

## MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY - CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES FOR WORK WITH YOUNG MIGRANTS: CASE STUDY ITALY

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### Abstract:

Within the Italian context, unaccompanied migrant children are often young teens, close to 18 years old, in need of work and economic inclusion. In 2017, most of them were 17 years old (55.2%), followed by those of 16 years old (26.6%), and 15 years old (10.4%). Transition to adulthood is often a difficult and challenging process, a time during which they move from the status and rights of childhood and care towards uncertainty, adulthood and responsibility. During this time, they are in the process of cultural, intellectual, physical, psychological and social development. A more gentle transition period for those reaching the age of majority could help better prepare them for life ahead and reduce the risk that these children find themselves unemployed and without any support network. Moreover, for those who have arrived in Italy at 16 or 17 years old, they may not have received sufficient support by the time that they are required to leave reception facilities to ensure their effective integration into Italian society. In the theoretical part, we will present current situation regarding unaccompanied minors and their transition into adulthood, including good practices identified in the area. In the research part, we will analyze the results of the workshops for unaccompanied minors and young adults, organized in Taranto and Bari in 2019 in frame of project CiSoTRA. Analysis will mainly focus on what are the needs of UAM and young adults, 'how do they see the system' and what in their opinion shall still be improved.

*Keywords: unaccompanied minor migrants, young adult migrants, life projects, multicultural society*

### 1. INTEGRATION PROJECTS

The Italian situation is part of a complex European framework: the development of effective paths for the inclusion of unaccompanied foreign minors is a challenge that goes beyond national borders and requires answers at European level.

The projects, operational since April 2017, involve 75 entities between Third Sector associations and public bodies, and work in 12 Italian regions: four regions in the North, four in the Center and four in the South, with a higher concentration in Sicily, where there is a greater presence of minors (43.9% of those surveyed in November 2017 by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies) and have focused their attention and efforts on the major issues concerning reception and inclusion. In this regard,

unaccompanied foreign minors have implemented numerous projects and initiatives in favor of the MSNA (Non-Accompanied Foreign Minors).

The projects identified as best practices have been selected in the framework of Never Alone, a joint tender promoted by the Cariplo Foundation, Compagnia di San Paolo, Fondazione con il Sud, Enel Cuore, Fondazione CRT, the Cassa di Risparmio di Cuneo Foundation, Cassa di Savings in Padua and Rovigo, Monte dei Paschi di Siena Foundation, in the framework of the European EPIM (European Program for Integration and Migration) initiative, to strengthen and innovate ways of taking care of minors and young foreigners in Italy, through the reception and accompaniment of unaccompanied minors and young foreigners arriving in Italy alone.

The selected projects have ensured good geographic coverage: being the majority of multi-regional projects, the actions carried out involved 12 Italian regions, namely four regions of the North, four of the Center and four of the South, with a concentration in Sicily where there is a greater presence of minors. The selected projects offer interventions in all the areas indicated in the Never Alone call: accompaniment to autonomy in the transition to age, strengthening and spreading the practice of foster care and the system of voluntary guardians, welcoming girls.

The projects, identified as best practices, are all headed by a non-profit organization and see the total participation of 46 bodies between third sector associations and public bodies. The total contributions approved amounted to 3.5 million euros.

Here are the projects selected by the Foundations:

- C.I.D.I.S. Onlus, Perugia - Area of intervention: Calabria, Campania, Lazio, Umbria and Veneto
- CESVI Onlus Foundation, Bergamo - Area of intervention: Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, Sicily
- Istituto Don Calabria, Verona - Area of intervention: Emilia Romagna, Sicily, Veneto
- Dedalus Cooperativa sociale, Naples - Area of intervention: Campania
- CIAI - Italian Center for Childcare, Milan - Area of intervention: Sicily
- Save the Children Italy, Rome - Area of intervention: Lazio, Piedmont, Sicily

The legal representation of a child can only be held by the parents or the guardian. In this light, legal representation becomes a key element for an unaccompanied minor to be formally recognized, and the guardian is, after parents, the subject that ensures his legal existence.

Improvement of multi-agency and inter-institutional working for policy coherence and continuity of interventions within the national territory in the field of child reception, assistance and protection. This should include institutional agreements between judicial authorities, local authorities, service providers and child protection agencies. Provision of public information and awareness campaigns on the protective dimension of guardianship as well as on the role and duties of voluntary guardians. Improvement of data collection and provision on unaccompanied minors at local level.

The guardianship authority of reference should ensure mechanisms of support and accompaniment for guardians. Desks of support, online platforms, meeting points or assistance teams of qualified professionals are some concrete methods. Sufficient financial and human resources should be made available to this end.

In Italy there are different experiences, both of local authorities and of civil society, which are experimenting with the support of young migrants in the transition from the minor to the majority, in particular in housing support and job placement. At national level the best experience since now, which is integrating the two areas throughout the national territory, is definitely the Never Alone project, with its 8 national projects. The difficulties instead insist on the aspect of immigration legislation, which becomes restrictive and excluding after 18 years.

The main shortcomings in the public system for the support of foreign minors coming to the transition to the age of majority are found in the lack of cooperation between the various actors involved in this process. In fact, while the Municipality of Naples has been experimenting with projects for support for the inclusion of young people over 18, through social housing and work placements (Progetto Percorsi di Autonomia Guidata – PAG), the Campania Region and the Prefecture of Naples have not realized

any initiative in this sense and have not carried out any initiative to this effect and fail to do it. They also fail to organize the institutional consultation tables that should be implemented to intervene in this area.

The knowledge and skills of the actors involved in supporting foreign minors / young adults who need to be strengthened relate to the areas of social, educational and cultural interventions aimed at supporting their paths after 18 years. Furthermore, it is necessary to intervene in raising awareness among public actors in supporting training and job placement, which together with regularization on the territory, are essential for social inclusion aimed at the autonomy of young adults.

Following Law n.47 / 2017 in 2018, some Italian Regions have organized training courses for Guardians for Unaccompanied foreign minors, in collaboration with the Juvenile Courts and Regional Child Protection Authorities. Furthermore, the Association for Juridical Studies for Immigration (ASGI) has for many years produced numerous courses of high specialization and training on legal and legal issues related to immigration policies in several Italian cities, which allow to update the knowledge on the subject of legislation and procedures for the work with migrants. But apart from these initiatives, there is a need to carry out other training courses both in relation to the social and cultural responsibility of Msna and in relation to support for the inclusion of young foreigners.

## **2. THE KEY AREAS WHERE THE MINORS AND YOUNGSTERS IN TRANSITION NEED SUPPORT**

The areas of intervention to be strengthened, in order to support minors and young people in transition, are certainly those linked to the strengthening of their skills and competences, such as L2 Italian language literacy courses, vocational training courses, active citizenship workshops. , Orientation pathways to work, insertion in work placements, paths to support housing insertion, credit support, etc. All these activities are decisive for formal, informal and non-formal learning that is essential for a correct socio-cultural and working integration. However, all this inevitably necessitates the need to adapt the legislation regarding the stay of young foreigners after the age of 18. In fact, in Italy, where the regular labor market is rather fragile for all low-skilled citizens and where the black market is very widespread, the residence permit for foreign citizens is bound to obtain a regular work contract. Moreover, the residence permit for "waiting for employment" lasts only one year, which is not always sufficient to find a job with a regular contract. Therefore this criticality is the main obstacle to the success of the inclusion pathways, which puts the young foreigner in a position of new vulnerability that threatens to frustrate the good that has been achieved during the minor age.

## **3. BEST PRACTICES**

- Institutional coordination in the transition from status as minor to young adulthood
- Social support
- Educational support;
- Support from education to labour market
- Building of competences of actors
- Building of competences of minors

### **1) Project Mai più soli (Cidis onlus Perugia)**

To guarantee a tailor-made welcome to minors arriving alone in Italy, among the regional territories of Calabria, Campania, Lazio, Umbria, Veneto: this is the challenge of Cidis Onlus and the five partners involved in the project. To make effective the right of children to a healthy psychophysical development, Mai alone promotes interactions and exchanges of skills between the different actors involved in the protection of young people, differentiating interventions for minors and for children in the phase of transition to age.

For the former, no more alone is working to integrate into the family through the systematic implementation of the system of voluntary guardians and family loyalty, simultaneously implementing advocacy and legal protection for the promotion of respect for children's rights. The territories involved are the site of awareness campaigns for the population on the theme, training courses for service operators and for people who apply as custodians and tutors to deepen the psychological, relational, cultural and legal aspects of the reception process.

For the newcomers, the project experiments with the development of good alternative sustainable practices to the reception in structures that allow to integrate public and private resources and involve the same guys in the management.

A boy, a family: a guiding principle of the project, which led to the creation of an awareness-raising video for the welcome of the new-age children, supervised by Refugees Welcome Italia, in the sphere of Never more alone.

## 2) Project Strada facendo (CESVI Bergamo)

"Strada Facendo" is a project promoted by Cesvi as part of the "Never Alone, for a possible tomorrow" initiative. Experimentation of interventions in the network for the passage into adulthood of foreign minors and unaccompanied young people.

The project promotes experimentation, networking and replicability of best practices for the reception and integration of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors and young migrants between 16 and 19 years of age. There are four territories involved (Bergamo, Bologna, Livorno and Syracuse): four Italian provinces in which the number and experiences relating to the reception of foreign minors alone are very different. Thanks to the "Strada Facendo" project, over 170 young migrants will be able to study, carry out training internships and receive the necessary support to become autonomous and face the delicate transition to adulthood. At the same time, Strada Facendo will allow 17 public agencies, social cooperatives, associations and vocational training bodies to dialogue and collaborate with each other to ensure that the positive experiences and skills of each one are made available to a wider network. of subjects.

Over the three years of the project, more than ten meetings, training sessions and in-depth study of specific themes on all the territories involved will be organized. Topics such as trafficking in human beings, the voluntary protection of minors alone, ethno-psychiatric support, housing autonomy and inter-institutional dialogue between bodies involved in immigration will be addressed. The road to which the project title refers is not only the one undertaken by young migrants who have arrived in Italy, but also the one that these youngsters still have to travel responsibly in the design of their life project, wherever it is directed. It is also the path that must be followed together by public and private subjects who have the task of finding adequate and integrated responses to accompany, empower and empower these young people in the migration process. It is the path that every territorial community, respecting its own specificities, must follow, aware of its own identity but also of the necessity of a cultural change of which each must be bearer and participant.

## 3) Project for Minors and young Unaccompanied Foreigners: inclusion and autonomy actions (Don Calabria Institute, Verona)

The Don Calabria Institute, together with a network of eight partners, intervenes in Emilia Romagna, Sicily and Veneto to enhance the reception of young migrants in the area, guarantee full respect for children's rights and ensure their needs are met. The institutions involved in the areas of the interventions provide support and support for the autonomy of young people, actions aimed at literacy and initiatives aimed at social integration, enhancing the recreational, recreational and cultural aspects to be developed in the area. The project intends to implement the employment of young foreigners by activating job grants and training periods lasting a minimum of four months. Furthermore, to encourage housing inclusion, it proposes the use of semi-autonomous apartments and housing first packages, with which it contributes to the deposit and the rent of accommodation for a period of six months. Minors and young Unaccompanied Foreigners: inclusion and autonomy actions are committed to the training of operators and the development of effective practices to promptly identify, during the landings, vulnerable girls and boys and possible victims of trafficking. The project involves the creation of a legal consultancy desk in Palermo dedicated to minors and young people in the area to guarantee and extend protection and provide support to girls who are victims of trafficking also in the complaint procedures. In addition, Ferrara, Palermo and Verona are the headquarters of initiatives aimed at informing and sensitizing the local community on the issue of fostering and family coaching by proposing training meetings for the families concerned, and expanding the network of volunteer tutors by activating training for aspiring and updating tutors for those in charge.

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#### 4) Suspended Boys Project - Actions to accompany autonomy in the transition to the age of unaccompanied foreign minors (Social Cooperative Dedalus, Naples)

The project intends to improve the living conditions and access to the system of socio-educational and working opportunities for unaccompanied foreign minors, in particular by supporting the difficult transition to age. In particular, it offers hospitality and autonomy; education, training and support for work placement; training and activation of peer operators and peer tutors; action research; advocacy and comparison seminars on intervention models; provision of citizenship / work grants; theatrical workshops and civic education and active citizenship. In Campania, Dedalus collaborates with four partners in a project that aims to improve the quality of life of migrant children and to facilitate their access to the opportunities of Italian peers. Declined on a range of actions ranging from contact in the street, to the first and second level reception until the full autonomy of living and work, Boys suspended is based on a series of individualized programs that call children and young people to participate in active way to the definition of its own path: by signing a Social Contract based on the sharing of goals and activities, young people and operators engage in a fair exchange and start a path between peers, far from merely welfareist approaches. The programs undertaken respond to material needs, but at the same time give an important attention to cultural and social occasions aimed at the possibility of inhabiting common areas and building relationships centered on affections. The network of partners involved in the project works with the aim of stabilizing the services offered in the local welfare planning.

#### 5) Rgazzi Harraga - Processes of social inclusion for unaccompanied migrant minors in the City of Palermo (CIAI, Milan)

CIAI - Italian Center for Childcare Aid works in Sicily together with a network of eight partners to enhance and strengthen the child protection system already active in the territory and to guarantee 400 young migrants the services and tools necessary to be an integral part and resource of Italian society. The project was born in Palermo, a safe haven for the many minors who arrive alone in Italy after months of escape from their countries of origin: girls and boys "who burn borders" - in Arabic, harraga means "the one who burns" -, willing to risk everything to migrate.

With an approach based on reception and listening, Ragazzi Harraga creates intercultural workshops, orientation activities and training internships to help children build a new life project in Italy by recomposing the fragments of their experience and starting from their skills and attitudes . In support of the autonomy of migrants, in Palermo, collaboration is also active with local companies that are committed to fostering the learning and integration of young people into the world of work.

A model of social housing that combines the housing solution with the work is in the process of experimentation in the Ballarò district: the renovation of some rooms of a historic building will open "Casa Santa Chiara", where they will live and work the same young people. At the center, the will to work together with the boys for their well-being and their autonomy, with modalities centered on integration and interaction.

#### 6) Together: Let's build the future together (Save the Children Italy, Rome)

In 2016 Save the Children launched a new challenge: at the center, integration. Together supports migrant minors and new migrants (17-19 years) who arrive in Italy unaccompanied with the aim of supporting young people in the long term, towards economic and social autonomy. On the territories of Lazio, Piedmont and Sicily, Save the Children activates networks and collaborations with nine partners between public bodies, associations and local organizations to plan and activate accompaniment paths in full respect of the rights of the child, starting from the migrant project of the young, his needs, his expectations and his potential, and working in parallel with the host community: with the aim of offering children the opportunity to re-build their future and give the country the ability to re-read the face of the boys .

Together accompanies the young people involved with training activities and guidance to the world of work, job grants, supporting them for the aspects of care, sport, health and housing. About 1,500 young people are involved in learning paths in Italian and civic education: the activities, also realized through the use of social networks and a web radio, intend to favor a process of positive integration and to facilitate language learning. of the words and the structure of the working environment.

The project activates courses of company training and plans to accompany housing autonomy for at least 60 children and is committed to creating a database of national-based skills to identify the professional profiles of new people potentially in line with the needs of the production world. The exchange and integration between migrant minors and peer groups of the host community are guaranteed by the institution in each intervention city of a Consulta dei Ragazzi, to which every young person can contribute and participate in a relevant way and to the maximum of his abilities.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The present research represents the general situation of refugee youth aged 14-27 in Italy, the arrivals date, the delicate situation in Italy and the best practices carried out through the implementations of various projects.

It is necessary that local authorities and the institutions invest resources so that the guardians are guaranteed adequate support (not only legal/administrative, but also psycho-social, etc.) in the exercise of their important function. This is also essential to make access to possible this program to citizens who are not necessarily experts in immigration matters, in accordance with the spirit of the law that does not apply to professional categories specifications. In particular, funding of update programs and services should be guaranteed orientation and accompaniment to the correct exercise of the function, as well as of monitoring of the same. This can also be done by identifying territorial locations comparison between different bodies involved (local authorities, judicial authorities, non-profit organizations, etc.), for example by activating orientation panels with the aid at the municipal level professional associations, non-profit organizations and legal experts. It would also be useful, without prejudice to the absolute gratuitousness of the role as foreseen by the Civil Code, provide for reimbursements for living expenses incurred by the guardian, so that the supportive experience of being a voluntary guardian of an unaccompanied minor is not exclusive prerogative of wealthy citizens. In the same spirit it is proposed that the public administration and the private sector provide work permits that allow aspiring volunteer tutors to attend the related courses and, once appointed, to deal with the duties inherent in the own role, for example to guarantee the presence during the interview before the Territorial Commission for the recognition of international protection or in others procedures that require the representation of the minor.

It is appropriate to offer similar training possibilities to the provisional guardians, considered their increased functions according to the provisions of art. 18 of the Law on the possibility of the managers of the reception facilities to assist the minor in presenting the application for international protection and other ordinary functions carried out pending the appointment.

Finally, it is necessary to provide appropriate procedures to prevent risks of abuse or inadequate behavior by guardians against protected minors.

Unaccompanied foreign minors need to integration, education and protection.

#### Integration

Being able to receive personalized support integration, by the team of the reception facility, for example starting from the evaluation and from the recognition of skills, too professional type, already possibly acquired in the country of origin. In order to combat intolerance and limit the episodes of racism, o promote awareness-raising activities, meeting and mutual knowledge in the local communities where the facilities are located reception, to this end supporting the minor ones in the realization of these activity. Being able to get to know and to be introduced into an Italian family, as a support mechanism and as way to learn more about culture Italian ("for example we could pass Sundays together") Have the opportunity to engage in knowledge orientation activities of Italian culture, such as trips and visits to museums and places of cultural interest.

#### Protection

Select volunteer guardians too taking account of their motivation and individual ability to establish a relationship of knowledge and respect mutual, and ultimately trusted, with the minor: "the guardian should be like an aunt, someone close to you "

#### Education

Having the opportunity to attend more intensive and frequent Italian courses, and better designed. Having the chance to meet and socialize with Italian peers, in particular through linguistic and cultural exchanges and social activities to be carried out together.

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