, which always concerns mediation in its changes. The experimentation, with adaptations, from the British experience promoted by Dr. Lai Fong Chiu (2003), consists of community health educators/tutors, adults (man or woman) of foreign origin, who carry out "mediation" roles and functions in strict contact and according to forms of collaboration shared and monitored with health services and operators (Chiu & West 2007; Tizzi 2014). The community health educator approaches, accompanies and promotes the participation and access to health services of their compatriots inside and outside the health facility, reaching users at home, in neighbourhoods, in meeting places, during holidays and anniversaries, where healthcare workers alone cannot reach. It operates using peer education methodology and community empowerment actions aimed at promoting health behaviours and correct lifestyles or achieving a specific health objective. This approach addresses a highlighted problem and a specific group, particularly when the service struggles to effectively engage with members of that group.

This active offering model bases its potential for effectiveness precisely on building personal and collective capabilities in terms of health protection. The Community Health educator Model develops in three phases:
- *Analysis of needs and research*: This phase of investigation represents an important part as it allows us to contextualise the interventions and delve deeper into the topic addressed both in terms of health needs and the characteristics of the territorial context.

- *Training*: The program takes into consideration both the future figures of community health educators and social health workers. The training curriculum is calibrated based on the needs emerging from the territories. The training includes modules dedicated only to health educators, others only to health workers and other joint workers.
- *Implementation*: Health educators begin their work within their communities, starting with training. The first task involves creating informational material for the target migrant population. This is followed by outreach activities, which consist of educational efforts conducted in collaboration with public health institutions. These activities aim to guarantee access to prevention and treatment opportunities through proactive outreach, directly in people's living environments.

In Tuscany, among various initiatives, two projects implemented by the Community Health Educator model involved refugees and asylum seekers: the SPRINT 2 project, focused on health literacy, and the SAMEDI project (Mental Health against Addictions), which provided healthcare online in order to overcome cultural barriers. The Sprint project has already been deepened. The SAMEDI project was conducted by the Amiata Grossetana, Colline Metallifere and Grosseto Health Societies[2], while the project partners were the AUSL Toscana of the Southeast area[3] and the University of Siena (Department of Social, Political and Cognitive Sciences). In both experiences, financed under FAMI 2014-2020, the Community Health Educator Model's aim was to spread a culture of prevention regarding mental health, addictions and participation in health screenings.

Hence, from these quick and partial notes, from these examples and experiences, the heterogeneous scope of action of "mediation" takes on aspects and connotations which inevitably now refer to a mediated "proximity" work, that is to a weaving work and maintenance of links inside and outside the services. It is evident that this profession has been significantly impacted by the radical social changes of recent decades. For this reason, the process of systematization and recognition undertaken by the regional authority represents an important achievement, but it also requires continuous updating.

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[2] Health Societies (in Italian "Società della Salute"; Italian acronym: SDS). In Tuscany, SDSs are public consortia formed by the municipalities of a social-health area and the Local Health Authority. Their main goal is to ensure the integration of local health, social, and welfare services (Regional Law no. 60/2008, amending Regional Law no. 40/2005).

[3] AUSL is the Italian acronym for: Azienda Unità Sanitaria Locale. In English: Local Health Authority.

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Recognition of the Professional Role of the Linguistic-Cultural Mediator

- **Guidelines for defining the role**: Develop guidelines outlining the role of the linguistic-cultural mediator, including necessary training profiles, functions, and required knowledge and skills.
- **Specific training courses**: Implement training programs to enhance the knowledge and skills of linguistic-cultural mediators.
- **Development of degree programs**: Create degree programs specifically focused on the role of the linguistic-cultural mediator.
- **Identification of essential knowledge areas**: Define the essential knowledge areas for linguistic-cultural mediators, including fundamentals of immigration law and international protection, ethnoanthropology, intercultural education, psychology, verbal and non-verbal communication, conflict management, geopolitics, contemporary history, and theories and techniques of linguistic-cultural mediation.
- **Required skills for mediation**: Specify the skills needed for effective linguistic and cultural mediation, such as providing accurate interpretations and translations that convey both the content and meaning of the message, as well as understanding both verbal and non-verbal signals.
- **Competencies for service support**: Identify competencies required for supporting users with a migratory background, including knowledge of local service networks, ability to raise awareness among the foreign population, and fostering effective relationships between service users and providers.
- **Strengthening training for foreign citizens**: Enhance training and qualification programs for foreign citizens to become linguistic-cultural mediators, focusing on hard-to-reach communities through peer education and community empowerment actions.
- **Recognition as a professional figure**: Include the linguistic-cultural mediator among officially recognized professional roles.
- **Structuring mediator presence**: Organise the presence of linguistic-cultural mediators across various local services.
- **Unified selection procedure**: Establish a standardized procedure for selecting linguistic-cultural mediators.

- **Involvement in co-designing interventions**: Increase the involvement of linguistic-cultural mediators in co-designing orientation and inter-cultural integration interventions.

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Legal Assistance

by *Maria Stella Rognoni* and *Alberto Tonini*[*][1]

In order to overcome an approach based solely on assistance, reception measures for asylum seekers and refugees should promote an integrated and holistic approach aimed at the progressive individual empowerment concerning all aspects of life. Legal support actions are a significant part of the activities that make up this approach of "integrated reception". The *Operational Manual for the Activation and Management of Integrated Reception Services* highlights that «Legal support includes all actions aimed at helping beneficiaries – particularly those applying for international protection –by offering guidance and information on various aspects: the steps to follow during the application process, networking and interaction with pertinent institutions and authorities, protection of rights, options for appealing legal decisions, and the ability to gather documentation that supports their protection claim» (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018, 88-89)[2].

The legal services offered within the reception system can be divided into two main categories: assistance in the broad protection of rights and bureaucratic-administrative guidance. The role of the legal assistant fits within this complex and diverse framework (*Ibidem*). The primary task of legal assistants, who do not necessarily need to be lawyers, is indeed to support and assist the user throughout all phases of the "integrated reception" process. Legal assistants must therefore possess adequate legal knowledge to correctly identify and apply the relevant regulations for the recognition of international protection (including the various steps, the actors involved, and the different skills) and activate judicial protection mechanisms.

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[1] Although the article is the result of a joint reflection by the authors, the first section was written by Maria Stella Rognoni e Alberto Tonini; Sheet 1 was written by Maria Stella Rognoni; Sheet 2 was written by Alberto Tonini.
[2] Translation into English by the author.

The legal assistant, as already indicated in the 2018 *Operational Manual for the Activation and Management of Integrated Reception Services*, is responsible for:

- Informing the migrant about Italian and European asylum regulations;
- Making known the rights and duties established by the Italian legal system;
- Assisting asylum seekers in their interactions with the institutional actors responsible for the various steps of the international protection recognition procedure;
- Presenting the Italian regulations on family reunification;
- Offering support and assistance in carrying out this procedure;
- Informing interested individuals about assisted voluntary return programs.

Additionally, legal and administrative guidance actions with reference to the territory are:

- Allowing registration in the National Residency Registry, which is crucial for migrants to exercise their fundamental rights and access local services.
- Obtaining the issuance of a tax code from the Revenue Agency, which is necessary for registration with the National Health Service, for signing a contract as an employee, or for starting a self-employed business.
- Facilitating registration with the National Health Service, which is essential for obtaining medical care and preventive services.
- Ensuring that minors can enroll in school. All foreign minors, whether accompanied or unaccompanied, have the right to attend schools at all levels, regardless of their legal status, on the same terms as Italian minors. Enrolment is available year-round.
- Facilitating the recognition of previous educational qualifications, even in cases of missing or incomplete documentation.

The legal assistant is responsible for facilitating communication between the beneficiary and various institutions, as well as ensuring that all necessary paperwork is completed and processed accurately. In particular, the legal assistant plays a crucial role in collaborating with the *Questura* – the Police Headquarters – which is a key player in many aspects of the reception and integration process. From the initial steps, such as reporting presence in the territory and completing the C3 form for residency permit applications, it is essential that individuals' rights are protected. Therefore, the legal assistant must ensure that a linguistic mediator is available to overcome any possible

language barriers. Additionally, the legal assistant, in collaboration with other professionals in the reception system, must address any difficulties or mistrust arising from past traumatic experiences. The ultimate goal of the legal assistant's work in this context is to empower the assisted person to achieve autonomy, including managing interactions with various local institutions independently (Accorinti & Giovannetti 2023).

A crucial moment in the reception and integration process is the hearing before the territorial commission, which is responsible for evaluating asylum or special protection requests (Gallo 2018). This step requires particular care and attention from the legal assistant, both in the preparation of the documentation and during the hearing itself.

The primary goals of preparing the statement are to provide a clear and concise account of the applicant's background and to offer evidence that substantiates the accuracy of their claims. The legal assistant is crucial in helping the applicant recount their experiences and organise their memories. Since each case is inherently personal and unique, there is no one-size-fits-all procedure for preparing the documentation; a customised approach is required for each situation. However some general guidelines can serve as working assumptions. The legal assistant conducts several discussions to build trust and gain a thorough understanding of the applicant's background within their social, political, and economic context. The process of drafting the statement thus becomes a tool for helping the applicant organise their thoughts, memories, and expectations. The legal assistant helps draft the statement, ensuring the content aligns accurately with the applicant's declarations. It is vital to explain to the applicant the importance of providing detailed and realistic information to prevent any inconsistencies during the hearing.

There is no standardized procedure for organising the personal statement and supporting documents. Some assistants find it effective to create a file that includes the statement itself and all relevant documents. These materials may include country reports, medical certificates, photographs, newspaper articles, third-party statements, and any other documents that can verify the applicant's statements and confirm their credibility (Cammelli 2017; Faso & Bontempelli 2017).

After counselling in the preparation of the statement, the legal assistant aids the applicant in preparing for the hearing. This support involves guiding the applicant to approach the process with calm and view the hearing as a chance to present their story. Preparing the personal statement helps organise memories, which can be challenging due to the often traumatic nature of the applicant's experiences. Targeted questions during preliminary discussions help clarify these memories and prepare the applicant for the hearing, which

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can be particularly difficult as it involves revisiting distressing periods of their life (Scotti 2023).

The legal assistant also provides support if the hearing results in a denial of the international protection request. According to recent provisions in Article 7 of Law no. 50/2023, this denial is followed by an administrative expulsion order, which includes a return obligation and a re-entry ban (ranging from three to five years). The applicant can challenge the Commission's decision by filing an appeal with the District Court of the Appeal Court where the Commission is located. Filing the appeal, except in specific cases (applications lodged by applicants detained in a Return Centre, applications declared inadmissible, rejected as unfounded or lodged in an instrumental manner for which an accelerated procedure is foreseen), suspends the effectiveness of the decision that denied the international protection request. The appeal must be filed within 30 days of receiving the Commission's decision; however, for applicants detained in Return Centres or for manifestly unfounded requests, the deadline is reduced to 15 days (Masetti Zannini 2024).

The importance and complexity of this step, including adherence to deadlines and procedures for filing the appeal, make legal assistance crucial for the applicant. Additionally, filing the appeal requires a lawyer's help, and the applicant is entitled to free legal aid if needed.

Finally, it is important to note that, according to Article 35-*bis* of Legislative Decree no. 25/2008, the Court should make a decision within four months of receiving the appeal. The appeal does not challenge the Commission's denial itself but rather focuses on the applicant's right to international protection. Therefore, the legal operator and the lawyer assisting the appellant must pay special attention to gathering both the foundational facts of the protection request and any new evidence that was not presented during the administrative phase (*Ibidem*).

With the implementation of Law no. 50/2023, legal assistance is now available only within the SAI network and is no longer offered at governmental reception centres or temporary reception centres, which have become the primary facilities for housing asylum seekers.[3] Given the various roles described, the absence of a legal operator may jeopardize the applicants' ability to fully access the international protection process, ensuring that it is effective, informed, and thoroughly understood (Giovannetti 2023).

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[3] Exceptions include asylum seekers from Afghanistan or Ukraine, individuals arriving in Italy through humanitarian corridors, and those in vulnerable categories, who continue to be accommodated within the SAI system (refer to Ivana Acocella's essay in this volume).

Good practices for the promotion of rights and protection in the Tuscany region

Sheet 1: The connections between the anti-trafficking system and the national international protection system, the case of Tuscany

The emergence of cases of both labour and sexual exploitation linked to human trafficking, which might have been overlooked in the past, has significantly increased in recent years. This rise is largely due to the recognition of complementary roles of anti-trafficking organisations and territorial commissions for the assessment of asylum applications, as well as the resulting collaboration between them (Nicodemi 2017).

The identification and referral by the territorial commissions – meaning the reporting and communication to the appropriate agencies for the subsequent care of victims and their rights and needs – complements the outreach methods used by anti-trafficking organisations, which are primarily based on street units. Over time, these outreach efforts have allowed them to reach a significant number of victims, particularly women subjected to sexual exploitation (Palumbo & Romano 2022).

Coordination between the two has been promoted within the framework of the international protection recognition process.[4] Today, it is possible for a trafficking victim, who was not identified as such in the earlier stages of the reception and integration process, to be recognized during the international protection procedure and "referred" to civil society organisations. These organisations can then take responsibility for the victim and support them in a path toward empowerment and social inclusion, in accordance with Article 18 of Legislative Decree no. 286/1998.

As early as 2015, recognizing the interview with the territorial commission for international protection as a crucial and, in some respects, unique moment for identifying trafficking situations, the National Commission for the Right of Asylum and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) initiated a project to establish standard procedures for the correct and timely identification of trafficking victims during the evaluation of international protection applications. This led to the publication in 2017

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[4] The links between human trafficking in its various forms and migration flows identify asylum seekers as a significant pool of victims or potential victims of trafficking. This highlights the growing focus of territorial commissions on detecting signs of human trafficking during interviews although this is not their specific role. For a discussion on the advantages and risks involved, see Aricò 2023.

of the first *Guidelines for Territorial Commissions on Identifying Trafficking Victims among Asylum Seekers and Referral Procedures*.[5] The revised version of the guidelines, approved at the end of 2020, includes several new elements, particularly in the updated indicators and refined referral procedures, addressing previously identified issues.[6]

The new set of indicators helps the territorial commissions – authorities not specifically tasked with "formal identification" – improve their ability to detect early signs of trafficking situations. This includes keeping abreast of the evolving nature of trafficking, which can reveal new patterns regarding recruitment methods, types of exploitation, and the nationalities of asylum seekers potentially involved in human trafficking (Aricò 2023).

A notable innovation in the updated guidelines is the inclusion of indicators for labour exploitation trafficking, a type that is less familiar to territorial commissions and generally harder to identify. The challenges in recognizing this form of exploitation are mainly due to workers' fear of retaliation at their workplaces, a lack of awareness about their own situation, or reluctance to report it to authorities because, despite the exploitation, it allows them and sometimes their families to survive in their home country. This set of indicators was developed based on the experiences territorial commissions have encountered over recent years with asylum seekers who, after a careful and gradual process of building trust with anti-trafficking operators, have fully disclosed their actual trafficking experiences and exploitation conditions in Italy. Particularly in cases of labour exploitation, it is often difficult, if not impossible, to obtain the necessary information about past situations experienced in the countries of origin. Such information, if available, could more easily lead to identifying a trafficking victim, which differs from a victim of "smuggling" and also from "mere" labour exploitation. While sexual exploitation trafficking has long been recognized and studied, including the phases before arriving in Italy and the experiences in the countries of origin, labour

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[5] The issue of recognizing refugee status for trafficking victims has been examined in a document published by UNHCR in 2006: "UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection no. 7: The Application of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees to Victims of Trafficking and Persons at Risk of Being Trafficked", HCR/GIP/06/07, 2006, available at https://www.unhcr.org/.

[6] UNHCR (2021), L'identificazione delle vittime di tratta tra i richiedenti protezione internazionale e procedure di *referral*. Linee guida per le Commissioni territoriali per il riconoscimento della protezione internazionali. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/it/wp-content/uploads/sites/97/2021/01/Linee-Guida-per-le-Commissioni-Territoriali_identificazione-vittime-di-tratta.pdf. For additional information, see also, UNHCR, L'identificazione e la protezione delle vittime di tratta nel contesto della protezione internazionale: https://www.unhcr.org/it/wp-content/uploads/sites/97/2021/01/Factsheet-tratta-UNHCR.pdf.

exploitation trafficking remains poorly documented and studied. Consequently, it is still challenging to detect and recognize (GRETA 2024, 9-10).

Tuscany is at the forefront of this sensitive area of work, effectively managing the challenges of a constantly evolving phenomenon through strong inter-agency collaboration and proactive regional actions. To highlight just two of the many significant initiatives undertaken in recent years. In February 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Tuscan territorial commission and the SATIS project (Tuscany Anti-Trafficking Social Intervention System)[7], formalising a long-standing collaboration aimed at "creating a targeted referral action for the rapid identification of trafficking victims among asylum seekers and ensuring their prompt support"[8] through the activation of local service networks. Recently, the Tuscany Region reaffirmed its commitment to combating trafficking by allocating, through a resolution in March 2024, a specific funding line for projects supporting trafficking victims and/or severe labour exploitation.[9]

It is also important to recognize that while the growing cooperation among various organisations involved in the anti-trafficking system and the international protection process has produced positive outcomes, as seen in the Tuscan example, the transparency resulting from increasingly standardized and well-known procedures can have unintended consequences. Criminal networks involved in trafficking may exploit the referral processes that follow the identification of a victim or potential victim during international protection procedures for their own benefit. When the territorial commission refers a case, or suspicion, of trafficking to the anti-trafficking organisation, and if it lacks sufficient information to make a decision on the international protection application, it can suspend the process for up to three months while waiting for the necessary information. Although this suspension aims to protect the victim (Aricò 2023; GRETA 2024;), it prolongs the review period of the protection application and can lead to various outcomes for the individual involved. During this suspension, there is a risk that criminal networks might further exploit the person, taking advantage of the uncertainty created by the delay in decision-making.

Given this brief overview of the relationship between the Italian international protection system and the anti-trafficking one, with a particular focus

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[7] The SATIS project will be dealt with below. For more information see Annalisa Tonarelli's contribution in this text.

[8] https://www.satistoscana.org/satistoscana/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Protocollo-Commissione-Tribunale-Satis.pdf.

[9] https://www301.regione.toscana.it/bancadati/atti/DettaglioAttiG.xml?cod-prat=2024DG00000000308.

on the Tuscan case, the crucial importance of legal assistance becomes clear. Before the enactment of Law no. 50/2023, legal assistance was provided to a much larger group of users than it is today. It is worth recalling that the "White Paper" highlighted the need for specific training for staff working in various support and assistance services, particularly for vulnerable individuals such as trafficking victims (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017, 29). Currently, this type of service is no longer available in first reception centres or in extraordinary reception centres, and remains active and essential only within the SAI network, which now serves a significantly smaller number of beneficiaries.

This shift, as noted by various sources (Masetti Zannini 2024), not only complicates the identification of "vulnerabilities" such as those of trafficking victims, that could potentially qualify individuals for refugee status, but also endangers their full right to access the international protection process.[10] Against this backdrop, the experience developed over the years by the Tuscan anti-trafficking system gains particular significance. Despite all challenges, it continues to prove its effectiveness. Thanks to the collaboration between local and regional institutions, as well as public and private entities, it remains capable of identifying various forms of modern slavery and implementing integrated projects aimed at combating and, where possible, preventing them.

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Tools for Connecting the National International Protection System with the Anti-Trafficking System

- **Identification of exploitation indicators**: Develop tools for identifying indicators of sexual exploitation and labour exploitation.
- **Strategic collaborations**: Establish a Memorandum of Understanding between anti-trafficking organisations and territorial commissions that assess asylum applications.
- **Guidelines for territorial commissions**: Create guidelines for territorial commissions to identify trafficking victims among asylum seekers and establish referral procedures.

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[10] For a summary of the impact of recent legislative provisions on the reception system in Italy, with reference to European and international regulations, see also the following sources: https://www.meltingpot.org/2023/05/cosa-resta-della-prima-accoglienza-dopo-il-decreto-cutro/, last retrieved on July 20, 2024.

- **Specialized personnel in territorial commissions**: Ensure the presence of a person specialized in trafficking and exploitation within the territorial commission team.
- **Liaison tools**: Develop tools for effective liaison between the territorial commission and local authorities that handle protection and treatment procedures for trafficking victims (e.g., police headquarters for issuing residence permits and social workers for implementing protection procedures).
- **Trafficking observatory**: Set up an observatory to monitor trafficking (labour and sexual) and update indicators accordingly.

Sheet 2: Being an inclusive university for refugee students

Access to education is a fundamental human right that must be guaranteed and protected. Education is also linked to principles of equity and social justice, as it plays a significant role in reducing inequalities. The lack of recognition of previously held educational qualifications can hinder access to higher education and confine migrants to poorly qualified and subordinate jobs.

Although since 2010 education has been a strategic priority for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), most resources have been allocated to primary and secondary education. Attention to tertiary education remains inadequate: globally, refugees are estimated to be five times less likely to attend university compared to non-refugees (UNHCR, 2021). This situation results in a significant loss of human potential, considering that about 50% of asylum seekers in EU countries are between 18 and 34 years old.

The "White Paper" of the Tuscany Region emphasises the crucial role of education and knowledge in protecting individuals and fostering social cohesion within the community (Regione Toscana-ANCI 2017). It advises «starting programs to recognize and validate the formal and informal skills of asylum seekers and refugees» (*Ibi*, 23). This recommendation is based on the intention of viewing the person being welcomed as a potential source of value and skills, who «can contribute to the well-being of the community of which they become a part» (*Ibi*, 9). [11]

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[11] For the English version of the "White Paper" see:
https://accoglienza.toscana.it/documents/2362619/0/White+Paper+on+immigration+policies.pdf/67cbcbad-cd33-f051-f146-f8de7cd6281d?t=1642585526331.

Recognizing prior educational qualifications is essential for strengthening inclusion pathways. This effort aligns with the goals of legal and administrative orientation services, which – as discussed above – are part of the legal assistance provided to refugees and asylum seekers in Tuscany. In line with this approach, and to ensure fair access to higher education, the University of Florence's Department of Political and Social Sciences, in partnership with several extraordinary reception centres and the SAI network in the region, launched the *Being an Inclusive University for Refugee Students* project in 2022. The project aimed to offer specialized pre-academic orientation and mentoring for asylum seekers and refugees residing in reception centres around Florence. Its objective was to promote university enrolment as a viable alternative to other inclusion pathways – such as enrolment in training courses or entry into the labour market – which appear to be more incentivised. The project also included ongoing mentoring to help overcome challenges to integrating refugees into the academic setting, as suggested by the "White Paper".

To carry out these activities, Italian and foreign students or recent graduates were selected as tutors, with the aim of fostering equal relational dynamics between refugee students and non-refugee youths. The training for tutors had three main objectives:

- *Combine Active Listening Skills with In-Depth Knowledge*: Tutors were trained to integrate active listening skills with a deeper understanding of the backgrounds and causes of migration, legal status, and fundamental rights of people with refugee backgrounds. This aimed to sensitize tutors to the experiences of forced migrants without reducing their experiences to "labels" that could undermine their agency. At the same time, the training provided tutors with tools to balance their position of power when interacting with people in a more asymmetric situation (Bertozzi 2019).
- *Expand Tutors' Knowledge on Educational Systems and Qualification Recognition*: The training aimed to enhance tutors' understanding of educational systems in refugees' home countries and the tools available in Italy for recognizing qualifications. This helped provide legal and administrative support to refugee students involved in the project.
- *Integrate Knowledge of Bureaucratic Procedures with Academic and Local Services for Foreign Nationals*: Tutors were trained to combine knowledge of bureaucratic processes, academic curricula, and examination methods with information about university and local services for foreigners. This goal was intended to strengthen legal

and administrative support for people who have spent extended periods in assistance centres, easing their transition into the university environment. Additionally, it aimed to broaden their access to various forms of social capital, including opportunities outside formal institutional support (Maringe *et al.* 2017).

"Time" was a central element of the project, aimed at positioning the university as an institution capable of making the reception period more productive (Acocella & Tonini 2024). Pre-academic tutoring was focused on supporting the pursuit of higher education as an alternative to early entry into the labour market. This perspective, grounded in the capability approach, sought to expand substantive freedoms and enhance the overall quality of life (Sen 1993; Grüttner *et al.* 2018).

At the same time, the pre-academic orientation phase aimed to facilitate the "transition" from refugee to student. The goal of challenging the victimization process or the sense of uncertainty that characterises the reception period involves supporting processes of identity redefinition, which help individuals reconnect with their future (Fassin 2010). Seeing oneself as a student (or future student) becomes a means of escaping the «stifling atmosphere [...] devoid of activities and a sense of purpose [...] of the direct assistance context» (Farrell *et al.* 2020, 8). Empirical studies also highlight that moving beyond the labels of "refugee", "traumatized" or "different" can lead to improved educational resilience (Ramos 2021).

From a practical perspective, the pre-academic tutoring period was used to expand access to information about the university environment. Making this information available also aimed to expedite certain procedures, such as the recognition of academic qualification, which often take a long time. Delays in these procedures can lead to further "loss" of time, impacting the educational trajectory and possibly endangering the continuation of scholarships (Acocella & Tonini 2024). Pre-academic tutoring time was also used to develop "academic skills", with the aim of expanding language and computer skills, as well as knowledge of new teaching methodologies. Additionally, this time was devoted to studying texts in preparation for first-year examinations related to the chosen study path, to address potential knowledge gaps before actual enrolment. The goal was to make the orientation period and transition to the academic environment more adequate and "fluid" (Anselme & Hands 2020).

Ongoing tutoring time was devoted to continuing orientation activities in the academic environment for newly matriculated students, as well as enhancing the skills needed to successfully navigate their chosen paths. Fur-

thermore, the ongoing tutoring phase emphasised promoting a holistic approach by enhancing students' awareness of the services offered not only by the university but also within the local community. This effort aimed to address various needs – administrative, health-related, and legal –of students with refugee backgrounds. By doing so, it sought to help them experience the advantages of a supportive community, facilitating their social inclusion and helping them move beyond any previous dependencies or confinement (Allsopp *et al.* 2014).

Undoubtedly, having university students serve as tutors created an environment of "equity buddies". Similarly, the enrolment process was supported by providing free accommodation and meals, which helped break the continuity of traditional reception settings, encouraged study motivation, and strengthened the sense of belonging to the university community (Vickers, McCarthy & Zammit 2017). In this specific case, legal and administrative assistance facilitated a smoother transition to university life, helping individuals shift from being "recipients of assistance" to active participants capable of making independent choices. This support allowed students with migration backgrounds to move from a position of dependency to one of autonomy, enabling them to engage with the university system in terms of attendance and study. These aspects require certain administrative and bureaucratic skills, which were provided through the project's tutoring support.

The service *Being an Inclusive University for Refugee Students*, although not intrinsically linked to the provision of legal mentoring to the beneficiaries, has enabled them to acquire essential knowledge for the process of becoming self-sufficient in the territory, including access to a higher education system. In the medium to long term, this ensures a solid background for exercising their rights and those of the migrant community.

For further information see:
https://www.euniwell.eu/what-we-offer/seed-funding-programme/projects-of-the-second-seed-funding-call-2021/being-an-inclusive-university-for-refugee-students.

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Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Tools to Support the Right to Study and Facilitate the Transition from the Reception Context to the Academic Context

- **Support the right to study**: Promote the right to study and lifelong learning for asylum seekers and refugees.
- **Pre-academic tutoring activities**: Implement tutoring activities in reception facilities to encourage university enrolment as a viable alternative to other inclusion pathways.
- **Ongoing mentoring**: Provide ongoing mentoring to help asylum seekers and refugees overcome challenges and integrate into the academic context.
- **Selection of tutors**: Select students or recent graduates (including those of foreign origin) as tutors to foster equal relational dynamics and create an environment of "equity buddies".
- **Training objectives for tutors**: Combine active listening skills with in-depth knowledge of migration, broaden understanding of educational systems and qualification recognition, and integrate knowledge of bureaucratic procedures with academic and local services for foreign nationals.
- **Pre-academic tutoring time**: Expand opportunities for prospective students to get information about the university environment, develop skills in language, IT, or new teaching methodologies, and strengthen basic knowledge to address gaps before enrolment.
- **Ongoing mentoring time**: Continue orientation activities for newly enrolled students, improve skills needed for academic success, support integration into the student body (e.g., through scholarships, free board and lodging in student residences), and strengthen awareness of services offered by both the university and the local community.

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Language Learning

by *Giorgia Bulli*[*] and *Silvia Botti*[**][1]

The learning of the second language (L2)[2] by refugees and asylum seekers is a crucial issue in the context of the socio-cultural and economic integration of individuals who have embarked on a migration path often characterised by multiple crisis and vulnerability factors (Barni & Villarini 2001). Specific studies on international contexts and research on Italian case studies (Caon & Cognigni 2022) highlight the difficulties associated with the process of learning Italian as L2, underlining the importance of pedagogical approaches adapted to the specific needs of this population group. Indeed, refugees and asylum seekers face numerous barriers in learning L2, which include past trauma, housing instability and bureaucratic barriers. Socio-emotional factors significantly influence language acquisition. The post-traumatic stress of the migration route corresponds to a psychological state that is difficult to combine with ideal conditions for L2 learning. Limited access to educational resources, and teaching materials that are still not fully adequate for learning, constitute a further obstacle in the acquisition of linguistic-relational autonomy (Helbling 2016).

Research on language learning by foreign nationals and migrants emphasises that pedagogical approaches to L2 teaching should be flexible and sensitive to the learners' cultural context. Cummins (2000) highlights how adopting an educational model based on *empowerment* can facilitate L2 acquisition, as it promotes active participation and enhances refugees' personal

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[1] The text is the result of reflections by both authors. Giorgia Bulli wrote the introductory part, Silvia Botti wrote the part on good practices in Garfagnana and the Serchio Valley.
[2] On the concepts of mother tongue (LM), second language (LS) and language2 see Chini M., Bosisio C, Fondamenti di glottodidattica, Roma, Carrocci, 2014, p. 47.

experiences. The communicative methodology, which emphasises interaction and the practical use of language, has proven particularly effective in this respect (Lightbown & Spada 2013).

L2 learning by refugees and asylum seekers is therefore a complex process that requires a multifactorial approach. Socio-emotional and material barriers can be mitigated through well-designed language integration programmes supported by the local community. Existing literature emphasises the importance of teaching methodologies that enhance learners' experiences and promote practical language use. The long-term benefits of L2 learning highlight the need for continued investment in language support programmes for this vulnerable population.

The Tuscany Region's "White Paper" already incorporated these recommendations. Pages 21-23 are expressly dedicated to the recognition of the role of language as a "fundamental prerequisite to be able to activate processes of integration and socio-occupational insertion of migrants", through pathways that adhere to the needs and skills of the users and meet homogeneous quality standards (Tuscany Region-ANCI 2017, 21-23).[3] The actions identified to achieve these objectives include: strengthening the role of CPIAs (Provincial Centres for Adult Education, see below); teacher training, technological innovation, access to training experiences also outside the reception centre; the use of ICT tools; the implementation of workshop activities and informal learning paths with citizenship.

These principles also underpin the language integration provisions of the SAI model. In this Chapter, we will focus mainly on the SAI model. In fact, following changes to the reception measures for asylum seekers and refugees in Italy, Italian language teaching is now only provided within the SAI network. The teaching of Italian as L2, on the other hand, is no longer provided in governmental reception centres and extraordinary reception centres (Italian acronym: CAS). The CAS centres have become the "ordinary" places to host asylum seekers. The exceptions to this rule are few and include the reception of Afghan and Ukrainian nationals, people arrived as a result of humanitarian evacuation operations and vulnerable groups, who can instead access the SAI.[4] Within the framework of the SAI, as discussed in Chapter 1, the provision of Italian language courses is one of the first-level services reserved for both asylum seekers and beneficiaries of the various forms of international protection.

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[3] For the English version of the "White Paper" see:
https://accoglienza.toscana.it/documents/2362619/0/White+Paper+on+immigration+policies.pdf/67cbcbad-cd33-f051-f146-f8de7cd6281d?t=1642585526331.
[4] Law no. 50/2023.

On these premises, in this contribution, we focus above all on the SAI network and the way in which Italian language learning activities are carried out in this system, also identifying some good practices found in the Tuscan territory. We will take into consideration cases of good practices in mountainous areas, which present demographic and social characteristics different from the urban contexts that are normally the focus of attention and research.

The language integration programmes of the SAI model offer integrated support that combines language teaching with local guidance, assistance and inclusion services (Faso & Bontempelli 2017; Tarsia 2018).

The *Operational Manual for the activation and management of integrated reception services* devotes special attention to learning Italian. In fact, within the framework of an "integrated" governance of reception and integration measures, it is emphasised that «knowledge of Italian represents an indispensable condition to enter into relations with the social context. Without adequate knowledge of the Italian language, beneficiaries would have strong restrictions in accessing information, using services, expressing needs and more generally to understand, be understood, participate and feel part of the local community» (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018, 46).[5]

In accordance with the considerations from the national and international literature presented in the opening of the essay, the Handbook also carefully considers the role of motivation in language learning.[6]

With these principles in mind, L2 teaching in the SAI network should be structured to meet the different language needs of the users. Italian lessons can be organised in levels of proficiency, starting from absolute beginner courses to advanced courses that prepare students for entering the labour market or continuing their studies. Teaching programmes should therefore be flexible and adapted to each individual's abilities and learning time, taking into account cultural differences and different educational backgrounds.

In line with the general aims of 'integrated' governance of reception and integration measures, the distinctive aspect of L2 teaching should be the practical approach. Lessons should not be limited to formal grammar and vocabulary learning, but also include practical activities that foster language use in real contexts. Teachers are therefore encouraged to use interactive teaching methods, such as role-plays, simulations of everyday situations and

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[5] Translation into English by the author.

[6] «A strong motivation to learn Italian should be stimulated where it is lacking. In fact, motivation is a relevant element for learning a foreign language in adulthood and even more so for those beneficiaries who have not had a previous course of study in their country of origin» (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018, 46). Translation into English by the author.

language workshops, that help students develop effective communication skills.

Moreover, in line with the guidelines of the "White Paper", L2 teaching is closely linked to the integration pathway to be undertaken once out of the reception circuit. For example, Italian courses can be combined with job orientation workshops, which provide information and tools for finding employment, writing a curriculum vitae and preparing for job interviews. This integrated approach should enable SAI users to acquire not only language skills but also those necessary for full participation in the social and economic life of the community.

Another fundamental element is collaboration with local realities. Tuscan schools, cultural associations and libraries play an important role in supporting L2 teaching. Through partnerships and joint projects, SAI students can have the opportunity to participate in cultural and social activities, thus expanding their language and social skills in an inclusive and welcoming context.

On the operational side, it is the same *Operational Manual* that envisages that the provision of Italian teaching takes place both inside and outside the reception facilities. In fact, the Manual states that «another relevant activity of the project concerns the mapping of Italian courses offered in the area. Attending Italian language courses, in addition to allowing beneficiaries a greater possibility of choice, favours the process of autonomy and helps to develop the personal network of contacts and points of reference in the territory» (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018, 47).[7] One of the most relevant entities in this regard are the CIPIAs, the provincial centres for adult education. The CPIAs, in partnership with local associations, offer courses aimed at achieving the A2 qualification, certifying the attainment of the level of knowledge of the Italian language, in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, drawn up by the Council of Europe. In order to guarantee the variety of the training offer, the CIPIAs tend to dialogue with the territorial actors and, from this point of view, are to be considered as privileged interlocutors for common planning. In this respect, the data of the latest SAI report are eloquent. During 2022 in the SAI, a mixed modality of course delivery of Italian as L2 was mainly envisaged. In 72.5% of the SAI projects at the national level, language courses were held at the CPIAs or other organisations in the area, with the integration of teaching activities organised directly within the SAI (SAI-Ministry of the Interior-ANCI-Cittalia 2023). With a view to integrated language learning, the CPIAs, in addition

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[7] Translation into English by the author.

to literacy and Italian language learning courses, also offer first-level education courses (attainment of a secondary school leaving certificate) and second-level education courses (attainment of a secondary school leaving certificate), which the in-house courses of the projects could not guarantee (Gabrielli *et al.* 2022).

Finally, it is important to emphasise that L2 teaching should not only be about acquiring a new language, but also represent a path to personal growth and *empowerment*. Learning Italian allows immigrants and refugees to express their ideas and needs, build meaningful relationships with the local community and pursue their life goals with greater confidence. L2 learning has significant long-term impacts for refugees and asylum seekers, contributing not only to social integration, but also to access to the labour market and higher education. The acquisition of advanced language skills is correlated with better job opportunities and increased civic participation.

Good practices related to teaching and learning Italian as L2 in the Tuscany region

Sheet 1: Good practices in a mountainous context. Teaching Italian in Garfagnana and the Media Valle del Serchio

In Tuscany, the SAI network plays a fundamental role in offering support and hospitality to different categories of vulnerable people, including ordinary people, unaccompanied foreign minors and people with physical or mental disabilities.

Widespread reception, in the mountainous territories widely present in the region, is a model that aims to distribute users in small towns, favouring integration and the sustainability of the reception system. This approach offers several advantages, both for refugees and for host communities, as in the particular case of the Mediavalle del Serchio and Garfagnana territories, in the province of Lucca. The integration of refugees in the small towns of the Serchio Valley has facilitated over the years and continues to facilitate direct contact with the local population, promoting interpersonal relations and greater mutual understanding. Smaller communities tend to be more welcoming and provide more personalized, not to say sometimes even "family-like" support (De Matteis *et. al.* 2019). Many mountain areas are also suffering from depopulation and economic decline. The arrival of new inhabitants has therefore helped to revitalise these communities, stimulating the local

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economy through new business activities and an increase in demand for services. Reception in small numbers also makes it possible to provide more targeted and customised assistance from local services and in particular the SAI project teams, being able to follow the refugees' specific needs more closely and providing appropriate educational, health and employment support.

A significant example of this reception network is found, as mentioned, in the Garfagnana and Media Valle del Serchio area, in the province of Lucca. In this area, the SAI projects are managed by the Municipalities of Gallicano, Borgo a Mozzano and Fabbriche di Vergemoli, in collaboration with the Cooperativa Sociale Odissea, which acts as the managing body. These three projects can accommodate a total of 89 people, offering housing solutions that facilitate living together and social integration. In Gallicano, 14 places are available, distributed among families and single men in three different facilities. In Fabbriche di Vergemoli, the facilities have a capacity of 40 places, welcoming families and single women in six structures. In Borgo a Mozzano, which from 2021 collaborates with the Municipality of Castelnuovo Garfagnana, there are 35 places for single men and families, distributed in five structures.[8]

In line with the principles and guidelines that emerged in the "White Paper", these projects represent a reception model centred on the individual needs of beneficiaries, promoting real integration in local communities. Integration is fostered through the teaching of Italian, a fundamental element in each beneficiary's journey. Italian L2 classes are held in the Borgo a Mozzano and Gallicano libraries, with a reduced number of students, which allows for a higher quality of teaching, better interaction between students and greater personalization of learning compared to external courses. In addition to the beneficiaries of the projects, foreigners resident in the area also participate, who, unable to access public schools such as the CPIAs for various reasons, submit their requests to the social services or directly to the municipality.

The Odyssey Cooperative, which collaborates in these reception projects, adopts a number of specific teaching practices in their Italian courses to facilitate integration and language learning.[9] These practices include:

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[8] https://www.retesai.it/i-numeri-della-rete-sai/, data as at 30.06.2024.

[9] The following information is taken from Silvia Botti's degree thesis entitled: "L'insegnamento dell'italiano come L2 nei progetti S.A.I. Una Panoramica sui progetti della Valle Del Serchio", University of Pisa, Degree Course in Euro-American Languages and Literature, Academic Year 2022/2023.

- *Customised lessons*: Lessons are tailored to the language skills, needs and interests of the participants, who often have different education levels and cultural backgrounds.
- *Active and participative methods*: Teaching techniques that encourage active student participation are used, such as group work, discussions, role-playing and simulations of everyday situations.
- *Contextual teaching*: Teaching activities are often linked to practical life and the local context. This includes itinerant lessons, where students visit places such as supermarkets, government offices or banks, employment or real estate agencies, to learn and practise vocabulary and useful phrases in real-life contexts (which they will have to master independently once they have completed their placement).
- *Use of authentic materials*: Authentic materials such as newspapers, advertising flyers, forms and other real documents are used to accustom students to the language used in everyday life.
- *Cooperative learning*: Collaboration is encouraged among students, who work together on projects and activities, helping each other and creating an atmosphere of support and solidarity.
- *Psycho-social support*: Cooperative teachers and staff are often trained to offer psycho-social support, recognising and responding to trauma and personal difficulties that may affect learning.[10]
- *Integration with local services*: Italian courses are integrated with other services offered by the cooperatives, such as legal assistance, employment support and cultural activities, to facilitate the overall integration of refugees into society.
- *Use of educational technology*: Whenever possible, digital tools and online platforms are used to support learning, especially in areas with adequate technological infrastructure.[11]

These practices are designed to respond flexibly and adaptively to the specific needs of refugees, promoting inclusion and *empowerment* through learning Italian. Language courses in SAI projects do not follow a predefined and uniform path for all students, but offer a customised project, tailored to the needs of each participant. This approach reduces the affective filter

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[10] The Cooperativa Odissea has an ethno-psychological team of anthropologists, psychologists and cultural-linguistic mediators to take care of the most vulnerable beneficiaries, for further information: https://www.cooperativaodissea.org/dettaglio-progetto/mediazione-etnoclinica/

[11] During the Covid-19 pandemic, teledidactics evolved to allow for the continuation of courses of study, including Italian L2 courses for refugees in the SAI projects of the Cooperativa Odissea, as developed extensively in the in-depth study, considered essential.

(Krashen, Tracy & Terrell 1996) and increases students' motivation, making them active protagonists of their learning. These arrangements differ from those in provincial State schools, where programmes are uniform and set at the beginning of the school year.

In the specific case of the SAI projects of the Garfagnana and the Serchio Valley[12], the courses are open indiscriminately to adult men and women, single or belonging to family units to which young mothers often bring their babies, newly born or only a few months old, in order not to miss the course. These courses are distinguished mainly by the language level of the learners and range from level A0-pre A1, for illiterate or semi-illiterate learners, to level A2, up to a maximum of level B1. To access the various levels, the beneficiaries take written and oral entry tests specifically designed to place them in class groups. The beneficiaries enrolled in the internal courses managed by the SAI projects also have the possibility of enrolling in the provincial CPIA, which has three sites in the province: the main site in Lucca and the two detachments located in Castelnuovo di Garfagnana and Bagni di Lucca. With the support of the Italian teachers of the SAI projects, interested beneficiaries proceed to enroll online on the CPIA website. The course has a duration of 200 hours and is divided into two levels: level A1: duration of 100 hours; level A2: duration of 80 hours. In addition, there is a third pathway of 200 hours divided into 180 hours of didactic activities (and 18 hours of reception) divided as follows: cognitive-motivational interview; hours of in-depth study; administration of the level placement test; introductory unit on the use of the We School platform, including the procedure for registering on the platform; conclusion of the training pact; two hours of in-depth study.

CPIAs represent the only alternative to SAI courses in the Mediavalle and Garfagnana area. Here, qualified teachers offer Italian courses to students of various nationalities, collaborating with local cooperatives. The cooperatives support public teachers in the insertion and monitoring of new students, facilitating integration through practical and social activities.

The advantages of SAI project courses include an environment that fosters oral communication, which is crucial for language learning. Small classes offer more opportunities to talk, ask questions and receive immediate feedback. Students feel less intimidated and more comfortable participating, regardless of gender, age or cultural and religious background, which is crucial for beginners and illiterates who may feel insecure. Teachers can closely monitor individual progress, intervening at an early stage and adapting lessons as needed.

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[12] Silvia Botti 2023, quoted.

However, in these mountainous areas, there are also disadvantages, such as difficulties in accessing public transport that limit not only course attendance but also opportunities for social interaction. Furthermore, educational facilities, such as kindergartens, have limited places, preventing parents from attending courses. The less developed technological infrastructure, especially in Fabbriche di Vergemoli, limits access to online educational resources, a problem accentuated during the pandemic.

Teaching Italian to refugees and asylum seekers in mountain contexts such as that of Mediavalle and Garfagnana, therefore, offers a series of opportunities linked to the peaceful environment, community solidarity and lower costs, characteristics that allow for replicability of the various practices adopted by the Serchio Valley SAIs in other mountain contexts with similar qualities. However, as seen, this reality also presents significant challenges. To maximise the benefits and mitigate the disadvantages, it is therefore crucial to continue with an integrated approach that involves both local authorities and host communities, ensuring continuous support and adequate resources for integration and learning.

In this context of attention to the needs of learning Italian as L2 in contexts that take into account specific needs, it is important to note the adoption of e-learning modes during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic was a very difficult time for the migrant population. During the two years that passed between lockdowns and zone closures, the SAI projects did not stop, as they were considered "essential work". It was therefore necessary to think of an alternative to in-presence Italian lessons, which could not only not interrupt the compulsory and necessary lessons foreseen for L2 Italian students, but also try to make this a fixed appointment for the people accommodated in the facilities.

This is how the S.M.ART-ITALIAN (Sistema Multimediale Apprendimento di Lingua Italiana L2 – Multimedia System for Learning Italian as a second language) project was born, aimed at the beneficiaries of the SAI projects of Cooperativa Odissea, which started from the need to provide beneficiaries with a tool to deepen and consolidate the language skills acquired during the Italian courses held in presence until March 2020.[13] The project envisaged a remote teaching programme, based on the development of a digital platform that can be activated through the application Classroom[14], a free

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[13] https://www.mestieritoscana.it/una-piattaforma-multimediale-per-litaliano-l2/
[14] https://www.educationmarketing.it/didattica-innovativa/google-classroom-cose-e-come-usarlo/

web service for schools and universities, designed by Google to allow teachers to create and distribute teaching material with their class group, through the assignment and assessment of homework and assignments online and shared with students, even instantaneously and simultaneously with other invited and/or authorised users. S.M.ART-ITALIAN was realised thanks to the collaboration of some of the teachers of the Itaca Association, the Cooperativa Odissea and the Consortium Mestieri[15] and thus saw the creation of customised lessons and exercises according to the teaching needs of the various language levels of the beneficiaries.[16]

Within the platform, which each student accessed with his or her own credentials, teachers uploaded various types of exercises ranging from text comprehension exercises, multiple-choice questions, to fun and playful activities such as watching videos or films, but also games that could be played remotely. There were different language levels on the platform, from A0 to B1, as well as other activities useful for job hunting, obtaining a driving licence, or learning more about topics related to everyday life.

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Teaching and learning of Italian as a L2

- **Customised lessons**: Lessons tailored to the language skills, needs, and interests of the participants, recognizing different educational levels and cultural backgrounds.
- **Active and participative methods**: Using teaching techniques that encourage active student participation, such as group work, discussions, role-playing, and simulations of everyday situations.
- **Contextual teaching**: Linking teaching activities to practical life and the local context, including itinerant lessons where students practice language skills in real-life contexts like supermarkets or government offices.

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[15] Mestieri Toscana is a regional consortium that deals with training, intermediation, orientation, reception and labour policies. Originating from the cooperative movement, Mestieri works for the social integration of people at risk of marginalization and exclusion, favouring training and professional requalification through activities aimed at human, moral, cultural and professional promotion.

[16] https://www.cooperativaodissea.org/dettaglio-progetto/s-m-art-italian/

- **Use of authentic materials**: Employing real-life documents such as newspapers, advertising flyers, and official forms to familiarize students with everyday language usage.
- **Cooperative learning**: Encouraging collaboration among students to foster a supportive and solidarity-based learning environment.
- **Integration with local services**: Coordinating Italian courses with other support services, such as legal assistance, employment support, and cultural activities to facilitate overall integration.
- **Use of educational technology**: Incorporating digital tools and online platforms, especially in areas with adequate technological infrastructure, to support language learning.
- **E-learning adoption**: Implementing e-learning modes during the Covid-19 pandemic, providing remote teaching through digital platforms like Classroom, ensuring continuity in language education despite lockdowns.

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Work Inclusion

by *Annalisa Tonarelli*[*]

The main objective of the SAI is to (re)conquer the individual autonomy for the host people (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018). From this point of view, labour market participation becomes a fundamental step to promote people's autonomy and social inclusion (Tarsia 2021). The employment is important not only in terms of economic resources acquired, but also because it offers the opportunity to actively contribute to the wealth and the enrichment of the host society. According to government guidelines, the mission of SAI is to facilitate access to employment for hosted people, and to encourage the acquisition of new skills. In this perspective, the aim of the second-level services provided by SAI are specifically aimed at the integration of the labour market (Campomori 2017)[1].

Although labour market integration is a crucial goal for SAI projects, its pursuit poses many challenges (Di Sario 2021). Difficulties in finding job opportunities deal both with individuals characteristics and with labour market opportunity in the host country. Individual characteristics concern mainly the lack of documents and certifications that ascertain the qualifications and professional competences acquired in the countries of origin and low language skills. Health issues due to the migratory paths and persecutions in the home country can be a fundamental obstacle to integration, as they impinge on virtually all areas of life and shape the ability to enter employment, learn the host country's languages, interact with public institutions, and do well in

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[1] Law no. 50/2023 establishes that the second level services are addressed to holders of international protection as well as unaccompanied minor foreigners, and all holders of residence permits that allow access to SAI mentioned above (Chapter 1 by Acocella), while for asylum seekers who "can" still access today the SAI are provided only first-level reception measures (which include material, health, social, legal and linguistic assistance) (Giovanetti 2023).

school (OECD 2019).[2] Other personal characteristics as gender and age could also be a challenge for personal engagement in job search (Capalbo 2020). Local labour market specificities as weakness of job opportunities (Bonifazi & Marini 2014), rules and social regulation, as well as discrimination mechanisms operated by companies against foreign workforce, may in turn hinder work inclusion (Omizzolo & Sodano 2015). These aspects characterise the national territory differently and therefore, together with the other factors examined above, contribute to ensuring that the projects of the Protection System have different fates depending on the territorial context in which they are rooted. According to current government guidelines (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018), SAI services are therefore specifically geared towards removing this kind of obstacles, providing career guidance activities, and accompanying beneficiaries in vocational training and retraining (vocational training courses, training internships, scholarships and apprenticeships), encouraging acquisition of new skills (Martin 2016; Federico & Baglioni 2021).

One of the main tools provided is the assistance to the *Curriculum vitae* writing (Torlone 2022). The curriculum vitae (CV) is a document aimed at arousing the interest of the potential employer and summarizing a person's educational and work experiences, presenting not only professional skills, but also interests and attitudes. Its drafting is essential to help the beneficiary promote themselves towards potential employers, highlighting individual empowerment. The active drafting by the beneficiary favours the effective possession of the document and the development of autonomy in the search for work; therefore, it is advisable to start drafting it as soon as possible when defining personalized training and work objectives.

Skills assessment is another activity currently provided by SAI with the aim of reconstructing the humanitarian migrants' background in terms of skills acquired, abilities, experiences, interests, attitudes and expectations (OECD 2016; 2016b). Such a reconstruction presupposes specific techniques and methodologies (pedagogical sheets, self-assessment questionnaires, recovery of personal biography, analysis of previous experiences, tests and simulations, etc.) and the involvement of consultants ("guidance tutor" or

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[2] OECD (2019) outlines that refugees and other vulnerable migrant groups have four specific factors of vulnerability: First, they have on average, lower educational attainment than the native-born and other migrants. Second, they are more likely to have suffered trauma. Third, as they have not chosen to migrate, they generally have had no opportunity to prepare for their life in the new country. Fourth, refugees often arrive in the context of large-scale inflows, which means they compete for employment. As a result, refugees do not start from the same position on the labour market and in the host society as other migrants.

"work psychologist") who knows how to manage a cycle of meetings/interviews with the individual beneficiary. The skills assessment is a tool to identify and describe even uncertified skills and competencies, and to bring out those that the person is not aware of possessing. This process is generally divided into three phases:

- *Preliminary*: Analysis of the needs and aspirations of the individual, in order to (self-)trace the personal profile and identify the individual objectives to be achieved.
- *Investigative*: Analysis of motivations, skills and personal and professional attitudes.
- *Conclusive*: Synthesis and definition of the elements capable of favouring or hindering the implementation of a professional development project, drawing up an action plan for the pursuit of the defined objectives.

Also important in this phase is the certification of skills, i.e. an examination and evaluation process conducted by an external certification body, aimed at giving the person official recognition of specific knowledge, skills and qualifications. This certificate allows the subject to use his, or her skills, in the context of his or her socio-economic development.

Another service for work inclusion usually provided by SAI is the guidance of beneficiaries in vocational training and retraining (vocational training courses, training internships, scholarships and apprenticeships). *Vocational training* must be seen as the main pillar for work inclusion (Torlone 2022). Vocational training includes courses aimed at the acquisition and updating of practical and theoretical skills for specific professions. These courses can be for job placement, qualification, retraining, specialization, updating or improvement of workers. Usually, training is financed through European, regional or local funds and is provided by training institutions on the basis of agreements signed with the institutions responsible for the SAI project. To ensure that the project has the widest possible information regarding training opportunities, it is important to monitor the training offer, subscribe to newsletters and know the regional legislation. It is also crucial to identify the employment needs in order to design courses facilitating the match with skills demanded by the enterprises. The involvement of micro and small enterprises integrated into the local territory is also crucial and needs "cultural encouragement" and access to tools that can mitigate risks for enterprises. Finally, since training has to meet at the same time the needs of enterprises and beneficiaries it has to be a very "personalized" tool.

An additional tool normally used for work inclusion is *Training and orientation internship*. It aims to facilitate professional choices through direct

experience in the work field. It does not constitute an employment relationship, but it is a training opportunity. It involves three parties: a promoter, the host company and the trainee. It must be governed by agreements between the promoter and the company, with a training project attached. Among the promoters, social cooperatives and Employment Centers play a key role in providing information and services related to internships. It is crucial to consider internships an opportunity both for beneficiaries and companies, and to frame them as investments in human resources development (Battisti *et al.* 2018). The internship design requires close synergy and collaboration among different stakeholders: SAI managing bodies, training agencies, Employment Centers, companies.

More in general the involvement of companies is crucial for the socio-professional integration of people in need of international protection; therefore, it is necessary to incentivize their participation with agreements and memoranda of understanding, as well as providing dedicated incentives and simplifying administrative procedures. It is also important to develop ICT devices for matching labour supply and demand, thus facilitating companies' access to qualified resources (OECD-UNHCR 2018).

Good practices related to work inclusion in the Tuscany region

Sheet 1: SAI project of the Union of Municipalities of the Empolese Valdelsa District[3]

The SAI project of the Union of Municipalities of the Empolese Valdelsa District stands out as a model for promoting migrant employment through strategic collaborations and innovative approaches. Managed by CO&SO Empoli in partnership with organisations like Oxfam Italia and the Misericordie of Empoli and Certaldo, the project emphasises shared planning and

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[3] The sheet is mainly drafted on the results of the event entitled "The paths of socio-occupational inclusion in SAI projects" organised in Empoli by ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities) Tuscany and the Tuscany Region on 16 June 2023 (see link: https://ancitoscana.it/percorsi-di-inclusione-socio-lavorativa-nei-progetti-sai-sistema-di-accoglienza-e-integrazione/). During the event, several SAI projects presented their experiences. Among them were representatives of the SAI project of the Union of Municipalities of the Empolese Valdelsa District who presented their labour inclusion model based on the training-work supply chain. Further useful elements for the preparation of the module came from the contents of the Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/SaiEmpoleseValdelsa/?locale=it_IT.

co-design, adhering to third-sector regulations. A key strength of the SAI project is its widespread reception strategy, which allows for the distribution of beneficiaries throughout the territory. This enables effective management of a significant number of people, including families and individuals who have obtained protection but are awaiting residence permits. Recently, the project has also begun to accommodate vulnerable asylum seekers, despite the absence of specific dedicated measures.

This SAI project stands out for its strong link with local companies and its attempt to promote labour market inclusion tools based on the training-work supply chain. The project's employment area includes two operators with complementary skills, one focused on training and internships and the other on employment integration. This structure effectively addresses the diverse needs of the beneficiaries. The project LinK – Lavoriamo Inclusivamente – promoted by the Health Societies (Italian acronym: SDSs)[4] Empolese Valdarno Valdelsa, has been particularly effective in recognizing previous skills and facilitating employment inclusion. Despite not being specifically aimed at migrants, LinK has created a vast network of local companies willing to host interns, ensuring internships are used constructively.

The synergy between SAI and LinK highlights a systemic vision in the District's project, especially in training. Indeed, training courses tailored to the needs of companies and production activities in the area were chosen or promoted. Furthermore, Internships are the main tool for employment integration within the SAI project, with initial costs covered to incentivize companies to hire interns. This approach ensures internships are not seen merely as free labour but as a genuine support mechanism for employment inclusion.

The SAI project views internships not only as training opportunities but also as platforms for mutual understanding and network collaboration between reception managing entities and entrepreneurs. This collaboration fosters trust and loyalty, creating a supportive environment for beneficiaries. Many companies involved in the project offer customised internship paths and invest in training as an opportunity for growth. An optimal model for small and medium-sized enterprises includes planning a six-month internship per year, with dedicated support for the intern, followed by a six-month break to allow for effective skill development. This approach appears to be fully in line with the recommendations provided by the OECD-UNHCR guidelines (2018).

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[4] In Tuscany, SDSs are public consortia formed by the municipalities of a social-health area and the Local Health Authority. Their main goal is to ensure the integration of local health, social, and welfare services (Regional Law no. 60/2008, amending Regional Law no. 40/2005).

This network of relationships has enabled structured placements for individuals with specific issues and vulnerabilities, focusing on social inclusion rather than just employment integration. Some companies have established such positive relationships with the project that they are willing to support individuals with significant challenges, such as alcoholism, by providing opportunities that help them regain motivation and a sense of purpose. This commitment extends to social cooperatives, which often involve highly disadvantaged individuals, such as those with disabilities or mental health issues, in simple, manual tasks to boost their confidence and sense of productivity. This holistic approach not only provides employment but significantly enhances psychological and social well-being (Tarsia 2021).

Diversifying networks and promoting collaborations is essential, given the varied needs of beneficiaries and the time constraints of hospitality paths. SAI system operators advocate for broad, diversified networks involving Employment Centers, training agencies, trade associations, companies, and other territorial entities to support job accompaniment and address related needs like housing and childcare. The SAI project has promoted a synergy with The National Agency for Active Employment Policies to implement certification paths for skills acquired through internships. Effective job accompaniment paths require practical laboratories and closer collaboration between Employment Centers and companies to ensure skill certification is understandable and valuable for employers.

Lastly, collaboration with CGIL has been fundamental in addressing labour exploitation and organising training sessions on workers' rights, including issues like undeclared work and fraudulent VAT numbers. These initiatives, renewed with the project's update in 2023, also include training operators to improve their ability to identify exploitation cases.

SAI project of the Union of Municipalities of the Empolese Valdelsa District can be considered a good practice to the extent that it has been promoted by an aggregation of municipalities, thus implementing the recommendations contained in the "White Paper" (Regione Toscana-ANCI 2017) which proposes overcoming "particularistic communal visions" in favour of joint action between public actors to take care of the migrant.

As regards the specific issue of job placement, it is an experience that, in accordance with the main recommendations both at international and national and local level, invests decisively in the creation of collaborative relationships with local companies. Starting from the assumption that the SAI project needs companies in which to insert the people welcomed, but that local companies also need manpower, the attempt was to create a continuous and effective relationship with the entrepreneurial fabric, training agencies

and SAI facilities, based on creating mutual knowledge and trust. This is also in line with the proposals and orientations of the "White Paper" which, among the "complementary" dimensions of reception, explicitly includes "the training-work supply chain" (*Ibi*, 24).[5] This has favoured the definition of personalized projects that look both at the characteristics of people and at the needs of companies and which has been based on a flexible use of internships. This SAI project can also be considered a good practice about the ability to reflect constructively and participatory on the actions put in place with respect to job placement as emerges from the day organised on 16 June 2023 in Empoli, and also with regard to the co-programming and co-design of migrant integration services (Galli 2021).

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Tools to Foster a Labour Market Integration Approach
Based on the Training-Work Supply Chain

- **Strategic collaborations**: Strengthening relations between refugee reception centres and businesses as strategic partners in reception projects to improve the effectiveness of labour market integration pathways. Promote the development of a network involving reception centres, training agencies, and employment agencies to align professional profiles with local production needs and create suitable training pathways.
- **Specialized operators**: Include operators with expertise in training and employment integration in refugee reception projects. Provide specific training courses for social workers on job orientation, such as assessing migrants' aspirations, informing them about labour market rights and risks, and understanding local professional profile requirements.
- **Support for internships**: Focus on internships as a key tool for job placement by covering initial costs to incentivize companies. Build and maintain strong relationships with local companies and training agencies to foster trust and mutual understanding.

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[5] For the English version of the "White Paper" see:
https://accoglienza.toscana.it/documents/2362619/0/White+Paper+on+immigration+policies.pdf/67cbcbad-cd33-f051-f146-f8de7cd6281d?t=1642585526331.

- **Customised projects**: Develop projects tailored to individual characteristics and company or territorial needs (e.g., local production activities), using flexible internships to address these needs effectively.
- **Skills certification**: Collaborate with the National Agency for Active Employment Policies to implement certification paths for skills acquired through internships.
- **Tackling labour exploitation**: Work with trade unions to organise training sessions on labour rights and issues like undeclared work. Train workers to identify and address cases of labour exploitation.

Sheet 2: COMMIT PROJECT – Migrant Skills in Tuscany

The "Migrant Skills in Tuscany" (COMMIT) project was funded by the Labour Department of the Tuscany Region with grants from the European Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund 2014-2020. The project concluded in 2023 with the primary objective of strengthening the local system to promote the employment inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers, and holders of international protection. The aim was to support their transition from the reception system to becoming active contributors to the local society by enhancing their skills to meet the demands of the local labour market.

Several key actions were undertaken to create a cohesive environment involving all actors in the labour market, including Employment Centers, and to improve the effectiveness of these centres in profiling and integrating migrants. Efforts focused on strengthening collaboration with reception services, enhancing linguistic mediation, and providing integrated access to services. Public-private partnerships were also fostered through pilot projects involving local businesses. The project therefore acted at a systemic level with actions oriented towards the network of existing services and experimenting locally with innovative models of intervention.

Empowerment of Job Guidance Services were strengthened and collaboration with reception services was consolidated. This included the development of support tools for operators of Employment Centres and reception centres to facilitate the employment of foreign nationals; the effectiveness of Employment Centers in profiling and integrating migrants was improved by increasing the transparency of skills and supporting job placements. Specific pathways were activated within Employment Centers for skill validation, job searching, and company placements. Linguistic mediation services and integrated care access points were enhanced. Information, training, and support

tools were built to promote labour market knowledge and rights among migrants, supporting regular job placement pathways. Actions included territorial planning tables, strengthening Single Access Points, updating information system on the data on the professional and personal records of workers and companies operating in the region.

The project delivered three key outputs. The first one is *Guidelines for Strengthening Employment and Reception Centres in Supporting the Integration of Migrants into the Labour Market*. These guidelines address common issues such as improving work culture understanding in Italy and building trust between users and operators. Actions included enhanced collaboration between Employment Centers and reception managers, organising orientation meetings, and emphasising the mediator's role as a cultural and linguistic bridge. The second one is *Guidelines for Modeling Skills Enhancement Paths*. These guidelines focused on improving the capacity of Employment Centers to profile the migrant by enhancing skills in line with local needs and job profiles. Key sections included orientation initiatives, effective training programs, and support for company onboarding. Collaboration between public and private sectors was promoted through local pilot projects, analysing local skill needs, and facilitating effective job placements through the activation of specific training paths and the design of initial accompanying programmes.

The third and more innovative one, is *video pills* and *fact sheets to provide labour market information to foreign nationals*. They were produced in Italian and subsequently translated into 4 languages thanks to the support of linguistic and cultural mediators. The five videos offer a complete overview of the dynamics of the world of work in Italy. The first video, "Introduction to: Working in Italy", explores the various types of jobs available in the country, with a focus on regular work, document requirements and training opportunities, as well as offering an overview of self-employment. The second video, "Looking for Work in Italy", provides practical advice on writing a curriculum vitae, on job search strategies through the Employment Center, employment agencies, ads and self-application, warning against scams and false ads. The third video, "The Job Interview", offers ten valuable tips on how to successfully face a job interview. The fourth video, "Recruitment, Rights and Duties, the Payslip", examines in detail the hiring process, the rights and obligations of the worker, the employment contract, the probationary period, the payslip and the risks associated with irregular work. Finally, the fifth video, "The Work Environment" emphasises the importance of respecting roles, rules and safety in the work environment. Each video offers a clear and practical guide to help users understand and successfully navigate

the Italian world of work. These videos are also supported by seven fact-sheets, which present a comprehensive overview of the different aspects of the world of work and professional integration. The first tab introduces the COMMIT project and the results obtained, providing an overview of the context. The following sheets deal with specific issues, such as skills (sheet 2), the Curriculum Vitae (sheet 3), the Employment Centre (sheet 4), regular and irregular work (sheet 5), the various types of employment contract (sheet 6) and safety in the workplace (sheet 7). Each worksheet offers detailed information on each topic, including definitions, purposes, procedures, and related rights, supported by video materials for deeper and more engaging understanding.

COMMIT acted at a systemic level to create a sustainable and effective model for migrant employment inclusion. By enhancing the existing service network and introducing innovative intervention models, the project aimed to ensure that migrants can contribute positively to the local society while achieving greater independence and integration. From this point of view, also in line with the principles and guidelines of the "White Paper" (Regione Toscana-ANCI 2017), the project can be considered a good practice for the following reasons. Firstly, it promotes synergy between public and private actors involved in the labour inclusion process. Secondly, it enhances the private and public resources available in the territory and particularly strengthens the skills and effectiveness of a key resource like the Employment Centers. Thirdly, it is strongly focused on the objective of increasing the empowerment of individuals. Fourthly, it develops from a process of reflection on the major issues identified regarding the labour inclusion of labour inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers, and holders of international protection. These issues concern three aspects: how to increase knowledge of the work culture in Italy to provide users with the necessary tools to interact with employers; how to improve the experience of the first meeting with the Employment Centers and build a relationship of trust between users and operators; how to define the orientation and job placement path to make it more consistent with the needs, difficulties, and potential of the users and at the same time sustainable for the Employment Centers. Finally, Video pills and factsheets represent innovative and useful instruments to inform migrants about labour market functioning in Italy.

For further information see: https://arti.toscana.it/progetto-commit

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Sustainable and Effective Model for Labour Inclusion of Migrants

- **Strengthening collaboration**: Enhance cooperation between job centres, accommodation centres, and local businesses to better integrate migrants into the labour market by aligning their skills with local production needs.
- **Information system update**: Modernize the regional information system to improve the matching of labour supply and demand, focusing on the personal and professional data of workers and enterprises.
- **Guidelines for employment and reception centres**: Develop guidelines to support migrant integration into the labour market by improving understanding of Italy's work culture and building trust between users and operators. This includes fostering collaboration between job centres and reception managers and reinforcing the mediator's role as a cultural and linguistic bridge.
- **Improving job centres' effectiveness**: Provide guidelines to enhance Job Centres' ability to profile and integrate migrants. This involves analysing local skill needs, creating effective CVs, and ensuring successful job placements through specific training courses and initial support programs.
- **Video pills and factsheets**: Create educational videos and factsheets in multiple languages to provide migrants with practical information about the Italian labour market, including job searching, job interviews, rights and duties, and workplace safety.

Sheet 3: SATIS PROJECT – Tuscan Anti-Trafficking System Social Interventions

The SATIS Project (Tuscan Anti-trafficking System Social Interventions) includes a broad partnership of public and private bodies, aims at the implementation of the Tuscan system of interventions in support of victims of trafficking and/or exploitation and the progressive rooting of anti-trafficking services in the social and health system.

SATIS represents the consolidation of the Tuscan system of support for victims of trafficking, derived in continuity from the Con-trat-To Project. It

has inherited and developed a broad partnership involving the regional administration, provinces, municipalities, Health Societies and all the private social entities operating in Tuscany. The Single Coordination, composed of the Versilia area Social and Health District, the Trafficking Secretariat and the Regional Anti-trafficking Toll-Free Number, works to strengthen the synergies and integration of anti-trafficking services in the social and health system. In the broader context of the protection of applicants or holders of international protection, the project pays particular attention to people who are victims of trafficking and/or exploitation, as established by Legislative Decree no. 142/2015. This is done through proactive multi-agency actions to identify the status of victim at reception facilities dedicated to persons seeking or holding international protection.

In particular, the project aims to aid victims of labour exploitation, such as in the construction, agriculture, catering, domestic work and welfare sectors; adults and minors exploited in prostitution both on the street and indoors; people who are victims of violence and serious exploitation, such as begging and forced illegal activities, such as forced marriages, drug trafficking and theft for third parties.

The working methodology of this project is based on the centrality of the person and protection of human rights; it assumes flexibility, research, integration and enhancement of knowledge and professionalism as criteria to be conformed to in a scenario of collaboration and synergy between all the subjects involved.

As regards the objectives, SATIS aims to: a) combat trafficking in human beings; b) ensure the protection and promotion of victims' rights; and c) safeguard the quality of social life and collective health. The main interventions instead include: a) activities aimed at identifying, assisting and ensuring initial assistance to the victim; b) programs to provide assistance and promote social integration; and c) strategies aimed at preventing, protecting and facilitating the social and work reintegration of victims.

The SATIS project, tested by the local network of Prato, leverages the expertise of CAT Cooperativa Sociale Onlus and Sarah Società Coop. Soc. Onlus in coordination with the Trafficking Secretariat to carry out its activities in the area. The project's efforts are mainly channeled through two key components. The first is the Unità di Strada di Prato, operational since 2017, which includes street operators and linguistic and cultural mediators. This Unit provides health resources, multilingual information, and establishes contacts with prostitutes to offer support and help them escape exploitation. They also have a mobile phone service to facilitate appointments with social

and health services. The second component is the Immigration Desk, managed in collaboration with the Municipality of Prato's Immigration Office. This desk aims to identify victims or potential victims of trafficking and exploitation. Interviews are conducted in a safe environment, supported by linguistic-cultural mediators to build trust. The desk provides information on social protection programs and health services, with operators available to offer advice through the Tuscany toll-free number. Early identification of exploitation victims among asylum seekers is a key focus, linking them with anti-trafficking services in their area of residence.

The project's main activities in Prato focus on several dimensions. The Single Social Protection Program supports individuals escaping exploitation, offering reception in protected structures, followed by territorial accompaniment. This includes primary care, health support, legal advice, training, and job placement assistance, with individualized projects funded by the Tuscany Region. Social and work reintegration is another critical aspect. During their stay, individuals are helped to acquire basic language skills and facilitated to enter the legal labour market. They receive guidance in job searching, CV writing, and occupational activities to develop social skills, along with enrolment in professional courses and internships funded by the SATIS Project. Achieving autonomy is the ultimate goal. Once individuals attain economic independence and secure their own accommodation, they are monitored in their social integration process, with continuous support provided to prevent a return to exploitative situations.

Overall, in line with the guidelines of the "White Paper" (Regione Toscana-ANCI 2017) which expresses the need to identify instruments to support vulnerable migrants, the SATIS project in Prato ensures comprehensive support for individuals at risk of exploitation, from immediate protection and care to long-term integration and independence.

The SATIS project highlights several good practices covering a wide range of dimensions, from the selection of the Territorial Network to cultural mediation. The growing phenomenon of trafficking and exploitation in Italy and Tuscany requires targeted interventions to protect vulnerable people. The linguistic-cultural mediator plays a fundamental role in facilitating communication and promoting the rights of the people involved, supported by the intervention model structured by SATIS which provides cultural mediators with experience in the field. Furthermore, vocational training not only provides technical skills but also social and cultural sensitivity; therefore, operators are constantly encouraged to participate in training and refresher events.

For further information see: https://www.satistoscana.org/

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Interventions to Support Victims of Trafficking and/or Sexual and Labour Exploitation

- **Strategic partnership**: Form a broad collaboration involving regions, municipalities, provinces, health authorities, and private social organisations to combat human trafficking, protect victims' rights, and ensure the quality of social life and public health.
- **Target groups**: Address the needs of victims of labour exploitation in sectors such as construction, agriculture, catering, domestic work, and welfare; adults and minors exploited in prostitution (both street and indoor); and victims of severe exploitation, including forced begging, forced illegal activities (e.g., forced marriages, drug trafficking, theft for third parties).
- **Identification and initial assistance**: Focus on identifying, assisting, and providing initial support to victims. Utilize Street Units with social workers and linguistic-cultural mediators to offer health resources, multilingual information, and establish contact with victims. Immigration desks at municipalities provide advice and information on social protection programs and health services.
- **Programs for assistance and social integration**: Implement the Single Social Protection Programme to support individuals escaping exploitation. Provide sheltered accommodation followed by local support, including primary care, health services, legal counselling, training, and job placement assistance.
- **Strategies for prevention, protection, and reintegration**: Assist individuals in the protection program in acquiring basic language skills and integrating into the legal labour market. Offer guidance on job searching, CV writing, and work activities to develop social skills, along with enrolment in vocational courses and funded internships.

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Promotion of Citizenship and Social Cohesion

by *Silvia Pezzoli*[*][1]

In order to promote the social cohesion essential for peaceful and harmonious coexistence within the community, the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees should not be limited to the labour dimension alone. It should also enhance broader social integration by empowering beneficiaries to develop a genuine sense of belonging to the community. As Ambrosini argues: «citizenship [...] is a complex institution, in some ways ambiguous, comprising at least three aspects: that of formal membership in a State, for which one is either a citizen or not; that of a package of rights and benefits, which can be released from formal status; and that of identification» (Ambrosini 2016, 84). As Brøndsted Sejersen (2008) says, this adds subjective, situational, and changing elements to the political and social institution of citizenship. It is precisely the third aspect – that of identification, which Ambrosini calls political "loyalty" – where «immigrants express composite and changing affiliations, sometimes linked to the specific situations and social interactions in which they are involved» (*Ibi*, 89).

To this end, the *Operational Manual for the Activation and Management of Integrated Reception Services* (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior 2018) provisions emphasise the importance of activities designed to facilitate sociocultural, educational, relational, and cultural integration. These initiatives are particularly relevant for both the beneficiaries and the local citizens, offering the beneficiaries the possibility of effective integration into the local social fabric. Integration is accomplished through collaboration with local organisations, which play a crucial role in supporting the pathways toward integration and inclusion.

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[1] Silvia Pezzoli wrote the general part; Sheet 1 (PROJECT TEAMS wp4) was written by Silvia Pezzoli with the contribution of ANCI Tuscany Immigration Office.

Specifically, the types of actions indicated by the *Operational Manual* aims to:

- Bring out and enhance the skills, competencies, and aspirations of the beneficiaries, thus enhancing the soft skills developed both in education and work and in other environments and occasions. Such soft skills are crucial for building positive relationships with the host community.
- Carry out awareness-raising and information activities to prevent the emergence of phenomena of social exclusion and marginalization and promote positive social inclusion.
- Intervene to resolve cases of discrimination, rejection, and isolation, using alternative approaches and modes of expression.
- Promote intercultural dialogue within and outside the reception project.
- Promote active participation in community life, as well as the enjoyment, respect, and enhancement of common goods, with a view to reciprocity and sharing with the local population.

This approach is also taken up and emphasised in the "White Paper" (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017).[2] Indeed, in the fourth session of the second part titled *Citizenship and Community*, it advocates and outlines the characteristics of processes to foster the development of participation and active citizenship and social cohesion. In particular, in Objective 1, the "White Paper" recommends to promote intercultural dialogue and social cohesion and the implementation of cultural and volunteer projects in reception centres is increasingly emphasised. In addition to this, it explains: "These projects can play an important role as 'bridges' between the various categories, facilitating the dialogue in a climate of mutual partnership. However, in order for these processes to be effective, it is important that they have clear objectives and common aims that are participated by the various reception actors: public bodies, operators, associations and the migrants themselves (*Ibi*, 33). Objective 3 states: «Whilst building a solid governance whose objective is sharing planning guidelines and defining minimum quality standards is important, it is also vital to adopt all the solutions that can promote greater, more active and aware participation of the various actors involved in the projects, starting with migrants and local associations. In order to do this,

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[2] For the English version of the "White Paper" see:
https://accoglienza.toscana.it/documents/2362619/0/White+Paper+on+immigration+policies.pdf/67cbcbad-cd33-f051-f146-f8de7cd6281d?t=1642585526331.

it may be necessary to develop an incentive scheme so to motivate the actors to participate in person and in a proactive way» (*Ibi*, 35).

It should be noted that following the changes to reception measures for asylum seekers and refugees in Italy, socio-cultural integration and social cohesion projects are now only included in the reception and integration measures for beneficiaries of international protection within the SAI network.[3] Indeed, these activities were never included in the reception measures of the governmental reception centres and extraordinary reception centres, which are now the standard facilities for receiving asylum seekers. Moreover, the SAI network has recovered fundamental elements of integration and cohesion especially in the second-level services, which also promote active citizenship (for more details see Chapter 1 by Acocella).

Although restricted to those who access the second level, the SAI system outlines complex and challenging paths designed to actively involve both native citizens and those with a migratory background. In particular, based on the indications and guidelines expressed in the *Operational Manual*, the SAI network emphasises actions in informal settings to enhance involvement and active participation among beneficiaries. To turn this vision into reality and promote social cohesion and active citizenship, the SAI network introduces a variety of activities aligned with these goals:

- *Workshops*: Designed to develop expressive skills, improve group dynamics, and encourage mutual respect, these workshops can also have therapeutic benefits and allow beneficiaries to present their work during public events.
- *Heritage Activities*: Collaborations with third-sector entities enable beneficiaries to engage in tourism and restoration efforts, helping to protect and promote local heritage.
- *Educational Initiatives*: Meetings, seminars, and materials in schools focused on international protection and migration raise awareness and combat stereotypes.
- *Cultural Events*: Sporting, musical, and cultural events that involve the local community foster appreciation for the beneficiaries' cultural traditions.
- *Media Projects*: The creation of a newspaper or web radio featuring the experiences of SAI network beneficiaries not only highlights their backgrounds but also introduces them to valuable technology skills.

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[3] Law no. 50/2023.

These actions clearly demonstrate that integration and active citizenship are not solely about reception, but are also about fostering relationships, encouraging participation, and building a sense of belonging among all community members. By engaging third-country nationals in meaningful activities and dialogue, the SAI network's approach reinforces the foundation for an inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to contribute and thrive. In accordance with a perspective based on Parson's approach (Parsons 1949), this method seeks to achieve social cohesion, defined as the stability and order derived from shared values and norms. Such cohesion is vital for both the maintenance and development of a social system, as it strengthens individuals' ties to their communities. The interconnection among order, integration, solidarity, and community are underlined by Ceri (2008). Within this framework, David Lockwood's distinction between systemic integration and social integration is particularly pertinent. Systemic integration refers to the adaptation of the diverse functions, sectors, and roles that make up society, while social integration underscores the significance of social participation among individuals and collective entities (1964).

The proposals put forth by the SAI and the "White Paper" aim to embrace these variables through regulations that facilitate complex actions encompassing values, norms, behavioural patterns, and symbolic frameworks. Thus, a second-level pathway, as that provided by the SAI network, and paths traced in the "White Paper" play a significant role in facilitating not only better integration for individuals and communities with a migration background into their new country but also in preserving, understanding, and acknowledging their cultural roots.

Good practices related to the promotion of citizenship and social cohesion in the region of Tuscany

Sheet 1: TEAMS PROJECT WP4 – Guidelines for the Effective Activation of Active Citizenship Pathways

Associations, volunteering, and active citizenship are three fundamental elements for the integration and participation of citizens with migration backgrounding in their host communities. The value and opportunities offered by volunteering and active citizenship activities are not always effectively communicated by associations or fully understood by migrants. Differing value systems, the absence of similar references in home communities,

poor communication between associations and diaspora communities, and difficulties in proposing activities aligned with the needs and expectations of third-country nationals, compounded by language barriers, often limit the understanding of how active citizenship can provide opportunities for interaction with the host society.

The "White Paper" (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017) is the result of a process that has guided subsequent projects in the field of inclusion for refugees and migrants in Tuscany. The "TEAMS Project – Tuscany Empowerment Actions for Migrant System" implemented from 2018 to 2023, has taken on the challenge of advancing the pathway outlined in the "White Paper". As elaborated in Acocella's contribution on "Reception" and "Integration", the main goal of TEAMS was to create an integrated system of quality services for all third-country nationals, including asylum seekers and refugees, with actions co-planned by key public and private actors in the field of immigration.

In relation to the TEAMS project, here it is useful to elaborate, in particular, on Work Package 4 entitled "Participation of Third-Country Nationals in Active Citizenship Projects". Indeed, one of its core activities aimed to enhance the role of foreign national associations in promoting integration processes through the active involvement of migrants and local communities.

By specifically addressing this objective, WP4 advances and develops the recommendations outlined in the "White Paper", particularly the first action identified in paragraph 2.4 "Citizenship and Community" – Objective 1 – "Promote Social Cohesion through Shared Projects".

More specifically, Objective 1 was aimed, among other purposes, to define «guidelines for the regional planning of voluntary projects with the various local actors» (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017, 33). In this context, the TEAMS project (particularly the actions carried out in WP4) has proven to be an innovative approach for developing a document intended to guide the work of public entities and organisations addressing this issue. The *Guidelines for the Effective Activation of Active Citizenship Pathways*[4] was the final product. It emerged from a listening process lasting approximately one year. This process involved public administrations, third-sector entities, associations, and citizens with migration backgrounds and association of migrants, fostering an equitable relationship between different stakeholders.

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[4] See the guide: Linee Guida per l'efficace attivazione di percorsi di cittadinanza attiva, Progetto TEAMS https://www2.immigrazione.regione.toscana.it/sites/default/files/Linee%20Guida%20per%20l%E2%80%99efficace%20attivazione%20di%20percorsi%20di%20cittadinanza%20attiva.pdf.

The project's results were submitted to a panel consisting of ANCI Toscana, Federsanità, and Sociolab[5], who articulated the key findings.

The *Guidelines for the Effective Activation of Active Citizenship Pathways* focus on the users, meaning the foreign citizens and the associations of foreign citizens. The guidelines are user-centred, both in terms of the needs assessment process and the identification of future visions, to ensure that active citizenship is possible within migrant communities, as well as in the management of differences and conflicts among the various participants. They are also objective-oriented because they serve as guidelines for effective activation of active citizenship pathways not imposed by the host country, but rather created by the migrants themselves.

In collaboration with volunteers, the third sector, public administration, and various associations, the different proposals, requests, needs were collected, systematized, and translated into guidelines to promote the exercise of active citizenship. The initiative highlighted the needs related to project planning and the vision of integration and citizenship. The perspective of third-country nationals was vital, as it provided a first chance to directly understand and develop specific insights on how to transform active citizenship into an opportunity for protagonism.

The TEAMS project has successfully addressed the challenges of integrating citizens with migration backgrounds into their host communities, by emphasising the importance of active citizenship, collaboration with local stakeholders, and the co-creation of user-centred guidelines, for fostering an inclusive environment where migrants are empowered to actively participate and engage in societal processes.

The objectives to be achieved in the collaborative development of the Guidelines were:
- *Relationship*: Promote interaction among foreign citizens (asylum seekers, holders of international protection, long-term residents) and both formal and informal organisations, along with the local community.
- *Empowerment*: Generate lasting benefits in empowerment, skills, and competencies acquired by all participants, including asylum seekers, holders of humanitarian protection, local community members, and foreign citizen associations. Additionally, support the dynamism and

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[5] ANCI is the acronym for the National Association of Italian Municipalities; Federsanità ANCI Toscana acts as a representative tool for the municipalities, ensuring the integration of social and health services, and is the institutional body for ANCI Toscana that organises Local Health and Hospital Authorities and Mayors' Conferences; SocioLab is defined as a social enterprise that facilitates the growth of communities and organisations starting from the people.

continuity of action among these groups, enhancing their ability to respond to needs, their awareness of services and rights, as well as the development of skills useful for employment integration.

- *Awareness*: Promote active citizenship to improve social cohesion and community responsibility. This is achieved by supporting volunteering and active citizenship to encourage tangible involvement of foreign citizens as key actors in projects. Furthermore, it aims to raise awareness among foreign citizens about the value and opportunities of being actively involved in the community.
- *Collaboration*: Promote cooperation and exchange between foreign communities, local authorities, and third sector organisations to create social ties and enhance mutual skills, resources, and knowledge. Encourage co-design of interventions and initiatives that foster peer interaction and the active involvement of foreign citizens, promoting the protagonism of third-country communities.

The methodologies employed in formulating the Guidelines were innovative, primarily because they involved engaging migrants in articulating their needs, aspirations, and visions regarding how reception should function, as well as their perspectives on the welcoming process for future arrivals. Specifically, some of the methodologies recommended included: network approach; multiplication of relationships with and among local communities; building interventions based on the needs of individuals and the local context; co-designing pathways; enhancing places and themes where communities typically meet; and targeted communication.

The areas of work, identified through listening to the third-country nationals participating in the Guidelines elaboration included:

- *Mutual Aid*: Support for basic needs and the creation of social and relational spaces.
- *Cultural Promotion*: Recovery, preservation, and transmission of culture and traditions of origin.
- *International Cooperation*: Economic support, micro-projects, and responsible travel to countries of origin.
- *Activities for Specific Target Groups*: Focus on women and young foreigners to promote inclusion.
- *Information and Empowerment in the Socio-Health Sector*: Initiatives to familiarize individuals with the Italian social and health system.
- *Sports, Music, and Socialization*: Use inclusive methods to encourage peer exchange and inclusion.

This WP4 activity of TEAMS, among other valuable ones, was designed to brainstorm, discuss, and arrive at a definition of the Guidelines for the

Effective Activation of Active Citizenship Pathways. The process itself provided an opportunity to foster social cohesion, enhance community participation, and empower individuals from diverse backgrounds. It offered a tangible opportunity to experience what relationship-building truly means, highlighting its importance for the empowerment of all participants, whether native or not. Moreover, it facilitated collaboration and meaningful interaction among people and communities typically perceived as divided and self-standing.

From a methodological point of view, the project is innovative in its approach to tailoring the guidelines to accommodate the specific needs of different individuals and communities. The methodological choices were instrumental in the design process, emphasising more listening and observation rather than data gathering, and favouring moments of exchange over surveys or structured interviews. For all participants, this approach necessitated openness to new roles, new confrontations, and new viewpoints on themselves and others.

This path put in light both the possibility to bring together to a common floor different citizenship in the search of becoming an integrated community and, although volunteering initiatives are often seen with scepticism by citizens with a migrant background, opportunities to be taken to develop places and spaces more suitable for all people that happened to live together. It is also worth highlighting that the outcome of this challenge has been the creation of opportunities for "new citizens" to shape the guidelines on how future arrivals should be welcomed.

These guidelines not only help them access the services designed for them but also enable them to build a network of relationships that can be successfully oriented toward a common goal.

For further information see:
https://www2.immigrazione.regione.toscana.it/?q=progetto-teams
Work Package 4:
https://www2.immigrazione.regione.toscana.it/?q=node/5342

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Promotion of Citizenship and Social Cohesion

- **Holistic integration approach**: Focus on broader social integration beyond the labour market. Encourage a sense of belonging to the community by addressing socio-cultural, educational, relational, and cultural dimensions.
- **Strengthening migrants' interpersonal skills**: Develop migrants' transversal skills to build positive relationships with the host community. Promote enjoyment, respect and appreciation of common goods, encouraging reciprocity and sharing with local citizens.
- **Awareness and information**: Conduct awareness-raising and information activities to prevent social exclusion and marginalization. Promote positive social inclusion and address discrimination, rejection, and isolation through alternative approaches.
- **Intercultural dialogue**: Promote intercultural dialogue both within and outside reception projects. Facilitate interactions that respect and appreciate cultural diversity.
- **Community-Based workshops and events**: Organise workshops, heritage activities, educational initiatives, cultural events, and media projects to develop skills, encourage mutual respect, and raise awareness. These activities should involve both the local community and migrants.
- **Network approach and collaboration**: Promote cooperation and exchange between foreign communities, local authorities, and third-sector organisations. Encourage co-design of interventions that foster peer interaction and active involvement of migrants, enhancing mutual skills and knowledge.
- **User-Centered guidelines**: Create guidelines for active citizenship pathways based on the needs and aspirations of migrants. Engage migrants in the co-design process to ensure their perspectives and visions are incorporated.

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Housing Autonomy

by *Costanza Gasparo*[*][1]

The SAI network provides for reception in the facility for a variable time. As specified in the The *Operational Manual for the Activation and Management of Integrated Reception Services* (ANCI-Ministero dell'Interno 2018), beneficiaries of international protection can participate in the project for a period of six months. This period can be extended for an additional six months. In addition, according to Law no. 173/2020, reception for unaccompanied foreign minors who reach the age of majority can be extended until they reach the age of 21. Thereafter, it becomes necessary for the refugee to independently find housing. For this reason, interventions to promote housing self-sufficiency are also included in the services provided by the SAI network (ANCI-Ministero dell'Interno 2018).[2] Finding housing is in fact a step that asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection have to face very early in a migration path that has a limited duration in the SAI network.

The process of housing orientation and accompaniment begins with the beneficiary's entry into the housing project. At this stage, information is provided on condominium rules, energy conservation, garbage collection and other relevant aspects. In addition, housing in smaller facilities located in urban centers contributes significantly to promoting autonomy for greater

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[1] The Chapter is the result of collaboration between the author and ANCI Tuscany Immigration Office. In detail, Costanza Gasparo wrote the general part and the Sheet 1 (APARTMENTS FOR AUTONOMY); the Sheet 2 (*THE INCLUD-EU PROJECT*) was written with the contribution of ANCI Tuscany Immigration Office.

[2] In this contribution, we focus on the SAI, since asylum seekers, after their first reception in governmental centres and once the asylum application assessment process has been completed, can continue their reception path within the SAI. Accompaniment to independent living is not included among the services provided in governmental reception centres and extraordinary reception centres, which are now the ordinary places to receive asylum seekers (Law no. 50/2023).

interaction with the local community and the creation of a more familiar and personalized environment.

According to the accommodation capacity and organisation adopted, different models and types of facilities can be distinguished: apartments; small collective centres (about 15 people) and medium-sized collective centres (up to 30 people) (*Ibidem*). Apartments, followed by small-scale collective centres, are particularly suitable for realizing the purposes of SAI, as they make it possible to balance the support needed to ensure individual care and protection with the opportunity to foster the return to full autonomy of the people involved (ANCI-Ministero dell'Interno 2022). As highlighted in the relevant literature, it is essential to create a comfortable environment where people can independently perform daily activities such as grocery shopping and meal preparation while preserving their privacy despite living with others. This environment promotes a return to an ordinary life routine (Marchetti 2016). Moreover, placing these facilities in cities is also aimed at fostering interaction with the surrounding community, facilitating social inclusion and optimizing access to local services in order to avoid forms of social isolation, whether voluntary or involuntary (Tarsia 2018).

Housing placement after placement in SAI facilities is problematic due to the scarcity of adequate housing for both future autonomy and immediate reception. Lack of public housing and difficulties in the private market slow down shelter services, complicating support for young and vulnerable migrant adults (ANCI-Ministero dell'Interno 2022). In the *Plan for the Integration of Persons with International Protection* of the Ministry of the Interior (2017), this issue was very much emphasised, along with some tools that can accompany and support the exit from reception projects. Among the solutions listed are direct actions, such as mediation; indirect actions, such as awareness-raising and training on housing and autonomy; and finally, promoting and implementing projects aimed at fostering autonomy and facilitating integration into the urban community.

Various housing solutions emerge in this landscape, each characterised by different levels of independence, autonomy and complexity of access. The main solutions refer to housing subsidies, access to *Edilizia Residenziale Pubblica* (Public Residential Housing) (ERP), mediation carried out in the private market, *Edilizia Residenziale Sociale* (Social Residential Housing) (ERS), the promotion of supportive co-housing projects, and, finally, the promotion of projects promoted through the *Housing Led* and *Housing First* approaches. These housing support measures are nationwide in Italy and, where possible, specific examples for the Tuscany region will be given. Moreover, they are measures not necessarily and directly related to the SAI network.

They are projects that can also involve asylum seekers or refugees, without, however, considering them as a specific target, but privileging a broader category of vulnerable individuals into which they may fall.

As indicated in the *Operational Manual for the Activation and Management of Integrated Reception services*, among the tools to support housing integration paths for beneficiaries of reception measures is the *Housing grant*. It consists «in an economic support granted to the beneficiary coming out of the reception project to facilitate the socio-economic-housing integration pathway» (ANCI-Ministero dell'Interno 2018, 255).[3]

This assistance covers various expenses, including the deposit, initial rent, utilities and housing-related costs. To apply for it, applicants must submit documentation such as a lease agreement and payment receipts to municipalities. The allocation of grants and identification of beneficiaries are managed by municipalities, which use annual allocations and public notices. The *housing grant* represents financial assistance provided at the individual and/or household level by the SAI project's local referral agency at the end of the shelter program, aimed at facilitating the refugees' placement in a housing unit (Casadei 2022).

Turning to *Public housing* (ERP), the SAI network can provide advice and its members are trained to offer support in filling out the necessary applications. These are public housing and rent subsidies for the weaker segments of the population, allocated annually by municipalities based on a ranking list. Not all residence permits allow access to public housing. In fact, Italian citizens, EU citizens and citizens of non-EU countries with long-term EU residence permits or at least two-year residence permits are eligible. Holders of residence permits for medical treatment and calamities are therefore not eligible for public housing, because the residence permit held by these categories of citizens is only valid for six months. In order to apply, it is necessary to have a registered residence or main occupation in the municipality where the application is made, not to have another dwelling suitable for the needs of the household, and not to have previously obtained subsidised public housing contributions. In addition, the total annual income of the household must not exceed the limit specified in the current regulations for access to public housing (Fravega 2018). As Colombo (2019) points out, the Italian housing system is characterised by a low level of social protection in the rental market and very low turnover in housing. The peculiarities of public housing management thus end up turning the public sector into a "protected reserve" that excludes most refugees (Tosi 2017).

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[3] Translation into English by the author.

With regard to *Private market support*, the means of supporting housing insertion pathways are many and varied, with great flexibility allowing them to be adapted to individual territorial contexts and the specific needs of the people involved. Among the most common or interesting ones to experiment with we find the search for housing solutions through close collaboration with real estate brokerage services in the area, such as real estate agencies. In this context, the mediation role that the SAI network can play between tenants under international protection and private homeowners becomes relevant. Other tools include the establishment of a guarantee fund to cover security deposits or the first monthly payments of leases, and the possibility of the SAI network providing a guarantee or acting as a direct intermediary, temporarily taking over the lease before transferring it to the tenant.

Among the tools of welfare to support the housing autonomy there is also the *Edilizia Residenziale Sociale* (Residential Social Housing; Italian acronym: ERS) (ANCI-Ministero dell'Interno 2018). It is intended to meet the housing needs of individuals and families who cannot access the private housing market due to limited economic resources. It is essentially an intermediate solution between market housing and public housing (ERP). These temporary housing solutions, usually of long duration, allow residents to develop autonomy while benefiting from support services such as financial education and social assistance. ERS projects can be financed through non-refundable public grants, private investment or mixed public/private capital, including real Real Estate Funds. Also in this vein, the definition of Social Residential Housing can be used for all those projects in which there is collaboration between local authorities, the third housing sector and private individuals. The distinction of these interventions from the public housing sector is emphasised in this approach. The difference also lies in the fact that social housing intervention is not limited to the provision of housing, but accompanies and complements this action with accompaniment, housing mediation and actions for the empowerment of people (Colombo 2019). Thus, it includes centres or facilities for people in economically disadvantaged conditions, even referring to a specific target (as, for example, in the case of the reception of refugees and displaced persons, etc.) or intended for housing autonomy projects.

Another area of housing autonomy intervention is *Supportive co-housing*, understood as a form of housing in which residents share common spaces and resources, despite each household or individual having a private house or apartment within the housing complex (Costa & Bianchi 2020; Andreola & Muzzonigro 2023). This housing model is expected to promote socialization, collaboration, and efficiency in the use of resources. Supportive co-

housing communities usually include shared areas such as kitchens, dining rooms, gardens, laundry and recreational activity spaces, allowing residents to interact and collaborate on a daily basis. Indeed, the concept of supportive co-housing stems from the idea of creating a balance between private and community life, offering benefits such as reduced housing costs, improved quality of life through mutual support, and the opportunity to actively participate in community management. Decisions within these communities are often made collectively, with a strong sense of shared participation and responsibility among residents (Tummers 2016). Solidarity co-housing projects for refugees may face some critical issues during the independent living phase. These include challenges related to cultural and linguistic integration between refugees and other residents, the need to provide adequate socio-educational support to facilitate adaptation to the new context, and complexity in managing shared resources and responsibilities. It is also crucial to ensure long-term financial sustainability and to promote the acceptance and inclusion of refugees in the local community by tailoring services to their specific social and economic integration needs. Indeed, as stated in the *Operational Manual for the Activation and Management of Integrated Reception Services* (ANCI-Ministero dell'Interno 2018), creating supportive co-housing requires a well-structured process that includes careful planning, judicious selection of group members, and ongoing support for the tenant community. Specific forms of supportive co-housing include the social condominium, a form of housing managed by the local government or a private entity, that offers apartments at subsidised or social rents to people or groups in economically fragile situations. The social condominium is a model of co-housing in which residents share not only the common spaces, but also the management and responsibility for the building. In addition to simply providing affordable housing, social condominiums can also feature the presence of support services and initiatives to promote social cohesion and the inclusion of residents. Support activities include cleaning common spaces, running small errands, and managing ground-floor rooms to promote socialization (Arlotti *et al.* 2022).

In Tuscany, in relation to welfare policies supporting housing, models of *Housing First* and *Housing Led* have become widespread in recent years. These instruments could also be an incentive for the housing autonomy of beneficiaries of international protection as they are both based on the concept that housing is a fundamental right from which homeless people must start on a path to social inclusion. Housing First is based on two key principles: rapid re-housing, which recognizes housing as a primary human right, and

case management, which involves taking charge of the person and accompanying them to social and health services (Pleace 2016). Those who advocate this approach believe that only stable and safe housing can significantly improve the quality of life of those who have experienced long-term homelessness. Improved health, psychological and welfare support offered directly at home is essential to ensure housing stability, on the assumption that the intervention is not conditional on integrated services. Housing Led (literally, "guided/accompanied living"), on the other hand, refers to less intensive and short-term housing placement services for marginalized people (e.g., housing for refugees, ex-convicts, households in economic and social hardship), in transition between different housing situations, who are assisted by local social services through a more comprehensive and integrated pathway. Within this process, not only housing is provided, but also support in employment, training, education for minors, legal counselling and other services. The Valdinievole Health Society's "Paracaduti" project followed the Housing First model, targeting marginalized people and asylum seekers.[4] It provided pathways of supportive co-housing and socio-educational support, with an integrated approach managed by a multidisciplinary team, to avoid the use of temporary structures and directly place homeless people in stable housing.

Good practices for housing inclusion in the Tuscany region

Sheet 1: APARTMENTS FOR AUTONOMY

The SAI network is configured as a model of collaboration between public and private entities to ensure a comprehensive and dignified reception for asylum seekers and refugees. In this scenario, the Tuscany Region assumes a central role as a point of connection and facilitator of dialogue between the different actors involved. Indeed, in line with the principles and guidelines of the "White Paper" (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017)[5], the goal is

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[4] Health Society: in Italian "Società della Salute" (Italian acronym: SDS). In Tuscany, SDSs are public consortia formed by the municipalities of a social-health area and the Local Health Authority. Their main goal is to ensure the integration of local health, social, and welfare services (Regional Law no. 60/2008, amending Regional Law no. 40/2005).

[5] For the English version of the "White Paper" see:
https://accoglienza.toscana.it/documents/2362619/0/White+Paper+on+immigration+policies.pdf/67cbcbad-cd33-f051-f146-f8de7cd6281d?t=1642585526331.

to improve social cohesion and social capital for all members of the community, both Italian and foreign, by including the management of the reception system for international protection in the territorial policies for immigration (Gori 2020).

In this, the regional authority in 2014 launched the resolution no. 594/2014 *Public notice to submit expressions of interest for the activation of innovative experimental projects on care pathways for the elderly, disabled and minors*. This is an experimental initiative aimed at residential facilities, called apartments for autonomy, which accommodate Italian or foreign minors between 16 and 18 years of age assisted by municipal social services, including unaccompanied foreign minors, and young Italians or foreigners up to 21 years of age who are in situations of difficulty or distress and for whom it is possible to develop a support project focused on family autonomy and the gradual overcoming of welfare dependence by encouraging and supporting their autonomy (Istituto degli Innocenti-Regione Toscana 2017). This Tuscany experimentation ended in 2018, with the introduction of autonomy apartments among the types of residential facilities.

Third sector stakeholders, in collaboration with proposing entities such as municipalities, Unions of Municipalities and other entities, submitted their experimental projects through a *Project Sheet* that included indicators to analyse the territorial context, the needs of the recipients and the responsiveness of the service. Following the approval of the applications, the interiors of the apartments deemed suitable were arranged for activities such as cooking, studying, entertainment and socialization. In addition to the structural aspects, each apartment had to adopt a formal commitment called the *Reception Pact*, which set out the duties of both the managing entity and the guests, including compliance with the regulations and participation in educational programs, while the *Service Charter*, issued by the managing entities, indicated what services were available, such as school support, vocational guidance and housing assistance, and the *Internal Regulations* detailed the rules of living together, the length of stay and who was allowed to access the facility.

Project promoters took care of their monitoring through two regional information systems: ASSO (Anagrafe strutture sociali) (Registry of Social Facilities) and ASMI (Anagrafe strutture sociali) (Activities on Minors in Facilities).[6] These systems made it possible to collect data on the facilities involved and the activities carried out with minors. In addition, third sector

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[6] For more details on the ASSO-ASMI information system see https://www.minoritoscana.it/sistema-informativo-asso-asmi.

promoters filled out a short questionnaire to evaluate the experimental projects and their impact on the regional system. At the end of the experiment, there were 51 active facilities, managed by 33 third sector entities and 19 public entities. There were 438 boys and girls accommodated, most of them boys and foreigners with an age range equally distributed between 14-17 years old and 18-21 years old.[7] As of December 31, 2022, the number of autonomous apartments in Tuscany has increased to 63 and they are allocated an average of 56 euros per day per apartment.[8]

Turning to the characteristics of the apartments and projects, these are residential facilities in which an attempt is made to combine instances of protection and guardianship with a pathway aimed at achieving independence. The projects aimed to provide young people with a sense of stability while enhancing skills and promoting greater participation in decision-making and self-management of daily activities. The main objective is thus to promote independence, social interaction and integration through empowerment and autonomy.

In this regard, it is useful to recall how for many years the residential care of minors, both locally and outside, has been managed through facilities other than autonomy apartments such as educational/socio-educational communities and family homes/family communities (Morini 2019). Socio-educational communities provide family-type care, characterised by the constant presence of an educational team that carries out its work in a professional manner. They are primarily aimed at children and young people between the ages of 6 and 18. Each educator takes care of a small group of guests, generally less than 12, and follows shifts that ensure the continuous presence of at least one adult in each group (Istituto degli Innocenti-Regione Toscana 2017). These facilities are characterised by limited accommodation availability, designed to create a welcoming and safe environment that meets the protection needs of the children housed (Marchesini, Monacelli & Molinari 2019). Family homes or family communities involve the stable presence of adult residents, such as families, couples or educators who permanently reside in the facility (Bovo *et.al* 2015).

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[7] For more details see the document *Appartamenti per l'autonomia. Report di monitoraggio al 31/12/2017 dei progetti sperimentali in attuazione della delibera di Giunta regionale Toscana n. 400/2015 e successive delibere n. 84/2016 e n. 316/2017 (terzo step)* (Centro Regionale di documentazione per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza-Regione Toscana-Istituto degli Innocenti 2017) https://issuu.com/istitutodeglinnocenti/docs/idi_autonomia_181105-web.

[8] For more information see the document *Le strutture residenziali sociali e socioeducative che accolgono bambini e ragazzi in Toscana al 31 dicembre 2022* (Centro Regionale di documentazione per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza-Regione Toscana-Istituto degli Innocenti 2022) https://www.minoritoscana.it/sistema-informativo-asso-asmi-report-di-sintesi

Therefore, the change in approach promoted by the autonomy apartments project is evident. Here, professional educators are present only for a few hours of the day and their presence must be organised according to the activities carried out by the acolytes and aimed at the gradual autonomy of the young people. The presence of educators must be only guaranteed during the night hours in the case of minors of age (Confalonieri 2006). In comparative terms, compared to communities and foster homes, the protagonism of the individuals living in these apartments is valued, recognizing their agency with respect to the decisions that affect their lives, while guaranteeing them constant accompaniment. In addition, the construction of residences with low organisational and care intensity, such as apartments for autonomy, designed to meet the specific needs of a particular segment of the population, entails lower economic costs than communities that require more intensive care and protection interventions.

Turning to the work team, there may be such figures as coordinators, professional educators, cultural-linguistic mediators, social workers, psychologists, and administrative managers. The coordinator oversees the service, while the professional educator supports the individual development of the children, and the linguistic-cultural mediator facilitates communication and understanding among guests of different languages and cultures. An *Individualized Educational Project* is drawn up for each young adult, a tool by which his or her personal goals, the actions to achieve them and the commitments the young person makes to achieve them are identified. Each action is therefore planned in advance, ensuring consistency and cohesion with the goals set. The paths activated are aimed at the development of specific skills such as knowledge of the Italian language, planning of the school route, financial education, orientation activities and training paths for the acquisition of skills. In addition, during their stay at the facility, young people are given training on the rules of coexistence and the responsible use of resources such as energy and water. The guests also have access to the following services: pocket money, a phone card, a monthly subscription to urban public transportation, membership in voluntary associations, interpreting services and linguistic-cultural mediation, and support for the recognition of foreign educational qualifications (Centro Regionale di documentazione per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza-Regione Toscana-Istituto degli Innocenti 2020).

It is also important to emphasise the strategic placement of the facilities in promoting the autonomy and integration of the young people. The proximity to inhabited neighbourhoods and central location facilitate the daily management of commitments and integration into the social fabric, offering

the opportunity to participate in activities with peers and promoting tolerance from the community (*Ibidem*).

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Apartments for the Autonomy of Young Adults Who Arrived in Italy as Unaccompanied Foreign Minors

- **Innovative experimental projects to foster independence**: Develop independent flats for vulnerable young people, including both local and foreign individuals aged 16 to 21, to reduce welfare dependency and promote autonomy.
- **Strategic partnerships**: Foster collaboration between public and private entities in the design and management of autonomy apartments to ensure effective support and resources.
- **Use of indicators in the design**: Implement specific indicators to analyse the territorial context and the needs of the young residents, ensuring that projects are well-targeted and effective.
- **Formal commitments and regulations**: Establish a Reception Pact and Internal Regulations for autonomy apartments to set clear expectations for both managing entities and residents, fostering a structured and supportive environment.
- **Monitoring and data collection**: Utilize and implement information systems to monitor and collect data on the facilities and activities within them, ensuring ongoing evaluation and improvement.
- **Promotion of autonomy and empowerment**: Focus on promoting independence, social interaction, and integration through personalized educational projects, supporting the development of life skills and self-sufficiency.
- **Presence of professional educators**: Ensure the presence of professional educators only for a few hours per day, organised according to the needs and activities to be carried out in the project, in order to foster the autonomy of the young residents.
- **Comprehensive support services**: Provide essential services such as pocket money, transportation passes, language and cultural mediation, and support for educational recognition to help young residents successfully integrate and achieve independence.

- **Strategic location of facilities**: Locate facilities near inhabited neighbourhoods and central areas to facilitate integration, daily management of commitments, and promote community tolerance and interaction.

Sheet 2: THE INCLUD-EU PROJECT – Regional and local expertise, exchange and engagement for enhanced social cohesion in Europe

The project pilot carried out in Tuscany in the context of "INCLUD-EU: Regional and local expertise, exchange and engagement for enhanced social cohesion in Europe" (2020-2023) takes its cue from the intent of the "White Paper" (Regione Toscana-ANCI Toscana 2017) to implement measures aimed at housing inclusion "complementary" to standard reception, by promoting initiatives aimed not only at asylum seekers or refugees, but at the entire population with a migration background and, at the same time, promoting integration between the public and private sectors.

This project, coordinated by the International Organization for Migration Italy (IOM Italy) and financed by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), promoted collaboration between regions and municipalities in Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia and Spain to foster the integration of third-country nationals. The overall aim of INCLUD-EU has been to improve transnational knowledge and experience sharing, cooperation and partnerships between local and regional authorities with different levels of expertise in the inclusion of citizens with migrant backgrounds. The National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) Tuscany, as a project partner, was in charge of developing a pilot action in Tuscany in the area of housing inclusion of third-country nationals with the aim of defining the model for an effective, sustainable and respectful housing transition through activities that leveraged two key elements: the adoption of a participatory approach and the promotion of collaborative housing solutions through public-private partnerships.

Beginning with a mapping of good practices[9], three experimental contexts in the area of collaborative living intended for people with migrant

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[9] Among the good practices encountered in Tuscany in the area of housing inclusion was the Agenzia Casa, a project launched in 1998 by the Municipalities of Lucca and Capannori with the support of the Tuscany regional administration, which supports non-EU immigrant citizens in finding housing. Managed by the Fondazione Casa Lucca, it extended to several municipalities and offers mediation services, direct rental and management of a guarantee fund. The objective was to facilitate the permanent integration of immigrants and address housing problems. The Foundation also offered consultancy, organised courses on housing

backgrounds in Tuscany were explored in depth. Specifically, through various methods, including desk research and interviews, 18 interventions were first identified and investigated in depth. From the findings, seven interventions classified as "good practices" were selected and further investigated through interviews with managing bodies.[10] Finally, three experimental settings were selected and analysed through a participatory modelling process that actively involved stakeholders in the projects.[11] These interventions are not limited exclusively to refugees, but include all people of foreign origin, with a special focus on people in housing transition (exiting the SAI system, for example), who can be considered a particularly vulnerable category in the context of the housing market. In fact, migrants may face significant barriers in accessing housing, including discrimination by landlords and housing agencies, language and cultural barriers, high housing costs (particularly in central city areas, where housing prices often exceed the financial possibilities of many middle- or low-income people), and limited access to social networks (Fravega 2022).

The regional mapping of territorial responses to the housing needs of citizens of foreign origin and the consequent qualitative in-depth study of some of the mapped good practices led to the modelling of a process for the design and management of housing projects, which put a collaborative and inclusive approach at the centre. The *Guidelines for the Design and Management of Housing Transition Pathways with a Collaborative and Inclusive Approach* and the model of *Memorandum of Understanding for Public-Private Collaboration on Housing Transition Policies with a Collaborative and Inclusive*

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regulations and managed social housing construction and management projects. The project proved replicable and was extended to other areas, helping to improve access to housing and promoting social inclusion.

[10] The seven interventions selected for in-depth qualitative analysis were: 1. Project PAR-ACADUTI – Accompanying Paths to Responsibility and Autonomy. Completed project, in place of which the project that represents its natural evolution was analysed: Cohousing Health Society Valdinievole; 2. Agenzia Casa del Mugello; 3. E.V.V.A.I – Empolese Valdarno Valdelsa Aperti Inclusivi; 4. INSIDE AUT: individual socio-economic integration plans for the autonomy of holders of international protection; 5. Casa Simonetta; 6. WE ITA: WElfare generativo per Integrare Tutti Attivamente; 7. Tecnoseal Solidarity and Growth Cooperative Housing Project.

[11] The three selected case studies include: 1. The Empolese Valdelsa Valdarno area, which hosts the E.V.V.A.I – Empolese Valdarno Valdelsa Aperti Inclusivi project, led by the CO&SO Empoli Consortium and involving a wide network of partners, including the Health Society. 2. The Valdinievole region in the province of Pistoia, which presents the Cohousing Valdinievole and Diamoci Le Ali projects, promoted by the Health Society Valdinievole. 3. The city of Grosseto, with the cohousing projects proposed by the Cooperativa Solidarietà e Crescita and WE ITA: WElfare generativo per Integrare Tutti Attivamente, also sponsored by the Health Society.

Approach) are the tangible results of the Tuscan experimentation, whose basic assumption is that housing autonomy pathways can be strengthened by interventions that put people's protagonism at the centre and support their creation of varied social networks and capacity for collective action. These are real new operational tools available to territories to support the creation of pathways to sustainable and durable housing inclusion.

In detail, the *Guidelines for the Design and Management of Housing Transition Pathways with a Collaborative and Inclusive Approach* is a *self-assessment* tool to guide in the process of designing new housing transition interventions, aimed also, but not exclusively, at individuals of foreign origin, and in the analysis and evaluation of those already underway. This tool offers support to those working at various levels on housing policies or projects. Although its primary audience is the team responsible for the design and implementation of individual housing projects, several variables considered also affect the policymakers and institutions involved. In particular, the tool is designed as a flexible and adaptable guide on the aspects to be considered during the planning, initiation and development over time of a transitional housing project based on collaboration and inclusion.

The self-assessment system focuses on several areas, including the proposed housing offerings, the creation of support networks, the approaches used in the socio-educational intervention programs, the profiles and skills needed, and the frameworks provided by policies and funding. For each dimension, useful questions are provided to evaluate the project from both collaborative and participatory perspectives.

Starting with *housing supply*, the self-assessment system includes various variables, such as housing type and amenities, spatial location, and surrounding services. Proposed self-assessment questions concern consideration of the need for intimacy and shared spaces, personalization of environments, availability of adequate collective spaces, and the possibility of involving residents in the design process. Spatial location is assessed by considering the spatial context and the risk of social isolation, while accessibility to urban services is considered crucial to fostering residents' autonomy. Questions aim to assess the proximity of essential services and identify any unmet needs that could be addressed through collaborative projects.

The second part of the evaluation system focuses on the development of *positive and meaningful relationships* within and outside the housing project to foster social integration. Aspects such as cohabitation as a form of relationship, the involvement of neighbours in creating a social support network, and the role of guarantor and brokerage figures are considered. The importance of selecting roommates and nurturing neighbourhood relationships

is evaluated, while how to foster the participation of beneficiaries outside the project through collaboration with outside figures is also explored. Evaluation questions focus on the quality of relationships inside and outside the project and the effectiveness of measures taken to foster social inclusion.

The third part of the evaluation system focuses on *collaborative social-educational intervention* in housing inclusion and transition projects involving people excluded from other forms of access to housing. This aspect is crucial for improving current projects and developing new professional skills. This part explores whether and how much a specific educational approach is developed within housing interventions, considering variables such as accompanying relationships, attention to frailty, orientation toward networks, and care for housing inclusion processes. The importance of continuous accompaniment during co-housing, attention to the specific needs of housed persons, orientation toward territorial services and care of insertion processes are also evaluated. Self-assessment questions concern the presence of figures dedicated to housing accompaniment, attention to specific fragilities, orientation toward networks and care of housing insertion processes.

The fourth dimension concerns the *profiles* and *skills* needed to implement collaborative living interventions for the housing transition of people with migrant backgrounds. The variables considered are new skills, spaces for discussion and reflection, and monitoring and evaluation in a collaborative manner. Regarding new competencies, the experiment recommends having a multidisciplinary team within the project and figures with experience in participatory processes and co-design tools. Spaces for discussion and reflection are essential to dealing with daily emergencies related to coexistence issues, with specific supervision moments and tools for learning sharing. Finally, collaborative monitoring and evaluation are crucial not only for reporting on activities but also for defining learnings and lines of development, involving people in housing projects and communicating project outcomes and impact outward.

The last aspect considered in housing transition projects for people with migrant backgrounds concerns the mix of *programs* and *funding* from different policies. These are access and selection criteria, involvement of actors, individual project time management, financial sustainability, and integration of resources. That is also in line with the guidelines of the "White Paper". The goal is to promote equitable accessibility, involve a wide range of actors in participatory design, flexibly manage individual pathway timeframes, ensure financial continuity, and integrate diverse funding sources to support long-term housing inclusion. The focus on these dimensions shows that for migrant people, housing is not only a primary necessity for accessing local

services, but also a fundamental starting point for building social networks and integrating into the community (Boccagni 2017).

From the various dimensions analysed and their variables, it was possible to draw a *self-assessment chart* that allows areas for improvement to be identified and internal comparisons to be initiated for development over time from the dimensions described above. Through specific questions for each area and reflecting on the variables involved, the self-assessment exercise stimulates processes for strengthening individual projects. Its flexibility allows it to be used during discussions among practitioners, either as a whole or by focusing on priority dimensions.

The project "Includ-EU" can be considered a good practice as it has generated a versatile tool that can be used by social workers who are attentive to numerous dimensions and variables concerning the housing inclusion of foreign citizens. Indeed, the project considered fundamental variables for the housing inclusion of foreigners, including asylum seekers and refugees, going beyond the simple conception of living (and housing) as a physical space and including relational aspects. Finally, this tool proved effective in both the design and evaluation of inclusive housing solutions.

For more information see: https://includeu.eu/

Analytical Box on Best Practices procedures

Tools for the Development of Sustainable and Inclusive Housing Solutions in a participatory Project Design Approach

- **Mapping and Analysis of Good Practices**: Conduct thorough mapping and qualitative analysis of existing good practices to establish a solid foundation for developing effective housing solutions and identifying successful strategies.
- **Strategic Partnerships**: Promote public-private partnerships to develop sustainable and inclusive housing solutions for individuals with a migration background, integrating efforts across various sectors.
- **Integration of Diverse Funding Sources**: Ensure financial sustainability by integrating diverse funding sources.
- **Participatory Approach in Project Design**: Involve stakeholders, including residents, in the design and management of housing projects through a participatory process, ensuring that interventions are responsive to the community's needs.

- **Development of Flexible and Adaptable Guidelines**: Create guidelines with self-assessment tools to support the design of new housing transitions. These self-assessment tools have to consider housing supply, support networks, residents' profiles and skills, and educational interventions to support their development.
- **Focus on Social Integration and Relationship Building**: Emphasise the development of positive relationships within and outside housing projects to foster social integration and build supportive social networks for residents.
- **Collaborative Socio-Educational Interventions**: Implement collaborative social-educational interventions within housing projects to address the specific needs of vulnerable residents, enhance their skills, and promote long-term inclusion.
- **Strategic Location and Accessibility of Housing**: Prioritize the strategic placement of housing projects in accessible areas close to essential services and social networks to enhance residents' autonomy and facilitate their integration into the community.

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The volume presents a selection of best practices implemented in the Tuscany region in the field of reception and integration policies for migrants and asylum seekers. This book is the result of research conducted within the European project "Global Social Work and Human Mobility: Comparative Studies on Local Government and Good Social Work Practices in the Euro-Mediterranean Region" (Global-ANSWER), dedicated to promoting knowledge exchange, expertise transfer and the dissemination of best practices in social work and human mobility in Europe.

The volume adopts the framework of the "White Paper on Reception Policies for Asylum Seekers and International or Humanitarian Protection Holders" released in 2017 by the Tuscany Region and Anci Toscana to consolidate principles, guidelines and best practices, as well as to provide a common framework aimed at improving reception services and integration policies for migrant citizens. Within this context, the volume's primary goal is to identify good practices, analyze the context of their application, describe their characteristics and assess their potential for replication in other settings. The volume is a useful tool for a broad audience, including social workers, educators, policy evaluators and implementers, policymakers, students, academics, citizens with a migrant background and anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding of migrant integration.

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