

## MILMET Project

### IO1-Handbook: Country's situation

#### Migration in Italy

Geography makes Italy a natural gateway to the European Union, especially for those coming from Africa, the Middle East or Southern Asia. In fact, two out of the three main maritime migration routes to the EU, through the Eastern and Central Mediterranean, end in Italy<sup>1</sup>. The Balkan route (by land) is currently the most used path to the European Union. While it arrives in Germany, it may include a detour to Trieste, which lies at the border of Slovenia.

Thus, it may not come as a surprise that Italy is the fourth recipient of asylum applications in Europe, with 53.610<sup>2</sup> applications in 2021, after Germany (190.545), France (120.685) and Spain (65.295). **So far, from 2018 to 2021, 177.950 persons have obtained refugee status in Italy.**<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1 Migration routes<sup>4</sup>

Since the beginning of 2016, 124.475 migrants have arrived in Italy through the Mediterranean route. The majority arrived from Sub-Saharan Africa through the Strait of Sicily (West-East route), after a long and difficult journey filled with obstacles and ending with an extremely dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean Sea. While the land route, known as “the Balkan route”, has been used for many decades by popula-



tions fleeing war and totalitarian regimes, it has in recent years become the scene of a humanitarian tragedy. Thousands of migrants along the route live and travel in extremely poor conditions, facing persecution and violence.

Many migrants arriving in Italy do not wish to stay there definitely but are seeking to continue to Northern Europe, either because they already have family or friends to reunite with or because they see greater possibilities for integration elsewhere.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/2016/09/13/rotte-migranti-africa-italia>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.openpolis.it/litalia-riceve-meno-richiedenti-asilo-degli-altri-grandi-paesi-ue/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/i-numeri-del-lasilo>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.limesonline.com/afghanistan-migranti-italia-africa-medio-oriente-guerre-cartta/124790>

## A focus on Unaccompanied foreign minors

The activities of *Duemilauno Agenzia Sociale* in the migration sector are mainly addressed at the group of unaccompanied foreign minors. In fact, the cooperative, in collaboration with local actors and public authorities, starting from 2016, has built a large network of structures (short-, medium- and long-term communities), able to host unaccompanied minors and accompany them on a path of gradual autonomy and inclusion, compatible with the legal and the specific Italian situation.

### **The situation of unaccompanied foreign minors – legal context**

In 2017, Italy became the first European country to adopt legislation specifically aimed at strengthening the rights and situation of unaccompanied foreign minors, the so-called “Zampa” law (n° 47/2017, “Zampa” law).<sup>5</sup> In particular, the law explicitly introduces a ban on the rejection of unaccompanied minors at the border.

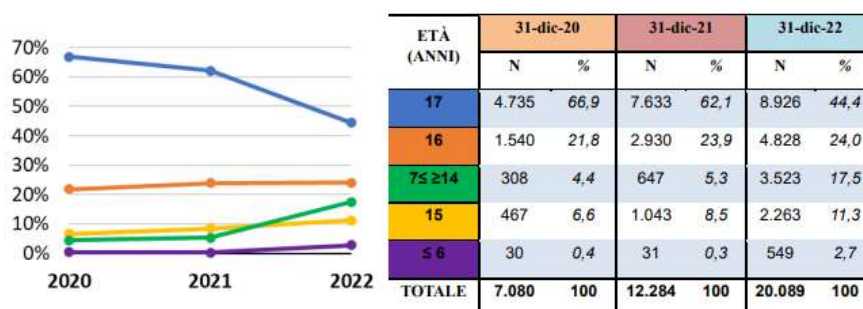
Even if the “Zampa” law considers unaccompanied foreign minors in the same way as Italian teens, there is an important gap between law and the reality. Policies that effectively improve opportunities offered to foreign minors are urgently needed, not only in order to meet the needs and potentials of the minors, but also of the context of an ageing Italian population.

The situation is complex, partly because of the increasing number of arrivals of unaccompanied foreign minors.

Between January 2021 and June 2022, the number of unaccompanied foreign minors arriving in Italy increased by nearly 100%. This is mainly due to the war and resulting humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> 28% originate from this country.

There are 20,089 unaccompanied foreign minors registered in Italy as of 31 December 2022, a sharp increase compared to 2021 (+64%) due to the humanitarian crisis that has affected Ukraine since February 2022. UAMs are in the majority males (85.1%), and are mostly 17 (44.4%), 16 (24%) or 7 to 14 years old (17.5%), mainly from Ukraine (5,042 minors), Egypt (4,899), Tunisia (1,800), Albania (1,347) and Pakistan (1,082).<sup>7</sup>

**Graph - Distribution of unaccompanied minors present as of 31.12.2022 by age group. Comparison with the situation as at 31.12.2021 e to 31.12.2020**



<sup>5</sup> <https://openmigration.org/analisi/la-legge-zampa-sui-minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati-in-5-punti/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.agensir.it/quotidiano/2022/10/7/minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati-caritas-e-mi-grantes-nellultimo-anno-preoccupante-aumento-servono-politiche-ad-hoc/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/minori-stranieri/Documents/Rapporto-approfondimento-semestrale-MSNA-31-dicembre-2022.pdf>

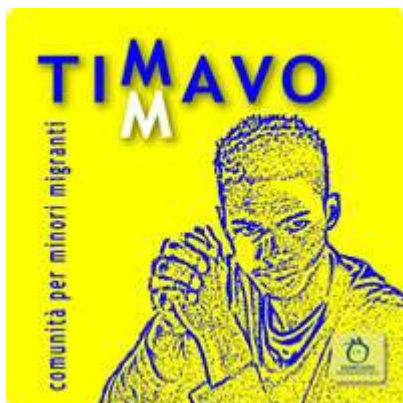
### **Unaccompanied Minors in Trieste since the period of Corona Virus (form April 2020 in progress) - a short storytelling**

Since 2020, due to the pandemic situation, new services have been arranged for refugees and unaccompanied minors arriving in Italy and at Trieste.

During the early months of the Covid-19 outbreak, a 14-day quarantine period (“fiduciary isolation”) was implemented for unaccompanied minors arriving in Trieste in order to prevent the spread of the virus in the communities. These measures were activated by the Social Services of the Municipality of Trieste in collaboration with cooperatives as *Duemilauno Agenzia Sociale*. During their stay in quarantine, minors were given the opportunities for legal counselling in relation to their status and follow up possibilities. In addition, the minors received first-line medical care as well as the access to hygiene and healthy food and support linked to their mental health. Minors welcomed in these services, often arrived in quite bad physical conditions after having survived the final part of the route, referred to by the migrants as “the game”, which starts in Serbia/Bosnia and involves a crossing of the Croatian and Slovenian forests on foot for two or three weeks. Limb wounds, injuries, infections from scabies and gastrointestinal problems are common.

For many minors it has been quite challenging to understand and accept the measure of precautionary isolation. That’s why the work on awareness-raising represented an important investment during the Covid-19 period. Not only in regard to the minors, but also referred to their families which expected them to join immediately the final destination (France, Germany...).

In 2022, with the end of the Covid-19 emergency, the municipality of Trieste, in cooperation with *Duemilauno Agenzia Sociale* and further local stakeholders (associations, boarder police, social cooperatives...), implemented follow-up hosting projects in favour of young unaccompanied migrants. During a stay up to 50 days, the young migrants start to participate in more structured activities: language training, legal and psychological support when needed, as well as support in completing all relevant documentation (foreigners’ permit of stay, tax code and health card). A new kind of services, aimed to create a bridge to the already existing long term Communities.



After the initial period, the minors are placed in educational services/long term communities as the “Community Timavo”, created and managed by *Duemilauno Agenzia Sociale* since 2016. Sent by the municipalities, the young migrants can be hosted until the age of 18 or 21 if they attend school or work projects, or are in a situation of fragility.

Educational plans and activities in these services are tailored to the needs, resources and interests of each individual person and the activation of local resources. We consider this the only valid methodological approach, able to create real situations of integration.