



# Coping with the evolving trends of trafficking before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Insight from the N.A.Ve Anti-trafficking Network in Italy.*

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**INSigHT**  
Building Capacity to  
Deal with  
Human Trafficking and  
Transit Routes in  
Nigeria, Italy, Sweden

Prepared by SSIIM UNESCO Chair, University Iuav of Venice (Italy)

E-book produced as part of the INSigHT Action (Building capacity to deal with human trafficking and transit routes in Nigeria, Italy, Sweden)

SSIIM UNESCO Chair, University Iuav of Venice, June 2021

ISBN 978-88-31241-43-4



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Suggested Citation: Semprebon M., Caroselli S., Scarabello S. (2021) “Coping with the evolving trends of trafficking before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Insight from the N.A.Ve Anti-trafficking Network*”, SSIIM UNESCO Chair, University Iuav of Venice.

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union, contracted by ICMPD through the Mobility Partnership Facility. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of IUAV and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and the one of ICMPD.

Layout by: Associazione 2050



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## Acknowledgments

The INSigHT Research Team wishes to thank all the people that contributed to the compilation of this publication. Special thanks are due to: all the colleagues of Equality ATI, partner of the INSigHT Action, all the N.A.Ve professionals for access to and constant support for an extremely enriching and inspiring ethnographic experience and for their passionate engagement in their work and in sharing their thoughts with us, beyond the scope of this e-book; ICMPD and in particular Jennifer Tangney for her useful comments and for her support throughout the Action; Giovanna Marconi, Project Manager of the INSigHT Action and Coordinator of the SSIIM UNESCO Chair for her precious support all throughout the research. We also wish to thank Francesca Agnellini for contributing, during her internship (in compliance with the Undergraduate Degree on Social Services at the University of Padova) to our reflections on the system of referral within the N.A.Ve Network. Thank you also to Gianfranco Bonesso, anthropologist and expert on migration who has been taking part to the research on a voluntary basis. Last but not least our greatest thank you goes to the Nigerian women and girls we have met during our fieldwork and that welcomed our presence in activities in which they were involved.



## List of acronyms and abbreviations

**ANCI:** Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani (National Association of Italian Municipalities)

**ASGI:** Associazione Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione (Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration)

**AULSS:** Azienda Socio-Sanitaria Locale (Local socio-health Authority)

**CAS:** Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria (Centre for Extraordinary Reception)

**CGIL:** Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (General Italian Confederation of Labour)

**CIA:** Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori (Italian Confederation of Agricultural Workers)

**CIR:** Consiglio Italiano per i Rifugiati (Italian Council for Refugees)

**CNCA:** Coordinamento Nazionale Comunità di Accoglienza (National Coordination Asylum Seeker Reception facilities)

**CPIA:** Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione per Adulti (Provincial Centres for Adult Education)

**CPR:** Centri di Permanenza per Rimpatri (Detention Centres for Repatriation)

**Di.Re:** Donne in rete contro la violenza (Network of women against violence)

**EASO:** European Asylum Support Service

**EU:** European Union

**EC:** European Commission

**GRETA:** Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

**ICMPD:** International Centre for Migration Policy Development

**IOM:** International Organisation for Migration

**IPM:** Istituto Penale Minorile (Juvenile Detention Centre)

**N.A.Ve:** Network Antitratta Veneto (Veneto Region Anti-trafficking Network)

**N.A.V.I.G.A.Re:** Veneto Region Anti-trafficking Network Intersections Governance and Regional Actions (Network Antitratta Veneto Intersezioni Governance Azioni Regionali)

**SPRAR:** Sistema di protezione per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati (System of protection for asylum seekers and refugees)

**SIPROIMI:** Sistema di protezione per titolari di protezione internazionale e per minori stranieri non accompagnati (System of protection for holders of international protection and for foreign unaccompanied minors)

**SAI:** Sistema Accoglienza e Integrazione (System of Reception and Integration)

**SERD:** Servizi per le dipendenze patologiche (Services for pathological addictions)

**UIL:** Unione Italiana del Lavoro (Italian Union of Labour)

**UNHCR:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**USSM:** Ufficio Servizio Sociale presso il Tribunale Minorenni (Social Services Office of the Juvenile Court)

## Terms used in the e-book

A **Migrant**, in the global context, is a person who is outside the territory of the State of which they are nationals or citizens and who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate. In the EU context, a person who either:

- (i) establishes their usual residence in the territory of an EU Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another EU/EFTA Member State or a third country;
- (ii) or having previously been usually resident in the territory of the EU Member State, ceases to have their usual residence in the EU Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months<sup>1</sup>.

An **Unaccompanied Minor** is defined as “a third-country national or stateless person below the age of 18 years, who arrives on the territory of the Member States unaccompanied by the adult responsible for them by law or by the practice of the Member State concerned, and for as long as they are not effectively taken into the care of such a person”<sup>2</sup>. It includes minors who are left unaccompanied after they have entered the territory of the Member States<sup>3</sup>.

**Human trafficking / Trafficking in persons** shall mean

- (a) the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;
- (b) the consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;
- (c) the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article.

Art. 2.1 of Directive 2011/36/EU includes three constitutive elements of this crime: acts, means and purpose. The act is linked to the establishment of control over a person; it consists in the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of persons, including the exchange or transfer of control over them. The means are the way in which control is attained: the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person. The purpose is the exploitation of the trafficked person.

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<sup>1</sup> See the definition provided in the EMN EU Glossary: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/glossary\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_en) and the UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration.

<sup>2</sup> Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, *supra* note 4, art. 24(2). See also Art. 2(l) of the Qualifications Directive (2011/95/EU).

<sup>3</sup> See note 2. See also Art. 2(l) of the Qualifications Directive (2011/95/EU).

### *Terms used in the e-book regarding the Italian context*

**Commissioni Territoriali (Territorial Commission):** they are the bodies responsible for the examination of asylum applications in Italy. They are nominated with a decree of the Ministry of Interior and are headed by an Officer with prefectural career (see Prefettura). They are composed of administrative officers specialised in asylum law and a member of UNHCR.

**Commissione Nazionale Asilo (National Commission for Asylum):** it operates within the Department for civil liberties and immigration and it is the referent body for the Italian system of international protection. It coordinates and orients Territorial Commissions that examine asylum applications.

**Prefettura(e):** it is a peripheral body of the Ministry of Interior, with representative functions at the provincial and metropolitan levels. Their main task is to ensure the coordination of administrative activities of State peripheral bodies. Their tasks include also granting order and public safety, for example through the organisation and coordination of provincial meetings for public order and safety. furthermore, they carry out activities in relation to migration and asylum seeker reception. In particular, since 2011, they have been responsible for the publication of public tenders to outsource the management of CAS reception facilities.

**Questore/Questura(e):** the Questura is an office of the Dipartimento della Pubblica Sicurezza (Department for Public Safety), with provincial competence, and it responds to the Ministry of Interior. Its main duty is associated with granting public order and public safety and it carries out activities to prevent and repress crimes. It also exercises administrative functions associated with the issuance of passports and of residence permits for immigrants. The Questore is the Head of the Questura.

**(Squadra) Volante:** it is a department of the Ufficio prevenzione generale e soccorso pubblico (Office for general prevention and public rescue) of Polizia di Stato (National Police) that ensure immediate interventions on a 24/7 basis. It is directed by an Official of Polizia di Stato in each Questura.

**Squadra Mobile:** it is an office of Polizia di Stato (National Police) that operates in each Questura with judicial police tasks and therefore undertake investigations. The Squadre Mobili respond to the Sco (Servizio Centrale Operativo – Central Operative Service) of the Direzione Centrale Anticrimine (Central Anti-Criminality Directorate).

**Carabinieri:** it is an Italian law enforcement agency, together with Polizia di Stato and Guardia di Finanza. They primarily have domestic policing duties. As Guardia di Finanza. and differently from Polizia di Stato, Carabinieri are a military agency and respond to the Ministry of Defence. Yet, there are some overlaps in the roles of Carabinieri and Polizia di Stato and both manage an emergency number.

**Guardia di Finanza:** it is an Italian law enforcement agency who responds to the Ministry of Economy and Finance, although it is a Military Agency. It carries out duties relating to economic and financial crimes. Additionally, it also patrols Italy's territorial waters.

**Direzioni del Lavoro (Labour Directorates):** they are a territorial articulation, at provincial and interregional levels, of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. Through Ispettorati del Lavoro (Labour Inspectorates), they carry out surveillance and regulation duties relating to the labour normative

framework. They carry out prevention, promotion, informative activities to ensure the correct application of labour norms. They also engage with a mediation role in labour disputes. Finally, they manage economic migration flows.

## Executive Summary

This e-book is part of a series of five e-books produced by the INSigHT Action, that is aimed to build the capacity of key stakeholders to deal with human trafficking and secondary routes in Nigeria, Italy and Sweden, with attention to trafficked women and girls engaged in sex work and men involved in begging<sup>4</sup>. It undertakes a critical analysis of the N.A.Ve system of prevention and protection, particularly with reference to the specific target of Nigerian women and girls, in line with the objectives of the INSigHT Action. N.A.Ve is the Veneto Region Anti-trafficking Network.

The main purpose of this publication is to provide a detailed account of how N.A.Ve works and how it has been facing the challenges posed by the evolving phenomenon of trafficking. By doing this, it does not only aim to contribute to the academic debate, but also to the capacity building of anti-trafficking professionals in Italy and in Europe.

According to EU data (2018), Nigeria was the first among the top non-EU origin countries for the total number of victims of trafficking registered in the EU, in the period 2015-2016. Nearly half of the victims with Nigerian citizenship were registered in Italy. Regarding age and gender, victims registered in the EU, in the period 2015-2017, included overwhelmingly girls and women who were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Children represented almost one quarter of the victims. Nigeria is still a focus country for Europe. In the period 2017-2018, Italy was the second country with the largest number of registered victims of trafficking. As in the period 2015-2016, Nigeria was still the main country of citizenship of non-EU victims. Detected fraudulent document users were mostly from sub-Saharan countries, especially Nigeria, and mostly landed in Rome Fiumicino. While fewer detections of illegal border crossings have been reported most recently, a considerable rise in multiple movements internal to Europe were highlighted. The trafficking of young Nigerian women and girls is still a plague, although arrivals on southern Italian coasts have diminished considerable since 2018. Changes have been observed also in the dynamics of trafficking and with respect to the targets of exploitation. N.A.Ve has been faced with increasing calls for support by young lone mothers with children, many of whom have travelled throughout Europe, as we explain in a dedicated INSigHT e-book, that looks at the movements across the Brenner border, in northern Italy. Increasing calls for support have emerged also from Nigerian men, and men of other nationalities, following labour exploitation. Many have been involved in begging too, but they are rarely referring to the anti-trafficking system. An INSigHT e-book is dedicated specifically to begging.

In face of this scenario, anti-trafficking interventions in Italy have been implemented for more than two decades. Various reports have described the anti-trafficking systems in EU Member States and their respective normative frameworks. Less attention has been dedicated to the actual implementation of anti-trafficking projects and little empirical evidence is available accordingly. We aim to contribute to filling this gap. We have studied N.A.Ve, with a micro-sociological method to analyse its governance approach and the organisational and institutional cultures that characterise it. Our main theoretical perspective is that of superdiversity, which is focused on the increasing diversity of social service users' profiles in Italy (but also at wider international level). We have also drawn from the literature on the local governance of migration and on asylum seeker reception. While looking at the structural institutional variables that have affected anti-trafficking projects (i.e. political orientation, inclusionary versus exclusionary forms of governance, multiplicity of actors at different territorial levels, discretion), we have addressed individual variables too, associated with service users and beneficiaries, including

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<sup>4</sup> For more information please visit the INSigHT Action website: <https://www.insightproject.net/>.



their migratory experience, cultural and linguistic issues, forms of vulnerability and legal status, to try and understand to what extent they have also influenced social services and related interventions. In this direction, we have adopted an intersectional approach that is sensitive to the multiple dimensions of people's experiences and vulnerabilities (i.e. age, gender, nationality, type of exploitation, etc.). Beyond looking at N.A.Ve and anti-trafficking efforts in the Veneto Region, through our analysis we have also explored the most recent trends of the phenomenon of trafficking in Italy and the challenges faced by professionals to address them.

To compile this publication, we have drawn from both qualitative and quantitative data collected from April 2019 to December 2020. Quantitative data draw mostly from EU reports, data by the Italian Ministry of Interior, data elaborated by N.A.Ve and the National Anti-trafficking Helpline, as well as data shared by ASGI. Qualitative data has been collected during our ethnographic research, that extended over 21 months, and through over 40 semi-structured interviews carried out in the provincial territories of Verona, Padova and Venice, that have been most affected, in the Veneto Region, by trafficking. Ethnographic research has consisted in participant observation, for a total of more than 300 sessions involving attendance to coordination meetings, monitoring meetings with beneficiaries, meetings with partners, etc. From March to September 2020, most of the observation has been done online, due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. A two-day focus group has also been organised with Cultural-linguistic mediators, in September 2020, to further explore the functioning of N.A.Ve through the perspective of these professionals.

N.A.Ve is a unique and integrated regional network that provides assistance and social protection to victims of trafficking and severe exploitation. It is structured in units, each focused on specific phases which make up its social protection programme. The N.A.Ve professionals have been active in the Veneto Region since 2016, they have accumulated long-term experience on trafficking, since the mid-1990s, and have also engaged at wider national level, through participation to the National Anti-trafficking Platform and to the Anti-trafficking Round Table of the Department of Equal Opportunities of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Additionally, N.A.Ve is considered as a good practice throughout Italy, which makes this publication even more relevant in terms of practice sharing. Local authorities hold a central role in N.A.Ve. It is the Case Managers who take up responsibility on the "cases" and they are social workers working in local authorities. However, engagement has been varied, depending on the political orientation and the willingness of local councillors to dedicate attention to trafficking. Besides the public sector, private third sector actors, including mainly social cooperatives, have had an important role in the network, as they implement the actual social protection programmes. N.A.Ve has a capillary presence over the regional territory, with at least one professional for each unit in most provincial cities in Veneto and over 50 partners.

We have observed several strengths in the N.A.Ve interventions and we recommend anti-trafficking professionals should continue implementing social protection programmes with increasing focus on beneficiaries' migration projects and needs. Generally speaking, the N.A.Ve professionals are all highly specialised and, with respect to the asylum system, we have observed a much lower rate of personnel turnover, which contribute to knowledge building. Over the last years, N.A.Ve has made particular efforts to improve work with specific targets, such as unaccompanied minors exploited in criminal activities and this has been important also to promote their early identification and protection.

The N.A.Ve Professionals are regularly working with Cultural-linguistic mediators that are central to the network's approach, although the need emerged during our fieldwork to promote a thorough reflection on their role with the involvement of all professionals. While on the one side, mediators are considered as essential, they are only rarely involved in coordination meetings.

Regarding the personnel, interesting experiments have been made with the involvement of peer-educators. They promise to provide an added value to social protection programmes, in the measure they can provide positive role models for beneficiaries and promote increasingly sympathetic attitude towards them.

N.A.Ve protection programmes should last for one a half year maximum, as the normative framework states, but numerous cases were reported in which programmes were extended as beneficiaries had not yet achieved a sufficient level of autonomy. This points to the need to rethink programmes' objectives, to question whether they are realistic and to what extent the programme's outcomes are dependent on individual or structural variables. In our view, both types of variables are relevant. Constant reflections have been made within N.A.Ve on how to improve programmes' outcomes while also preventing the risk for some professionals to adopt paternalistic attitudes. Programmes must be certainly more and more individualised. A good example is provided by the so-called "territorial projects", that is to say projects for beneficiaries who have already an accommodation and only needs some specific support services. Paradoxically, their entrance in the social protection program may frustrate their efforts towards autonomy and programme resources may be wasted as a result. Individualised programmes mean that improved attention must be paid to the specific needs of beneficiaries. These include the importance of regularisation, that is often underestimated by professionals and considered to be of secondary importance, with respect to the overall social protection programme. What professionals often forget or do not clearly realised is that regularisation is at the centre of migrants' experiences and it permeates their lives. Socio-legal professionals have the main task of supporting beneficiaries in the process of regularisation but with limited resources and often little understanding on the side of other colleagues of the relevance of their work. In this sense, dedicated capacity building should be organised, in our opinion, within N.A.Ve, but also at wider national level, as this issue has emerged beyond the Veneto Region territory.

Regarding regularisation, it must be stressed that Italy does have some good normative provisions, including the right, spelt in art. 18, for victims of trafficking to obtain a residence permit, even without collaborating in investigations. However, implementation is poor and advocacy efforts are necessary. Socio-legal professionals can play an important role in this sense too.

Many forms of coordination have been established within the N.A.Ve but in spite of this, collaborations across units are not systematic and communication is not always fluid. This can result in the fragmentation of the social protection programme, to the detriment of beneficiaries. Professionals have explained that, more recently, beneficiaries' profiles have been characterised by multiple forms of vulnerability. Such an evolution in profiles calls for a thorough assessment of their needs involving all relevant professionals and specialists, including psychologists but also, in our view, intercultural and ethno-psychiatric experts. A working group of professionals with a background in psychology has recently been created with this scope in mind. However, bureaucratic obstacles need to be considered: the funding provided to N.A.Ve is characterised by rigid budget management that hardly allows for any flexibility in the use of resources, as it emerged for example during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is certainly a critical issue. Overcoming it could also mean finding a way to ensure dedicated funding for follow-up activities, upon completion of social protection programmes.

Critical issues in terms of collaboration do not only regard the internal organisation of N.A.Ve but also external partnerships. N.A.Ve comprises a large number of partners, but collaborations are not always effective. It is particularly the case of collaborations with (some) local socio-health units that de facto prevent the access of beneficiaries to specific services. Some improvement is needed also in the collaboration with law enforcement agencies, as will be explained.

N.A.Ve should keep developing partnerships with research institutes and universities, that can provide support in the study of trafficking in its multifaced nature, with attention to the intersections of phenomena such as sexual exploitation, begging, drug dealing, forced involvement in criminal activities and connections to Nigerian criminal organisations. More research is needed also on the outcomes of social protection programmes, looking at the long-term impacts on beneficiaries' lives, as hardly any data has been collected, let alone analysed, in this sense. We cannot stress enough the importance of adopting an ethnographic approach that has the merit to promote the full involvement of research participants throughout the research and their reflexivity, thus offering multiple occasions for knowledge sharing and building, while also ensuring the production of evidence-informed and policy-relevant findings.

At a higher national level, we also suggest some improvements could be made by N.A.Ve, as far as advocacy is concerned. N.A.Ve is placed in an ideal position to promote advocacy that could benefit the wider anti-trafficking system and the asylum system too with which it is still scarcely interconnected, but this has not been a priority of the network, although important awareness raising work has been done as far as specific target groups are concerned, such as minors who are authors and victims of crimes. Further work could be done also to promote the multi-agency approach which is a cornerstone of N.A.Ve, particularly with reference to the activities of the Outreach and the Crisis and Evaluation Units. The former has made steps forward in collaborations with Labour Inspectorates and law enforcement agencies. The latter has been building collaborations with law enforcement agencies not only to protect people victims of trafficking but also to support their collaboration in the fight against trafficking. Some good results have been obtained, but the rate of prosecutions is still low and structural obstacles need addressing.

Beyond the organisations and institutional features of N.A.Ve more generally, our analysis has focused on some specific targets that are particularly relevant to the INSigHT Action and that have become increasingly important in the most recent years. First, we have looked at people involved in Dublin procedures and/or informal readmissions to Italy. Associated multiple internal movements of vulnerable individuals call for increasing collaboration between EU Member States to ensure prompt early identification of people victims of trafficking and adequate protection. This is particularly important for unaccompanied minors, following concerns expressed by international organisations on the high estimated number of minors who have become invisible to institutions and have left reception centres, if they ever reached them in the first place. Arguably, this cannot be achieved unless a transnational referral mechanism is activated. The new EU Anti-trafficking Strategy 2021-2025 is also calling of this mechanism to be put in place. At the same time, we believe that more capacity building should be promoted targeting all anti-trafficking professionals as without basic knowledge of the reciprocal contexts, any mechanism is unlikely to be implemented effectively. The importance of a good referral mechanism leads us to recently proposed 2020 Migration Pack. Our research is timely in this sense and it suggests that European authorities should: ensure sufficient consideration for the implementation of effective referral and risk assessment mechanisms, particularly at border areas, but also revise the Dublin Regulation, particularly as far as the rights of unaccompanied minors are concerned. Not least, we strongly encourage European authorities to increase investment in resettlement schemes and to improve efforts to combat human trafficking by opening channels for regular migration rather than investing on returns. Furthermore, we stress the importance to ensure effective protection to the most vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied minors and women.

Second, we have looked at unaccompanied minors. N.A.Ve cannot deal directly with them as no specific funding is provided to anti-trafficking project to deal with this target. We argue that an effective

integrated system should be defined, including the anti-trafficking system, the asylum system and the system of the protection for unaccompanied minors, to prevent fragmentation and to ensure the implementation of a unique protection programme. Child specialists and legal guardians should be fully involved in all steps of the programme, even after the achievement of the majority age, which is still a critical moment in the lives of unaccompanied minors. To this end, the normative Italian framework envisages the continuation of the protection programme after minors turn 18, but social services are often resistant to do it, particularly if funding must come from local authorities themselves, hence awareness raising and advocacy is necessary in this context.

Third, we looked at lone mothers with children, as many Nigerian women with children have returned to Italy from northern European countries, such as Germany or Sweden. The situation of these women is extremely complex. In some cases, there are still elements of bondage to a network of exploiters. Furthermore, professionals are faced with several needs associated with motherhoods, including needs of the women themselves and their children, in a context, at least in Veneto, where very few dedicated reception facilities are available. These cases require also consideration for family unity, although it is not always evident whether partners are reliable and can grant the best interest of the child and the mother. It is situations that can be sometimes connected to forms of domestic violence too, which is why we explored this theme. From our fieldwork it emerged that very rare referrals are made by women with reference to domestic violence. Referrals are more likely to be on exploitation. Therefore, continuous collaboration between the anti-trafficking system and the anti-violence system, as it has been experimented in the last years, is likely to prove beneficial to support women in the most effective way, with due consideration for all the relevant elements of their personal stories.

## Recommendations

### *Recommendations for Italian authorities*



- ✓ To publish swiftly an updated Anti-trafficking Action Plan, which should: take into account the multiple and increasingly interlinked forms of exploitation; encourage multi-agency work, especially with law enforcement agencies; provide for the strengthening of the referral system; appoint an Ombudsperson for the rights of people victims of trafficking and exploitation;
- ✓ to commission an independent evaluation of the implementation of the first National Anti-trafficking Action Plan (2016-2018), with particular focus on the outcomes of social protection programmes and beneficiaries' inclusion;
- ✓ to establish and nominate regional Ombudspersons on trafficking, who should collaborate closely with the regional Ombudspersons for Childhood and Adolescence;
- ✓ to re-establish a national Anti-trafficking Round Table to ensure effective collaboration among stakeholders and promote increasing collaborations with "border systems", particularly as far as the most vulnerable groups are concerned (i.e. minors, lone mothers and people with severe psychological problems);
- ✓ to organise systematic training to promote the effective implementation of a multi-agency approach, at local, regional, national level to combat trafficking, involving anti-trafficking professionals, social workers, law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, asylum officials, labour inspectorates, cultural-linguistic mediators, child specialists and health care professionals;
- ✓ to organise awareness-raising activities, at national level, targeted to the wider public, but also to teachers, educational staff and child welfare professionals with the aim to mainstream the prevention of trafficking, particularly by ensuring knowledge of the referral system;
- ✓ to develop a database with updated statistics on investigations, prosecutions and adjudication of trafficking cases, to be integrated with the database managed by the National Anti-trafficking Helpline (including data on outreach contacts and beneficiaries of protection programmes);
- ✓ to provide funding to support: research on the new trends of human trafficking (i.e. internal trafficking and re-trafficking, forced engagement in criminal activities); follow-up activities with beneficiaries;
- ✓ to verify the extent to which: asylum seeker victims of trafficking have access to the asylum procedure and art. 18 of Italian Legislative Decree 286/1998 is being implemented to the full;
- ✓ to verify to what extent unaccompanied minor victims of trafficking: have access to the "prosiegua amministrativo", which grants them the continuation of the protection programme upon achievement of the age of majority and are provided support to regularise their status;
- ✓ to ensure legal guardians are provided opportunities for continued training, in order to grant effective support to unaccompanied minors;
- ✓ to continue developing and strengthening transnational co-operation with third-countries and European countries, as far as investigation and prosecution are concerned;
- ✓ to consider the introduction of measures to expand legal migration channels in order to address push factors and the vulnerability to trafficking.





### *Recommendations for European authorities*



- ✓ To continue supporting transnational cooperation with third countries but also among EU Member States, thorough initiatives such as the Mobility Partnership Framework, in line with the call for improved cooperation indicated by the new EU Strategy towards the eradication of trafficking in human beings 2021-2025;
- ✓ to further promote the EU Civil Society Platform against Trafficking in Human Beings and participation to it to favour increased collaborations across Member States, particularly on the following issues: the functioning of anti-trafficking and asylum systems as well as of referral mechanisms;  
to consider reviewing the new Migration Pact on the following issues: effective revision of the Dublin system (particularly as far as the rights of unaccompanied minors); increased investment in resettlement schemes; creation of channels for regular migration; strengthened measures at border areas to ensure effective identification and risk assessment procedures that grant the full respect of human rights;
- ✓ to provide funding: to ensure systematic capacity building on referral and multi-agency collaboration to all anti-trafficking stakeholders (law enforcement, prosecutors and judges, social workers and professionals, Cultural-linguistic mediators, etc.); to support research on the new trends on human trafficking and re-trafficking.

## *Recommendations for anti-trafficking projects*



### **Coordination and general training:**

- ✓ To continue promoting systematic awareness raising activities on human trafficking, targeted to all relevant stakeholders and the wider society, also with the involvement of diaspora associations and Nigerian churches in Italy and across Member States;
- ✓ to ensure regular supervision to all anti-trafficking professionals in order to learn from experience, to continue developing innovative strategies to address challenges and emerging issues and monitor the well-being of professionals (in a setting characterised by high emotional involvement);
- ✓ to ensure fluid and regular communication among professionals in the different phases of the social protection programmes to avoid losing sight of the individual needs of each beneficiary (i.e. by sharing the minutes of meetings and by compiling shared individual file-sheets for each beneficiary);
- ✓ to keep implementing and improving multi-agency activities, involving law enforcement agencies, labour inspectorates, the Dublin Unit, etc.;
- ✓ to monitor the evolution of the multiple forms of trafficking and their intersection, by collecting and analysing punctual data on the trajectories of beneficiaries and the impacts of social protection programmes, in collaboration with universities and research institutes.



### **Outreach activities:**

- ✓ To ensure equal access to socio-sanitary services and the provision of adequate legal information and support;
- ✓ to develop specific methodologies and outreach activities to monitor the phenomena of indoor sexual exploitation and begging and reach out to potential victims and victims of exploitation;
- ✓ to organise opportunities for training and exchange of experiences on the methodologies adopted in street outreach activities by professionals in other regions in Italy and other EU Member States;
- ✓ to continue developing and strengthening multi-agency forms of collaboration, at local but also regional and national level as far as labour exploitation, begging and other phenomena are concerned, in collaboration with law enforcement agencies, labour directorates and researchers;
- ✓ to continue monitoring the increasing phenomenon of substances abuse among people victims of sexual exploitation and to provide specific health information on the issue, as part of street outreach activities;
- ✓ to keep collaborating with law enforcement agencies, to monitor and provide feedback on the (often negative) impacts of repressive public safety mayoral orders and regulations, while also organising lobbying activities at wider national level to ensure adequate protection of victims of trafficking for the scope of sexual and labour exploitation.



### Access to assistance and referral:

- ✓ To promote reflections among stakeholders on anti-trafficking indicators to evaluate their effectiveness in identifying victims, in light of all forms of exploitation (i.e. forced engagement in criminal activities, indoor sexual exploitation, etc.) and to reinforce the mechanism of referral;
- ✓ to ensure increasing collaboration with Socio-legal professionals across all phases of the protection programmes to favour shared knowledge on procedures of regularisation;
- ✓ to continue collaborating with professionals working in asylum seeker reception facilities to ensure effective referral.



### Protection programmes:

- ✓ To promote an improved participation of beneficiaries in the design of programmes and take their aspirations into consideration;
- ✓ to ensure the collaboration of all relevant professionals in all the phases of the programmes;
- ✓ to continue involving peer-educators as they can embody a positive role-model;
- ✓ to ensure comprehensive legal information on protection and regularisation are provided to all beneficiaries who enter social protection programmes;
- ✓ to develop and strengthen collaborations with local socio-sanitary services to ensure equal access to health services, psychological support and adequate prevention as far as sexually transmitted illnesses, pregnancy, substances abuse are concerned;
- ✓ to address critical issues associated with racism and discrimination, particularly as far as access to housing and employment are concerned and develop initiatives to address these issues (i.e. collaborations with estate agencies, workers' associations and trade unions);
- ✓ to continue developing and strengthening collaborations with public employment services and local firms to ensure increasing opportunities for training and employment, particularly in face of the challenges associated with the on-going pandemic;
- ✓ to ensure beneficiaries are provided full information on the services available on the territory as to favour their autonomy.



### Follow-up:

- ✓ To continue following-up beneficiaries after completion of the social protection programme, to monitor their trajectories towards inclusion and the effectiveness of the social protection programmes, while also reaching out for support, if needed;
- ✓ to collect punctual data, in collaboration with researchers, on any obstacle and difficulty faced by beneficiaries after completion of the social protection programme, particularly as far as access to housing and employment are concerned.

### *Recommendations for researchers*



- ✓ To promote continued collaborations between academic and research institutes and anti-trafficking projects and to promote the work towards greater involvement of law enforcement agencies in research, to ensure research work is policy-relevant and in line with emerging trends;
- ✓ to develop collaborations with street outreach units to carry out effective monitoring activities aimed to improve knowledge of evolving phenomena, to improve approaches to assistance, based on targets' specific needs;
- ✓ to carry out qualitative multi-sited transnational research on trafficking, also by means of innovative and experimental methodologies, and with a feminist and intersectional approach, to study under-explored topics, such as begging, labour exploitation, forced involvement in criminal activities, indoor sexual exploitation and the potential interlinking of these phenomena, including also connections to Nigerian criminal organisations more widely, but also the role of diaspora associations and Nigerian churches in the fight against trafficking;
- ✓ to multiply occasions for research dissemination involving not only researchers but also anti-trafficking stakeholders in order to share insights on on-going research activities and to favour collaborations and self-reflexivity among professionals and researchers.

## Introduction and academic background of the study

Anti-trafficking interventions in Italy have been implemented for more than two decades now, in order to address on-going migration movements associated with human trafficking. This e-book focuses on the social protection programmes, as they are called in Italy, implemented by N.A.Ve, the Veneto Region Anti-trafficking Network, in northern Italy, that is considered as a good practice nation-wide (see for example Save the Children, 2019). Our main goal is to explore its strengths and weakness, as well as pending critical issues, in face of the constantly evolving dynamics of trafficking.

The network was formally established in 2016, but earlier anti-trafficking interventions had been implemented since the late 1990s and considerable experience has been accumulated in this policy field. With a view on its evolution, we aim to trace a short overview of its history and to examine to what extent and how the project has been capable of addressing the needs of people victims of trafficking, in particular Nigerian women and girls who have been sexually exploited - although some references will also be made to men and people of other nationalities.

In line with the objectives of the INSigHT Action, the focus on Nigerian women and girls is based on two main reasons: on the one hand, this target has been particularly relevant, in qualitative terms, over the last 5 years, since a peak of arrivals in 2015; on the other it has proved particularly challenging, as will be explained.

By providing insights on N.A.Ve and its functioning, this e-book provides also material to explore the most recent trends that have characterised the phenomenon of trafficking Italy and the challenges faced by anti-trafficking professionals in Italy, with reference to different target groups, including increasing numbers of lone mothers with children, women but also men victims of both sexual and labour exploitation and unaccompanied minors.

The e-book is structured as follows. Following an overview of the relevant academic debates on which this e-book builds and to which it intends to contribute, we will introduce the research design and the difficulties encountered throughout the research, associated in particular with the spreading of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been a challenging time to carry out research, but it has provided also an invaluable opportunity to look at anti-trafficking systems in a critical way. As many observers have stressed, the pandemic has made the needs and vulnerabilities of the most marginalised groups more evident as well as the failure of policies to address them.

The second section will provide some quantitative data regarding migration movements from Nigeria to Europe, in the past decade, with a specific focus on movements associated with trafficking. The third section will present a critical overview of the anti-trafficking legislation, from the international down to the Italian level. The fourth section will describe N.A.Ve and explain how it has consolidated into a regional network starting from the experience accumulated by the Municipality of Venice with street prostitution. Section five will dive into the N.A.Ve Network and report the findings of our fieldwork, over a period of 21 months, from April 2019 to December 2020. Our goal is that of explaining the complex organisational structure of N.A.Ve and to put to value the unbounded dedication of many professionals towards the constant improvement of anti-trafficking interventions. As will be explained, their efforts have contributed to the strengthening and consolidation of N.A.Ve as a system and network. We will also look at the critical issues that are still open for improvement, including structural issues, such as unequal access to health services, but also the difficulty of professionals to deal with beneficiaries' specific needs, to put their migration project at the centre of interventions and to involve them as active actors of their social protection programmes.



In section six we will reflect on N.A.Ve, and more generally on the anti-trafficking system in Italy, through the lens of specific transversal themes that emerged during our fieldwork. We will look at the needs of: lone mothers with children, people involved in “Dublin procedures” and secondary movements, women and girls victims of trafficking and gender-based violence, unaccompanied minors. Some final remarks will conclude this e-book.

### *The literature on social work with people of migrant origins*

Various reports have been produced on anti-trafficking systems in EU countries. Most of them have described the respective normative frameworks, sometimes in comparative perspective. Little empirical evidence is available on how these systems work, what kind of services they provide (i.e. accommodation, training, employment, health support, etc.), how their specific goals are implemented in practice. This publication aims to contribute to filling this gap, by exploring the N.A.Ve system in northern Italy. Specifically, we aim to analyse its governance approach and its organisational and institutional cultures.

Over the past decades, these themes have been taken up by scholars with a general focus on social work with people of migrant origins (Shier et al., 2011; Williams and Graham, 2014; Cox and Geisen; 2014). More recently, some contributions have thrown light on the specific features of social work with migrants in the Italian context (see for example Barberis and Boccagni, 2014).

As the authors explain, there is no standard approach in the country. Approaches vary across regions ranging from the provision of mainstream services to that of specialist ones targeted to migrants. Professional guidelines can rarely be found for specific professionals, such as cultural-linguistic mediators, who have been increasingly involved in social services. The risk has emerged for social workers to fall into the trap of excessive “culturalization” of “cases” in the effort to deal with the increasing complexity of their work (van der Haar, 2009; Eliassi, 2013). Furthermore, social workers have paid more attention to the technical dimension of their role, while leaving aside the most political aspects (Humpries, 2004; Fargion, 2008).

This publication takes inspiration from the studies mentioned above, but is grounded in the wider theoretical perspective of superdiversity, that addressed the increasing diversity of service users and the deriving challenges for social work (Hugman, 1996; Geldof, 2016). It also builds on a second academic strand, that of migration studies and particularly the literature on the local governance of migration (see for example Caponio and Borkert, 2010; Marzorati et al., 2017). It describes local policy interventions as pragmatically focused on addressing the needs of actual and potential service users (Jørgensen, 2012; Ambrosini and Boccagni, 2015), sometimes in line with, sometimes in contrast to national migration policies. Since 2011, with the increase of asylum seeker arrivals, local governments have struggled to handle the challenges associated with reception: some have refused to comply with state restrictions and have opened services to migrants, including also migrants with irregular legal status (Davis et al., 2016; Ambrosini, 2018); others have implemented interventions that reinforced exclusionary national policies (Gilbert 2009; Ambrosini and Campomori 2020).

While the inclusionary or exclusionary character of local policymaking can depend on government agencies’ political orientation, it is also linked to professional norms and discretionary power (Lipsky, 2010; for Italy see also Marzorati et al., 2017). Decisions by administrative and social workers are certainly influenced by factors internal to their institutions, but also by external pressures exercised by non-institutional actors and advocacy groups. In fact, the field of migration governance has been characterised by a multiplicity of public and private actors at local, regional, national and supra-national

levels, in the backdrop of a very contentious global migration regime. Third sector actors have become increasingly relevant, in all phases of the policymaking process (Campomori, 2008; De Graauw, 2015; Paris and Müller, 2016) and have delivered various forms of services to migrants. In turn, service outsourcing has become a widespread phenomenon in the Italian context (Semprebon, 2021; Ambrosini and Campomori 2020), not only in the migration field but in the wider context of welfare policy.

The scenario we have just sketched out suggest the relevance of structural institutional variables (political orientation, inclusionary versus exclusionary forms of governance, multiplicity of actors at different territorial levels, discretion) in understanding migration governance. In this publication we will also address individual variables, associated with service users and beneficiaries, such as their migratory background and experience, cultural and linguistic issues, forms of vulnerability and legal status to try and understand to what extent they have also influenced social services related interventions.

### *The literature on social work and anti-trafficking interventions*

Okech et al. (2017) presented an overview of the social work literature that dealt with anti-trafficking interventions, in the period 2000-2017, noting that almost half of the articles were published in the most recent years, between 2012 and 2015. Most of the articles were written by authors affiliated with institutions of the United States, almost a quarter by authors affiliated with institutions outside the United States. While more than half of the articles were theoretical (62%), a bit more than a third provided empirical evidence (38%) but only 19% of these described interventions, pointing to a gap in the literature.

Those that described interventions highlighted a common feature, that is to say the tendency to activate forms of interagency collaboration, both at local and international level. Among the critical issues reported, the need was expressed to implement existing policies in a way that ensure the punishment of offenders, while granting the protection of victims; to extend psychosocial counselling services for victims who have been traumatized; and to provide long-term support services.

Based on the overview and on pending weaknesses of interventions, the authors suggested that research should continue along three main axes: (a) more detailed studies with evidence on prevalence and incidence of different forms of trafficking; (b) studies on the efficacy of policies and programs designed to reduce trafficking; and in line with the objective of this publication (c) studies that describe and evaluate projects in national and international arenas to highlight the implications and possibly the effects of anti-trafficking policies on the welfare of their target groups. While we will look at N.A.Ve and the implications of its social protection programme on beneficiaries, it was not possible to evaluate the longer term effects, nor the final outcome of the programme, as this would require a longitudinal analysis.

### *The literature on anti-trafficking interventions in Italy*

Social protection programmes in Italy are relatively recent. The first dedicated funding dates back to 2000, but it was only in 2016 that provision was made for projects that integrated social protection and first assistance programmes, as will be explained later.

Apart from a recent growing number of undergraduate theses focusing on specific projects in specific territorial contexts, some reports have been produced, since the second half of the year 2000, that describe the functioning of the anti-trafficking system in Italy (Palazzi, 2006; Prina, 2007), including also

comparative work (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2012). In the last decade, some evidence has been provided also on the organisational models of anti-trafficking projects in specific regions: Campania (Bonavolontà et al., 2017), Emilia-Romagna (Braglia, 2016), Liguria (Abbatecola and Popolla, 2019). To our knowledge, only a comprehensive overview is available of anti-trafficking interventions in Italy. It draws from the research carried out in 2011, by Caritas, CNCA, Gruppo Abele and On the Road (Castelli, 2014) on which we will focus next.

With reference to the 2012 funding stream by the Italian Department of Equal Opportunities, dedicated to anti-trafficking projects, the research identified 20 projects implementing art. 13 programmes of first assistance and 25 projects implementing art. 18 programmes of social protection, while also highlighting the continuity of the actors involved in interventions and of the funding provided, over the period 2007-2012. In spite of the continuity of funding, almost half of the actors declared they were engaged in further fundraising, at regional and EU level (Daphne and Prevention of and fight against crime funding streams).

All projects were based on strong public-private partnerships, with a growing role of public entities, particularly regional authorities, which more and more assumed their leadership. The growth of partnerships can certainly be associated with an approach that is typical of social work and that involves interagency collaboration. It has also been promoted by Italian Law 328/2000<sup>5</sup> which specifically addressed the need for integrated services. It can be argued that the anti-trafficking arena further contributed to its development, as will become clear throughout this e-book.

The projects offered the following services: reception (70%), drop-in centres (more than 50%), increasing attention on employment inclusion (more than 50%), as well as other services such as indoor and outdoor outreach activities, first assistance associated with dedicated helplines, Italian language courses (6.4%), accompaniment to health consultation and check-ups (5.1%), psychological support (3.8%), cultural-linguistic mediation (1.9%), legal assistance (1.3%), awareness raising with the wider community.

The main implementing agencies were associations and social cooperatives, but some projects were run also by faith-based catholic actors. Their main declared objective was that of supporting beneficiaries to break free of exploitation and achieve a good level of autonomy. Over 70 organisational models were identified to address this objective, pointing to considerable variability. The main model (9% of the sample) included outreach and drop-in activities and reception. As far as the 5 most common models are concerned, only 1 had outreach activities, only 2 operated a drop-in centre and/or a labour inclusion unit, while 4 had at least a reception facility, suggesting that strong emphasis was put on reception, while little connection was ensured with outreach activities.

According to the acute analysis by Donadel (2014), four were the macro-areas that required attention for the overall improvement of the anti-trafficking system:

- a) scarce political attention on the phenomenon of trafficking and absence of a national anti-trafficking plan – and of a dedicated observatory collecting both data on social protection programmes and investigations, while also undertaking independent research on the wider phenomenon of trafficking;
- b) absence of a centralised coordination system including also the implementation of the national referral mechanism and the collaboration with the asylum system and other relevant actors, in

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<sup>5</sup> Legge 8 novembre 2000, n. 238 “Legge Quadro per la realizzazione del sistema integrato di interventi e servizi sociali” (Law 8 November 2000, 238 “Law for the implementation of an integrated system of interventions and social services). Available at: <https://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/00328l.htm> Last access: 04/07/2021.

particular law enforcement agencies (both regarding the regularisation of beneficiaries and their engagement in investigations);

- c) fragmented implementation of the social protection programmes, associated with insufficient operational capacity to construct individualised programmes especially for specific targets (i.e. mothers with children) and difficulty in achieving beneficiaries' autonomy;
- d) uncertainty in funding and limited (annual) length of programmes that would rather require a three-year lifespan.

### *The literature on asylum seeker and refugee reception*

A third strand of the academic debate from which our work draws regards asylum seeker reception. In the early 1990s, asylum was increasingly problematized as an alternative form for economic immigration to Europe (Huysmans, 2000), as people arrived from the Balkans to seek asylum. Later in 2011 and 2015, with the growth of asylum seeker arrivals, EU Member States started talking about a "refugee" and a "humanitarian" crisis, which emerged in fact as a "migration reception crisis" (Rosenberger and Mueller, 2020). In many parts of Europe, local authorities showed concern over their difficulty to deal with an increasing number of asylum seekers. Some made efforts to offer welfare services to migrants, others openly rejected the request by central government to provide reception services (Glorius and Doomernik, 2020; Campomori and Ambrosini, 2020).

As far as the Italian context is concerned, at the beginning of the new millennium, some scholars had already started sharing reflections on the reception system and advancing some criticism on asylum seeker and refugee reception conditions (Van Aken, 2005; Sorgoni, 2013; Pinelli, 2015). Although the Reception Directive specifies that minimum standards must be granted, no precise indication is given to detail these standards and considerable fragmentation has derived in implementation, particularly with the multiplication of actors involved in reception (Darling, 2016; Semprebon, 2021). Many reports have described standards as very low, if not against basic human rights. The often protracted permanence of asylum seekers and refugees in reception centres, frequently connected to lengthy asylum procedures, has been impacting even more negatively on their conditions. They have been de facto thrown into a state of "permanent temporariness" (Vosko et al., 2014) which prevents them from projecting themselves into the future and holds them back in an endless waiting time (Pinelli, 2011).

Apart from criticising the actual standards of services, some scholars have looked at the dynamics between reception beneficiaries and professionals. They have argued that professionals' approaches tend to fluctuate in a tension between assistance and control (Szczepanikova, 2013; Pinelli, 2017), with attitudes that sometimes risk infantilizing beneficiaries (Malkki, 1995). Their autonomy has been conceived on the one side as a programme goal and on the other as a sort of natural fact strictly dependent on each person's own engagement. Little consideration has been given to how structural issues and politics influence asylum seekers' and refugees' trajectories (see Türken et al., 2016), as if the surrounding environment was neutral. Professionals have overconcentrated on individuals' responsibility while paying less attention - although acknowledging it - to the traumas suffered by many beneficiaries (with specific reference to Nigerian women victims of trafficking see for example Taliani, 2019) and the endless frustrations experienced during the reception period. Frustration has repeatedly been interpreted as "juvenile intemperance" (Zavaroni et al., 2021: 10).

Similar approaches and attitudes are coherent with a humanitarian regime characterised by an ethic of compassion (Fassin, 2005; Ong, 2005) that "labels" (Zetter, 1991) vulnerable people as victims who deserve help (Harrell-Bond, 1986; Malkki, 1995; Agier 2010). Paradoxically, in this scenario, whereby

many professionals have been genuinely motivated by the will to support beneficiaries, the very need of those concerned have been overlooked. This has become particularly evident with reference to the most vulnerable individuals, such as children (i.e. Humpris and Sigona, 2017) and young women (Taliani, 2019). As a result, the violence experience by many during their migratory journeys has become inseparable from the structural violence, suffered within social protection programmes that are aimed to protect them, in an experiential continuum (Scheper-Huges, Burgois, 2004; Freedman, 2015).



# Section 1

## About the e-book

This publication is part of the INSigHT Action that is aimed at building the capacity of stakeholders to deal with human trafficking and secondary routes in Nigeria, Italy and Sweden, with specific attention to women and girls engaged in prostitutions and young men involved in street begging<sup>6</sup>.

As anticipated, the aim of this specific e-book is to explore the functioning of N.A.Ve, that has been operated in the north-eastern part of Italy since 2016. Specific attention will be paid to how the system deals with the specific needs of Nigerian women and girls and the continuous challenging posed by the constantly evolving phenomenon of trafficking.

In particular, this publication addresses the following questions:

- how has the phenomenon of trafficking been changing, particularly over the last 5 years, as far as Italy is concerned and the specific target of Nigerian women and girls?
- What are the new challenges posed by the phenomenon and its constantly changing dynamics?
- How has N.A.Ve been addressing these challenges?
- What are the strengths and the weaknesses of N.A.Ve, with specific reference to the protection of Nigerian women and girls?
- What lessons have been learnt and what are the challenges open for improvement for N.A.Ve and other anti-trafficking projects in Italy and Europe?

## Methodology

In our research we explored N.A.Ve, through a micro-sociological and institutional perspective, by observing institutions “up” but also “across”, through the eyes of the N.A.Ve professionals (Gazi and Maoz-Shai, 2010). In doing this, we tried to observe also their relationships and dynamics with the N.A.Ve beneficiaries and the relevant processes of border construction (Baumann, 1996), as well as associated power dynamics. An intersection approach (Bilge and Collins, 2016), has further encouraged us to explore the experience of the N.A.Ve beneficiaries in their multi-layered dimensions, including gender, age, nationality, type of exploitation (not only sexual, although it is the main focus of this publication, but also labour exploitation, begging and forced involvement in criminal activities).

We have paid particular attention to avoid any form of re-victimisation and “labelling” (Zetter, 1991) not only throughout the research but also when writing the findings. This has meant, first of all, reconsidering the terms to be used in the study to refer to people. Unless otherwise specified, the terms young people, men, women, girls will be preferred to the terms men/women/unaccompanied minors victims of trafficking. Furthermore, the terms victims and survivors<sup>7</sup> will be used interchangeably to stress the *agency* that always characterises the trajectory of each individual irrespectively of any form of violence, abuse and exploitation they may have suffered from. We are doing this also to acknowledge that the many categories associated with people who were victims of

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<sup>6</sup> For further information see the dedicated website: <https://www.insightproject.net/> Last access: 20/12/2020.

<sup>7</sup> The term survivor has been more and more used by NGOs in Nigeria, as well as in other countries, while it is not being used in Italy very much to date.

trafficking (i.e. asylum seekers, refugees, holders of international protection, but also the term victim of trafficking itself) are not neutral categories and have been produced by a global migration regime aimed at regulating and controlling migration flows.

### *Data collection and analysis*

This publication was compiled by drawing from qualitative and quantitative data collected from April 2019 to December 2020. Quantitative data draw mostly from EU reports, statistics by the Italian Ministry of Interior and statistics elaborated by N.A.Ve, the National Anti-trafficking Helpline and ASGI. Qualitative data has been collected in over a year of intense ethnographic research that concluded with the conduction of semi-structured interviews carried out by three researchers of the INSigHT Research Team: Michela Sempredon, Serena Caroselli and Serena Scarabello, respectively in the territory of Verona, Padova and Venice.

Ethnographic research consisted in participant observation of N.A.Ve activities and meetings, from June 2019 to October 2020, for a total of more than 300 sessions of 3 to 6 hours. Observation has been done in particular through attendance to: regional coordination meetings, interviews and monitoring meetings with beneficiaries, meetings with partners of N.A.Ve and relevant stakeholders, national meetings attended by the N.A.Ve professionals. From March to September 2020, most of the observation was done on the zoom platform, as meetings could only be organised online, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A two-day focus group with Cultural-linguistic mediators was also conducted in September 2020, at Luav University in Venice, with a total of 13 participants, including 4 researchers of the INSigHT Research Team (one of whom, Gianfranco Bonesso, has been collaborating as a volunteer to the team). Furthermore, multiple sessions (of up to 4 people), were organised with the Coordinator of N.A.Ve and other N.A.Ve professionals, in February, May, September 2020, with the aim to report in-progress research findings. These sessions have been important to share thoughts, to contribute to brainstorming on future project planning and prospective funding applications, while also favouring self-reflexivity both for the Research Team and for research participants, while collecting doubts and questions. They have been an integral part of the ethnographic process (see for example Mosse, 2006). These sessions and the continuous proximity with N.A.Ve professionals have also arguably contributed to trigger a process of “resonance” (see for example Wikan, 1992) in which professionals could share their thought and perceptions (and frustrations) and have an empathic space for discussion.

Interviews were carried out in Italian, with the N.A.Ve professionals and partners (see tables in appendices), for a total of 41 interviews (some in multiple sessions, in the period June - October 2020 in the specific local teams of Venice, Padova and Verona, as these are the territories with the strongest experience in the anti-trafficking field, as anti-trafficking interventions in the region were first implemented here. Interviews were carried out also with N.A.Ve beneficiaries, including young women and girls of Nigerian origins, for a total of 16. These were carried out in Italian or English, as preferred by the interviewee. This material will be the focus of a dedicated publication.

The sampling of the interviewees followed these criteria: all N.A.Ve professionals operating in Verona, Padova and Venice, with the exception of Reception facility professionals who were selected based on their longer term experience; relevant partners, such as representatives of Anti-violence Centres and law enforcement agencies.

Exception made for interviews with beneficiaries, all interviews were recorded and transcribed with the software Express Scribe. The analysis was done through manual coding, with categories focusing on the phases and activities of the N.A.Ve social protection programme and the roles of the N.A.Ve

professionals. All interviewees were asked to sign a consent module before participating to the interview.

It should be specified that, at the time of the research, one of the researchers, Michela Semprebon, was the legal guardian of one of the Nigerian girl who joined the N.A.Ve social protection programme and attended some N.A.Ve activities, sometimes in her presence, in the double capacity as guardian and researcher.

### *Difficulties of access to data and the fieldwork*

Access to participant observation was negotiated since we started preparing the funding application which led to the funding of the INSigHT Action. Access was constantly re-negotiated throughout the research, as deemed adequate, particularly whereby it concerned participation to meetings involving beneficiaries. Some difficulties of access were experienced with reference to quantitative data, because little disaggregated data is collected by N.A.Ve and direct access to the available databases could not be authorised because of ethical and privacy concerns. Interviews with law enforcement agencies were challenging because of the lengthy bureaucratic procedures involved in obtaining authorisation. Additionally, some challenges were experienced in carrying out both the ethnographic fieldwork and the interviews because of the on-going pandemic, particularly during the lockdown period, in the period March-May 2020. They required the re-organisation of the work online, that was made easier by the consolidated collaboration with N.A.Ve that had been built by then. The lockdown and the pandemic were even more challenging for the Research Team given the constant necessity to re-negotiate and reconcile work-family care duties.

## Section 2

### Migration movements and human trafficking from Nigeria to Europe: an overview of the period 2012-2016

#### *Nigeria as a prominent country of origin*

Trafficking from and to Europe has involved both EU and third countries. This publication focuses specifically on trafficking from Nigeria to Europe, that has been on-going since the late 90s and has increased in the second decade of 2000.

The 2018 Risk Analysis Report by Frontex suggested that after uninterrupted movements, a peak was recorded in the number of arrivals of Nigerian women to Italy and Spain, in the period 2015-2017. The EU Agency called for urgent attention on the phenomenon.

According to the EU Data Collection Report on Human Trafficking (2018), **in the period 2015-2016, Nigeria was the top non-EU country of citizenship of the people registered as victims of trafficking in the EU**, accounting for a total of 2,084 individuals. It was followed by Albania, Vietnam, China and Eritrea (see table 1). This data confirmed the trends highlighted by Eurostat in the period 2010-2012, although Nigeria was then followed by Brazil (rather than Albania) and the subsequent positions were occupied by China, Vietnam and Russia.

Furthermore, **in 2019, Nigeria - alongside Niger, Chad, and Cameroon - was the main country of departure and intended destination** for individuals passing through the Flow Monitoring Points established by IOM (see table 2).

#### *Transit and destination countries*

According to estimates, **in 2016, 602,000 Nigerians left their country and crossed the Sahara to migrate to Europe** (PJI, 2019). **27,000 died *en route*. As of December 2017, 36,512 migrants were stranded in Niger and Libya** (IOM, 2019). The majority of people in this group were from Edo state. They started their journey in Benin City to then reach Kano where they were smuggled to Niger and Libya.

**2018 EC data** (see table 3) indicated that **nearly half (1,012 out of 2,084) of the Nigerian citizens victims of trafficking who arrived in the EU were registered in Italy**; and nearly one quarter (500 out of 2,084) in the United Kingdom. However, in the same year, the number of migrants arriving to Italy, either by sea or land, decreased, amounting to -5% with respect to the previous year and Nigerians were no longer in the top five list of non-EU citizens. What needs stressing is that **the number of people who start a journey from Nigeria to reach Europe remains largely unknown**. Data is partial and unreliable and it is questionable whether migration from Nigeria to Europe is actually decreasing and or rather undergoing changing dynamics and routes. Not to be underestimated is also the fact that the EC Report does not include any data relating to transfer and movements internal to Europe.

2015		2016	
Citizenship of registered victims	Number of	Citizenship of registered victims	Number of
Nigeria	842	Nigeria	1242
Albania	648	Albania	749
Viet Nam	537	Viet Nam	562
China	202	China	537
Eritrea	158	Afghanistan	134
India	123	Eritrea	129
Morocco	99	India	126
Philippines	89	Pakistan	126
Sudan	84	Morocco	119
*	79	Philippines	118
Total (Top 10)	2861	Total (Top 10)	3842
Others (Non- EU, outside top 10)	1543	Others (Non- EU, outside top 10)	2126
Sconosciuta/ Unknown	249	Sconosciuta/ Unknown	256
Total Non-EU	4404	Total Non-EU	5968

TABLE 1: TOP NON-EU CITIZENSHIP OF REGISTERED VICTIMS (SOURCE: EC, 2018: 90)

Paese di origine/ Country of origin	%	Variazione/Variation
Nigeria	63	+2
Niger	36	-2
Chad	1	-
Cameroon	<1	-

TABLE 2: TOP NON-EU CITIZENSHIP OF REGISTERED VICTIMS (SOURCE: IOM NIGERIA, 2019: 1)

Reporting Member States	Number of Nigerian Registered Victims	Female							Male						
		Total	0 to 11	12 to 17	Children	18 to 24	25 +	Adults	Total	0 to 11	12 to 17	Children	18 to 24	25 +	Adults
EU 28	2084	1483	0	30	161	174	193	1272	66	0	3	3	12	22	63
Belgium	34	33	0	6	6	20	7	27	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Denmark	134	131	0	4	4	52	75	127	3	0	1	1	0	2	2
Germany	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ireland	23	23	0	2	2	7	14	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Greece	19	19	0	0	0	0	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spain	54	54	0	2	2	28	24	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Italy	1012	965	0	0	130	0	0	855	27	0	0	0	0	0	27
Luxembourg	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Netherlands	90	61	0	6	6	11	44	55	29	0	2	2	7	20	27
Austria	50	49	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Portugal	15	12	0	0	0	0	10	11	3	0	0	0	3	0	3
Finland	33	31	0	0	1	0	0	30	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
UK	500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

TABLE 3: REGISTERED VICTIMS OF NIGERIAN CITIZENSHIP BY AGE AND GENDER (2015-2016) (SOURCE: EC, 2018: 96)<sup>8</sup>

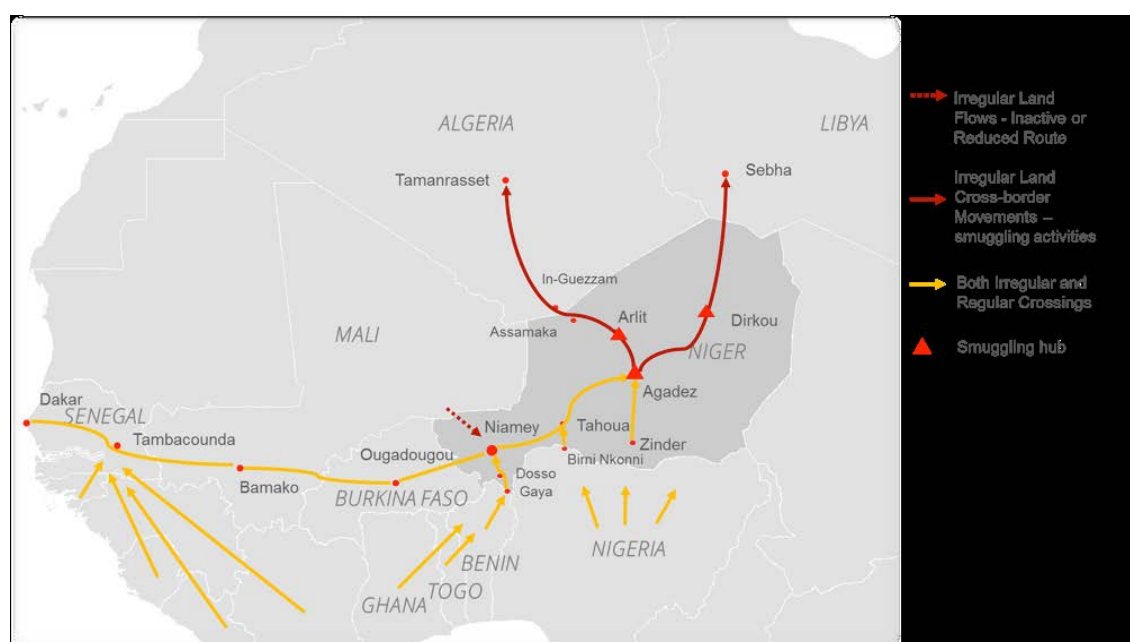
<sup>8</sup> For the EU states not in this table data were either not available or 0. Sums do match numbers as some member states (EG Italy) do not have age categorization.

IOM (2017) suggested that **transport through transit countries and by sea to destination countries (mainly Italy, Spain, France and Germany, but also Sweden, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands and Switzerland) should be much more under scrutiny.** In line with this consideration, the 2<sup>nd</sup> EU Report on the Progress made in the fight against trafficking (2018) highlighted that internal trafficking, within the territory of Member States, is on the rise. This clearly points to the need of addressing the phenomenon of trafficking in its transnational dimension, but also in view of evolving international and internal European trafficking routes.

### *Smuggling and other forms of trafficking*

People leaving Nigeria may start their journey as migrants (either internal or international migrants). Forms of smuggling and/or trafficking may apply to later stages of migrants' journey to Europe, not necessarily the actual phase of departure from Nigeria. **Smuggling operates along two main lines: flight transportation to Europe, Turkey or the Gulf; or land smuggling through Niger and Libya and eventually Europe** (IOM Nigeria, 2015) (see map 1). When arriving by plane to Istanbul, Moscow or areas close to Eastern European borders, smuggled migrants try to enter Europe via land, sea or air (Smits, 2001; Okojie et al., 2003; Prina, 2003).

Nigerian migrants mostly rely on smugglers when trying to reach/cross Libya or Algeria, or to organise air travels with fraudulent documents (Molenaar and Kamouni-Janssen, 2017; Huddleston et al., 2015). **Between 2010 and 2015, Nigeria was among the top six nationalities for refusals of entry at EU air borders.** The country was also among the top 10 nationalities for persons trying to enter Europe with fraudulent documents. **The main airports of embarkation indicated by Frontex (2018), with reference to irregular entries at EU air borders, included Lagos in the top six.** Furthermore, in 2016, about 37,000 Nigerian migrants reached Europe by sea, representing 20% of the total flows from the central Mediterranean route (Frontex, 2017).



MAP 1: NIGER-LIBYA ROUTE SOURCE: IOM NIGERIA (2015) IRREGULAR MIGRATION BETWEEN WEST AFRICA, NORTH AFRICA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN. PREPARED BY ALTAI CONSULTING. ABUJA. AVAILABLE AT: <https://bit.ly/2mz4HG5>

### *People trafficked for sexual exploitation: gender and age profiles*

In 2018, around 74% of the people registered as victims of trafficking in Europe were of Nigerian nationality and were trafficked for sexual exploitation, while less than one in twenty (4%) were trafficked for labour exploitation and nearly one quarter (23%) for other forms of exploitation (EC, 2018) (see table 4).

People registered as victims of trafficking in the EU, in the period 2015-2017, included overwhelmingly females trapped in trafficking for sexual exploitation (68%), although the phenomenon included also males. Children represented 23% of the registered victims (EC 2018). NAPTIP Factsheet (2018) indicated that 15 was the average age of trafficked children in Nigeria. This data clearly stresses the importance of an improved focus on the most vulnerable individuals subjected to trafficking, including first and foremost children and young people (Healy, 2019).

The sexual exploitation of women and girls, particularly of Nigerian origins, is prominent also in internal trafficking in western and northern Africa. Child trafficking affects also young boys, often in association with exploitation in agricultural or in-house domestic work (IOM Nigeria, 2015). Although this plague is as severe (or even more severe) than transnational trafficking, it is still largely unexplored.

Reporting Member States	Number of Nigerian Registered Victims	Form of exploitation			Percentage of victims		
		Sexual	Labour	Other	%Sexual	%Labour	%Other
EU 28	1923	1360	67	420	73.6	3.6	22.7
Belgium	34	33	1	0	97.1	2.9	0.0
Denmark	134	131	2	0	98.5	1.5	0.0
Germany	35	35	0	0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Ireland	23	18	4	1	78.3	17.4	4.3
Greece	19	18	0	0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Spain	54	54	0	0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Italy	1012	753	4	255	74.4	0.4	25.2
Luxembourg	1	1	0	0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Netherlands	96	81	2	6	91.0	2.2	6.7
Portugal	15	12	3	0	80.0	20.0	0.0
United Kingdom	500	224	51	158	51.7	11.8	36.5
Not including UK	1423	1136	16	262	80.3	1.1	18.5

TABLE 4: NIGERIAN VICTIMS BY FORM OF EXPLOITATION SHOWING PERCENTAGES FOR EACH REPORTING MEMBER STATE (SOURCE: EC, 2018: 97)<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For the EU states not in this table, data were either not available or 0.

## Recent trends in migration and trafficking from Nigeria to Europe and Italy

The 2020 EC Report shows that trafficking in human beings has not weakened, on the contrary. It has evolved, with changing and more complex interconnected forms of exploitation.

### *Main countries of destination and origin countries*

With reference to EU-27 Member States, in the period 2017-2018, 14,145 people were registered as victims of trafficking. Italy was the second country with the largest number of registered victims, after France, followed by the Netherlands, Germany and Romania.

Concerning, the country of origin, 49% were EU nationals and one third (34%) were registered in their own EU Member State. As in the period 2015-2016, the main country of citizenship of non-EU victims was Nigeria (3,112), followed by Albania (1,814), Vietnam (1,535), China (1,064) (table 5). However, the total number of victims has decreased. As far as Nigeria is concerned, they amount to one third less (2,094 in 2015-2016).

Rank	2017		2018		2017-2018	
	Citizenship	N	Citizenship	N	Citizenship	N
1	Nigeria	1 574	Nigeria	1 538	Nigeria	3 112
2	Albania	831	Albania	983	Albania	1 814
3	Vietnam	786	Vietnam	749	Vietnam	1 535
4	China	466	China	598	China	1 064
5	Sudan	240	Sudan	363	Sudan	603
6	India	199	Eritrea	335	Eritrea	532
7	Eritrea	197	India	294	India	493
8	Ukraine	139	Pakistan	175	Ukraine	301
9	Iraq	123	Ukraine	162	Pakistan	298
10	Pakistan	123	Philippines	159	Philippines	267
Total (Top 10)		4 678	Top 10 NEU	5 356	Top 10 NEU	10 019
Non-EU outside top 10		10 216	Non-EU outside top 10	10 160	Non-EU outside top 10	10 160
Unknown citizenship		488	Unknown citizenship	488	Unknown citizenship	488
Total Non-EU		7 273	Total Non-EU	8 070	Total Non-EU	15 343

TABLE 5: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU BY NON-EU CITIZENSHIP (TOP 10) (SOURCE: EC, 2020: 27)

### *Evolutions in air and land routes*

Previous hints of variations on migratory routes have been confirmed. While in the period 2012 - 2017, Libya was the main hub for smugglers to transport sub-Saharan migrants across the Mediterranean Sea to Italy, dynamics changed in 2018. As reported by Frontex (2020), the Libyan Coast Guard increased its patrolling activities in the Mediterranean Sea and the Italian authorities further modified SARs policy, thus making sea crossings more difficult and expensive. This pushed migrants towards alternative routes, including Algeria and Morocco, via Mali and Mauritania and then Spain to boat.

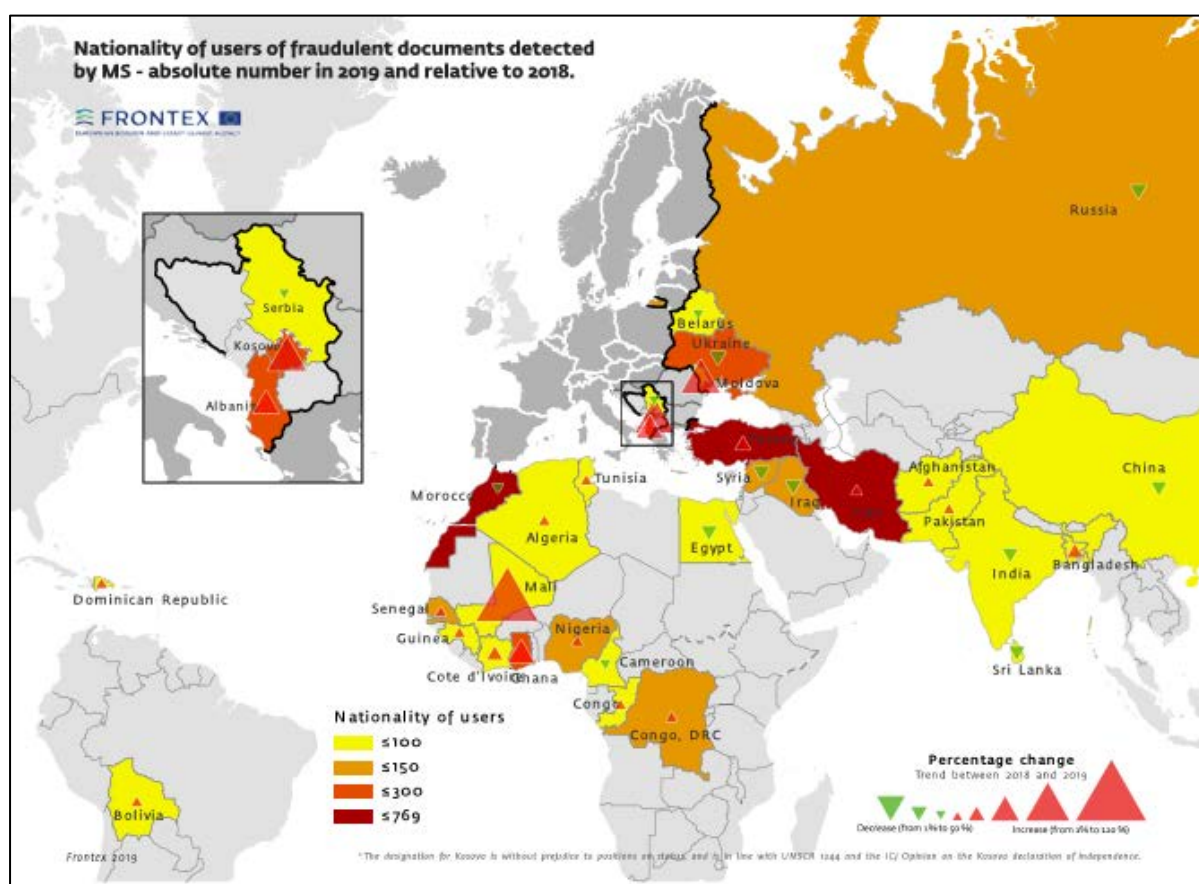
Confirming trends in previous years, Frontex (2020) reports that most detections of fraudulent documents, in 2019, were reported on air routes. Italian airports were the most affected by this



increase. A large majority of detected fraudulent document users were identified in Italy upon arrival from Casablanca - the top departure airport for detections, with an increase by 114% compared to 2018. **Detected fraudulent document users were mostly from sub-Saharan countries, including also Nigeria** (map 1). Many Italian airports recorded a noticeable increase in the number of attempts to travel within the EU/Schengen area using fraudulent documents. **Italian documents continue to be the main documents used by fraudulent document users on internal EU movements.**

Regarding people arriving by air, in 2019, 11 people of Nigerian nationality were pushed back upon arrival at Rome Fiumicino and 1 at the Venice airport<sup>10</sup>.

**Fewer detections of illegal border crossings have been reported. At the same time, a considerable rise in internal movements has been registered inside the EU/Schengen area,** as evidenced by - undetailed - discoveries of such movements (38% more compared to 2018). These movements will clearly remain a crucial area of attention (Frontex, 2020).



MAP 1: NATIONALITY OF USERS OF FRAUDULENT DOCUMENTS DETECTED BY MEMBER STATES – ABSOLUTE NUMBER IN 2019 AND RELATIVE TO 2018 (SOURCE: FRONTEXT, 2020: 29)

In 2017, 23,543 passive rejections were carried out at northern Italian borders, including 648 Nigerians with a regular residence permit in Italy. 27 passive readmissions were operated in the Veneto Region area (from Venice to Treviso). In the territory of Bolzano, 1,484 passive readmissions were proposed at

<sup>10</sup> Data shared by ASGI (Associazione Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione), following a direct inquiry to airport authorities.

the five borders with Austria (including the Brenner Pass, Malles Venosta, Prato alla Drava, San Candido, Forcella di Fleres), of which 555 were accepted<sup>11</sup>.

Regarding arrivals on Southern Italian shores, a total of 181,436 people was recorded in 2016, decreasing to 119,369 in 2017, to rise again to 34,134 in 2020. Concerning nationality, the Nigerian nationality figured as the first in 2017, with a total of 18,153 people; in 2018 it figured as the 6<sup>th</sup>, with a total of 1,250, following Tunisia (5,181), Eritrea, Iraq, Sudan, Pakistan, while in 2019 and 2020 it did not figure in the first ten nationalities<sup>12</sup>.

As a result of changes in border policies and bilateral agreements between Italy and Libya, there has been a decrease in the number of arrivals on Southern Italian coasts. This does not mean there are fewer people victim of trafficking, but that it is less likely for them to enter the asylum system, at least upon arrival in Italy.

Important data relate also to the entry into CPR (Centri di Permanenza per Rimpatri - Centres of Permanence for Repatriation) of people of Nigerian nationality. As of April 2020, 113 Nigerians (25 women and 88 men) were in Italian CPR. To these people, other 39 must be added, including Nigerian people who were repatriated<sup>13</sup>.

Over the years, Italy has been carrying out an increasing number of forced returns to Nigeria and various organisations have reported severe violations of human rights in this sense<sup>14</sup>. The destination airport is always Lagos and the departure airport is mainly Rome Fiumicino. In 2016, out of 5,817 repatriated people, 151 were of Nigerian nationality. In the following years, the total number of Nigerian people repatriated corresponded to 279 in 2017, 189 in 2018, with a peak of 348 in 2019<sup>15</sup>.

### *Repeated asylum applications*

Concerning migratory movements and trajectories, a few data should be added on asylum applications. In 2017, 23,057 Nigerians applied for asylum in Italy. 5% obtained the refugee status, 2% the subsidiary protection, 20% the humanitarian protection. 69% of the total were not granted protection, while 4% of applications were not assessed as the applicants became untraceable. As for unaccompanied minors, 953 asylum seekers were recorded in the same year: 11% obtained the refugee status, 1% the subsidiary protection, 67% the humanitarian protection, 20% were rejected their application and 1% were untraceable<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Data drawn from the Statistical Dossier, dated 27/10/2017, and elaborated by the Camera dei Deputati, Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul sistema di accoglienza, di identificazione ed espulsione, nonché sulle condizioni di trattenimento dei migranti e sulle risorse pubbliche impegnate (Italian House of Representatives, Parliamentary Commission on the system of reception, identification and expulsion and on the conditions of migrants' detention and on the related public expenditures).

<sup>12</sup> Data drawn from the following "Cruscotto giornaliero" (daily updated "dashboard") of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies: 31/12/2017, 31/12/2018, 31/12/2019, 28/12/2020. Available at: <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/cruscotto-statistico-giornaliero> Last access: 12/12/2020.

<sup>13</sup> Data provided by the Garante Nazionale dei diritti delle persone detenute o private della libertà personale. Rapporto sull'attività di monitoraggio delle operazioni di rimpatrio forzato di cittadini stranieri. Relazione al Parlamento 2020 (Data provided by the Ombudsperson for the rights of detained people and people deprived of their liberty. Report on the monitoring of the forced returns of foreign citizens. 2020 Report to Parliament).

<sup>14</sup> An example relates to women deported from the CPR Ponte Galeria to Nigeria, as reported by LasciateCIEntrare activities. Article available at: <https://www.lasciatecientrare.it/senza-memoria-non-ce-nessuna-liberazione/> Last access: 10/01/2021.

<sup>15</sup> See note 10.

<sup>16</sup> Data available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics) Last access: 10/01/2021.

What needs stressing is that, in 2019, 715,000 applications for international protection were lodged by third-country nationals in EU/SAC area (EU/Schengen-associated countries area), that is to say 13% more than in 2018. In the same year, **9% of all asylum applications were repeated, following a negative decision on a previous application.** This phenomenon regards particularly nationals of Serbia, Russia, Moldova, but also Sri Lanka, Senegal and Nigeria (the last three with more than 15% of the total applicants of each country).

### *People trafficked for sexual exploitation: gender and age profiles*

In the period 2017-2018, in the EU-27, over 56% of the people registered as victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation, which still represents the main form of exploitation. However, trafficking for the scope of labour exploitation regards 26% of the people registered as victims (table 6), with a considerable increase with respect to the period 2015-2016 (table 7). Data on the EU-28 substantially changes the figure: 60% for sexual exploitation, 15% for labour exploitation. **Non-EU victims were trafficked mainly for sexual exploitation (41%),** again with a considerable group of people trafficked for forced labour (22%) and other forms of exploitation (24%). Among the top five non-EU citizenships of people trafficked for sexual exploitation, Nigeria is still the first (68%) (table 8).

**Nearly three quarters (72 %) of all registered victims were females, including both women and girls - 23% were male (table 9).** Although the number of victims of EU-nationality has grown, **girls still represent 69% of child victims with non-EU citizenship. Nigeria is the first country in the list of the top 5 nationalities of female victims (table 10).**

Age is a relevant variable: **children accounted for 22% of registered victims (table 11) - and nearly three quarters were EU citizens. The majority of child victims (64%) were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation and the vast majority (78%) were girls.**

### *Progress in reporting, prosecutions and convictions*

In face of the continuous challenges posed by the fight of trafficking, some progress can be recording in the reporting, prosecution and conviction of traffickers, although data should be considered with caution. As indicated in the 2015-2016 EU report on trafficking (2018), some ambiguity is evident in data referring to some countries, including also Italy. Notwithstanding, **in the period 2017-2018, the top five Member States in the EU-27, with the highest number of reported persons suspected, arrested or cautioned for trafficking in human beings included Italy (4,104) and the following as top countries: France (2,786), Germany (1,359), Romania (850) and Spain (573) (table 12).**

The Member States reporting the highest number of prosecutions were France (2,907), Belgium (986), Romania (850), Austria (294) and Bulgaria (156) - figures in the period 2015-2016 were similarly. **No data are available on prosecutions in Italy for either periods.**

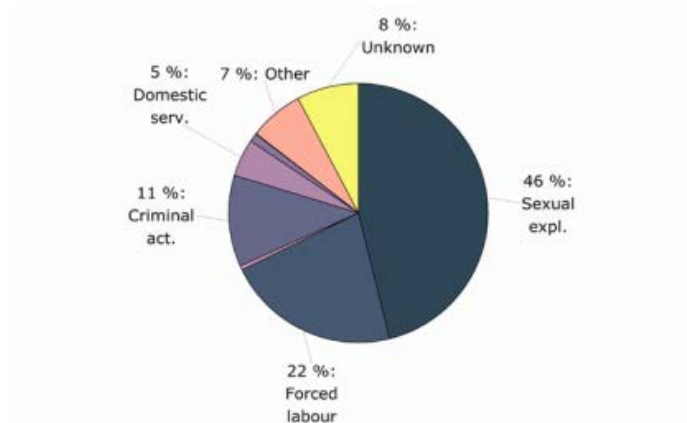


TABLE 6: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU BY FORM OF EXPLOITATION IN THE PERIOD 2015-2016 (SOURCE: EC, 2020: 16)

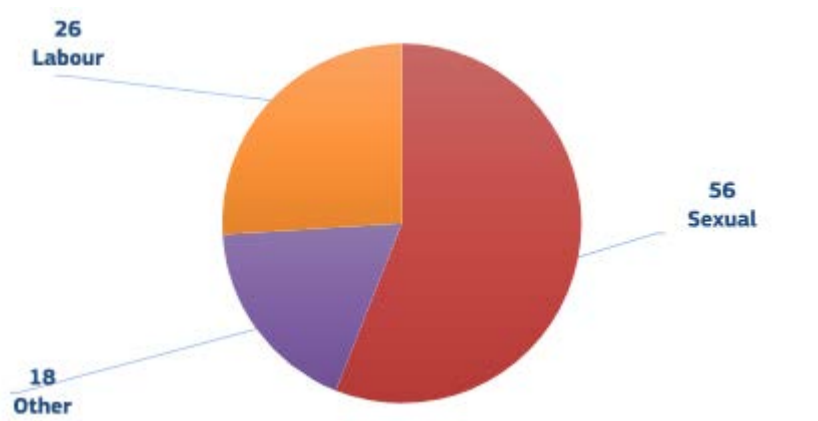


TABLE 7: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU BY FORM OF EXPLOITATION IN THE PERIOD 2017-2018 (SOURCE: EC, 2018: 55)

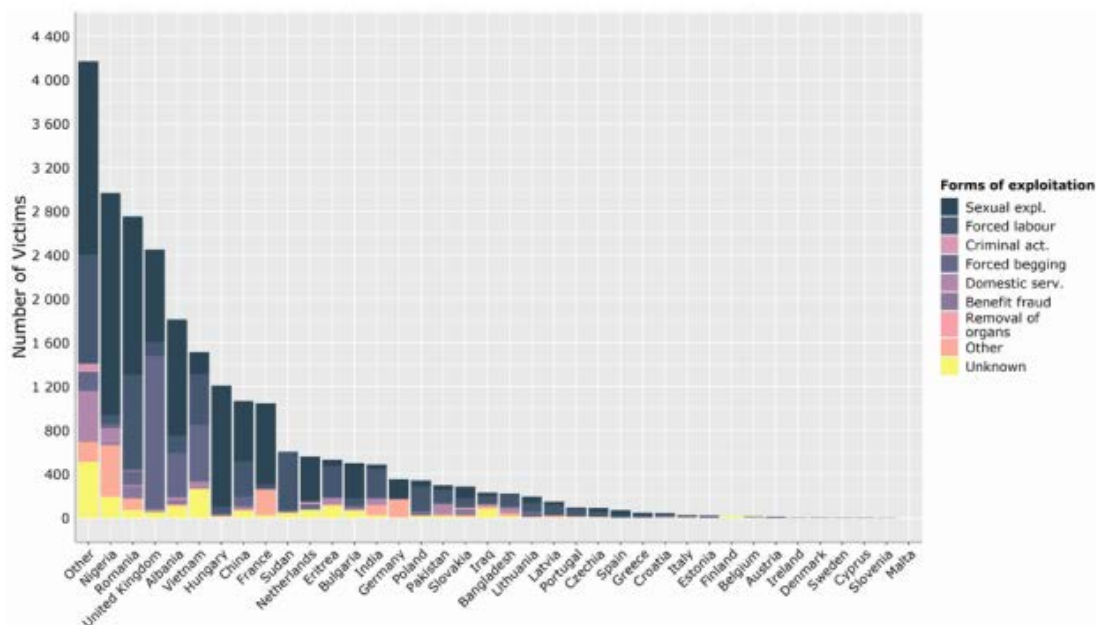


TABLE 8: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU BY CITIZENSHIP AND FORM OF EXPLOITATION (SOURCE: EC, 2020: 28)

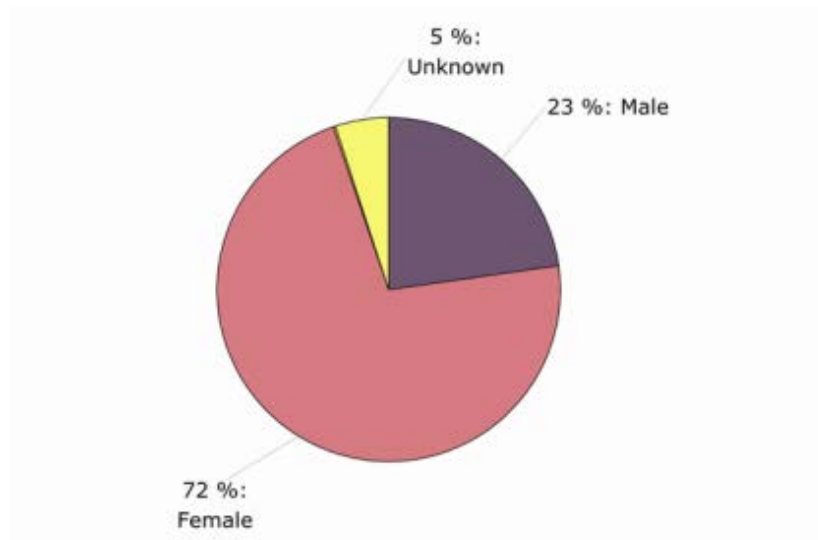


TABLE 9: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU-27 BY SEX (SOURCE: EC, 2020: 18)

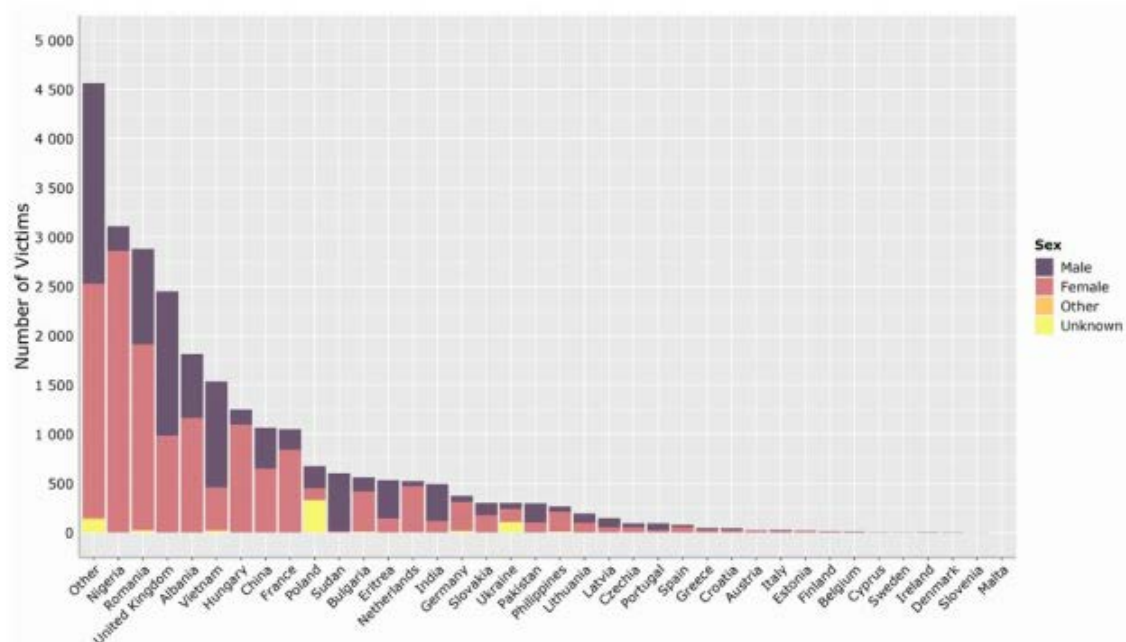


TABLE 10: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU BY CITIZENSHIP AND SEX (SOURCE: EC, 2020: 30)

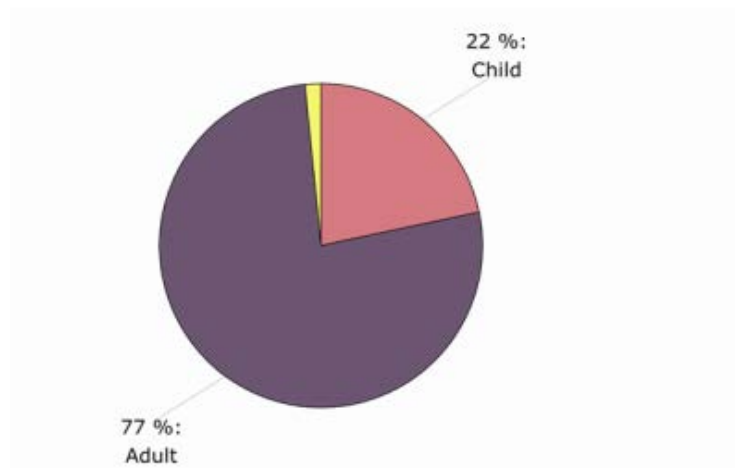


TABLE 11: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU-27 BY AGE (SOURCE: EC ,2020: 20)

	2017	2018	2017-2018
<b>EU-28</b>	<b>5 925</b>	<b>5 889</b>	<b>11 814</b>
BE	186	155	341
BG	19	24	43
CZ	24	15	39
DK	4	1	5
DE	654	705	1 359
EE	:	:	:
IE	0	0	0
EL	147	136	283
ES	258	315	573
FR	1 287	1 499	2 786
HR	41	26	67
IT	1 971	2 133	4 104
CY	:	:	:
LV	16	13	29
LT	56	8	64
LU	23	11	34
HU	263	:	263
MT	4	12	16
NL	165	:	165
AT	141	172	313
PL	18	30	48
PT	30	27	57
RO	450	400	850
SI	15	33	48
SK	72	53	125
FI	22	19	41
SE	54	81	135
UK	5	21	26

TABLE 12: NUMBER OF PERSONS SUSPECTED IN THE EU (SOURCE: EC, 2020: 185)

### *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human trafficking*

As indicated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> EU Report on the Progress made in the fight against trafficking, civil society and international organisations, as well as EU agencies, have expressed strong concerns with respect to how criminal organisations may have taken advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to multiply and diversify their profits, by modifying their strategies. Concerns have also regarded delays in the identification of people who are potential victims of trafficking, with likely negative impacts in terms of granting their rights with respect to access to justice, assistance and support. At the time being, it is still hardly possible to measure the actual impact of the on-going pandemic but warnings are evident. It is also a shared opinion of European institutions at large that the worsening economic situation has opened up challenges that are already affecting the most vulnerable groups of society in a disproportionate way<sup>17</sup>. People that are victims of trafficking are part of these social groups and thus require improved attention, especially as far as women and children are concerned.

In Spring 2020, ODIHR (The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) and UN Women (the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) conducted a global survey with 94 people from 40 countries who are victims of trafficking and 385 and frontline workers from 102 countries to explore the impact of the pandemic on trafficking in persons. More than a third of the victims, and in particular females (44% females and 34% males), reported their mental health has worsened. Many reported difficulties in accessing services. Additionally, 14% of female survivors were targeted to engage in illicit activities during the pandemic, most often through online channels. On their side, frontline workers, reported that the fight against human trafficking has been negatively impacted by the pandemic, because of difficulties associated with the partial functioning of national referral mechanisms and with limited access to basic and essential services, such as sheltered accommodation. Moreover, increasing problems have been experienced, in comparison to the pre-pandemic period, to ensure access to: employment (85%), medical services (73%), social services (70%), repatriation services (66%), safe accommodation (66%), legal assistance (66%), and access to food and water (66%).

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<sup>17</sup> See for example “How Covid-19 restrictions and the economic consequences are likely to impact migrant smuggling and cross-border trafficking in persons to Europe and North America”. Research brief, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/islamicropublicofiran/en/how-covid-19-restrictions-and-the-economic-consequences-are-likely-to-impact-migrant-smuggling-and-cross-border-trafficking-in-persons-to-europe-and-north-america.html> Last access: 10/01/2021.



## Section 3

### The Italian normative framework on human trafficking

The Italian legislation on human trafficking and serious exploitation consists of a number of policies which have determined the analytical and operational framework to deal with the phenomenon and protect the people who are victims and potential victims of it. These policies include the following:

- **Art. 18 of Legislative Decree 286/1998** “Testo unico delle disposizioni concernenti la disciplina dell'immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero” (Unique Text with provisions relating to immigration and norms on the condition of foreigners)<sup>18</sup>;
- **Law 228/2003** “Misure contro la tratta di persone” (Measures against the trafficking of human beings)<sup>19</sup>;
- **Legislative Decree 24/2014** “Attuazione della Direttiva 2011/36/UE, relativa alla prevenzione e alla repressione della tratta di esseri umani (Transposition of Directive 2011/36/EU)<sup>20</sup>;
- **Piano nazionale d’azione contro la tratta e il grave sfruttamento 2016-2018** (National Action Plan against human trafficking and serious exploitation)<sup>21</sup>.

#### *Art. 18 of Legislative Decree 286/1998*

Art. 18 states that *“the Questore<sup>22</sup>, also upon request by the Public Prosecutor’s Office, or upon a favourable opinion by the latter, shall deliver a special residence permit to allow the foreigner to break free of the violence and the subjection to the criminal organisation and to participate in a programme of assistance and social inclusion when, in the course of police operations, investigations or criminal proceedings relevant to either of the offences under article 3 of Law 75 of 20 February 1958 or under article 380 of the Italian Penal Code, or in the course of welfare services provided by local authorities, cases of coercion or serious exploitation are found with respect to a foreigner and his/her safety is seriously endangered as a result of his/her attempts to escape the pressures exerted by an organisation involved in either of the said offences or as a result of statements made during the pre-trial investigations or the trial”*.

Art. 18 gives people who are victims and potential victims of trafficking are entitled to a residence permit “for social protection”, not only whereby people collaborate with the police to prosecute their exploiters (*judicial procedure*), but also if they choose not to collaborate (*social procedure*)<sup>23</sup>. In

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<sup>18</sup> Available at: <https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/deleghe/98286dl.htm> Last access: 20/12/2020.

<sup>19</sup> Available at: <https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/03228l.htm> Last access: 10/12/2020.

<sup>20</sup> Available at: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2014/03/13/14G00035/sg> Last access: 19/09/2020.

<sup>21</sup> Available at: <http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Piano-nazionale-di-azione-contro-la-tratta-e-il-grave-sfruttamento-2016-2018.pdf> Last access: 12/12/2020.

<sup>22</sup> Questore/Questura(e): the Questura is an office of the Dipartimento della Pubblica Sicurezza (Department for Public Safety), with provincial competence, and it responds to the Ministry of Interior. Its main duty is associated with granting public order and public safety and it carries out activities to prevent and repress crimes. It also exercises administrative functions associated with the issuance of passports and of residence permits for immigrants. The Questore is the Head of the Questura.

<sup>23</sup> Within the framework of the Italian legislation on immigration, the first provision for a residence permit for people who are victims of trafficking or serious exploitation was made by **Decree Law 447/1996**, which modified **art. 3 of Decree Law 416/1989** and was later converted to **Law 39/1990**. Law 39/1990 provided for the Questore to issue a special residence permit to non-EU citizens if, during the course of a criminal proceeding associated with any crime indicated in **art. 3 of Law 75/1958** (concerning the abolition of the normative regulation of prostitution and the fight against exploitation) or any of



practice, whereby a person agrees to enter a social protection programme<sup>24</sup>, the association that runs it or the social worker who takes up the person's case can ask the Questore to authorise the issuance of a residence permit<sup>25</sup>.

These two procedures, the social and judicial ones, are not mutually excluding. Beneficiaries can follow either. There are also cases in which beneficiaries agree to follow the social procedure to then move to the judicial one.

The social procedure is the most significant and peculiar aspect of art. 18, as it grants protection to people who do not want to report to the police because of the fear of retaliation by their exploiters. However, the choice not to report does not nullify law enforcement agencies' efforts to contrast trafficking. The social procedure can still provide the grounds for investigations, because it is the Questore that authorised the issuance of art. 18 residence permits and being a public official, he/she has the obligation to report to judicial authorities any situation of violence or exploitation. At the same time, receiving the residence permit and accessing a social protection programme can result in increasing trust on anti-trafficking professionals. In turn, trust can become an incentive for beneficiaries to cooperate in investigations (Mancini, 2008). This points to the need to put people's need for protection first because of the overarching priority of protection and more specially because the chances for people to break free from exploitation are strongly connected to the actual possibility to ask for help, to obtain protection and a residence permit, without being forced to collaborate in investigations and participate to criminal proceedings as witnesses (Giammarinaro, 2002). At the same time, whereby people understand that their protection comes first, they may be more prone to collaboration with law enforcement agencies (La Rocca, 2008), as also stressed by various speakers during the 2020 Conference of the Alliance against trafficking<sup>26</sup>. Another point was raised at the

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the crimes indicated in art. 380 of the Italian Penal Code (including the exploitation of prostitution), citizen are exposed to a serious danger as a result of their collaboration during investigation or the penal proceeding - provided their contribution was exceptionally important to identify and prosecute offenders. This residence permit expired after one year, unless procedural or security issues required otherwise and it was intended as a form of "reward" for people victims of trafficking who collaborated in investigations (Nicodemi and Bonetti, 2009). Moreover, this law provided that neither expulsion orders nor a hypothetical criminal conviction or previously served by a person victim of trafficking would represent an obstacle to the issuance of the residence permit (For more information see: Decree Law 47/1996 "Urgent provision relating to immigration policy and the regular entry and stay on the national territory of citizens of non-EU countries). Available at: <https://www.isfol.it/sistema-documentale/banche-dati/normative/archivio/12689> Last access: 10/12/2020; Decree Law 30 December 1989 416 "Urgent measures on political asylum, entry and residence for third country nationals and regularisation of third country nationals and stateless people who are already on the State territory"; Conversion into law, with changes to Decree Law 30 September 1989, 426, with provision on political asylum, entry and stay of non-EU citizens and the regularisation of third country citizens and stateless people who are already present in the Italian territory. Available at: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1990/02/28/090G0075/sg> Last access: 10/12/2020; Law 20 February 1958, 75 "Abolition of the normative regulation of prostitution and the fight against exploitation of prostitution". Available at: [https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/serie\\_generale/caricaDettaglioAtto/originario?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1958-03-04&atto.codiceRedazionale=058U0075&elenco30giorni=false](https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/serie_generale/caricaDettaglioAtto/originario?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1958-03-04&atto.codiceRedazionale=058U0075&elenco30giorni=false) Last access: 10/12/2020).

<sup>24</sup> Social protection programmes are run by specialised stakeholders who in order to operate need to register in a dedicated list of associations and entities (section 2 - including anti-trafficking stakeholders) managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. Details are available at: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/registro-associazioni-ed-enti/Pagine/Attivita-e-servizi.aspx> Last access: 16/12/2020.

<sup>25</sup> It must be reported that, according to **art. 32 of Legislative Decree 25/08, paragraph 3-bis**, any officer of any Territorial Commission, that is to say the authorities responsible for the examination of asylum applications, shall forward relevant documentation to the Questore if, during an interview with an asylum seeker, they found any well-founded element suggesting that the interviewed asylum seeker is a victim of one of the crimes indicated in articles 600 and 601 of the Penal Code, so that the Questore can decide whether to issue a residence permit for humanitarian reasons (for more information: Legislative Decree 28 January 2008, 25 "Implementation of Directive 2005/85/EC with provisions on procedures implemented by EU Member States for the recognition and withdrawal of the status of refugee". Available at: <https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/deleghe/08025dl.htm>. Last access: 21/12/2020).

<sup>26</sup> For more details see: <https://www.osce.org/event/alliance20> Last access: 10/01/2021.

Conference, in line with the opinion of some prosecutors in Italy<sup>27</sup>. Investigations should be carried out as much as possible without the direct involvement of victims as, when cooperating, they do put their life and that of their family members at risk. Besides, direct involvement is likely to involve forms of re-victimisation.

Although art. 18 has positively influenced international legislation, including impacts on the Palermo Protocol, on the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and the United States legislation, it has been criticised on the following grounds. First, the art. 18 residence permit expires after six months, although it is renewable. It can be converted to a work or study permit, but conversion to the former is dependent on a regular employment, in a socio-economic situation, that of Italy, that is very fragile – even more now with the on-going pandemic – not only in terms of limited job opportunities but also of frequent episodes of racism (De Masi, 2014). Second, art. 18 has been interpreted in an increasingly restrictive way. Various stakeholders have testified that the Questure, throughout the Italian territory, authorises the issuance of a residence permit for the social procedure only in rare cases (Be Free, 2016).

### ***Law 228/2003***

**Law 228/2003** modified articles 600, 601 and 602 of the Italian Penal Code with the aim to establish serious and effective punishments to fight new forms of slavery. Art. 13 provided also for the establishment of an emergency and first aid programme for people victims of trafficking and serious exploitation, which integrated the provision made by art. 18 of Legislative Decree 286/1998. In order for people to access these programmes, they did not have to be in a situation of danger, nor to have already experienced any form of exploitation. At the same time, the same people could, at a later stage, access an art. 18 social protection programme.

### ***Legislative Decree 24/2014***

**Legislative Decree 24/2014** transposed **Directive 2011/36/EU** on the prevention and fight against human trafficking and the protection of victims. It introduced the requirement of individual assessment in light of specific situations of vulnerability, including particularly the situation of: children, unaccompanied minors, elderly people, people with disabilities, women, particularly during pregnancy, lone parents with minor children, people with mental health problems, people who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical, sexual or gender-based violence. Additionally, art. 10 called for coordination among relevant institutional actors, a very ambitious and yet crucial objective aiming to overcome the fragmented assistance provided to vulnerable people while also favouring mechanisms of collaboration with other systems of protection, such as the SPRAR/SIPROIMI/SAI systems for asylum seekers and refugee protection, to which we will refer later<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Lina Trovato, Deputy Prosecutor of the Public Prosecutor Office of Catania (Italy) 11/12/2020. Organised with Equality ATI, in preparation of the INSigHT webinar with law enforcement agencies on 27/01/2021.

<sup>28</sup> Respectively: Sistema di protezione per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati (System of protection for asylum seekers and refugees); Sistema di protezione per titolari di protezione internazionale e per minori stranieri non accompagnati (System of protection for holders of international protection and for foreign unaccompanied minors); Sistema di Accoglienza e Integrazione (System of Reception and Integration).

## *The National Anti-trafficking Action Plan and anti-trafficking projects in Italy*

Pursuant to **art. 9 of Legislative Decree 24/2014**, the Italian Government adopted the National Action Plan against trafficking and serious exploitation of human beings for the period 2016-2018. It aimed to define a multi-year intervention strategy to prevent and combat the phenomenon of trafficking, to raise awareness, to favour social prevention and the social inclusion of victims. The plan provided the Department of Equal Opportunities with responsibility over the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of anti-trafficking policies and interventions. Following various delays, caused by the unstable Italian political situation and by the on-going pandemic, a new updated plan is awaiting approval.

The plan encouraged the creation of a unique anti-trafficking program bringing together art. 13 and art. 18 interventions, integrating therefore first assistance and social protection programmes.

The plan is articulated in five priorities, in line with the **EU Strategy towards the eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016**:

- 1 identifying, protecting and assisting victims of trafficking,
- 2 stepping up the prevention of human trafficking,
- 3 improving outcomes regarding the prosecution of traffickers,
- 4 improving coordination and cooperation among key stakeholders,
- 5 increasing knowledge on emerging trends related to trafficking and providing effective responses.

Four are the key words: *Prevention, Prosecution, Protection, Partnership*. The need for partnership is particularly stressed, with reference to agencies in Italy but also in victims' countries of origin.

The plan also encouraged the adoption of a gender-sensitive approach<sup>29</sup> and the implementation of integrated policies and interventions, the creation and/or consolidation of stakeholder networks aimed to ensure the respect of the principles of non-discrimination and of the best interest of children.

Thanks to resources made available by the Department of Equal Opportunities, the plan further contributed to the launch of 21 anti-trafficking projects, one in each Italian Region (with the exception of the Lombardy Region that launched two projects). Each project, including N.A.Ve, the Veneto Region Anti-trafficking Network, which is the focus of this publication, involves some common features:

- a) first contact activities with populations at risk of exploitation aimed to grant health protection and harm reduction and to reach out to victims and potential victims of trafficking and severe exploitation, with particular attention to seekers and holders of international protection;
- b) proactive multi-agency actions to identify victim through an effective system of referral, also in collaboration with Territorial Commissions<sup>30</sup>;
- c) first assistance and immediate protection activities;
- d) protected residential reception and non-residential support, tailored to the specific needs and conditions of people victims of trafficking and severe exploitation;
- e) activities aimed to the regularisation of victims' legal status;
- f) educational and vocational training;

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<sup>29</sup> The EU Directive 2011/36/EU was the first to adopt a gender-based approach to human trafficking, in recognition that women and men, girls and boys are trafficked in different circumstances and need gender-sensitive forms of assistance and support.

<sup>30</sup> Commissioni Territoriali (Territorial Commission): they are the bodies responsible for the examination of asylum applications in Italy. They are nominated with a decree of the Ministry of Interior and are headed by an Officer with prefectural career (see Prefettura). They are composed of administrative officers specialised in asylum law and a member of UNHCR.

g) active inclusion activities, through assistance and social inclusion actions aimed to support people who are victims of trafficking, violence and serious exploitation - who may have benefited from first assistance measures - in a customised, integrated and multidimensional process towards the achievement of personal autonomy;

h) activities aimed to strengthen collaborative operational procedures between the anti-trafficking and the asylum system.

Generally speaking, the plan had the merit of providing a national strategy to fight human trafficking and it has certainly provided a useful tool for the definition and implementation of anti-trafficking projects. It remains to be seen whether the new plan will take up the challenge of addressing evolving forms of trafficking of exploitation.

## The intersection of the anti-trafficking and the asylum systems

People victims of trafficking are entitled to an art. 18 residence permit but also to apply for asylum. Until recently, the anti-trafficking and the asylum systems were largely unconnected, although the 2006 UNHCR guidelines on international protection stated explicitly that victims of trafficking may fall within the definition of refugee contained in the Geneva Convention and may therefore be eligible for international protection<sup>31</sup>.

### *When is a person victim of trafficking entitled to international protection?*

UNHCR pointed to the fact that membership in a “social group” concerns also gender (particularly women) and that gender membership can be associated to forms of discrimination and take the shape of abuse, harassment, violence: “gender can be considered as a category that identifies a social group, since women are a clear example of a social subset defined by innate and immutable characteristics, and are often treated differently from men” (UNHCR, 2016: 4). A similar interpretation emerges also from international legislation and is reflected in the Istanbul Convention, ratified and implemented by Italy with Law 77/2013<sup>32</sup>. On this ground, people must be granted the status of refugee whereby there is a well-founded fear of persecution linked to at least one of the cases covered by the Geneva Convention, including membership to a gendered group, like women.

Importantly, the Convention refers to “well-founded fear of persecution” (not certainty), otherwise, in many cases, protection would be hardly granted. At the same time, it is clear that the fear must be connected to the specific situation of asylum applicants. As far as asylum applicants victims of trafficking are concerned, they have often expressed the fear of returning to their country of origin and of facing the people who threatened and exploited them. This fear has been expressed by many women and girls of Nigerian origins. They may (more or less consciously) run the risk of “re-victimisation”, for the sole purpose of having or not fully paid the debt incurred to reach Europe. Other fears may relate to returning to a context of origin characterised by deprivation and marginalisation or even stigmatisation.

### *Measures towards the coordination of the anti-trafficking and the asylum system*

Both the European and the Italian legislation have gradually taken on board the phenomenal changes that have been taking place with respect to the overlap between the anti-trafficking and the asylum systems. As the Italian experience has shown, the interlinkage and overlap of the two systems has become an issue not only because the right to asylum of victims of trafficking has been highlighted with force. A second relevant factor, as observed in Italy, resides in changing dynamics of trafficking: applications for asylum have been encouraged by the exploiters of victims, as access to regularisation could paradoxically “keep away” law enforcement controls thus facilitating exploitation. Also as a result

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<sup>31</sup> Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=5513c7834> Last access: 12/12/2020.

<sup>32</sup> Legge 27 giugno 2013, 77 “Ratifica ed esecuzione della Convenzione del Consiglio d'Europa sulla prevenzione e la lotta contro la violenza nei confronti delle donne e la violenza domestica”. (Law 27 June 2013, 77 “Ratification and implementation of the Convention of the Council of Europe on prevention and the fight against violence against women and domestic violence”). Available at: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2013/07/01/13G00122/sg> Last access: 12/12/2020.

of this, the number of applications has grown, to then decrease again, as professionals started realising the dynamics at play and actively intervened to restrict access to the asylum procedure<sup>33</sup>.

At the European level, victims and potential victims of human trafficking are not included in the list of vulnerable people indicated by the relevant European Directives (**Qualification Directive 2004/83/EC, Procedures Directive 2005/85/EC, Reception Directive 2003/9/EC**). Following the recast of all three directives, victims of trafficking were explicitly included in the list provided by both the Qualification and the Reception Directives.

Upon transposition, Italy addressed the need for harmonisation of the anti-trafficking and the asylum systems. An important change was introduced for example with the coming into force of **Legislative Decree 142/2015**<sup>34</sup> which transposed the **Directives 2013/32/EU and 2013/33/EU**.

The increasing interconnection of the anti-trafficking and the asylum systems has become more and more evident, to the point that, in 2016, UNHCR and the National Commission for Asylum<sup>35</sup>, that coordinates Territorial Commissions, published specific guidelines for the referral and identification of people victims of trafficking, targeted to various relevant stakeholders, including not only Territorial Commissions, but also anti-trafficking professionals. The National Anti-trafficking Action Plan also addressed this issue, but not in detail.

### *Reception Facilities*

Although differences apply across facilities, dedicated facilities for people who are victims of trafficking normally share the following features: professionals require beneficiaries not to disclose the housing address to any external person, not to use their phone for an initial period of time (often minimum one month) and they oversee beneficiaries' daily activities more attentively. Such rules are all aimed to protect beneficiaries from exploiters and criminal networks, who could reach them or threaten them by phone or through other channels. However, they are generally perceived as too strict by people thus pushing some potential beneficiaries to reject social protection programmes and some beneficiaries to abandon them.

As explained in more details in Semprebon and Pelacani (2020), the asylum system has been characterised by a double-track reception system, an ordinary and an extraordinary one. The origins of the ordinary system can be traced back to the **National Asylum Plan** that was institutionalised by **Law 89/2002** under the name of SPRAR. The SPRAR has been coordinated and monitored by a central unit based within the Ministry of Interior. In 2011, a second system was set up, to cope with an increasing arrival of migrants, mostly associated with the Arab Springs. At that time, Extraordinary Reception Centres (CAS) were established, under the responsibility of the Civil Protection Department of the Italian government, as a temporary solution addressing the limited accommodation capacity of the ordinary system. Over time, this solution was consolidated and eventually institutionalized in 2014. It is

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Lina Trovato, Deputy Prosecutor of the Public Prosecutor Office of Catania (Italy) 11/12/2020. Organised with Equality ATI, in preparation of the INSigHT webinar with law enforcement agencies on 27/01/2021.

<sup>34</sup> Decreto Legislativo 18 Agosto 2015, 142 "Attuazione della direttiva 2013/33/UE recante norme relative all'accoglienza dei richiedenti protezione internazionale, nonché della direttiva 2013/32/UE, recante procedure comuni ai fini del riconoscimento e della revoca dello status di protezione internazionale" (Legislative Decree 18 August 2015, 142 "Implementation of Directive 2013/33/EU with provision on the reception of asylum seekers and Directive 2013/32/EU with provision for the recognition and revocation and of the status of international protection"). Available at: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/09/15/15G00158/sg> Last access: 12/12/2020.

<sup>35</sup> Commissione Nazionale Asilo (National Commission for Asylum): it operates within the Department for civil liberties and immigration and it is the referent body for the Italian system of international protection. It coordinates and orients Territorial Commissions that examine asylum applications.

now Prefetture<sup>36</sup> that have responsibility over CAS (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria - Centre for Extraordinary Reception). In particular, they organise the public tender procedure through which the management of reception facilities are outsourced. As defined by **Legislative Decree 142/2015**, asylum seekers are accommodated in SPRAR centres and, when available places are insufficient, in CAS, according to a system of progressive quotas, based on the number of inhabitants in each region and of the resources provided by the national fund for social policy<sup>37</sup>.

The SPRAR consists in a network of reception projects, mostly managed by social cooperatives, that provide integrated reception services, including room and board, health assistance but also other services aimed at favouring beneficiaries' autonomy (Italian language courses, multicultural activities, support for job seeking, legal assistance). CAS are also generally managed by social cooperatives, but normally with lower minimum standards of services with respect to SPRAR facilities. Accordingly, a few authors have highlighted the existence of inhomogeneous standards of reception across the country and different typologies of facilities (to cite a few see: Marchetti, 2016; Darling, 2016; Semprebon, 2021). SPRAR and CAS could host asylum seekers and asylum seekers that have either been granted or denied international protection. However, a trend developed in 2017, according to which priority access to SPRAR centres was given to holders of international protection and unaccompanied minors<sup>38</sup>.

**Legislative Decree 24/2014** set out the ambitious and yet important objective to overcome the fragmented and sectorial approach to asylum seeker assistance and reception to improve the implementation of the national referral mechanism across the various systems of protection, first and foremost the anti-trafficking and the asylum system, that, so far, have been mostly functioning as parallel systems. In practice, overcoming fragmentation would mean favouring the transfer of beneficiaries from one reception circuit to another: this should include both transfers from the SPRAR to art. 18 protected facilities, if beneficiaries are in situations of contingent danger or vice versa if there is no contingent danger and facilities with lighter rules, but still high standards of reception, are deemed more adequate to the needs of some individuals.

### *The effects of Decree Law 113/2018 on victims of trafficking and asylum seekers*

**Decree Law 113/2018**, later converted into **Law 132/2018**<sup>39</sup> - reconfigured parts of the Italian legislation on asylum and reception with negative impacts on people of migrant origins and victims of trafficking too, including:

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<sup>36</sup> Prefettura(e): it is a peripheral body of the Ministry of Interior, with representative functions at the provincial and metropolitan levels. Their main task is to ensure the coordination of administrative activities of State peripheral bodies. Their tasks include also granting order and public safety, for example through the organisation and coordination of provincial meetings for public order and safety. Furthermore, they carry out activities in relation to migration and asylum seeker reception. In particular, since 2011, they have been responsible for the publication of public tenders to outsource the management of CAS reception facilities.

<sup>37</sup> More details on the quota system are included in the "Intesa tra il Governo, le Regioni e gli Enti locali sul piano nazionale per fronteggiare il flusso straordinario di cittadini extracomunitari, adulti, famiglie e minori stranieri non accompagnati (National Agreement between the Italian Government, Regional Authorities and Local Authorities to deal with the exceptional flows of non-European citizens, adults, families and unaccompanied minors) Available at: <http://www.prefettura.it/FILES/AllegatiPag/1247/Accordo%20Conferenza%20Unificata.pdf> Last access: 03/07/2018.

<sup>38</sup> SPRAR (2017) Atlante SPRAR 2016. Available at: <https://www.sprar.it/publicazioni/atlante-sprar-2016> Last access: 12/10/2018.

<sup>39</sup> Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 4 ottobre 2018, n. 113, recante disposizioni urgenti in materia di protezione internazionale e immigrazione, sicurezza pubblica, nonché misure per la funzionalità del Ministero dell'interno e l'organizzazione e il funzionamento dell'Agenzia Nazionale per l'amministrazione e la destinazione dei beni sequestrati e confiscati alla criminalità organizzata. Delega al Governo in materia di riordino dei ruoli e delle carriere del personale delle Forze di polizia e delle Forze armate (Conversion into Law, with changes, of Decree Law 4 October 2018, 113, with urgent

- the abrogation of the humanitarian protection<sup>40</sup>;
- the increased investment - both in terms of resources allocated and rationalisation of management - on detention and repatriation;
- the extended detention in hotspots and the creation of new border procedures with less effective referral mechanisms;
- new rules to prevent repeated, although legitimate, asylum applications;
- the re-organisation of the reception system, with the abolition of the SPRAR and the creation of the SIPROIMI (System of Protection for the Holders of International Protection and Unaccompanied Minors), which mainly differs from the SPRAR as it provides reception for refugees, holders of subsidiary protection and unaccompanied minors only, while asylum seekers, whom could include also potential victims of trafficking were assigned to CAS facilities.

The exclusion of asylum seekers and holders of humanitarian protection (including victims of trafficking, immigrants with disabilities, lone mothers with children, minors who have turned 18, etc.) from SIPROIMI run counter the provision of the Qualification and Reception Directives that stress that adequate accommodation should be ensured particularly to people with specific needs and vulnerabilities. At the same time, the new organisation of the SIPROIMI has drastically deconstructed the reception system by: lowering the standards of CAS facilities, as financial support was curtailed, and pushing the costs of social and health services for these target groups onto municipal and regional authorities - that have been already strained by severe cuts in resources associated with welfare austerity. Furthermore, health care provision was put at risk because Law 132/2018 de facto made it impossible for asylum seekers to have a residency status which in turn is a precondition to obtain the national health card and access public health services to which asylum seekers are entitled. Another regulatory provision that affected people who are victims or trafficking concerns changes to the asylum application assessment at borders: procedures were accelerated thus preventing effective identification and risk assessment, particularly in face of inhomogeneous training of law enforcement agencies and little preparation in operating with a children and gender-sensitive approach.

Recent changes to **Law 132/2018** were passed on October 5<sup>th</sup> 2020, following the approval of the **Decree Law 130/2020**. The latter lead to new changes in the asylum and reception system, including first of all the introduction of a national form of protection (similar to the humanitarian protection), that grants access to the so-called residence permit for “special cases”. Moreover, the Decree Law modified Law 132/2018 to ensure again that asylum seekers could access to the ordinary system of reception, that has been renamed SAI (Sistema Accoglienza e Integrazione – System of Reception and Integration).

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provision on international protection and immigration, public safety, and measures for the organisation of the Ministry of Interior and the organisation and functioning of the National Agency for the administration and the provision of assets seized and confiscated from organized crime. Available at:

<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2018/12/03/18G00161/sg> Last access: 12/12/2020.

<sup>40</sup> The humanitarian protection is a form of non-EU harmonised national (rather than international) protection nowadays normally replaced by subsidiary protection, except in some EU Member States.



## The normative framework for the protection of children and unaccompanied minors<sup>41</sup>

### *General principles*

The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** (1989), ratified by Italy with **Law 176/1991**<sup>42</sup>, provided for the following principles:

- right of non-discrimination (art. 2),
- best interest of the child (art. 3),
- right to life (art. 6),
- right to participation and to be heard (art. 12).

The **UN Committee on the Rights of the Child** published General Comments that represent an integral relevant part of the international normative framework. In particular, **General Comment 12** (2009) asserts the right of the child to be heard and **General Comment 14** (2009) asserts the right to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration in all actions or decisions that concern him or her.

### *EU Legislation*

The **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU** (2009) guarantees the protection of the rights of the child by the EU and EU Member States. Specific articles include: art. 24 on the rights of the child and art. 31 on the prohibition of child labour. Art. 24 state three main principles secondary laws must necessarily comply with:

1. children shall have the right to such protection and care as is necessary for their well-being. They may express their views freely. Such views shall be taken into consideration on matters which concern them in accordance with their age and maturity.
2. In all actions relating to children, whether taken by public authorities or private institutions, the child's best interests must be a primary consideration.
3. Every child shall have the right to maintain on a regular basis a personal relationship and direct contact with both his or her parents, unless that is contrary to his or her interests.

**Directive 2011/95/EU** (on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection) does also stress the principle of the best interests of the child (art. 18), besides stating that:

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<sup>41</sup> The sections on General Principles and EU Legislation have been compiled following the self-funded attendance of one of the authors to the Intensive Training Course "International protection and rights of minors in the European Union", Jean Monnet Module MARS (Nov. 2020 – Jan. 2021), organised by Sant'Anna Scuola Universitaria Superiore, with the financial support of the EU Erasmus+ Program. In particular, the sections draw from the following lectures:

Babicka K., International Commission of Jurists "Access to justice for migrant children. Definitions and guiding principles"; Zelvenska J., ECRE "The Common EU Asylum System: standard for the qualification of beneficiaries of intern protection, procedures and reception of asylum applicants"; Papageorgopoulos S., Legal Officer - EDAL Coordinator "The CEAS implementation and reforms now".

<sup>42</sup> Legge 27 Maggio 1991, 176 "Ratifica ed esecuzione della convenzione sui diritti del fanciullo" (Law 27 May 1991, 176 "Ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child". Available at: <https://www.camera.it/bicamerali/infanzia/leggi/1176.htm> Last access: 22/12/2020.

- when the applicant [for international protection] is an unaccompanied minor, the availability of appropriate care and custodial arrangements, which are in the best interest of the unaccompanied minor, should form part of the assessment as to whether that protection is effectively available (art. 27);
- it is necessary, when assessing minors' applications for international protection, that Member States have regard to child-specific forms of persecution (art. 28).

The Directive further provides for: access to the education system (art. 17), adequate healthcare, including treatment of mental disorders for beneficiaries with special needs (art. 30), representation by a legal guardian (art. 31).

**Directive 2013/32/EU** (on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection) provides that children:

- can lodge an asylum application on their own (art. 7);
- have the right to a personal interview [in the context of asylum applications assessment] in a child-appropriate manner (art. 14 and 15);
- can benefit from the appointment of a legal representative to assist him or her, the provision of information about procedures, the availability of adequately trained staff to support him or her, etc. (art. 25).

**Directive 2013/33/EU** (on standards for the reception of international protection applicants) introduced a specific article (23) on minors, stressing the principle of the best interest and the need for vulnerability assessment to take into consideration specific factors, such as the well-being and social development of the child; safety and security issues, with particular attention to human trafficking and family issues (including the possibility for family reunion). Similarly to Directive 2013/32/EU, Directive 2013/33/EU dedicated an article (24) to guardianship, indicating that Member States should appoint as soon as possible a representative to assist the minor.

Generally speaking, some challenges have been identified as far as the protection of unaccompanied minors in the EU is concerned. These include, for example: the lack of clarity and some ambiguities that have resulted in differences in transpositions, and hence differences in implementation, of relevant principles (for example some countries use the term "legal representative", others "legal guardian" to refer to the person that should ensure the guardianship of the minor); the lack of specific indications and guidance on the assessment of the best interest principle. Part of these issues are being addressed in view of planned new recast directives on reception conditions, qualifications and procedures and for the Dublin Regulation IV. It remains to be seen whether effective changes will be introduced.

### *The international and EU legislation on the protection of children and unaccompanied minor victims of trafficking*

The main norms regulating the protection of children and unaccompanied children victims of trafficking comprise:

- the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (1989), acknowledging the importance to adopt all measures to prevent the abduction, sale or trafficking of children, for whatever purpose and in any form whatsoever;
- the **Palermo Protocol** (2000) that defines and addresses the trafficking of children;
- the **Treaty of the Functioning of the EU** (1957), establishing that the EU shall develop measures combating trafficking in persons, in particular women and children (art. 79);
- **Directive 2011/36/EU** explicitly referring to the higher risk of trafficking for children and suggesting that Member States should:
  - consider primarily the best interest of the child,
  - consider the child's opinion, needs and fears,
  - appoint a legal guardian or a representative of the child victim,
  - ensure access without delay to free legal advice and legal aid,
  - ensure particular attention and defence during hearings,
  - assess the situation of unaccompanied children on a case by case basis;
- the **EU Strategy towards the eradication of trafficking in human beings 2012-2016**, referring repeatedly to children and their specific rights, as does the new recently published **2021-2025 Strategy**<sup>43</sup>.

### *The Italian normative framework on the protection of unaccompanied minors*

Art. 10 of the **Italian Constitution** states that the Italian legal system complies with the generally recognised principles of international law. Hence it also complies with the principles stated in the Convention for the Rights of the Child.

The **Italian Civil Code** (titles X and XI) specifically refers to the protection of minors.

**Legislative Decree 286/1998** provides for:

- the issuance of a residence permit in associations with situation of trafficking and severe exploitation (art. 18);
- the principle of non-refoulement for minors (art. 19)
- consideration for the best interest of minors in all decisions regarding them (art. 28)

**Legislative Decree 142/2015** stresses that priority should be given to the best interest of the child, as well as the right to participation, the right to be heard, the right to an adequate assessment for victims of trafficking, to assistance in adequate reception facilities with adequately trained professionals and adequate psychological assistance (art. 18), provision of information on rights and procedures, appointment of a legal guardian (art. 19).

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<sup>43</sup> Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/pdf/14042021\\_eu\\_strategy\\_on\\_combatting\\_trafficking\\_in\\_human\\_beings\\_2021-2025\\_com-2021-171-1\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/pdf/14042021_eu_strategy_on_combatting_trafficking_in_human_beings_2021-2025_com-2021-171-1_en.pdf) Last access: 01/06/2021.

More recently, **Law 47/2017**<sup>44</sup>, the so-called Zampa Law, was passed, resulting from more than three years of advocacy work by Save the Children and various NGOs<sup>45</sup>. The Law focuses on the protection of unaccompanied foreign minors. UNICEF indicated it could serve as a model for other EU Member States.

The Law has certainly filled significant gaps. It introduced provisions on age assessment procedures, by encouraging a multidisciplinary approach by expert professionals, with the support of a Cultural-linguistic mediator. It has also improved minors' access to the asylum procedure: before the law entered into force, unaccompanied children could not lodge an asylum application without the signature of their guardian. At the same time, as stated by the EC, in the infringement procedure 2014/2171, guardians were often appointed several months after the arrival of minors thus resulting in severe delays in access to the asylum procedure. Hence the new law provides that minors can apply for asylum before a guardian is appointed and that until a guardian is appointed the role must be undertaken by a professional of the reception facility in which the minor is hosted. Further normative provisions include the following: simplification of the procedures for the issuance of residence permits "for minors"; creation of a list of "legal guardians" by the Juvenile Courts, to be selected and appropriately trained by the Regional Ombudsperson for Childhood and Adolescence; prohibition of children refoulement at the border; provision of adequate legal assistance; support to unaccompanied minors until they reach the age of majority and beyond it.

In spite of some evident positive steps forward promoted by the Zampa Law, some concerns remain relating to implementation. First, no implementation decree has been approved to date, hence some provisions are still short of detailed operational procedures. Second, while the law has encouraged the establishment of a unique reception system with homogenous minimum standards, there is still much space for improvement<sup>46</sup>.

Concerning reception, after the approval of the Zampa Law, a Circular Letter was signed by the Italian Ministry of Interior, on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019, that promoted the activation, as set by art. 13 of Law 47/2017, of continued assistance and reception to minors, beyond the age of majority, by means of the so-called "prosieguito amministrativo" as will be explained later.

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<sup>44</sup> Legge 7 Aprile 2017, 47 "Disposizioni in materia di misure di protezione dei minori stranieri non accompagnati" (Law 7 April 2017, 47 "Provisions for the protection of unaccompanied foreign minors". Available at: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/04/21/17G00062/sg> Last access: 12/12/2020.

<sup>45</sup> Rozzi E. (2017) The new Italian law on unaccompanied minors: a model for the EU? Available at: <https://eumigrationlawblog.eu/the-new-italian-law-on-unaccompanied-minors-a-model-for-the-eu/> Last access: 12/12/2020.

<sup>46</sup> Available at: [http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/circolare\\_post\\_decreto\\_sicurezza\\_dicembre\\_2018\\_v\\_18\\_dic.pdf](http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/circolare_post_decreto_sicurezza_dicembre_2018_v_18_dic.pdf) Last access: 10/08/2020.

## Section 4

### The N.A.Ve Network

As anticipated, N.A.Ve stands for Network Antitratta Veneto (Veneto Region Anti-trafficking Network). N.A.Ve is the anti-trafficking project active in the Veneto Region, in the north-eastern part of Italy, and it was launched in 2016.

To date, three annual projects have been carried out by the Network, each lasting 13 to 16 months:

- N.A.Ve 1 - from September 2016 to November 2017,
- N.A.Ve 2 - from December 2017 to February 2019,
- N.A.Ve 3 - from March 2019 to May 2020.

A new project has just been submitted for funding – following two extensions connected to the on-going pandemic. For this purpose N.A.Ve has been renamed N.A.V.I.G.A.Re (Network Antitratta Veneto Intersezioni Governance Azioni Regionali – Veneto Region Anti-trafficking Network Intersections Governance and Regional Actions). The new leading partner is the Veneto Region and it remains to be seen to what extent administrative and organisation changes will be made to the overall structure of the network.

N.A.Ve is a relatively small project, if we consider the total number of beneficiaries indicated in the final reports<sup>47</sup>:

Period	Adults	New adult beneficiaries	Unaccompanied minors	Males	Females	Transgender
Sept. 2016-Nov. 2017	66	46	6	12	60	0
Dec. 2017-Feb. 2019	124	85	20	21	122	1
Mar. 2019-Aug. 2020	124	54	0	35	89	0

Yet many more beneficiaries have received some form of support, although not necessarily all services available in the social protection programmes. Numbers are underestimated for two main reasons: unaccompanied minors were indicated in the final reports only until February 2019, as dedicated funding was no longer received afterwards; some beneficiaries (including for example asylum seekers hosted in SPRAR/SIPROIMI or CAS or unaccompanied minors facilities) have not entered the social protection programme and yet have been supported for specific needs (i.e. legal information).

It should be also specified that while the social protection programmes normally last for 18 months, many beneficiaries have overstayed. This was particularly the case in 2020, because of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic that has caused the interruption of internships, the upholding and/or non-renewal of job contracts and increasing difficulties and delays in finding decent housing solutions, with the result that further assistance was necessary for beneficiaries who would have otherwise remained stranded.

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<sup>47</sup> A final report was prepared by N.A.Ve each year, to comply with administrative requirements by the Department of Equal Opportunities that funds anti-trafficking projects. Data was provided for the scope of this publication and is not available online.

N.A.Ve is structured in 6 regional Units, as will be explained in more details in the following sections:

- the **Outreach Unit**,
- the **Crisis and Evaluation Unit**,
- the **Social Inclusion Unit**,
- the **Reception facilities Unit**,
- the **Socio-legal Unit**,
- the **Cultural-linguistic mediation Unit**.

Additionally, two working groups have been created: the **Labour Inclusion Working Group** and, in the last year, the **Working Group “Psicologhe a bordo”** (Psychologists on board).

Coordination meetings are regularly organised by each regional Unit. Local Units, including all the professionals (of different units) working in a given local territory, are active in the cities of Verona, Padova, Venice, Treviso, Rovigo. Therefore all provincial territories of the Veneto Region are involved in the N.A.Ve Network, exception made for Belluno, that is covered by the Venice Local Unit.

Social protection programmes are organised in six phases for a total average length of 18 months, as indicated in art. 18, although the actual length is often extended:

- **Outreach phase**: referring to street outreach contact, including one or more contacts extended over time, by Outreach Unit professionals with potential N.A.Ve beneficiaries. Outreach contacts include also informative workshops that have been organised with potential victims of trafficking, in N.A.Ve office spaces or in asylum seeker reception facilities, as well as in collaborations with labour inspectorates, law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders engaged in anti-labour exploitation activities.
- **Fuga** (literally “escape”) (**minimum 2 weeks**): referring to the phase in which beneficiaries first in come in contact with the Crisis and Evaluation Unit. If beneficiaries are facing an imminent risk, they are offered to be transferred immediately to a so-called “**punto di fuga**” (escape shelter).
- **Reflection phase** (**minimum 2 months**): referring to the phase that follows the phase of Fuga. As soon as a reception place is made available, the potential beneficiary can be transferred to a temporary facility, if she/he agrees. In this phase, potential beneficiaries can take time to decide whether to progress to the Social Inclusion phase thus entering the social protection programme. In the meantime, health checks are carried out and the procedure for regularisation activated.
- **Phase zero**: referring to the transitory administrative and organisational phase in which, if the potential beneficiary agrees to join the social protection programme, the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals transfer responsibility to the assigned Case Manager. This phase can last from a day to a few weeks of more, depending on the specific circumstances.
- **Social Inclusion phase** (**minimum 5 months + 6 months extension**): referring to actual implementation of the social protection programme. The Case Manager - working within one of N.A.Ve partner municipalities - takes responsibility over the programme of beneficiaries.
- **Sgancio** (literally “unhook”) (**minimum 4 months**): referring to the final phase of the social protection programme, when Case Managers and Reception facility professionals agree that beneficiaries are ready to leave the programme. This phase can be extended, if the main objectives of the programmes have not been met, including access to regular employment and decent accommodation.

## The evolution of the anti-trafficking system in the Veneto Region<sup>48</sup>

### *1996-2000: the monitoring of street sex work*

The Municipality of Venice started (regularly) monitoring street sex work in 1996. Preliminary observations highlighted two aspects that helped orient subsequent interventions. First, there were no more than 10 sex workers in the streets of Venice, not hundreds, as often perceived (and claimed) by local residents. They were not used to see young, black, foreign sex workers in urban spaces and perceived them as “alien bodies”. It soon emerged that these women, many of Romanian or Eastern European nationality, were practicing sex work for the first time in their lives and were not familiar with “the rules of the game” (i.e. how to protect their sexual health), nor were they used to deal with complaints by residents, thus pointing to the need to provide health assistance (i.e. information on sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, etc.). Through regular (weekly) street outreach contacts, relationships of trust were gradually built by anti-trafficking professionals. As a result, some of the women started opening up. Some explained that sex work was not a choice but had been forced by means of violence, deception and coercion. They asked for help to break free from their exploiters. Following up from the conduction of outreach activities, a specific sub-unit was created within the municipal Unit “Città e prostituzione” (City and prostitution) with the main aim to focus on exploitation. In the same year, an amnesty had been passed by the central government, hence some women asked for help with a second objective: that of regularising their residence status. Some women declared their willingness to abandon sex work if they could be granted full protection away from their exploiters. After six months, collaborations with law enforcement agencies took off and some women started reporting to the police. At that time, individuals who accepted to collaborate in investigations were entitled to a residence permit for “justice” that covered only the period during which the person was collaborating in investigations and participating to the penal proceeding in the capacity of a witness. It did not allow to have a regular employment contract, nor to stay in the country after completion of the proceeding.

Advocacy work was carried out to grant women the right to work and earn a living and an agreement was eventually reached with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies that confirmed they could work. Further advocacy was organised, in collaboration with anti-trafficking professionals of the provincial territory of Genova and the regional territory of Emilia-Romagna, who had matured similar expertise on street sex work, to call for a revision of the normative framework, in line with emerging trends of exploitation.

In 1998, **Law 40/1998**, the so-called Turco-Napolitano Law, was passed, to regulate the legal condition of people of foreign origins on the Italian territory. With **Legislative Decree 286/1998 (art. 18)**<sup>49</sup>, the right was introduced for people victims of trafficking to access a social protection programme and to apply for residence status regardless of their collaboration in investigations (social procedure). Over the following two years, the central government started delivering dedicated funding. In 2000 the

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<sup>48</sup> Most of this part was completed by drawing from the interview conducted with the N.A.Ve Coordinator (03/06/2020), unless otherwise specified. The details on the organisational structure of N.A.Ve have been put together throughout the ethnographic fieldwork and the responsibility for any mistake must be associated with the authors only.

<sup>49</sup> Legislative Decree 25 July 1998, 286 “Testo unico delle disposizioni concernenti la disciplina dell’immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero” (Unique Text with provisions relating to immigration and norms on the condition of foreigners”. Available at: <https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/deleghe/98286dl.htm> Last access: 20/12/2020.

Department of Equal Opportunity published the first public tender open to anti-trafficking professionals willing to manage an annual anti-trafficking programme.

The first art. 18 programme, in the Veneto Region, was activated in the same year by the Municipality of Venice.

### ***2000: the activation of the National Anti-trafficking Helpline***

When N.A.Ve 1 was activated, in 2016, the Municipality of Venice had been already managing a peripheral anti-trafficking helpline covering the territory of the regions Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto and Trentino Alto-Adige, that is to say the north-eastern area of Italy. Eventually, a national helpline, the National Anti-trafficking Helpline, was created to assist victims who wanted to break free from exploitation and it has been operating as a toll-free service (800 290290)<sup>50</sup>.

In 2000, a first helpline was set up. A first public tender was published by the Department for Equality Opportunity and it was adjudicated by the Municipality of Venice. In the following years, the Municipality continued operating the service but on the basis of a direct assignment agreement. The Department of Equal Opportunities has been providing dedicated funding (from an initial amount of 300,000 to 500,000)<sup>51</sup> since, in the wider framework of anti-trafficking interventions (interview, National Anti-trafficking Helpline Coordinator, 03/06/2020). However, it was only in 2007 that the decision was taken to create a unique helpline that would centralise the calls of the 14 peripheral helplines operating across Italy. Since then the calls have been received only by a central office, based in Venice, where a total of 8 professionals work, on rotating shifts, to ensure a 24/7 service coverage. The helpline professionals have backgrounds in human rights or in cultural-linguistic mediation. They are of Italian, Russian, Albanian, Serbian-Croatian and Mozambican origins and speak several languages. Calls are mostly received by third parties that operate in the anti-trafficking system and come into contact with victims and potential victims of trafficking and exploitation, while direct calls by victims and potential victims themselves are much rarer (10-15% of the total) (ibidem). Following a careful evaluation of the request put forward by the callers, the professionals transfer them to the relevant Crisis and Evaluation Unit professional - they also work on rotating shifts in the relevant local territory -, depending where the callers is calling from. Help is then offered including the possibility of being transferred to an escape shelter, if an imminent risk is evident and/or to meet a Crisis and Evaluation Unit professional to receive information on the social protection programme.

### ***2000-2016***

Besides the Municipality of Venice, also that of Verona started earlier with art. 18 anti-trafficking projects. The majority of requests for help, in the Veneto Region, actually emerged from this city, hence the Municipality decided to present a project, in the early 2000, the "Sirio" project, which involved both the Municipality of Verona and, from 2009 onwards, that of Padova too. Apart from covering costs of the social protection programme, part of the funding contributed to implementing street outreach activities targeting in particular sex workers. A Coordination Table was set up with the involvement of then Provincial Authority, the then Local socio-health Authority, the SERD (Servizi per le dipendenze

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<sup>50</sup> For more information see the website: <https://bit.ly/2S3irZF> Last access: 01/10/2021.

<sup>51</sup> The amount was increased because the need emerged to elaborate data. Therefore, the staff of the helpline is also responsible for managing the SIRIT, a dedicated database of anti-trafficking projects in Italy.



patologiche – Services for pathological addictions) that were dealing with drug abuse, the Comunità dei Giovani Social Cooperative and the Association Papa Giovanni XXIII that was then operating a street outreach unit. The most positive aspect of the Table was that it brought together a range of specialised professionals to focus on varying forms of vulnerabilities characterising their target groups. The Table was eventually called off, as some key representatives moved to a different job (Case Manager, AULSS - Local socio-health Authority 9/4 District<sup>52</sup>, Bussolengo, Verona, 19/05/2020).

As of 2006, a second set of anti-trafficking interventions were funded, based on the provisions of Law 228/2003 (art. 13) that required the organisation of first assistance to victims and potential victims of trafficking and severe exploitation. As two anti-trafficking projects, based on the provision of art. 18, were already operating, the idea gradually emerged from the Municipality of Venice and Verona to develop a unique project that would cover the whole regional territory. This is how the first art. 13 project was set up. It created the ground for the establishment, ten years later, of N.A.Ve, the Veneto Region Anti-trafficking Network, as soon as the Directive 2011/36/EU, which called for the development of a unique intervention chain (including both activities of assistance and social protection), was transposed in Italian legislation. It was then that art. 13 and art. 18 interventions were integrated into a unique system of protection.

### ***2016: the establishment of N.A.Ve and its mission***

N.A.Ve is a unique and integrated system that provides assistance and social protection to victims of trafficking and severe exploitation, regardless of their legal status, age, nationality, gender and types of exploitation (prostitution, labour, begging, forced involvement in criminal activities and forced marriage)<sup>53</sup>. As explained, since the launch of the network, three projects have been undertaken: N.A.Ve 1, 2 and 3. N.A.Ve 1 obtained a total funding of 1,600,000 euro for one and a half year. The following two projects, N.A.Ve 2 and N.A.Ve 3, received a slightly higher amount of funding (1,800,000 euro). Co-funding by the Veneto Region has been invariably provided for a total of about 50,000 euro. As reported above, the mission of the municipal Unit “Città e prostituzione” was centred on monitoring the phenomenon of street sex work, implementing preventive measures with respect to sexually transmitted illnesses and ensuring the more general socio-sanitary assistance of sex workers.

N.A.Ve, since its launch, started dealing with sexual as well as other forms of severe exploitation, including labour exploitation and forced involvement in criminal activities. In 2000, the Palermo Protocol had provided an impulse in this sense, but it took more than a decade for the Municipality of Venice - and other municipalities in the region -, to pay more attention to forms of exploitation, other than sexual.

In the most recent years, the mission of the Municipality of Venice has further evolved: the focus on sex workers has been gradually abandoned, while N.A.Ve professionals are mainly focused on victims of trafficking for the scope of sexual and labour exploitation. This is arguably the result of the Municipality’s changing political stance. In the 1990s the Municipal Unit “Città e prostituzione” had carried out mediation interventions with residents, to address and deal with their complaints, and participatory activities with sex workers to ensure their involvement in the policy-making process. Precious work was done by the now President, and members, of the Comitato per i diritti civili delle

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<sup>52</sup> The AULSS - Local socio-health Authority 9/4 District comprises 4 districts that include Verona and the wider provincial territory.

<sup>53</sup> N.A.Ve has a website (its updating is in progress): <http://www.progettonave.it/> Last access: 1/12/2020.

Prostitute (based in Pordenone, Italy)<sup>54</sup> in coincidence with the definition of the “zoning policy” that was eventually introduced by the Municipality of Venice. It was the first experiment of this kind in Italy and it had a double aim: on the one side to define in which areas street sex work would be permitted, on the other to ensure adequate assistance and protection of sex workers in these areas. In the following decade more resources were devoted to ensuring public order and safety, by means of public safety mayoral orders and regulations<sup>55</sup> that, in part, resulted in fines to sex workers’ clients, and sometimes sex workers too, who of course can include also victims of trafficking. Arguably the implementation of these policy measures has run counter the efforts of anti-trafficking professionals to reach out to and assist victims of trafficking. Additionally, little work has been done on awareness raising with the local community more generally. On the contrary, N.A.Ve has engaged this direction, with focus on trafficking and severe exploitation, in line with its mission.

### *The partners of N.A.Ve*

Leading partner of N.A.Ve is the Municipality of Venice. Other partners comprise the following, for a total of over 50 stakeholders, including both public and private actors:

- N.A.Ve implementing actors: Equality Social Cooperative (Padova), Gruppo R Social Cooperative (Padova), Association Francescane con i Poveri (Padova), Association Welcome (Padova), Comunità dei Giovani Social Cooperative (Verona), Azalea Social Cooperative (Verona), Volontà di Sapere Social Cooperative (Venice), Association La Tenda (Rovigo), Domus Nostra (Treviso);
- regional authorities in north-eastern Italy: Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia;
- municipalities in the Veneto Region and specifically those of: Padova, Verona, Treviso and Casier (in the province of Treviso), Vicenza, Rovigo, Belluno;
- local socio-health authorities and districts and specifically those in: Padova, Mirano (Province of Venice), Verona, Legnago and Bussolengo (in the province of Verona);
- trade unions: CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro - General Italian Confederation of Labour) Veneto and CGIL of Venice, Rovigo, Vicenza, Verona, Padova, as well as UIL (Unione Italiana del Lavoro - Italian Union of Labour) Veneto;
- workers’ Associations: CIA (Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori - Italian Confederation of Agricultural Workers);
- law enforcement agencies: Carabinieri<sup>56</sup> Legion Command Veneto, Carabinieri Provincial Command of Venice, Guardia di Finanza<sup>57</sup> of Venice;
- Territorial Commission of Verona;
- Direzione Interregionale del Lavoro<sup>58</sup> of Venice, and of Belluno, Padova, Rovigo, Treviso, Verona;

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<sup>54</sup> See the relevant facebook page: <https://it-it.facebook.com/groups/45849102179/>

<sup>55</sup> While public safety mayoral orders by definition are introduced to regulate a limited part of the urban space over a limited time span, municipal regulations are permanent.

<sup>56</sup> Carabinieri: it is an Italian law enforcement agency, together with Polizia di Stato and Guardia di Finanza. They primarily have domestic policing duties. As Guardia di Finanza. and differently from Polizia di Stato, Carabinieri are a military agency and respond to the Ministry of Defence. Yet, there are some overlaps in the roles of Carabinieri and Polizia di Stato and both manage an emergency number.

<sup>57</sup> Guardia di Finanza: it is an Italian law enforcement agency who responds to the Ministry of Economy and Finance, although it is a Military Agency. It carries out duties relating to economic and financial crimes. Additionally, it also patrols Italy’s territorial waters.

<sup>58</sup> Direzioni del Lavoro (Labour Directorates): they are a territorial articulation, at provincial and interregional levels, of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. Through Ispettorati del Lavoro (Labour Inspectorates), they carry out surveillance and regulation duties relating to the labour normative framework. They carry out prevention, promotion, informative activities to

- Questura of Belluno, and of Treviso, Venice, Padova, Verona;
- Università degli Studi di Padova, Università degli Studi di Verona;
- IPM (Istituto Penale Minorile di Treviso - Juvenile Detention Centre of Treviso), Prefettura of Venice, Procura (Public Prosecutor's Office) of Venice, USSM (Ufficio Servizio Sociale presso il Tribunale Minorenni – Social Services Office of the Juvenile Court) Veneto, Irecoop Veneto (a consortium of cooperatives in the Veneto Region), Bilateral body for the promotion of Tourism Venezia, Legacoop Veneto (an association of cooperatives), Ordine Assistenti Sociali Veneto; (Veneto Professional Association of Social Workers);
- other public and private actors: Dedalus Social Cooperative (Napoli), Cooperativa Lotta contro l'Emarginazione (Milano), Association La Strada Der Weg (Bolzano), Save the Children Italy.

### *The Governance approach*

N.A.Ve is a network centred on a local governance approach. Local authorities hold a central role in it, in terms of administrative but also operative roles. Generally speaking, N.A.Ve is based on the principle that responsibility for anti-trafficking “cases” should be taken up first and foremost by local authorities and more specifically social workers, because of their mission to protect vulnerable individuals and groups. Private and third sector actors, on their side, are entrusted with the management of reception facilities.

Other 2 anti-trafficking projects in Italy have adopted a similar approach to N.A.Ve, with some differences: the Lombardy Region and the Liguria Region projects, lead respectively by the Municipality of Milan and that of Viareggio. The former co-plans and co-designs interventions with implementing actors, that similarly to the Veneto Region are social cooperatives, while also monitoring implementation to ensure objectives are reached. The latter manages only the administrative part of the project, while fully delegating coordination, implementation and monitoring. The remaining projects in Italy are managed partly by regional authorities (8) and partly by private cooperatives (10). Importantly, the choice of the Municipality of Venice to be the leading partner derives not only from the central role accorded to municipalities in the network but also from the willingness to ensure that skills and competences acquired by anti-trafficking professionals translate into institutional learning and become a resource available to all staff and services of the public entity.

The governance of N.A.Ve is quite complex. It requires considerable administrative duties associated with the complex bureaucratic requirements of the public sector and this can come with less flexibility. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the flexibility that could afford social cooperatives in implementing programmes could have not been granted by municipalities, as re-gearing activities requires authorisation and changes to the budget that must in turn be authorised.

It also required constant coordination of all units. Arguably, this organisational structure has facilitated coordination more generally, but opinions differ, particularly among Case Managers: some have experienced a high level of fragmentation in interventions, due to the organisation of social protection programmes into phases, each associated with a specific unit. Fragmentation has also derived from strong coordination within the units, but weaker coordination among them (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020). Other Case Managers feel that the units-organisation is less

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ensure the correct application of labour norms. They also engage with a mediation role in labour disputes. Finally, they manage economic migration flows.

dispersive and has been useful to channel specialised support within them, with focus on the specific needs of professionals, depending on the programme phases in which they are involved (interview, Case Manager, 9/4 District, Bussolengo, Verona, 19/05/2020).

Another crucial aspect must be considered in terms of governance: the maintenance of the network. N.A.Ve comprises many institutional and non-institutional partners, as explained above, and new partners constantly join the network. This means considerable work should go ensuring the network is active and to consolidate collaborations with partners, such of which are particularly central to N.A.Ve: the Veneto Region and the Department of Equal Opportunities.

The Veneto Region is central as regional authorities are competent for socio-sanitary interventions - that are particularly relevant in the assistance of victims of trafficking – and should ensure equal access to services. Furthermore, it is regional authorities that manage specific welfare measures and they can therefore contribute to the integration of policies, to the channelling of resources, while also favouring the interlinking between the anti-trafficking system and other welfare systems (i.e. poverty plans, homelessness programmes and the protection of unaccompanied minors). Overlaps can emerge in terms of objectives and integration can lead to a more efficient use of resources and distribution of responsibilities and to the prevention of any duplication of interventions.

The Department of Equal Opportunities is also a central partner of N.A.Ve. While contacts between the Department and anti-trafficking projects in Italy has been associated with administrative duties (i.e. funding and monitoring reports), contacts with N.A.Ve have been more frequent and intense because the Municipality of Venice is the leading partner of the network but also manages the National Anti-trafficking Helpline, similarly funded by the Department. This strong connection has facilitated advocacy work on the side of N.A.Ve, not only as far as anti-trafficking in the Veneto Region is concerned, but also, more strategically, at wider national level. To this end, together with some representatives of the National Anti-trafficking Platform (an informal network of anti-trafficking projects in Italy), N.A.Ve professionals contributed to setting up an Anti-trafficking Round Table, comprising the following nominated political members: the Coordinator of N.A.Ve, who also represented the Municipality of Venice, nominated as representative of ANCI (Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani - National Association of Italian Municipalities); officers of the Veneto, Emilia-Romagna and Sicily regions, nominated by the Public Prosecutor's Office; representatives of local and provincial entities as well as private third sector actors, such as Caritas (a catholic faith-based organisation), CNCA (Coordinamento Nazionale Comunità di Accoglienza - National Coordination Asylum Seeker Reception facilities), the Association Giovanni 23, UNHCR, Save the Children, Comunità Sant'Egidio (an international movement); representatives of the ministries of Interior, Defence, Foreign Affairs, Justice and Labour. Being a political Table, its activities were interrupted following the fall of the Italian Government in 2019 and it has not been reinstated since.

### *Critical issues and open challenges for the governance of N.A.Ve*

Two main challenges lie ahead in the governance of N.A.Ve: the first is linked to the specific role of municipalities, the second regards collaborations between the anti-trafficking and other protection systems.

As far as the role of municipalities is concerned, it must be explained that the current normative framework does not require municipalities to carry out anti-trafficking interventions, while they have an obligation to protect particularly vulnerable individuals such as unaccompanied minors. On this basis, it has been hard for N.A.Ve to ensure the partnership of municipalities. Partnership is very much

dependent on the political orientation of the governing coalition and the willingness to deal with phenomena such as trafficking. When N.A.Ve was launched, besides the Municipality of Venice, only those of Verona, Vicenza and Padova signed a partnership agreement. Networking and negotiation efforts have been on-going with the Municipalities of Treviso and Rovigo since.

At present, all the provincial capital municipalities of the Veneto Region are partners of N.A.Ve, but their level of engagement varies considerably. On 2016 and 2017, municipalities contributed to the network with some co-funding, upon signing the partnership, but this rule was removed. A much higher engagement, in terms of both economic and human resources, has been accorded by the Municipality of Verona. Hence formal engagement has differed sensibly from practical operative engagement and the actual number of hours dedicated by Case Managers to beneficiaries and overall project activities, as it has emerged repeatedly during meetings (fieldwork notes, Social Inclusion Unit coordination meeting, 08/08/2019 and 24/10/2019).

Proposals were advanced by the N.A.Ve professionals - and the INSight Research Team stressed their importance during the fieldwork - to dedicate more time to building stronger partnerships with municipalities, particularly whereby expertise is more limited and collaborations are still in their infancy (fieldwork notes, N.A.Ve monitoring meeting, 11/09/2020) and to develop local N.A.Ve teams, comprising all the N.A.Ve professionals active in a given territory who could support each other locally. Both proposals could prevent the risk for beneficiaries to receive less support because they have been “unlucky” to be transferred to a territory with less expertise (interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Padova, 20/05/2020) and it would help addressing the current fragmentation of the network, while raising standards in all territories, to prevent the N.A.Ve “ship” (N.A.Ve in Italian means ship) from evolving into a “small fleet of small boats” instead of a more solid vessel.

The second challenge for N.A.Ve is more strategic in nature. Networking and advocacy efforts have been made to promote the interlinking of the anti-trafficking and other protection systems. For example, before the launch of N.A.Ve 3, people survivors of trafficking were added to the list of beneficiaries of the regional poverty plan, thus granting their access to related welfare measures. Similar actions can be useful for beneficiaries, hosted either in N.A.Ve or asylum seeker reception facilities, whereby they have reached some degree of autonomy and do not need the full support of a social protection programme, but only some partial assistance. In other words, the assumption should be overcome that no beneficiary has any sort of (economic or social) resource and assistance should be tailored to their needs (interview, Case Managers, Municipality of Venice, 26/05/2020-24/06/2020).

## Section 5: The N.A.Ve Units

### The Outreach Unit

#### *Evolution of the Outreach Unit*

The onset of this Unit coincided with the formalisation of the N.A.Ve Network in 2016, when street outreach activities, in Veneto, started being coordinated and organised based on shared objectives. Before 2016, there was no centralised coordination of outreach activities in Veneto, although outreach professionals collaborated and shared their approaches (interview, Outreach Unit Coordinator, 06/05/2020).

In the following years, the social cooperative Equality took over the contract with responsibility over the recruitment of staff, building on the experience of Mimosa Association<sup>59</sup>.

Street outreach activities in the region first took off thanks to funding deriving from Regional Law 41/1997. Specific funding was then assigned by municipalities to NGOs across the region. The law aimed to address the health risks connected to prostitution and provide health protection to sex workers and their clients (interview, Mimosa/Equality President, 25/05/2020). It also aimed to raise awareness, across the society, on prostitution and how to prevent it. Further funding became available through art. 13 of Law 228/2003, which supported street outreach work with women who were potential victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation (ibidem).

A street outreach unit was first established by Mimosa Association, in the 1990s. Establishing a relationship with sex workers, including also but not only victims of trafficking, has been key to Mimosa's "harm reduction" approach, that focuses on individual needs, primarily those associated with healthcare, to promote preventive measures, such as contraception and facilitated access to the voluntary interruption of pregnancy - to deter unsafe abortion with informal out-of-clinic providers or by means of do-it-yourself practices (i.e. use of medicines without consulting doctors) (interview, Outreach Unit Coordinator, Equality, Padova, 01/06/2020).

In the early 2000, Mimosa started organising street outreach activities also outside the Padova area, in the provincial territories of Vicenza (in 2005), Treviso (in 2011) and Venice (in 2019), when the Municipality outsourced the service to Equality ATI. Mimosa has its registered office in Padova. In 2008, a consortium of social cooperatives was formed, Equality ATI, that is responsible, among other things, for the implementation of outreach activities in Veneto. The ATI includes Mimosa, in Padova, and Azalea, in Verona.

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<sup>59</sup> Mimosa was named after the first Albanian female sex worker who asked for help to break free from exploitation, in 1996.

## *Composition of the Unit*

The Outreach Unit is composed of Outreach Unit professionals and Cultural-linguistic mediators (see section The Cultural-linguistic mediation Unit). The social cooperative Azalea coordinates the outreach activities in Verona, while the Equality coordinates activities in Padova, Treviso, Vicenza, Venice and Rovigo, where an experimental project on indoor prostitution has been carried out - as no street prostitution has been observed in this area. The project consists in regular monitoring of relevant websites and client forums - similarly to other more experienced outreach units in Italy (fieldwork notes, national coordination meeting of outreach units, 24-25/10/2019). It is carried out in collaboration with Caritas (a faith-based organisation) and also with the Questura of Rovigo. Collaboration with the Questura (and the Labour Inspectorate) is central to ensure access to massage centres and night clubs, as they are private sites and authorisation is required to enter.

Both Equality and Azalea are also responsible for the recruitment of the N.A.Ve Crisis and Evaluation professionals in the respective territories.

Outreach activities are structured in two types of interventions: on sexual and on labour exploitation. For the former, street outreach units operate in various provincial territories, with day and night shifts. For the latter, the Outreach Unit engages on multi-agency collaborations with law enforcement agencies and the Labour Inspectorate to organise inspections to employment sites (i.e. agricultural fields, construction sites, restaurants, etc.). While Outreach Unit professionals have been working with people, particularly women, victims of sexual exploitation since the end of the 1990s, work on labour exploitation is more recent. It started only in 2016, following the introduction of the National Anti-trafficking Action Plan and of **Law 199/2016**<sup>60</sup>, focusing on the fight against employment in the informal market and labour exploitation.

The Mimosa outreach activities are carried out by professionals and volunteers. Both professionals and volunteers (a total of 400 in the period 1996-2020) have been trained to adopt a harm reduction approach, which is not common in all outreach work in Italy. Volunteers are both males and females: females help contacting women and accompanying them to medical consultations, males generally provide support as drivers. Beyond the gender component, consideration is given also to the personality of volunteers, to favour their positive engagement in activities.

## *Objectives*

The N.A.Ve Outreach Unit has the following objectives: to ensure full respect of individuals' fundamental human rights, to promote individuals' self-determination, to promote equal access to health services and advocate for it with institutions, both for the targets of N.A.Ve and more generally for vulnerable individuals. A more implicit objective includes the circulation of relevant health and legal information and the observation of evolving dynamics in the streets (presence of people, conditions of work, etc.) to constantly adapt interventions, based on emerging needs, and to adapt, where necessary, interventions.

In order to reach these objectives, three main steps have been taken: (a) coordination of the Unit to address specific territorial challenges and provide support to professionals (specific targets, policy

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<sup>60</sup> Legge 29 Ottobre 2016, 199 "Disposizioni in materia di contrasto ai fenomeni del lavoro nero, dello sfruttamento del lavoro in agricoltura e di riallineamento retributivo nel settore agricolo" (Law 29 October 2016, 199 "Provisions to fight against irregular work, labour exploitation in agriculture and promote salary re-alignment in agriculture). Available at: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2016/11/3/16G00213/sg> Last access: 10/12/2020.

measures, etc.); (b) collection of data through a shared database; (c) increasing collaboration with Cultural-linguistic mediators.

### *Organisation and Approach*

Street outreach activities are carried out six days a week. Each territory is covered twice a week, mainly with night shifts, with the exception of Verona and Venice, as the presence of sex workers has been recorded also during the day.

The methodology used is circular and generative and it involves:

- standard health and safety procedures to ensure that both professionals and the people they meet in the street can work safely and are treated with respect for human rights,
- participatory interventions, by recognising the agency of beneficiaries and encouraging their self-determination,
- harm reduction and action-research approach, characterised by the constant interaction between professionals and target groups to strive for effective interventions based on the targets' feedback and requests.
- identification of specific needs,
- strategies for the provision of more and more protected settings for outreach contacts;
- de-construction of stereotypes and judgemental attitudes (verbal and non-verbal) by professionals,
- training for professionals and volunteers, including supervision, support and actions to motivate them,
- multi-agency work with partners, involving not only collaboration but most importantly the definition and use commonly agreed and shared procedures.

Apart from Outreach professions, Cultural-linguistic mediators are also active in street outreach activities, particularly since the last year, but not on a regular basis (interview, Outreach Unit Professional, Padova, 08/06/2020), exception made for the territory of Verona, where a professional with tasks of cultural-linguistic mediation has been active since the beginning of outreach activities. More recently, the *ad hoc* involvement of Socio-legal professionals has also been experimented, due to increasing requests of support on regularisation expressed by the target groups.

Outreach activities in Padova, Treviso and Venice are normally carried out by Equality/Mimosa and involve an Outreach professional, a volunteer who supports the professional, a volunteer driver and sometimes a Socio-legal professional or a Cultural-linguistic mediator. The volunteers remain in the car, the professional gets out of the car and carries out the actual outreach contact. In Verona, activities are carried out by Azalea and involve a professional, a Cultural-linguistic mediator, either of Albanian or Romanian or Nigerian origin, and sometimes a volunteer who supports the professional or a volunteer driver. As in the Equality/Mimosa unit, volunteers remain in the car, while the professional and/or the Cultural-linguistic mediator gets out of the car.

Both outreach units use a car provided by the respective cooperative (with no logo) that people in the streets learn to recognise and can easily distinguish from police cars and (not always) clients' cars.

Outreach contacts are friendly. In the case of first contacts, professionals give a short explanation of their role - Mimosa provides a short leaflet - and provide their telephone number; in subsequent contacts, professionals ask about the person's general health state and well-being, exchange a few more words and offer some tea and biscuits, if the person is willing. Some differences are evident in the approaches adopted by the two units. The Equality/Mimosa unit offers condoms and lubricants at the end of the contact; the Nigerian mediator of the Azalea unit provides condoms and lubricants as



soon as a contact is established and only then continue with the conversation, if the person is willing. It is interesting to notice that people call the Outreach Unit in Verona “the people of the condoms” (interview, Outreach Unit Professionals, Verona, 04/06/2020). This representation would deserve further exploration with Outreach professionals.

### *Outreach activities by non-N.A. Ve associations*

In Padova, apart from N.A.Ve, some associations are active in street outreach activities: Percorso Vita<sup>61</sup>, Associazione Tu io<sup>62</sup>, Associazione Cattolica dei Giovani di Padova. These are catholic-faith based or cultural associations, operating with volunteers, whose approach is generally not based on the principle of harm reduction. They aim to encourage and help people abandon prostitution, regardless of whether it is connected to forms of exploitation, and start a new life with their help. Some volunteers pray with sex workers, sometimes they provide clothes and can facilitate access to an emergency shelter (interview, Percorso Vita Outreach Unit Coordinator, N.A.Ve, 06/05/2020). In Verona, only a catholic-faith based association, Papa Giovanni 23, is active, apart from N.A.Ve, with a team of over 20 volunteers. They conduct street outreach activities, generally with two groups of 3 or 4 volunteers, once a week, on a different day than Azalea, as mutually agreed, because they pursue different objectives. As the associations operating in Padova, its main goal is to convince sex workers to abandon prostitution. They also offer the possibility of accessing one of the shelters that the association manages. They do not provide health assistance, nor condoms that are contrary to their religious ethics. They engage in informal conversations with people and offer, if they agree, to share a prayer. As observed during out fieldwork some Nigerian young Nigerian women do appreciate this aspect, as they are very religious. Others decline the offer (fieldwork notes, outreach activity with Papa Giovanni 23, 25/06/2019). Although the approach of this unit is very friendly, observation suggested that some volunteers can be sometimes judgemental as they sets clear boundaries between morally “bad work” (prostitution) and “good work” (other jobs). The risk is to consider prostitution bad by definition and to leave little space for people’s self-determination - which is incompatible with N.A.Ve’s approach. While this approach may be criticised for putting pressure on women, it must be noticed that the Associazione Papa Giovanni XXIII has succeeded in convincing some girls (only a few) to abandon prostitution, including a few very young Nigerian girls who eventually entered the N.A.Ve social protection programme, thus helping them break free of exploitation. It remains to be seen whether in the medium-long term they will fall again victim of exploitation.

### *Target groups*

During the 1990s, the majority of people contacted in the streets by the then outreach unit in Venice included largely women of Albanian nationality. This target has decreased over the years, to then increase again more recently, shortly before the spread of the pandemic, in the early months of 2020. As table 13 shows, a total of 688 people (whose vast majority were females) was seen in the streets of Verona, Vicenza, Treviso, Padova and Venice, in the period March to August 2019. A total of 217 people was assisted, while 567 is the total number of interventions carried out, including medical consultation/test, support to obtain the national health card, evaluation interviews with N.A.Ve Crisis

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<sup>61</sup> For more information on the project see: <http://www.percorsovitaonlus.it/> Last access: 02/02/2021.

<sup>62</sup> For more information on the project see: <https://www.facebook.com/associazionetuio/> Last access: 02/02/2021.

and Evaluation professionals. The highest presence of people was recorded in Verona, with almost double the percentage of other cities, exception made for Vicenza. In Verona the largest majority of people were of Nigerian origins (111) and it has been so since 2015-2016. The Oba of Benin declaration, in 2018<sup>63</sup>, was expected to have a positive impact on victims of trafficking and to encourage them to break free of exploitation. However, this happened only to a limited extent. As repeatedly reported by the N.A.Ve Outreach Unit Professionals and Nigerian Cultural-linguistic mediator - who in various occasions made sure that the young women they met in the streets were aware of the declaration -, only some girls from Edo State took the declaration seriously. Girls from other Nigerian states thought the declaration was not valid for them. At the same time, even some girls from Edo State did not feel liberated, thus testifying how strong the power of the traditional juju oath, to which they were forced prior to departure from Nigeria, is on them<sup>64</sup>.

In Padova Nigerian girls represented the largest group (54), but the group of Romanians (36) was also consistent. Another large group, particularly in Treviso and Venice, comprised South American individuals (including both women and transgender). Furthermore, the Bulgarian group was present in Venice (and a small group in Padova too), where it has been present since more than a decade. Concerning assistance and interventions, a few words must be said. Resources for outreach units in Veneto are not proportionally distributed based on the number of people in the streets. This is an aspect that, in our opinion, should be reviewed, considering the very higher number of people present in Verona (in general) compared to other cities. At the same time, it should be considered that in Verona, as explained by the local Outreach Unit professionals, more than 2 interventions were carried out for people when assisted, while in other cities interventions were one or two per person on average. This suggests reconsidering to what extent the different approaches adopted by the outreach unit in Verona does contribute or not to favouring interventions and/or to what extent the very higher number of people in the streets is the main variable that should be considered to evaluate the capacity of professionals to carry out interventions. According to the standard set by N.A.Ve, outreach units in each city should achieve a minimum of 20% interventions on the total number of people met to ensure that harm reduction is effectively granted. While this goal was met in all cities with most groups, we believe further reflections should be promoted in this regard. We wonder how people's requests vary over time and to what extent Outreach Unit Professionals are in the position to re-adapt their approach fast enough.

2020 data could not be made available when this report was being prepared. Notwithstanding, as testified by Outreach Unit Professionals, the number of people in the streets dropped to almost zero during the lockdown (March – May 2020) – with some very rare exceptions of Romanian women. In Summer 2020, people started working in the streets again, but numbers were very low, no more than 10 (if not less) individuals in each city. It remains to be seen whether, in summer 2021, as the limitations imposed for the pandemic will be progressively lifted, the number of people in streets will increase again to reach previous numbers or not.

The presence of men is more limited but is increasing.

Romanian women have been present in the streets since the first decade of the year 2000 and continued after Romania joined the European Union, in 2007. Usually, this target is characterised by strong seasonal mobility. A second main target has been that of Nigerian women, who recorded a peak

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<sup>63</sup> In 2018, the Oba of Benin - that is to say the highest traditional and religious authority in Edo State- invoked a curse on traffickers to liberate women and girls who had been and could be subjected to the juju oath, that is to say a traditional ritual used by traffickers to make victims swear they will not report to the police.

<sup>64</sup> See note 61 on the juju oath.

in the period 2015-2016 and are still present, particularly in the territory of Verona, although with a considerable decrease with respect to previous years, even more in coincidence with the COVID-19 pandemic. Other groups comprise very few Italians and Chinese. Bulgarian women, almost exclusively of Roma origins, are visible especially in Marghera (Venice), during day time. Some Hungarian women, mostly of Roma origins, can be found in the area of Treviso, on a seasonal basis.

City	Nationality	Nr. of people in the streets	Nr. of people assisted*	Total nr. of interventions	% of interventions on total nr. of people in streets
Verona	Nigeria	111	33	97	30%
	Romania-Moldova	38	12	45	32%
	South America	15	1	1	6%
	Bulgaria	---	---	---	---
	Albania	10	1	4	10%
	China	2	1	1	50%
	Other	22	3	8	14%
<b>Total</b>		<b>198</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>26%</b>
Vicenza	Nigeria	36	17	41	47%
	Romania-Moldova	51	11	29	22%
	South America	46	14	26	30%
	Bulgaria	---	---	---	---
	Albania	3	1	1	n.a.
	China	1	---	---	n.a.
	Other	6	---	---	n.a.
<b>Total</b>		<b>143</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>30%</b>
Treviso	Nigeria	15	8	30	53%
	Romania-Moldova	47	9	30	19%
	South America	21	10	14	5%
	Bulgaria	---	---	---	n.a.
	Albania	11	3	7	27%
	China	---	---	---	n.a.
	Other	14	2	3	n.a.
<b>Total</b>		<b>108</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>30%</b>
Padova	Nigeria	54	23	52	43%
	Romania-Moldova	36	3	16	8%
	South America	9	4	7	44%
	Bulgaria	16	---	---	n.a.
	Albania	4	1	2	25%
	China	---	---	---	n.a.
	Other	4	3	5	75%
<b>Total</b>		<b>123</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>28%</b>
Venice	Nigeria	20	19	61	95%

	Romania-Moldova	11	8	20	73%
	South America	34	16	38	47%
	Bulgaria	35	9	17	26%
	Albania	1	1	1	n.a.
	China	7	4	11	n.a.
	Other	8	---	---	n.a.
<i>Total</i>		<i>116</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>148</i>	<i>49%</i>
<b>Total for all provinces</b>		<b>688</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>n.a.</b>

TABLE 13: MAPPING OF OUTREACH WORK IN VENETO (MAR. - AUG. 2019) (SOURCE: N.A.VE DATA)

\*ACCOMPANIED TO MEDICAL CONSULTATION/TEST, SUPPORTED TO OBTAIN THE NATIONAL HEALTH CARD, ACCOMPANIED TO EVALUATION INTERVIEW WITH N.A.VE CRISIS AND EVALUATION PROFESSIONAL

Women from Latin America, particularly Peru and Brazil, are another relevant group. Not all of them are victims of exploitation, at least not in street prostitution - indoor prostitution is more common among this group. Finally, transgender people from Latin America are also present.

The number of children in the streets has never been high in the last 20 years, as confirmed by the National Anti-trafficking Helpline, contrary to what Save the Children stated in its 2019 report. Some children, mostly of Roma origins, were met most recently by Outreach professionals in Vicenza (fieldwork notes, outreach activity with Equality/Mimosa, 31/01/2020). Some young Nigerian girls in their 16/17 were also encountered in the streets, mainly in Verona, but mostly in the period 2015-2016 (interview, Outreach Unit Professional, Verona, 04/06/2020). The concern has been raised by some Outreach professionals that some children may be “invisible” and that also their exploitation could be “invisible” (interview, Outreach Unit Coordinator, Equality, Padova, 01/06/2020). Similar concerns have been expressed in recent reports by Save the Children (2021) and Lost in Europe (2021) indicating that unaccompanied minors may arrive as well as continue their journeys throughout Europe without adequate support and that many abandon reception facilities.

Moving to specific territories of the Veneto Region, Treviso mostly counts transgender people from Eastern Europe and Latin America and only few from Nigeria. Similar target groups can be found in Padova and Vicenza, although in Vicenza the presence of transgender people, particularly from Brazil, is higher. In Venice, the number of Bulgarian women stands out. The Nigerian nationality is most prevalent in Verona.

Outreach Units have also reported of a few men exploited sexually. It is the case in specific street of Padova where Romanian men were encountered, that have been “taken over” by the drug trade. Male prostitution was recorded in Mestre and Marghera (Venice) too, but it eventually disappeared. According to professionals’ hypotheses, their exploitation may have moved indoor or in a public park – where the Outreach Unit does not currently operate. Commuting in between cities for sex work seems uncommon. Sex workers usually work in the town where they live, but there are exceptions. If they commute it is likely to happen whereby there is a capillarity network of exploitation, such as in Padova and Vicenza and it is possible that the same person is exploited in both territories, depending on criminal organisations strategies. Examples were also reported of girls commuting from Trento and Bolzano (north of Verona) and back.

Varied forms of exploitation, involving women but also men and transgender as well as diversified locations, both indoor and outdoor, and dynamics certainly encourage Outreach professionals to

carefully monitor street work and never give any assumption for granted as far as evolving targets and forms of exploitation are concerned.

To draw a comparison with the wider national territory, data by the National Anti-trafficking Helpline<sup>65</sup> report that a total of 3,178 people were present in the streets in May 2017, 3,709 in October 2017, 3,294 in June 2018, to then decrease from 2,800 to 2,000 in the following years until 2019. In June 2020, about 600 people were reported, but this data is hardly reliable given the limitations imposed by the pandemic. In terms of gender, for the period 2017-2019, the majority of people counted in the streets were women: in June 2020 they corresponded to 74.7% of the total, compared to transgender (24.26%) and men (about 1%), reflecting a similar balance to the previous years. As far as origins are concerned, the majority of people, in June 2020, were from Europe (68.6%) or Africa (24.7%), while in 2017 percentages were more similar (44.7% from Africa versus 47.4% from Europe).

### *Needs expressed by target groups*

All the people contacted in the streets by the outreach units, in the period 2019-2020, that it so say during our fieldwork, invariable expressed a common need: access to health care. Transgender people often asked for sexually transmitted diseases tests. Eastern European women, who generally have a higher level of education than women of other nationalities (i.e. Nigerians), generally put forward more articulated requests for support, including pap tests and swabs. It must be certainly stressed that requests on their side have decreased over time as they have experienced less and less difficulties in accessing health care, since the entry or Romania and other Eastern European countries in the European Union – although some issues are still pending concerning access to the national health card. Nigerian women hardly ever asked for tests, as their knowledge on sexual health is normally rather limited. Some accepted to be accompanied to a gynaecological visit, but most often resorted to ask only upon discovering they were pregnant or when doubting they could be, in order to interrupt the pregnancy.

Support was also sought, particularly by Nigerians and Latin Americans, regarding legal support.

### *The Outreach Unit and the COVID-19 pandemic*

The activities of the Outreach Unit had to be reformulated as a lockdown was imposed in Italy due to the COVID-19 pandemic, from March to May 2020, as we described in a recently published article aimed to contribute to raising awareness on the matter<sup>66</sup>. Sex workers could no longer work in the streets. During a webinar organised by the INSigHT Action, in November 2020, a Deputy Prosecutor reported the fear of Nigerian prostitution having moved indoor, with Nigerian girls ending up in *connection houses*, that is to say indoor facilities used by traffickers for exploitation<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> Data was provided by the National Anti-trafficking Helpline, with reference to the mapping of street prostitution carried out by Italian outreach units. The Helpline invites all Italian outreach units to carry out a dedicated monitoring session twice a year on 2 specific dates set by the Helpline as to draw a quantitative overview of the phenomenon of street prostitution.

<sup>66</sup> *Contro la Tratta nella pandemia. Sfruttamento lavorativo e sessuale: quali sfide e strategie di adattamento ai tempi della pandemia? La riflessione del Network Antitratta per il Veneto* (Against trafficking during the pandemic. Labour and sexual exploitation: which are the challenges and strategies to adapt at a time of pandemic?), written by the INSigHT Research Team in collaboration with Equality and the Municipality of Venice (28/05/2020). Available at: <https://www.ingenere.it/articoli/contro-la-tratta-nella-pandemia> Last access: 12/12/2020.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Lina Trovato, Deputy Prosecutor of the Public Prosecutor Office of Catania (Italy) 11/12/2020. Organised with Equality ATI, in preparation of the INSigHT webinar with law enforcement agencies on 27/01/2021.

Outreach professionals had to stop working in the streets too. A deliberate spreading of erroneous and misleading information on migrants, which associated the spread of the virus with them<sup>68</sup>, could negatively influence clients' demand for sex work too, but according to Outreach professionals, clients' demand did not stop, but simply changed: prostitution, in part, moved indoor, as will be explained.

The concern soon emerged that forms of exploitation would continue, possibly in modified forms, or even become fiercer, through the use of modern communication technologies, that could raise the levels of violence and coercion, as also suggested by UNODC (2020)<sup>69</sup>.

Since the very first phases of the pandemic, it was evident that existing social inequalities would worsen, in face of the mobility limitations imposed by the COVID-19, particularly for people of migrant origins and victims of trafficking, given their vulnerability. While growing inspections in urban contexts and at borders, may have restricted cross-border movements, doubts were cast on whether this would impact irregular migration. Moreover, the question was raised on the extent to which an increasing demand for low-cost informal work, in conditions of severe exploitation, could be expected with the re-starting of economic activities that were forced to stop for some months<sup>70</sup>.

Asking for help became more difficult for people "locked up" in apartments, often in conditions of exploitation, who could no longer count on contacts with Outreach professionals to have access to support and relevant health information.

Calls to the National Anti-trafficking Helpline soon reflected the situation: the vast majority of calls were not pertinent to anti-trafficking work. Particularly during the months of March and April 2020, and later in November of the same year, people called primarily to ask for information on the pandemic<sup>71</sup>. At the same time, some people were probably discouraged even from asking health information due to fake news circulating within communities, as it happened within the Nigerian community<sup>72</sup>.

The N.A.Ve Outreach Unit strived to identify the emerging needs of the men and women that professionals could no longer meet in the streets, in face of growing economic difficulties, the suspension of some protection procedures (such as access to asylum applications, but also to the renewal of residence permits and increasing difficulties to enter social protection and reception facilities, due to strict health requirements).

Professionals' work largely moved online. Contacts with the target groups were made mostly by phone, with the support of Cultural-linguistic mediators, whose role proved important to ensure continuity in contacts and to lend an ear in moments of difficulty, fear and loneliness. More generally, it was also an occasion for N.A.Ve to re-consider the central role of mediators.

Sometimes video calls provide the chance to make people's living spaces more visible and better capture their state of mind, while also providing hints on their "domestic" situation, including threats of eviction, situation of exploitation, etc. (interview, Outreach Unit Professional, Equality, 8/06/2020). Especially for victims of trafficking, conditions of socio-economic precarity became soon even more evident that they were already before the breakout of the pandemic. Stranded with little (if any)

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<sup>68</sup> Ricorda M. *How the COVID-19 "Infodemic" Targets Migrants*. ICMPD Expert Opinion. Published on 18/05/2020. Available at: <https://www.icmpd.org/news/how-the-covid-19-infodemic-targets-migrants> Last access: 10/02/2021.

<sup>69</sup> UNODC (2020) *Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons. Preliminary Findings and Messaging Based on Rapid Stocktaking*. Available at: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/Advocacy-Section/HTMSS\\_Thematic\\_Brief\\_on\\_COVID-19.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/Advocacy-Section/HTMSS_Thematic_Brief_on_COVID-19.pdf) Last access: 10/02/2021.

<sup>70</sup> UNODC (2020) *How COVID-19 Restrictions and the Economic Consequences Are Likely to Impact Migrant Smuggling and Cross-Border Trafficking in Persons to Europe and North America*. Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/islamicrepublicofiran/2020/05/Covid-related-impact-on-SoM-TiP.PDF> Last access: 10/02/2021.

<sup>71</sup> This information was drawn from the 2020 Report of the National Anti-trafficking Helpline.

<sup>72</sup> Examples were reported by Nigerian girls hosted in N.A.Ve reception facilities of messages that associated the virus with "white people" only and that Nigerians would be protected by God, for instance.

economic resource, due to the forced suspension of street prostitution, many of them started experiencing difficulties in terms of primary needs, such as access to food and welfare support measures (i.e. payment of bills). At the beginning of the pandemic, this was particularly the case for Nigerian women who expressed more fear with regard to the pandemic and literally “closed themselves up” in precarious flats - with informal rental agreements -, often with fellow nationals and/or their *madame* and, consequently, with an increased risk of exploitation. Calls for help by this specific target group diminished in the following months. Arguably, they were “helped” by exploiters who provided economic support and/or accepted the payment of their pending debt in smaller instalments.

Through the distribution of “food vouchers”, the Outreach Units managed to maintain direct contacts with this and other target groups. Paradoxically the peculiar situation created by the pandemic somehow allowed Outreach professionals to “get closer” to indoor environments and try and explore the situations of exploitation in these contexts that are normally inaccessible.

Outreach work during the pandemic focused, as never before, on indoor prostitution, not only because the units could not do outreach work in the streets, but also because of the fear that sex work may have transferred indoor. Additionally, monitoring indoor prostitution requires considerable dedicated time that Outreach professionals hardly had before the spread of the pandemic, considering their focus on street prostitution.

Indoor outreach activities comprised the monitoring of website, online advertisements and clients’ forums, that were in turn propaedeutic to establish contacts with sex workers.

As explained by Outreach professionals, ads were associated mostly with women from Eastern Europe and Latin America, while an evident decrease became evident of ads by Chinese women, who turned totally invisible even before the lockdown, with the closure of massage centres. No ads were found by Nigerian women - who had been rarely noticed even before the pandemic. Apparently, Nigerian women tend not to use paid forums and privilege channels such as Facebook and other social media.

In half of the cases, professionals ended up contacting the most visible people in the ads and, through these first contacts and the building of a relationship of trust with them, less visible people could be later reached out.

Concerning online dynamics, anti-trafficking professionals were faced also with concerns regarding the increase in demand for online *live-streaming* pedopornography<sup>73</sup>, but none of N.A.Ve professionals reported any such case. Other off-line emerging dynamics included: the lack of (job) alternatives encouraged some women to take steps to ask for help and move out of exploitation; some women expressed the willingness for support to reorganise sex work in their home environment, particularly women from Eastern Europe; strong networks of solidarity emerged among trafficked women who showed greater concern about returning to work in streets, both for health reasons and for the likely exposure to even fiercer exploitation.

### ***Collaborations of the Outreach Unit***

One of the main strengths of the N.A.Ve Outreach Unit is its capillary street outreach work in Veneto and its consolidated collaborations with local socio-health authorities and districts as well as with law enforcement agencies.

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<sup>73</sup> Giammarinaro M. (2020) *The Impact and Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficked and Exploited Persons*. Position Paper. Published on 8/06/2020. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Trafficking/COVID-19-Impact-trafficking.pdf> Last access: 10/01/2021.

### *Collaboration with the Regional Health System*

The Veneto Region is the competent institution for the provision of socio-health services and it operates through local socio-health authorities and districts. Various meetings have been organised with local socio-health authorities and districts to improve access to services, but a number of critical issues remain open. The request has been repeatedly advanced to standardise procedures. Yet, difficulties are still evident regarding access to sexually transmitted diseases tests and to the voluntary interruption of pregnancy. Professionals have experienced delays with beneficiaries who do not have a valid residence permit. Free access to the service is granted only upon renewal, but this can take several months, while the voluntary interruption of pregnancy, as defined by law, can only be undertaken by the third month of pregnancy. Besides, it is not considered as a “guaranteed minimum health service”, as pregnancy is not life-threatening, with the result that women may pay for abortion (if they have the resources) or else recur to unsafe medical practices (i.e. use of unprescribed medicines). Cases were recalled of a few women who lost their lives in this manner (interview, Outreach Unit Professional, Verona, 04/06/2020).

More recently, the Outreach Unit has cast increasing attention to another health threat: the growing abuse of illicit drugs (fieldwork notes, Outreach Unit coordination meeting, 31/01/2020). Several beneficiaries have been affected by the risk of addiction, including also young Nigerian women hosted in N.A.Ve reception facilities (interview, Reception facility for Women “Casa della Giovane” Director, 25/06/2022) and work has been done in the last year to develop collaborations with the SERD dedicated services.

A critical aspect of socio-health services is the lack of cultural-linguistic mediation services. When accompanying women, the Outreach Unit always involves a N.A.Ve mediator, but this gap in mediation services shows well that is not a structural feature of the Italian health system, with potential severe consequences users of foreign origins who do not speak Italian fluently. This fragmentation in mediation services and more generally in access has become even more evident with the COVID-19 pandemic, as explained above.

Advocacy efforts have been conducted on the issuance of the national health card, a crucial document for free access to public health services. The card is issued only to migrants with regular residence permit and normally the residency status is also required - that is to say a certificate proving that a person resides in a given city in a permanent way. However, migrants often experience delays in their regularisation and they have difficulties in obtaining the residency status although they are entitled to it (depending on the specific legal status). Several official requests have been addressed to the Veneto Region to solve this overcome these limits, but without any positive outcome to date. This is particularly worrisome, as the Veneto Region is one of the partners of N.A.Ve. It clearly questions the terms of the partnership and the capacity of N.A.Ve to influence it. It must be also underlined that N.A.Ve has so far preferred to avoid the formalisation of any specific protocol of collaboration for its beneficiaries alone - that the Regional Authority may be more prone to sign - to avoid any form of positive discrimination that would leave critical issues unresolved for other beneficiaries. It remains that problems are still pending.



## *Collaboration in prostitution and anti-prostitution policy-making*

The Outreach Unit, and N.A.Ve more generally, have been involved in policy-making. The case of the zoning policy in Vicenza is noteworthy. The municipal administration invited Equality to contribute to the process of identifying a suitable area of the city to experiment the creation of a regulated and protected space for street prostitution, while also addressing residents' complaints. In the view of Equality professionals, this was an opportunity to improve the early identification of victims of sexual exploitation and their access to health service, by means of a dedicated drop-in or mobile service, that could also protect them from violent aggressions and thefts. Yet, none of the proposals put forward were taken on board and the municipal initiative merely took the shape of a securitisation of the urban space, while leaving sex workers unprotected.

Timid has been the contribution to the anti-prostitution policy in Venice instead, including the introduction of a local regulation by the Local Police, in 2019. The Local Police responds to the Municipality of Venice, that is also the leading partner of N.A.Ve, hence the Outreach Unit was in a delicate political position. The decision was taken to restrain from advocating for a more inclusive policy. It was at that time that the implementation of outreach activities in Venice was transferred to Equality (interview, Outreach Unit Professional, Padova, 08/06/2020).

A few lines must be spent on anti-prostitution and more generally urban safety policies in Italy, to stress the relevance of this normative area in the fight against trafficking. In 2008, the notion of "urban safety" entered the Italian normative framework. Urban safety has been increasingly associated with urban decorum and public order, thus legitimising, from a political and legal point of view, the implementation of policies that restrict personal liberties. Ministerial Decree 92/2008, the so-called Maroni Decree - converted into Law 24 July 2008, 125<sup>74</sup> - listed a series of behaviours that were to be considered as harmful to urban safety, intended as a "public good", and provided improved powers to mayors to regulate them through the implementation of public safety mayoral orders. In 2017, the then Ministry of Interior Minniti signed Decree Law 17 February 2017, 13 - converted into Law 13 April 2017, 46<sup>75</sup>. The Decree revised the list of behaviours to be sanctioned, adding, among others, "ostentatious" street sex work, while back in 1958 the regulation of prostitution had been abolished and prostitution had been legalised<sup>76</sup>. The same law further extended the power of mayors beyond the introduction of contingent public safety mayoral orders and provided them with the instrument of the so-called DASPO<sup>77</sup>, a measure that the police can use to "remove" people from specific areas of towns and cities, for 48 hours or more, whereby they prevent the free access and use of those specific areas.

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<sup>74</sup> Legge 24 luglio 2008, n. 125, "Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 23 maggio 2008, n. 92, recante misure urgenti in materia di sicurezza pubblica". Link: <https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/08125l.htm> Ultimo accesso/last access: 20/03/2021.

<sup>75</sup> Law 13 April 2017, 46. Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 17 febbraio 2017, n. 13, recante disposizioni urgenti per l'accelerazione dei procedimenti in materia di protezione internazionale, nonché per il contrasto dell'immigrazione illegale (Conversion into law, with changes, of Decree Law 17 February 2017, 13, with urgent provision on the acceleration of international protection procedures, and for the contrast of irregular migration). Available at: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/04/18/17G00059/sg> Last access: 12/12/2020.

<sup>76</sup> Legge 75, 20 febbraio 1958 "Abolizione della regolamentazione della prostituzione e lotta contro lo sfruttamento della prostituzione altrui" (Abolition of the regulation of prostitution and fight against sexual exploitation). Available at: <https://www.altalex.com/documents/leggi/2013/10/24/legge-merlin> Last access: 20/01/2021.

<sup>77</sup> DASPO stands for Divieto di accedere a manifestazioni sportive (Prohibition to access sport events). It was initially introduced to fight violence in stadiums, but it was later adopted by the mentioned Orlando-Minniti Law to address the theme of urban decorum.

In the summer of the same year, a peak of public safety mayoral orders was recorded in various Italian municipalities (Galantino and Giovannetti, 2012), particularly in Northern Italy. Besides, based on their improved powers, many mayors started transforming public safety mayoral orders into municipal regulations which, differently from the former, are not limited in time and space but are permanent and can regard the entire urban territory.

As far as prostitution is concerned, Law 46/2017 contributed to the potential increasing marginalisation of sex workers, including also people victims of trafficking. Sex workers have been more and more afraid of being stopped and fined by the police and concern has been raised by NGOs on the resulting risk of prostitution moving indoor, where it is clearly more difficult to reach out to and protect sex workers. Marginalisation infringes their rights and, at the same time, does not contribute to contrasting the phenomenon of trafficking and severe exploitation (fieldwork notes, national meeting of Outreach Units, 24-25/10/2019).

To stress further the risks that sex workers constantly face, it should be noticed that cases have been recorded - although they have not reached media attention - of violent aggressions and murders. 500 women have been killed over the past 30 years, including women, men and transsexuals from Italy (138), Nigeria (83), Albania (58), Romania (43), Brazil (14), Ukraine (11), Moldova (11), China (10), Colombia (8), Morocco (7), Hungary (5), Serbia (5), Dominican Republic (5), Bulgaria (5) (Degani and Della Valle 2020: 212). This clearly calls for increasing protection rather than removal from the streets.

### *Multi-agency work against labour exploitation*

Following the introduction of Law 199/2016 against irregular employment and labour exploitation<sup>78</sup>, the N.A.Ve Outreach Unit structured a dedicated system of interventions.

Ad hoc workshops were organised at N.A.Ve offices and at various CAS facilities to meet potential victims of labour exploitation, explain how a person can work regularly in Italy, what are the risks of exploitation and how help can be searched, hence with both a scope of prevention and of protection (see section The Crisis and Evaluation Unit).

The activity of the Outreach Unit has also consisted in visiting employment sites, with local Labour Inspectorates and law enforcement agencies, particularly in sectors that are most often associated with forms of exploitation, that is to say agriculture, construction, catering, and massage centres. Access to employment sites has been important to establish a first contact with workers and arrange post-access interviews, to ensure a follow-up in a more adequate setting, where professionals can further offer health and legal assistance, with the support of Cultural-linguistic mediators – who often accompany professionals to employment sites too.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2019, a Circular Letter was issued by the Ministry of Interior to encourage the Labour Inspectorates's engagement in the fight against irregular employment and exploitation, particularly in cities and areas considered to be most at risk of phenomena of exploitation. Moreover, a taskforce of 8 dedicated Law Enforcement Officers was established: while IOM (International Organisation for Migration) acts with a coordinating role across Italy, N.A.Ve was appointed to coordinate interventions in the Veneto Region. Verona and Venice were included in the list of "cities at high risk", with specific reference to the construction and the agricultural sectors. This is why, in 2020,

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<sup>78</sup> Legge 29 ottobre 2016, 199 "Disposizioni in materia di contrasto ai fenomeni del lavoro nero e dello sfruttamento (...)" (Law 29 October 2017, 199 "Provisions to contrast the phenomenon of informal employment and exploitation (...). Available at: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2016/11/3/16G00213/sg> Last access: 10/10/2021.

the University of Verona, Trento, Bolzano and Milan sought and obtained funding to train stakeholders to fight labour exploitation. The second and third phase of the same project include development and consolidation of collaborations with trade unions, workers' associations and third sector organisations and establishment of direct contacts with victim of labour exploitation<sup>79</sup>.

As the focus of this e-book is on Nigerian people, particularly women, we will not dedicate more space to this activity of the N.A.Ve Network, although it is one of the most innovative and relevant ones, particularly in view of the increasing phenomena of labour exploitation.

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<sup>79</sup> See FARM Project, AMIF Fund. More information available at: <https://www.dsg.univr.it/?ent=iniziativa&id=9167> Last access: 12/12/2020.

## The Crisis and Evaluation Unit

### *The origin, composition and the tasks of the Unit*

The Crisis and Evaluation Unit has its roots in the work carried out in the context of art. 13 first assistance programmes (see section The evolution of the anti-trafficking system in the Veneto Region) and in the work carried out by the Municipality of Venice.

The Unit comprises six professionals, one for each provincial territory in Veneto - excluding Belluno, that is covered by the Venetian colleagues. All professionals, except one, are female. The majority have a background in psychology, one is a social assistant. They are available on a 24-hour rotation shift pattern, to ensure a prompt response, whereby an immediate assessment is needed or an escape shelter must be sought promptly.

The Crisis and Evaluation Unit has the main task to meet potential N.A.Ve beneficiaries and conduct a risk assessment. The professionals usually meet them, for a first interview, following potential beneficiaries' first contact with the National Anti-trafficking Helpline. The Crisis and Evaluation Unit works in close synergy with it. If potential beneficiaries are facing an immediate threat, a Crisis and Evaluation professional, based in the city where the call to the Helpline was made - proposes an immediate transfer to a protected escape shelter. Only in a second interview, the same professional starts exploring potential beneficiaries' migration trajectory, with focus on their current conditions. Their main aim is to assess any risks of trafficking, re-trafficking and severe exploitation.

While the Crisis and Evaluation professionals' intervention is often activated by the Helpline, they are sometimes called by their colleagues working in the Outreach Unit. In Italy, a referral system is in place whereby they can also be contacted by other stakeholders in Italy: other outreach units outside the Veneto Region, the Labour Inspectorates, law enforcement agencies, lawyers, asylum seeker reception facilities, NGOs working with migrants, social services, etc. Over the last year, an increasing number of calls have been made by Territorial Commissions. Cases have not been rare of calls received directly by potential beneficiaries either, often following fellow citizens' word-of-mouth or else information provided by a municipal officer. As a Crisis and Evaluation Unit professional recalled, this happened particularly with Nigerian girls, in the period 2015-2016. As she explained, they would arrive in her office with a paper with her name written on it. Daily observations on what appeared as a strangely unusual and yet frequent practice, soon resulted in the professional understanding that word-of-mouth was being very effective among Nigerians and it became evident that it was traffickers themselves encouraging girls to contact N.A.Ve, in order to "take advantage" of the protection system, "to save money" for food and accommodation (interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Coordinator, 28/05/2020). In line with the trend in Veneto, data by the National Anti-trafficking Helpline, for the period 2017-2019, indicate that the crisis and evaluation units in Italy received the large majority of calls from: Territorial Commissions (4455). Other calls were received from: CAS facilities (841), private third sector actors (525), outreach units (506), potential beneficiaries (without the support of any stakeholder) (456), social services (446), law enforcement agencies (432), friends (of potential beneficiaries) (265)<sup>80</sup>. The Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals most often undertake more than one/two interviews with potential beneficiaries. If the risk assessment points to on-going risks of exploitation, they offer

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<sup>80</sup> This information was drawn from the 2020 Report of the National Anti-trafficking Helpline.

potential beneficiaries the possibility to join the social protection programme, thus de facto acting as a discretionary “filter” for access.

One of the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals explained well that the main rationale that guides her, in deciding whether a potential beneficiary should enter the programme, is whether the person has reached the so-called moment of “crisis”. “Crisis” means that a person feels no other alternative is available to her/him but to ask for help. The moment of “crisis” is often associated with a pregnancy, with the completion of a reception project, with difficulties on regularisation and more generally with a moment of transition in which help is perceived as urgent (fieldwork notes, Crisis and Evaluation Unit coordination meeting, 13/01/2020). Any of these moments are likely to be crucial in breaking free from exploitation in a definitive (?) way and in favouring a positive outcome of the social protection programme (interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Verona, 28/05/2020). “Crisis” is also connected to a fully aware and self-determined choice to put a stop to one’s condition of exploitation (interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Coordinator, 28/05/2020). It does not necessarily coincide, in temporal terms, with the phase of identification (of people as victims of trafficking and exploitation) by professionals. The term identification in itself is fraught with misunderstandings on who should be identified, how and for what exactly (interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Coordinator, 28/05/2020). This is one of the biggest challenges with which Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals are confronted. Opinions on the rationale for access to the social protection programme vary among the Crisis and Evaluation Unit operators, but the relevance of the temporal factor of “crisis” has been confirmed repeatedly. At the same time, all professionals agree that, regardless of any positive or negative decision on programme access, they aim to ensure that the right to basic information (orientation on local services, legal support, access to socio-sanitary support) is granted to all the people they come in contact with.

After the first interview with potential beneficiaries, the professionals monitor and follow them up in the reflection phase, in close synergy with Cultural-linguistic mediators and the Reception facility professionals. They compile an individual fact-sheet for each person. The reflection phase is very delicate and complex. Some people may require more time to decide whether they want to enter the protection programme and it may take more time for the Crisis and Evaluation professionals to decide on the matter too, hence the timeframes can vary and are defined on an ad-hoc basis (fieldwork notes, Crisis and Evaluation Unit coordination meeting, 28/04/2020)<sup>81</sup>.

If potential beneficiaries finally enter the programme, it is the Case Manager who takes up the “case” (see section The Social Inclusion Unit). Some do not enter it. Some ask/accept to benefit only from some services (i.e. legal support). Similar cases are referred to as “territorial cases” and are followed up by the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals, for example with CAS professionals. According to national data by the National Anti-trafficking Helpline, for the period 2017-2019, only one third (33%) of the people who met the Crisis and Evaluation professionals eventually started the social protection programme, of whom 73.2% were women. 36% were not motivated to start it, 13% chose not to start it because proposed rules were perceived as too strict. We will come back to this later. 11% were not identified as victims and were not offered to start the programme, while 7% interrupted the reflection phase (or were in a phase of transition). Details on the qualitative aspects of these data is not available on the national scale. Drawing from our fieldwork, with reference to potential beneficiaries in the Veneto Region, we hypothesize that the strict rules of the social protection programmes and the “crisis”

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<sup>81</sup> Ibidem.

do have a central role in deterring motivation for and in favouring rejection of the programme, but more analysis would be required in this sense.

Twice a month, a regional coordination meeting of the Crisis and Evaluation Unit is organised where all the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals meet to share and discuss “cases”. It is a crucial moment for coordination, mutual support and reflections on on-going trends in exploitation and trafficking, as well as on similarities and differences across territories (interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Padova, 20/05/2020). A challenge has been repeatedly expressed with reference to the ever evolving and changing profiles of beneficiaries. Particular concern has been voiced about the following groups of people: young mothers with children, particularly of Nigerian origins; unaccompanied minors who were potential authors and victims of drug-connected crimes; women victims of re-trafficking returning to Italy from Germany or another northern European country, following a Dublin procedure or an informal re-admission; men from Morocco, Egypt, Nigeria, Gambia and the Ivory Coast victims of labour exploitation; people of Ukrainian and Latin American nationality who are sexually exploited in indoor settings; young people from Romania and Sub-Saharan Africa exploited in begging.

### ***Multi-agency work with law enforcement agencies and prosecutors***

Two innovative aspects characterised art. 13 programmes on which the Crisis and Evaluation Unit built its work. On the one side, their regional dimension that favoured the structuring of a dedicated Crisis and Evaluation Unit and of a group of local Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals that, at a later stage, contributed to the setting up of N.A.Ve. On the other side, the multi-agency approach that was strongly advocated for and supported by the Equality Social Cooperative in Padova.

The multi-agency approach is still a strong component of the Unit and of N.A.Ve and it involves close collaboration, based on shared procedures, with various stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies, the Questura, prosecutors, Juvenile Courts, social services, etc. (fieldwork notes, Crisis and Evaluation Unit coordination meeting, 08/01/2019). Important steps have been made over time, but there is still space for improvement (fieldwork notes, N.A.Ve monitoring meeting, 15/06/2020; fieldwork notes, Crisis and Evaluation Unit coordination meeting, 25/11/2019).

At the local level, multi-agency work has involved close collaboration between the Unit and law enforcement agencies, particularly in Verona and Venice, which lead to investigations and prosecutions of traffickers. The professionals have had the important role of supporting N.A.Ve beneficiaries whereby they chose to collaborate in investigations, but less and less beneficiaries have chosen to do so in the most recent years. Both Law Enforcement Officers and Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals observed that the international protection system has become a privileged channel for regularisation, to the detriment of any collaboration on the side of people victims of trafficking that could be, to some extent, connected to obtaining a residence permit (interview, Squadra Mobile, Verona, 29/10/2020). As explained by the Questura of Verona, important results have been achieved in terms of investigations and arrests on the grounds of trafficking, including the arrest, in 2020, of two people and the arrest of a Nigerian woman, in 2019, following a joint action of the Squadra Mobile<sup>82</sup> of Verona and Parma. Yet, related investigations did not origin from victims of trafficking’s collaboration (ibidem).

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<sup>82</sup> Squadra Mobile: it is an office of Polizia di Stato (National Police) that operates in each Questura with judicial police tasks and therefore undertake investigations. The Squadre Mobili respond to the Sco (Servizio Centrale Operativo – Central Operative Service) of the Direzione Centrale Anticrimine (Central Anti-Criminality Directorate).

The Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals, particularly that of Verona, pointed out another relevant variable that are arguably affecting collaborations negatively: bureaucratic timeframes and delays. Investigations can take a long time and prosecution offices can take considerable time (over a year) to authorise the arrest of traffickers even where investigations are closed. This may expose victims of trafficking to risks whereby they reported their exploiters and professionals are sceptical to support their collaboration as a result. After a year, they are likely to be completing their protection programme and, if this happens before their exploiters are prosecuted, their transition to the post-programme period may be extremely dangerous.

The same professional expressed frustration with reference to cases in which the collaboration with Law Enforcement Officers was very effective but lead to what were perceived as weak results. She recalled various cases in which the prosecution of traffickers was “derubricated” from the crime of trafficking to that of child prostitution, involving lower sanctions, although, in their opinion, ample evidence of trafficking had been provided.

A critical aspect of multi-agency work was further reported in terms of lack of specialised capacity. Cases were recorded by N.A.Ve in which unaccompanied minors were forced to transport drugs, hence to commit a crime, as a result of their condition of exploitation. They are entitled to a special protection, but similar cases require the collaboration of a specific law enforcement agency that is specialised on drug dealing but is normally not engaged in trafficking, contrary to the Squadra Mobile. Multi-agency work can be much more challenging accordingly. On their side, prosecutors insist that to ensure effective multi-agency work, anti-trafficking professionals should promote stronger collaborations with law enforcement agencies and prosecutors, with the priority aim to learn about the reciprocal roles, which is likely to facilitate communication lines<sup>83</sup>.

At the national level, multi-agency work has apparently weakened because collaborations with law enforcement agencies are very much fragmented across territories and an overall strategy of advocacy has been missing (fieldwork notes, Crisis and Evaluation Unit coordination meeting, 01/04/2020; see also Andrea Morniroli, Webinar “INSIDE OUT” Project on minors authors and victims of criminal activities, 2/07/2020), but with exceptions. N.A.Ve has invested a lot in the development of multi-agency collaborations with law enforcement agencies and Juvenile Justice Officers in the field of children exploitation in criminal economies. A first pilot project was carried out with the EU TEMVI project, and the experimental project Inside Out was completed in 2020. The latter was a pilot project targeting non-accompanied minors and young adults of immigrant origins, aged 15-21, who were victim of trafficking and at the same time were authors of a crime, associated with exploitation by a criminal network. The project was funded by the Department of Equal Opportunities and included the following partners: the Municipality of Venezia, as leading partner, USSM Ufficio Servizio Sociale presso il Tribunale Minorenni, Venezia (Social Services Office of the Juvenile Court in Venice), IPM Istituto Penale Minorile, Treviso (Juvenile Detention Centre, Treviso), the social cooperative Dedalus, based in Naples (Campania Region). The main objectives of Inside Out were: to raise awareness on trafficked children exploited in criminal activities and encourage or consolidate the involvement of stakeholders working with this target group; to share reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of the systems of identification and protection of victims of trafficking; to define operative guidelines for joined intervention and to experiment a unique programme of identification, assistance and social inclusion for this specific target group<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> Interview with Lina Trovato, Deputy Prosecutor of the Public Prosecutor Office of Catania (Italy) 11/12/2020. Organised with Equality ATI, in preparation of the INSigHT webinar with law enforcement agencies on 27/01/2021

<sup>84</sup> More information on the project are being uploaded on the website of N.A.Ve: <http://www.progettonave.it/>

In spite of the critical issues of multi-agency work that were explained above, it is interesting to notice that the multi-agency approach has been very much advocated and promoted by anti-trafficking professionals, particularly in the last five years, with projects such as the Inside Out Project. Thus, there is considerable potential for N.A.Ve to positively influence the anti-trafficking as well as other social policy fields in Italy and at international level. In Italy, considerable academic reflections have been promoted on the importance of networks in social work for more than 2 decades now (Folgheraeiter, 2001), but multi-agency work involves a step forward. Building networks means working with relevant stakeholders. It does not mean working with a common shared objective, nor with the involvement of the public sector, which arguably represent the added value of the multi-agency approach. At the international level, the debate on trafficking and social work (see for example Okech et al., 2017) has been referring to the inter-agency approach, which recalls the multi-agency work, for a while, but little details are given on its defining characteristics.

### *Collaborations with the Territorial Commissions, within the Referral System*

The Crisis and Evaluation Unit has been increasingly put under pressure by the referrals made by the Territorial Commissions in Veneto and other regions. As reported by the Crisis and Evaluation Unit, in 2019, 153 cases were referred to N.A.Ve by the Territorial Commissions in Veneto and 13 from Commissions outside the region (interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Verona, 28/05/2020).

Various meetings have been organised with the Commissions of Padova and Verona to discuss on the critical issues of the referral system (i.e. fieldwork notes, meeting between Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professionals and the Territorial Commission of Verona, 20/01/2020).

Territorial Commissions may contact the N.A.Ve Crisis and Evaluation Unit following an interview with asylum seekers, whereby they identify indicators connected to trafficking and severe exploitation. According to UNHCR guidelines<sup>85</sup>, their task, within the referral system is to offer asylum seekers the possibility of meeting an anti-trafficking professional as to consider the opportunity of starting a protection programme. Misunderstandings have become evident, however, regarding what is expected from anti-trafficking projects, partly due to how their expert role is described in the same guidelines. The N.A.Ve professionals often lamented that Territorial Commissions expect them to meet asylum seekers and then write reports to “certify” whether they are victim of trafficking or not<sup>86</sup>. At the same time, they think their role is to assess on-going situation of risks which requires focusing on the current conditions of asylum seeker, not on their migratory experience and their country of origin, as Commissions must do. Following criticisms raised by anti-trafficking professionals, not only of N.A.Ve, new guidelines have been published in 2020<sup>87</sup>. Besides specifying better the role of anti-trafficking

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<sup>85</sup> UNHCR (2017) “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 internazionale” (The identification of victims of trafficking among seekers of international protection and referral procedures. Guidelines for Territorial Commissions). 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> Last access: 02/02/2021.

<sup>86</sup> This has emerged very clearly from the research conducted by Francesca Agnellini for the scope of her undergraduate thesis, under the supervision of Michela Sempredon. Sistema di referral per le persone trafficate in Italia: le criticità e il ruolo dell’ente anti-tratta. Corso di laurea *Magistrale* in Innovazione e Servizio Sociale, Università degli Studi di Padova, Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche, Giuridiche e Studi Internazionali. Academic year 2019/2020.

<sup>87</sup> 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> Last access: 20/01/2021.



professionals, they address the need to fully review trafficking indicators, by taking into consideration the evolution of the phenomenon. Territorial Commissions Officials in their evaluations tend to draw considerably from the COI (Country of Origin Information) prepared by EASO. While they certainly represent a useful tool with background information on the countries of origin, they are not sufficiently updated, nor do they take into considerations all relevant factors, including for example issues of vulnerability. In the light of the transformations of border policies, the externalisation of borders and the worsening conditions of migrants' transit, new indicators must be taken into account to promote a more dynamic perspective on trafficking. Issues of vulnerability are relevant also in connection to the on-going pandemic and the growing preoccupation of professionals for indoor sexual exploitation (fieldwork notes, Crisis and Evaluation Unit coordination meeting, 01/04/2020).

The Crisis and Evaluation Unit has been struggling to respond to Territorial Commissions, not only for the actual workload, but also because it may take many interviews with people before they feel ready to share their migratory and trafficking trajectory, if they ever feel like do it. As a result, the asylum procedure may be delayed, while, as defined by the referral system, the Unit should write a report within three months receipt of the referral, a report that is likely to be crucial for Territorial Commissions to take a decision on asylum seekers' applications.

## The Social Inclusion Unit

### *Differences of profiles but similarities in roles*

The Social inclusion Unit comprises the N.A.Ve Case Managers who have a central role in the network. Most Case Managers are female social assistants by professional and educational background, with the exception of the Case Managers of the Venetian territory. Most have matured considerable experience in the field of unaccompanied minors and anti-trafficking. Specific competence in intercultural approaches has also been developed by a few. N.A.Ve (and pre-N.A.Ve) training opportunities and coordination meetings have been recalled by all as precious occasions for improving skills and knowledge, at individual and team levels. However, to date, N.A.Ve has not defined the specific profile that Case Managers should have. Also, some are fully dedicated to anti-trafficking social protection programmes, others have multiple roles within and outside N.A.Ve.

The Case Manager of the Municipality of Verona is a male social assistant and has been working since the early years 2000 with women victims of trafficking. He currently works in what is now called the “Ufficio Accoglienza” (Reception Office), a specific Unit linked to the Social Services Department that deals with asylum seeker and unaccompanied minor reception and homeless people (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020). Another Case Manager is based in Verona. It is a female social assistant who works in the “Ufficio Stranieri” (Foreigners Office) of the Local socio-health Authority 9/4 District (in the north-western part of the provincial territory of Verona), which deals with social inclusion projects targeted to the population of immigrant origins. It is the only Case N.A.Ve Case Manager who does not have a contract with a municipality but the Local socio-health Authority. Her salary is paid collectively by the committee of mayors who are part of the authority itself, thus covering large part of the northern provincial territory of Verona (interview, Case Manager, Local socio-health Authority 9/4 District, Verona, 19/05/2020). Her involvement in anti-trafficking projects started in 2010. At that time the presence of street sex workers, particularly from Eastern Europe, was decreasing - after a peak in the period 2005-2008 and following the entrance of Romania in the EU (in 2007). In her view, the decrease was associated with entrance in the EU, as Romanian nationals no longer needed a residence permit and sex workers who were victims of trafficking became less motivated to seek the assistance of anti-trafficking professionals (ibidem).

The Case Manager of the Municipality of Padova is a female social assistant and has been working in the field of social services, specifically with children and young people, since the early 1990. Later in 2014, she started collaborating with colleagues involved in anti-trafficking projects that were later absorbed in N.A.Ve (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Padova, 11/06/2020).

In the Municipality of Venice there is a team of three Case Managers. A male social assistant joined the team two years ago. He has been working particularly with unaccompanied minors. His colleagues are educators and started engaged in anti-trafficking 3 and 13 years ago respectively, after many years of collaboration as outreach workers, with the “Servizio Marginalità Urbana” (Urban Marginality Service), with focus on homelessness, harm reduction, etc. The “Servizio Città e Prostituzione” (City and Prostitution Service), whose evolution led to the establishment of N.A.Ve, was first established as a Service, to be then integrated into the Servizio Marginalità Urbana, as an operative unit. Over time the unit became more and more isolated, due to its specific target: people victims of trafficking who were assisted and protected with the human and financial resources of the Municipality Venice. In principles, another municipality should have covered the costs, as they were often transferred outside Venice (on

the grounds of protection). The isolation, and at the same time the autonomy, of the “Servizio Città e Prostituzione” was certainly the result of the strong passionate leadership of the then Coordinator who engaged to ensure this non-mainstream specialised service would continue receiving funding (interview, Case Managers, Municipality of Venice, 26/05/2020-24/06/2020).

### *The role and mission of Case Manager*

The term “Case Manager” was first introduced in an EU project on school dropout, under the umbrella of the Equal Programme, in 2003. The need emerged to identify an actor who would be responsible for the overall project with pupils, the monitoring of the progress made by them and the achievement of a positive final outcome. A wide range of actors were involved and it was necessary to ensure a person would lead. This experience later inspired the establishment of the “Case Manager” role in N.A.Ve (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Venice and Labour Inclusion Working Group Coordinator, 29/05/2020).

A core feature of N.A.Ve, that differentiates it from other regional anti-trafficking projects in Italy, is the crucial role assigned to local authorities. It is local authorities that hold responsibility over the “cases”, that is to say the N.A.Ve beneficiaries. Their engagement takes shape through the role of social workers, the Case Managers, who are given the operational responsibility to accompany beneficiaries throughout the programme. Engagement of and resources provided by the local authorities vary considerably. The Municipality of Verona has been participating by providing resources for a full-time social assistant, a part-time coordinator and an administrative officer. In Padova only one social assistant works with N.A.Ve had with more limited budget and time. In Venice there are three Case Managers, as a result of the investment made in the anti-trafficking field. Difficulties with very limited resources dedicated by other municipalities in the wider regional territory have been reported in many Social Inclusion Unit coordination meetings, pointing to the scarce willingness of municipal councillors to take a strong political stance to support anti-trafficking projects.

Social workers are called to set individualised programme objectives together with each beneficiary and they are ultimately responsible for their attainment. Differently from a project manager, who focuses on a specific intervention, Case Managers follow beneficiaries through the entire programme, in line with what is generally understood as the standard mission of social workers<sup>88</sup> (interview, Case Managers, Municipality of Venice, 26/05/2020-24/06/2020). The ultimate objective of social protection programmes is beneficiaries’ autonomy and self-determination and this is the guiding principle for Case Managers (interview, Case Manager, Local socio-health Authority 9/4 District, Verona, 19/05/2020), not only with people victims of trafficking. What is often missing is sufficient time. Art. 18 sets for programmes to last one and a half year, but often more time is needed for effective outcomes to be achieved (see for example fieldwork notes, Case Managers and Reception facility Units joint meeting, 28/05/2020). In many cases permanence in the programme was extended for at least a few months, because of the difficulty to find a decent accommodation and employment. Notwithstanding, the duration of the programme is a clear example of how institutional times clash with the biographical times of beneficiaries and prevent them from finding their way towards self-determination.

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<sup>88</sup> See for example how the mission of social assistants is described in the deontological code of the Italian Professional Association of Social Workers. Available at: <https://cnoas.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/il-nuovo-codice-deontologico-dellassistente-sociale.pdf> Last access: 20/01/2021.

Case Managers do not act as educators, nor psychologists, nor Socio-legal professionals and yet they use and share some of their instruments (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020). They aim to support the process of inclusion of beneficiaries, including access to socio-health services, language learning courses, trainings and internships, employment, regularisation of the legal status. Inclusion means ensuring all these aspects are dealt with, as all Case Managers agree.

### ***The importance of trust and motivation***

All Case Managers insisted it is crucial to build with beneficiaries a relationship based on trust. One of the Case Managers put particular emphasis on this aspect, by referring to Pittalunga's work (2000) who describes social workers as "trusted stranger" who need to build a relationship with beneficiaries precisely because they are strangers and trust can only be constructed over time. In his view, this is why another crucial element must be considered: beneficiaries' motivation to join and stay in the programme. If motivations are not sufficiently strong and do not coincide with the programme's objectives, the programme is likely to fail beneficiaries' expectation and beneficiaries are likely to abandon it (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020). In the opinion of some Case Managers, the risk is for beneficiaries to use the programme just for their personal aims, often associated with obtaining a regular residence permit (see also interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Padova, 11/06/2020). This opinion was not confirmed by the interviews carried out by the INSigHT Research Team with beneficiaries. In this sense, we suggest the N.A.Ve Case Managers should rethink the programme's objectives in view of beneficiaries' migratory trajectory and improve efforts to co-build programmes.

Reflections have emerged also on the Case Managers' gender positionality. The majority of Case Managers are females and this is in principle adequate since the majority of beneficiaries, so far, have been females. The male Case Managers have been wondering whether their gender can represent an obstacle to building a relationship of trust, but have found that it could also represent an opportunity to provide a positive "male model" to contrast that of male traffickers and violent aggressive men more generally.

Monitoring meetings with beneficiaries were indicated as crucial moments in which Case Managers familiarise with beneficiaries and vice versa. They are organised on a more or less regular basis, depending on each Case Manager, about every two to three months. Meetings are likely to be more frequent at the beginning and at the end of the programme, as these are critical steps. They always involve the Case Manager, the beneficiary, a Reception facility professional and a Cultural-linguistic mediator and normally take place in municipal offices, although some beneficiaries have lamented they would like Case Managers to visit them in the reception facility in which they are hosted.

### ***Collaborations between Case Managers and the other N.A.Ve professionals***

Case Managers work with several other colleagues within N.A.Ve, each with specific and different functions. Beneficiaries meet and work with many of them and are often confused by the multiplication of actors and roles. Not only do Case Managers need to ensure fluent communication with other colleagues, they also need to ensure beneficiaries' full awareness of all professionals' tasks. Case Managers are expected to "keep the pieces together" of the various activities and phases that make up the programme. Yet, the risk is always present that beneficiaries express their needs but "loose them"

at some level of communication lines (Case Managers, Municipality of Venice, 26/05/2020-24/06/2020), hence the importance for Case Managers to be constantly updated (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020).

Differently from the Crisis and evaluation professionals, who work with beneficiaries only for a few months, Case Managers' role extends over a much longer period (*ibidem*). At the same time, when they enter the programme, beneficiaries first sign a contract, relating to reception facilities rules, with the Reception facility professionals. Only at a second stage, they sign the actual programme contract, with the Case Manager, in which they take responsibility for engagement in all proposed activities. This aspect further confuses beneficiaries on whom is to be considered as their main reference person.

Case Managers do perceive themselves as part of N.A.Ve., but difficulties emerged for them to work in an organic fashion. Many Case Managers find themselves "stuck" or "lost" in between programme phases, in a process of "parcelling" of competences and roles embedded in hyper-specialised professionals (interview, Case Manager, Local socio-health Authority 9/4 District, Verona, 19/05/2020). What is necessary is to overcome what is currently a very organised and yet fragmented organisational structure of protection programmes. It is important to ensure increasing integration among professionals to avoid losing sight of beneficiaries' - rather than programmes' - objectives. This was the scope of the so-called "phase zero". As explained above, this phase refers to the transitory administrative and organisational step in which, if the potential beneficiary agrees to join the social protection programme, the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals transfer responsibility to the assigned Case Managers. It was introduced to improve the connection between the first two phases of the programme: the evaluation and reflection phase to that of inclusion (fieldwork notes, N.A.Ve monitoring meeting, 29/05/2019).

Improved integration can also prevent discretionary implementation practices (Lipsky, 2010) and an excessively individualised application of professional norms (Dubois, 2016) based on whether beneficiaries are perceived as more or less "deserving" (on the EU: Ambrosini, 2018; on Italy: Marzorati et al., 2017; on the Netherlands: Van der Leun and Bouten, 2015; on the US: de Graauw, 2015), that can result in relationships based on Case Managers' hierarchical power rather than their professional power to enable beneficiaries to progress in their programme (see Laverack, 2017).

Cultural-linguistic mediators are an essential resource of the N.A.Ve social protection programme, differently from mediators who work in other contexts, such as the reception system, where they are often consulted on an ad hoc basis (fieldwork notes, Case Managers/Reception facilities Unit coordination meeting, 28/05/2020). They meet beneficiaries when they have the first contact with N.A.Ve, that is to say during the first Crisis and Evaluation interview and accompany them until the end of the programme (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020). Case Managers report they are precious collaborators and contributes to ensuring the good quality of the programme. In our view, they should have a more central role in some phases, for example in phase zero, considering they are involved in both and have proved to be precious in helping build a relationship with beneficiaries (*ibidem*), partly - but not only - because they share the same background of beneficiaries and their language, as will be explained. They are precious collaborators for their language skills but also for their capacity to interpret cultural values and frames. We will return to this point in the section on Cultural-linguistic mediators. What is striking is that although the crucial function of mediators is fully recognised by the Case Managers, they are not involved in the Social Inclusion Unit coordination meetings, that take place once a month or every two months (fieldwork notes, Case Managers/Reception facilities meeting, 28/05/2020).

### *When should the Case Manager take up their role?*

It is the Crisis and Evaluation Units that first works with potential beneficiaries. Opinions about the extent to which and how Case Managers should interact with the Crisis and Evaluation Units varies (ie. fieldwork notes, Case Managers/Reception facilities meeting, 28/05/2020).

When N.A.Ve was launched in 2016, a training was organised with focus on organisational issues and it was decided that Case Managers should meet potential beneficiaries within two days of their first meeting with the Crisis and Evaluation Unit, but this provision has been interpreted in different ways, because of only a small part of potential beneficiaries eventually enter the protection programme (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020). Some Case Managers think it is unnecessary, some explain it is sufficient to ensure coordination with the Crisis and Evaluation professionals (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Padova, 11/06/2020), some reclaim an early involvement, as soon as potential beneficiaries meet the Crisis and Evaluation Unit. They argue it would be useful if Evaluation Unit professionals could socialise the Case Manager on the criteria of their evaluation. What do they evaluate to decide whether a potential beneficiary should enter the programme? Is it an evaluation of the resources and needs of the potential beneficiaries? Of the resources required to stay in the programme and achieve the set objectives? This is unclear (fieldwork notes, Case Managers/Crisis and Evaluation Unit coordination meeting, 11/06/2020) and it can result in a clash of expectations. Some Case Managers recalled that the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals had presented some “cases” as very positive, stressing beneficiaries’ motivation and personal resources, but during the inclusion phase this presentation has proved misleading (interview, Case Manager, Local socio-health Authority 9/4 District, Verona, 19/05/2020), as some Reception facility professionals confirmed too.

It is hard to “jump on a running train”, after the reflection phase, stated a Case Manager: “we need to regain possession of our role, in order to build a clear and effective relationship of help with beneficiaries, with clarity on who is the main reference person (...) which is difficult if beneficiaries started building a similar type of relationship with other colleagues upon arrival in N.A.Ve” (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020). The phase zero has often taken the shape of a single meeting, mostly administrative in nature, in which the Crisis and Evaluation Unit profession introduces the beneficiary to the Case Manager (Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020). This was the procedure before N.A.Ve was established and the phase zero was introduced precisely to overcome this limit, but some organisation re-gearing is still needed.

### *The long way to service mainstreaming*

Case Managers largely work in isolation with respect with other social workers working in the same municipality, who rarely have a full understanding of what they do. They are generally associated with “those who work with prostitutes”, a very specific and irrelevant target to them (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020; Case Managers, Municipality of Venice, 26/05/2020-24/06/2020). For some Case Managers, this normally means more autonomy and flexibility in implementation (interview, Case Manager, Local socio-health Authority 9/4 District, Verona, 19/05/2020). In various occasions during the fieldwork the difference between projects and services has been stressed in this sense. We envisage a limit in the measure in which N.A.Ve remains a specialist project, not embedded in mainstream welfare provision, which prevents people victims of trafficking

from being integrated in municipal interventions as a structural target. To date, for example, N.A.Ve's beneficiaries are rarely issued the residency certificate, which is a basic prerequisite to access mainstream social services. Beneficiaries are entitled to it, as are asylum seekers, but both face difficulties in having it, because of discretionary discriminatory practices by local authorities, although some steps forward have been made, in Verona for example. This is a long-term strategic policy issue that does require further attention by the N.A.Ve Coordinator.

The fact that N.A.Ve remains a specialist service can have another side effect. Specialised competences could be lost whereby dedicated funding was no longer granted. One of the challenges that remains open is linked to the promotion of N.A.Ve as a network, to make it visible throughout the regional territorial and make its target known (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Padova, 11/06/2020) to socio-sanitary authorities and all relevant institutions. Upon completion of their social protection programme, beneficiaries may still need some welfare support, but be scarcely prepared to interact with institutions. Hence it is important for such actors to be aware of the vulnerable conditions and needs of this specific target, as well as of the existence of N.A.Ve, so that they can get in touch to ensure beneficiaries are supported in the best of ways.

### *Critical issues of coordination*

Coordination at various levels has been often mentioned as fundamental to the work of Case Managers. When N.A.Ve was launched, the support of an expert consultant to re-think the organisational structure of then regional anti-trafficking system. Among other things, it was decided that beneficiaries would be assigned to a given Case Manager depending on the territory in which they first asked for help. As a higher number of requests have concerned some territories, such as that of Verona, some Case Managers shared their difficulty in dealing with a considerably heavier workload, with respect to other colleagues, and proposed that the Social Inclusion Unit coordination meetings should provide an occasion to distribute the workload more fairly.

Some Case Managers further lamented that coordination meetings should involve other N.A.Ve Units representatives too (fieldwork notes, Social Inclusion Unit coordination meeting, 22/04/2020), as it happened before N.A.Ve was established, when meetings were organised that involved all professionals working in both art. 13 and art. 18 programmes, to ensure everyone could have the full picture of beneficiaries' assistance. It must be stressed that difficulties remain, to start with, in the involvement of some Case Managers themselves, whereby their respective municipality is not willing to engage much in the N.A.Ve project (fieldwork notes, Social Inclusion Unit coordination meeting, Venice-Mestre, 16/01/2020; fieldwork notes, Social Inclusion Unit coordination meeting, 10/07/2019).

An alternative suggestion has been put forward to promote local coordination meetings, bringing together professionals of all Units working in a given territory, with the aim to facilitate an improved understanding of the specific characteristics of each local contexts and invest more towards the consolidation of collaborations with local actors (interview, Case Manager, Local socio-health Authority 9/4 District, Verona, 19/05/2020; Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020). Some seeds in this direction have already been planted in Verona, where regular contacts occur among the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professional, the Case Managers and the Outreach Unit Professionals, due to consolidated collaboration among them and, arguably, the specific attitude of social workers. All N.A.Ve professionals based in Verona are social workers by educational background and by educational background they are very much prone to building networks and collaborations as part of their role.

While this attitude is clearly positive, a risk can be envisaged in the promotion of provincial working teams. The Case Managers in Verona stress the importance of familiarising with institutional practices in each territory (i.e. access to socio-sanitary services, procedures for the renewal of residence permits, etc.). Practices diverge considerably across the region - and the whole country (Case Manager, AULSS 9/4 District, Verona, 19/05/2020) thus making the work of social workers fraught with bureaucratic complications. Not rarely these practices, that are often blatantly discriminatory, prevent beneficiaries' access to services. Getting to know these practices may provide shortcuts to professionals and allow beneficiaries to eventually access services. However, it is not to be underestimated that a similar approach may contribute to legitimising illegitimate procedures instead of fighting them.

### *The increasingly complex profiles and experiences of beneficiaries*

One of the greatest concerns of Case Managers is the increasing vulnerability they have been identifying in beneficiaries' profiles, particularly as far as Nigerian girls and women are concerned. Many of them arrived and keep arriving in the programme with severe psychological and health problems, limited cognitive skills and little chances in terms of employability thus making the goal of autonomy harder to achieve (interview, Case Managers, Municipality of Venice, 26/05/2020-24/06/2020). Participation in the programme can therefore generate frustration on the side of beneficiaries, but also Case Managers (interview, Case Manager, Local socio-health Authority 9/4 District, Verona, 19/05/2020).

N.A.Ve offers good economic and professional human resources to professionals, including highly specialised services and a decent budget, compared to other social policy fields. Lack of economic resources hardly ever emerged as a concern throughout our fieldwork. Paradoxically this may generate even more frustration for professionals whereby objectives are not reached. Joining the N.A.Ve team gives hope that carefully planned work can be done with beneficiaries, by drawing on available resources, but the goal towards autonomy may still be unrealistic (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020).

An issue with budget emerged concerning specific needs of beneficiaries, but it was more a technical issue, related to expenses specification - as required by public entities. N.A.Ve 3 project did not include a specific budget for "extremely vulnerable cases" (fieldwork notes, Social Inclusion Unit coordination meeting, Venice-Mestre, 16/01/2020), that is to say for beneficiaries characterised by various forms of vulnerabilities, associated for example with gender, young age, health, to cite a few, that in turn require additional support during and possibly at the end of the programme. This has been the case for young lone mother survivors of trafficking with a child. While it should be the relevant local authority that takes responsibility for them, as particularly vulnerable individuals, social interventions with similar target groups are very costly and complex and local authorities are generally eager to delegate.

Another complexity with whom N.A.Ve and the N.A.Ve Case Managers have been faced concerns the so-called "territorial cases". As explained above, these are beneficiaries who are hosted in a reception facility for seekers of holders of international or share a flat with fellow citizens and do not need to enter a N.A.Ve facility, but still need some specialised support. Over time, anti-trafficking professionals, including professionals in the N.A.Ve Network, have realised that territorial programmes may be more adequate for some people. Similar solutions may be also ideal whereby insufficient places are available within an anti-trafficking system, although this has been hardly the case in Veneto - differently from other regions in Italy. In any case, the role of Case Managers in managing territorial cases is likely to be still central, in terms of ensuring an effective coordination of all stakeholders and it may represent an opportunity for increased integration between the anti-trafficking and the asylum systems, as stressed



by the National Anti-trafficking Action Plan (fieldwork notes, N.A.Ve monitoring meeting, 11/09/2020). However, to date, territorial cases have been followed mainly by the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals as territorial beneficiaries never enter the actual protection programme.

### *The difficult phase of “sgancio”*

Various are the challenges of the final phase of the social protection program, that is to say the “sgancio”. To start with, in this phase Reception facilities receive lower payments for beneficiaries, which means less resources for professionals to draw from (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020). Yet, this is a very delicate phase that would rather require extra resources because beneficiaries should be helped to find adequate accommodation and employment to achieve full autonomy. The decision to conclude the programme is a collective decision taken by the Case Manager, the Reception facility professionals and the Cultural-linguistic mediators, in agreement with beneficiaries. Cases have not been rare in which the programme was extended, particularly as specific vulnerabilities were still evident that required further support to beneficiaries. As suggested also during a coordination meeting, it would be interesting to elaborate data on the protection paths of particularly vulnerable beneficiaries (fieldwork notes, Social Inclusion Unit coordination meeting, 08/08/2019), but this data is not available, nor can it be disaggregated to date. This is certainly a limit of N.A.Ve. While two databases are used to collect data on beneficiaries, no methodology has been defined to ensure the systematic collection of such data.

According to all Case Managers, signs of potential failures in achieving the programme’s objectives are likely to emerged well before completion of the programme, but opinions diverge, for example, on why some beneficiaries leave the programme before concluding it: some Case Managers think that beneficiaries will abandon the programme if they obtain a residence permit before completion, as explained above; others firmly disagree on this point. What is sometimes underestimated is the right for beneficiaries to abandon the programme at any time, if participation to it runs counter their migratory project. In line with the view of the Venetian Case Managers, we also suggest that terminating a social protection programme when beneficiaries obtain the residence permit may also give them the opportunity to enter a reception facility, that may be preferable for their specific needs. Moreover, entering such facility would provide them more time to find a decent employment and accommodation.

The attitudes of some Case Managers appear to be rather paternalistic. They are anchored in the belief that the social protection programme is necessarily the best option for beneficiaries, while in fact it may discourage their self-determination.

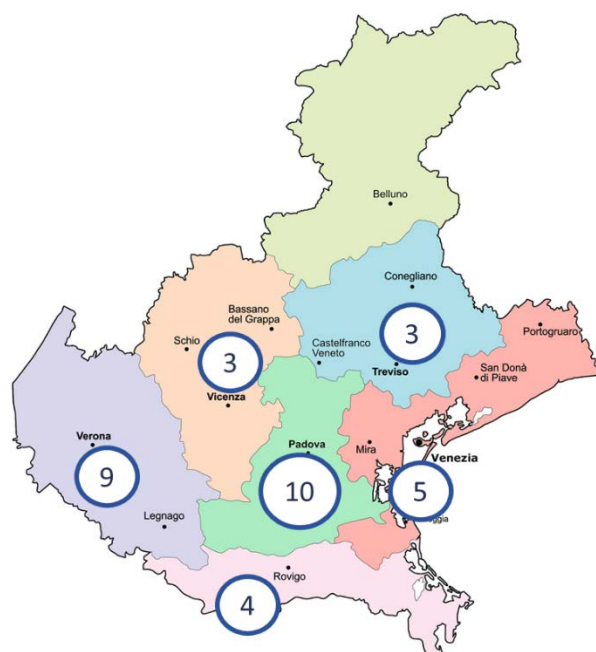
Interestingly, during a coordination meeting, a discussion revolved around the question of how “failed cases” should be defined (fieldwork notes, Case Managers/Crisis and Evaluation Unit coordination meeting, 11/06/2020). First, there is a propensity for Case Managers and professionals more generally to consider a failure what is perceived as a professional failure to them, including for example situations whereby beneficiaries do not achieve the objectives set at the beginning of the programme. It is evident that objectives can change over time, depending on the trajectory of each beneficiary but also on other external factors (the COVID-19 pandemic is certainly an example). It should also be considered that set objectives can turn out to be unrealistic and that beneficiaries can change their plans too. What we believe is crucial is to ensure that the social protection programme is constantly built together with beneficiaries to revisit objectives and expectations and revise them where useful.

## The Reception facilities Unit

### *Number of facilities and number of beneficiaries*

According to April 2020 data, provided by N.A.Ve, a total of 53 beneficiaries were hosted in reception facilities: 2 in escape shelters, 8 in the reflection phase, 20 in the inclusion phase and 23 in the final phase of “sgancio”. Most were females. The average age was 19-25, with some exceptions of male beneficiaries from Marocco, Pakistan and Tunisia and a woman from Romania, aged 30-40. In December 2020, a few more beneficiaries were hosted in N.A.Ve facilities but most significantly the number of those in the phase of sgancio corresponded to 34 (including two territorial beneficiaries). This is a result of the on-going pandemic that has made it harder for beneficiaries to conclude trainings, find an employment and accommodation and the resulting increase of beneficiaries “stuck” in this phase. Another notable dynamic is the significant increase of male beneficiaries, particularly of Pakistani origins, exploited in a labour sector. To date, the number of male beneficiaries in the programme corresponds to almost half of the total. These numbers do not include the many beneficiaries who have been supported after completion of the programme, in terms of follow-up, nor many territorial beneficiaries that are not indicated in the N.A.Ve financial report. While a precise figure is not available, it is reasonable to estimate they account for at least 30 more beneficiaries.

N.A.Ve can count on 34 reception facilities: 10 are managed by Equality and are accredited with N.A.Ve (2 in Verona, 1 in Vicenza, 4 in Padova, 2 in Venice, 1 in Rovigo), 13 are not (4 in Verona, 2 in Rovigo, 2 in Padova, 3 in Treviso, 2 in Venice), 11 are facilities dedicated to unaccompanied minors and are not accredited, but collaborate with N.A.Ve (4 in Padova, 3 in Verona, 1 in Venice, 2 in Vicenza, 1 in Rovigo – 5 of which are also part of Equality ATI)<sup>89</sup>. Overall, this is the distribution of facilities in the Veneto Region:



<sup>89</sup> More in details: Comunità dei Giovani manages 20 reception facilities (7 in Verona, 4 in Venice, 1 flat in Verona - used as escape shelter - and other flats for semi-autonomy) and hosts 20 beneficiaries; Il Gabbiano project has 4 facilities in Mestre and Venice and hosts 15 beneficiaries; La Casa della Giovane hosts on average 150 people every year, including 3/4 women victims of trafficking; La Tenda has one facility and can host up to 5 beneficiaries; the Francescane con i Poveri have one facility and can host 6 people.

### *Typologies of reception facilities and funding*

The N.A.Ve reception facilities have different histories. They are all managed by third sector actors, including social cooperatives, no-profit associations, either lay or faith-based.

**Comunità dei Giovani**<sup>90</sup> is a lay social cooperative that was founded in Verona at the beginning of the 1970s, with the main aim to deal with marginality and drug addiction. It has been collaborating in anti-trafficking projects with the Municipality of Verona since 2000, initially in the context of art. 13 and art. 18 programmes, to then join N.A.Ve, in 2016. **La Tenda** is a voluntary association founded in Rovigo in the 1990s, with a similar goal to support marginal vulnerable individuals. It started collaborating in anti-trafficking projects in 2001, following on-going collaborations on drug addictions with the Municipality of Venice (interview, Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020)<sup>91</sup>.

**Francescane con i Poveri** is a catholic faith-based no-profit association based in Padova<sup>92</sup>. It was founded in 1998, under the aegis of the bishop, who encouraged a group of nuns to take care of street sex workers. Early collaborations were developed with the local association Mimosa which then resulted in its involvement in anti-trafficking projects (interview, Reception facility for women “Francescane con i Poveri” Practitioner and Coordinator, 15/06/2020). **Il Gabbiano** started operating reception services within anti-trafficking projects in 2010. In 2015, it joined the Comunità dei Giovani (interview, Reception facility “Il Gabbiano” Coordinator and Professionals, 26/06/2020). The catholic, faith-based association Protezione della Giovane was founded in Switzerland in the 1890s, under the initiative of some priests who, in collaboration with some young mothers offered support to women in vulnerable conditions who had migrated from the countryside towards urban centres and had found themselves enslaved in prostitution. Currently, it has 16 headquarters in Italy. One of these is **La Casa della Giovane** that manages a small facility in Verona. It operates partly as a reception facility and partly as a female youth hostel<sup>93</sup>. The first contacts with N.A.Ve date back to 2011, when the Prefettura called for reception places in associated with the increasing arrival of asylum seekers (interview, Reception facility for Women “Casa della Giovane” Director, 25/06/2020). We must add **Papa Giovanni 23**, a catholic faith-based association, based in Rimini, that, among other activities, provides support to people survivors of trafficking. They have 4 reception facilities that are accredited with N.A.Ve, a few others that are not.

As anticipated, the N.A.Ve protection programme includes various phases. Beneficiaries may go through one of more phases and reception facilities can host beneficiaries in one or more phases too, depending on their specific organisation and on agreements with N.A.Ve: some, as Il Gabbiano, started with inclusion, but later provided reception also for the reflection phase (interview, Reception facility “Il Gabbiano” Coordinator and Professionals, 26/06/2020); Papa Giovanni XXIII facilities have been mostly hosting people in reflection facilities, but have occasionally functioned as escape shelters too. The phase of reflection is the phase privileged by the Francescane con i Poveri and La Tenda, as their facilities are hardly adequate to encourage beneficiaries’ autonomy, because they offer a communitarian setting (interview, Reception facility for women “Francescane con i Poveri” Practitioner and Coordinator, 15/06/2020). La Casa della Giovane has provided hospitality as escape shelter (interview, Reception facility for Women “Casa della Giovane” Director, 25/06/2020). Many facilities have also hosted lone mothers with children, a growing more recent target group of N.A.Ve that

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<sup>90</sup> Website: <http://cdgvr.it/> Last access: 05/12/2020.

<sup>91</sup> Website: [http://www.azisanrovigo.it/nqcontent.cfm?a\\_id=1789](http://www.azisanrovigo.it/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=1789) Last access: 05/12/2020.

<sup>92</sup> Website: <http://fcponlus.sfp-poor.org/> Last access: 05/12/2020.

<sup>93</sup> Website: <https://www.protezionedellagiovane.it/> Last access: 05/12/2020.

requires particular attention considering its multiple vulnerabilities (fieldwork notes, Reception facilities Unit coordination meeting, 03/03/2020; interview, Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020; Reception facility “Il Gabbiano” Coordinator and Professionals, 26/06/2020). Dedicated facilities are not available, hence places are made available ad hoc when the need arises.

Generally speaking, reception facilities are selected based on the availability of places but also, where possible, with attention on beneficiaries’ profiles (interview, Reception facility “Comunità dei Giovani” Reception Director and Coordinator, 17/06/2020; Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020).

While all the facilities accredited with N.A.Ve receive funding by the network, funding is not always sufficient, particularly for small facilities of up to 5 people. This is why the collaboration and support of volunteers have been crucial for some, as well as funding raised through other activities and donations for others (interview, Reception facility for Women “Casa della Giovane” Director, 25/06/2020; Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020; Reception facility for Women “Papa Giovanni XXIII” volunteer, 18/06/2020).

### *The profile of Reception professionals*

Reception professionals are both males and females, although females prevail. Their background is varied, with university degrees ranging from political science, to anthropology, human rights, psychology, pedagogy, science of education, although the last three are predominant. Many professionals have developed expertise in asylum seeker reception or on work with marginalised individuals with multiple forms of vulnerability. The main strength is certainly the multiplicity of skills available in reception facilities as well the low turnover (interview, Reception facility “Il Gabbiano” Coordinator and Professionals, 26/06/2020; fieldwork notes, N.A.Ve monitoring meeting, 11/09/2020), particularly when compared with the rather high turnover recorded in asylum seeker reception projects in Italy. Many professionals have been in their role for more than 5 years, with prior experience in other types of reception facilities. Apart from professionals, reception facilities often benefit from the support provided by volunteers, as far as the organisation of socialisation activities and Italian language courses are concerned.

### *The internal organisation of facilities*

Where reception is conducted by more than two professionals, it is organised in areas: socio-sanitary services; legal issues and regularisation; trainings, internship and employment. This approach has a triple objective: if beneficiaries do not get along with a professional, they can refer to others; social services normally operate in the same logic and this gives the opportunity to professionals to orient beneficiaries on how to approach them, if needed, once their programme is over; each professional can focus on a single area, improve activities in it and consolidate collaborations with relevant actors (interview, Reception facility “Comunità dei Giovani” Reception Director and Coordinator, 17/06/2020). Some facilities prepare and regularly update individual fact-sheets for each beneficiary, with an overall in-progress picture of the programme, including any difficulty encountered. It is a useful tool for professionals to be updated on beneficiaries and to motivate them as they progress through the

programme (interview, Reception facility “Comunità dei Giovani” Reception Director and Coordinator, 17/06/2020).

In order to favour coordination among facilities, a specific Unit was established in November 2019. No specific form of coordination existed before, although Reception professionals were attending some other regional coordination meetings, such as those of the Labour Inclusion Working Group. Since then, regional coordination meetings have been organised every 1 to 2 months. The need had been expressed by many professionals to have a dedicated space and time for shared reflections. They had been manifested increasing frustration as they perceived themselves as “mere implementers of a project planned by others”, although in fact they are the professionals that spend most time with beneficiaries (interview, Reception facility “Comunità dei Giovani” Reception Director and Coordinator, 17/06/2020). Concern had also been voiced with respect to the lack of homogeneity in reception approaches (fieldwork notes, Reception facilities Unit coordination meeting, 03/03/2020). A general regulation was therefore prepared and is currently under revision to reach an agreement on the basic minimum services to be offered and the basic rules to be set for everyday cohabitation.

Depending on the specific phase of the protection programme and on internal organisation, professionals can be more or less present in the facility, but the presence of a professional is granted day and night throughout the week, exception made for semi-autonomous facilities, that is to say facilities where beneficiaries are generally hosted in the very last phase of their programme. On average, the ratio professional-beneficiary is no higher than 1-3 to ensure adequate attention to each beneficiary.

In the case of the Papa Giovanni XXIII association, the facilities are the homes of volunteers who chose to host guests, including N.A.Ve beneficiaries and/or other vulnerable people, such as people suffering from drug addiction, people with severe disability or people who served a sentence in jail (interview, Reception facility for Women “Papa Giovanni XXIII” volunteer, 18/06/2020). This is in line with their mission to provide support to marginal people in need of support, but multiple vulnerabilities have sometimes resulted in excessive fatigue for the volunteers.

A distinction must be made between reception facilities that are lay or faith-based. While reflections on approaches have been increasingly shared, some misunderstandings emerged as far as specific situations are concerned. Disagreements regarded how to deal with female beneficiaries who decide to interrupt pregnancy for example. Faith-based facilities prefer not to support women who are facing this experience, because abortion is contrary to catholic principles and have asked other facilities to take responsibility for reception (interview, Reception facility “Comunità dei Giovani” Reception Director and Coordinator, 17/06/2020; Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020). In faith-based facilities there seems to be also a stronger emphasis on building a “communitarian dimension” which encourages beneficiaries to share their everyday life with all the people living in the facility (interview, Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020; Reception facility for women “Francescane con i Poveri” Practitioner and Coordinator, 15/06/2020). Some professionals consider it important that beneficiaries learn “Italian manners”. This aspect would deserve further exploration, but hints of an acculturation attitude were perceived during some interviews (interview, Reception facility for Women “Papa Giovanni XXIII” volunteer, 18/06/2020). Another attitude was noticed. Some professionals suggest that beneficiaries should “conquer” each step they make (interview, Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020), by working hard to become autonomous.

As anticipated (see section N.A.Ve), the phase of reflection normally lasts for a few months, during which beneficiaries’ everyday life is punctuated by several appointments connected to the

regularisation of their legal status and health checks. Sometimes, especially when the reflection phase lasts for more than two months, an “observation internship” (see section The Labour Inclusion Working Group) may be activated, so that professionals can start exploring beneficiaries’ skills and beneficiaries can practice Italian. They can be carried out in local firms but also inside reception facilities. La Casa della Giovane, for example, proposes beneficiaries to help and learn from the cleaning staff (interview, Reception facility for Women “Casa della Giovane” Director, 25/06/2020). La Tenda and the Francescane con i Poveri propose participation to their laboratories where they teach manual activities, such as embroidery, gardening, wedding favours, etc. (interview, Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020; Reception facility for women “Francescane con i Poveri” Practitioner and Coordinator, 15/06/2020).

As the inclusion phase starts, professionals explain some basic rules of cohabitation (concerning the timetable of activities, the use of individual and common rooms, etc.) to beneficiaries and they ask them to sign a contract in which they confirm they will respect them. Then, a range of activities are organised by professionals and beneficiaries are required to participate to them: Italian language courses, trainings and internships, orientation activities (ie. showing beneficiaries how to use public transports and buy tickets, how to go to the doctor, etc.). As the programme advances, professionals compile a skill evaluation file to help beneficiaries prepare for an internship or employment opportunity (interview, Reception facility “Comunità dei Giovani” Reception Director and Coordinator, 17/06/2020). Internships may take different forms (see section The Labour Inclusion Working Group), but professionals think they are all crucial for beneficiaries to get acquainted with the “unwritten rules” of employment (working with a regular timetable, arriving on time, etc.), to start learning a profession as well as to “fill” their days and prevent beneficiaries from experiencing increasing alienation (see also Mayblin, 2014; Pinelli, 2011; Glorius and Doomernik, 2020).

Communal activities are organised in each facility, including collective dinners, particularly in occasion of birthdays or other celebrations, that can also create an informal chance to raise and discuss critical matters (interview, Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020; Reception facility “Il Gabbiano” Coordinator and Professionals, 26/06/2020). At the same time, increasing attention has been put to allow beneficiaries’ self-organisation as far as meals are concerned (interview, Reception facility for women “Francescane con i Poveri” Practitioner and Coordinator, 15/06/2020; Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020). It has become increasingly evident that food, as an intimate issue, is a crucial element of well-being.

Reception professionals explained they tend to be very focused on everyday activities because of the pressure they experience in their work and the many unexpected events that can punctuate their work with beneficiaries thus changing priorities. They lament the lack of sufficient time for confrontation with colleagues of other Units to reflect specifically on beneficiaries’ trajectories overall (fieldwork notes, Reception facilities Unit coordination meeting, 03/03/2020; Social Inclusion Unit coordination meeting, 22/04/2020). Particularly during the lockdown, it was stressed that more coordination should be ensured with the Labour Inclusion Unit, for example, as much investment is required on internships and employment opportunities. Nodes of internal collaboration regard also the Social Inclusion Unit. Arguably monitoring meetings should be much more frequent to ensure full coordination between Case Managers and Reception professionals, but also to share reflections on beneficiaries’ programmes as they advance (interview, Reception facility “Il Gabbiano” Coordinator and Professionals, 26/06/2020; fieldwork notes, N.A.Ve monitoring meeting, 11/09/2020). Yet, because both Reception professionals and Case Managers are often overwhelmed with work, they often get in contact with each other when a situation needs to be addressed with urgency.

When Professionals and the Case Manager agree that the beneficiary is ready to finish the programme, the so-called phase of “sgancio” starts. During coordination meetings, particularly over the last year, doubts have been raised on the extent to which it is realistic to expect that all beneficiaries reach the set goals or whether professionals should rather concentrate on providing tools to favour their self-determination (interview, Reception facility “Il Gabbiano” Coordinator and Professionals, 26/06/2020). Another challenge is associated with finding an adequate accommodation. The risk is high, particularly for Nigerian women and girls, to have no alternative but to share a flat with a co-national - with associated risks of further exploitation - because of the scarce propensity of estate agents to rent flats out to migrants, particularly black people. The idea has been put forward, during a Reception facilities Unit coordination meeting (fieldwork notes, 03/03/2020), to create a specific “guarantee fund” to facilitate access to housing through the intermediation of estate agents or social cooperatives engaged in housing. This could allow to cover an initial deposit for the first few months of rent. A revision of the regional policy has opened a potential avenue to address critical housing issues for victims of trafficking: the RIA (Reddito di Inclusione Attiva – Income of Active Inclusion), a welfare measure introduced to prevent poverty, now includes them in the list of people entitled to it.

After beneficiaries leave the reception facility, professionals generally try to follow up on their trajectories through occasional telephone calls and by inviting them for season holidays celebrations. This is not part of their paid contract, nor is it required by N.A.Ve, but it is deemed important to continue supporting beneficiaries with respect to the many obstacles they may face and to better understand their trajectories. Some of the beneficiaries do keep in touch (interview, Reception facility “Comunità dei Giovani” Reception Director and Coordinator, 17/06/2020). This is more likely whereby beneficiaries remain in the same territory. Interestingly, some beneficiaries have been involved by professionals as “peer educator” to present the programme to new beneficiaries and explain its benefits. Outcomes have been very positive. Their “role model”, in the eyes of potential beneficiaries, testifies they have been successful and encourage entrance in the programme (interview, Reception facility “Il Gabbiano” Coordinator and Professionals, 26/06/2020).

### *Open challenges*

The open challenges for reception and the Reception facilities Unit are connected to the initial and final phases of the social protection programme.

Regarding the initial phase, some Reception professionals observed that they do not always receive “introductory” individual fact-sheets, from Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals, when beneficiaries enter reception facilities. If they do, the factsheets tend to be very positive and to focus on the potential of each person, rather than anticipating any critical issue or difficulty. The latter can emerge over time or at least become more evident when beneficiaries participate to everyday activities in facilities (interview, Reception facility “Il Gabbiano” Coordinator and Professionals, 26/06/2020).

Critical issues are associated to the individual trajectory of people, but more recently professionals have noticed that beneficiaries’ profiles are increasingly complex and characterised by multiple levels of vulnerability, as explained also by Case Managers. Concerning Nigerian people, and specifically women, they are generally a bit older than in earlier years (20-30 versus less than 18), they have been in Europe for more than a few years, they may have been in other EU countries too and would benefit from psychological support. None of these characteristics is completely new per se. What is new is that they are more frequently found, in people’s profiles, not in isolation but in a combination of multiple layers of vulnerability. Because of this, a dedicated Working Group, called “Psicologhe a bordo” (Psychologists

on board), has been recently established by some N.A.Ve professionals, who work in different Units but share a background in psychology. Their main aim is to address the need for psychological support, an aspect that has not received specific funding so far. The Working Group is planning to map existing services in the Veneto Region and to define potential interventions within N.A.Ve that can fill the existing service gaps. Some Reception facility professionals involved in the Working Group have started elaborating individual psychological files in view of preliminary screenings (fieldwork notes, Reception facilities Unit coordination meeting, 03/03/2020). On their side, some N.A.Ve professionals, who are not involved in the Working Group, have taken steps, in their respective territory, to provide specific psychological support to beneficiaries when needed. A specialist neuro-psychiatry service is available at the Borgo Roma Hospital, in Verona, but psychological support is normally restricted to people with residency status and N.A.Ve beneficiaries do not always have it. The hospital is part of the AULSS 9 system which is in turn partner of N.A.Ve, but still the service is not accessible to N.A.Ve beneficiaries, as there is no specific protocol regulating the collaboration - while there is one between the hospital and SAI facilities (fieldwork notes, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 19/06/2019). The Case Managers based in Verona are working to explore opportunities for collaboration, that have been developed, in the meantime, with a local association, Metis Africa, that is experimenting with some N.A.Ve beneficiaries, sessions of ethno-psychiatry<sup>94</sup>. In other territories of the Veneto Region, the lack of adequate psychological support is felt even more, for example in Venice (interview, Case Managers, Municipality of Venice, 24/06/2020-24/06/2020).

Advancement in the provision of psychological support promises to be beneficial in terms of addressing various issues in more depth, ranging from the treatment of traumas, to dealing with Nigerian women's state of debt bondage, subjection to traditional rituals, but also religious attitudes: many women put a lot of trust on God and the "divine Providence". This can be positive as it provides hope, especially in times of difficulty. At the same time, it can hold beneficiaries' back from activation (interview, Reception facility for Women "Casa della Giovane" Director, 25/06/2020).

Psychological support could also help deal with emerging problems of drug and substance abuse hints of drug abuse, but in this context more solid collaborations must be put in place with specialist services.

Sometimes, throughout our participant observation to N.A.Ve meetings, we noticed the tendency, particularly by Reception professionals, to draw from stereotypes, often based on nationality, that essentialise cultures but do not help understanding what could rather be habits or needs of people. An example regards conflicts in reception facilities. Some professionals reported that conflicts are more likely between Nigerians and other African or European nationals. Conflicts can be associated with cleaning or eating but professionals did not show an in-depth understanding of the issues involved, while pointing to the wish of increased support by Cultural-linguistic mediators to interpret conflictual situations they encounter in facilities (interview, Reception facility for Women "La Tenda" Professionals, 23/06/2020; (Reception facility "Il Gabbiano" Coordinator and Professionals, 26/06/2020), but mediators are rarely available to visit facilities because of their limited timetable.

Two thorny questions have generated particular tension between beneficiaries and Reception professionals: the distribution of pocket money and the control of smartphones. Pocket money is given to beneficiaries for personal expenses on a weekly basis. While the amount is similar in each facility (around 30 euros), slight differences may apply and whereby beneficiaries are transferred from one facility to another, or get to know beneficiaries of other facilities, lament what they perceive as unjustified unequal treatments (interview, Reception facility "Comunità dei Giovani" Reception Director

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<sup>94</sup> For more information see the website of Metis Africa: <http://www.metisafrica.org/home.php> Last access: 20/01/2021.



and Coordinator, 17/06/2020; Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020). Second, beneficiaries cannot use smartphones, when they first arrive. This rule can apply for one or several months, again with some differences across facilities. It is based on the necessity to protect beneficiaries- particularly to prevent exploiters from contacting them-, but it has a strong impact, as de facto it “cuts them off” from the outside world. The challenges of smartphones go beyond their use to include the modalities of use. Young people can play with them and take pictures of themselves with little clothes on (if any). Observations and conversations with beneficiaries have suggested that smartphones provide immediate feeling of gratification that contribute to overcoming boredom. However, there are evident dangers when N.A.Ve beneficiaries circulate such pictures. Dangers concern the safety of young people in general and even more N.A.Ve beneficiaries as victims of trafficking, considering that traffickers have been increasing using social media to control and re-attract people into the trafficking web.

Bureaucracy is another challenge in beneficiaries’ reception. It can take a long time for them to have the residence permit and this regularly causes prolonged waiting times to take up internship or employment opportunities. This is one of the reasons why Reception professionals have increasingly suggested that the asylum procedure should be the privileged channel for regularisation - as it is faster than the art. 18 procedure (interview, Reception facility “Il Gabbiano” Coordinator and Professionals, 26/06/202; Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020; fieldwork notes, N.A.Ve monitoring meeting, 11/09/2020). This contrasts with the position of some Case Managers, as explained earlier, who fear that beneficiaries may stay in the programme just to obtain a residence permit and that obtaining it may result in loss of motivation.

When the final phase of the programme approaches, difficulties relating to access to employment persist and become more urgent, in view of the need for beneficiaries to be economically autonomous (interview, Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020). Little opportunities are available in the job market in Veneto, although the N.A.Ve Labour Inclusion Working Group has made considerable efforts to create opportunities for beneficiaries (see section The Labour Inclusion Working Group). Opportunities are often particularly limited for Nigerian woman as they often lack relevant work experience, have a low fluency in Italian and are hardly used to work timetables and rules (i.e. arriving in time, working long hours, etc.), as it emerged during several coordination meetings and monitoring meetings with beneficiaries. As a result, social protection programmes are likely to be extended for a few more months, with economic challenges for reception facilities that receive lower amounts of funding in the phase of “sgancio”. Challenges regard also the difficulty of dealing with some beneficiaries that “hold onto the programme” and are reticent to terminate the programme and do not engage sufficiently looking for a job and a flat (interview, Reception facility “Comunità dei Giovani” Reception Director and Coordinator, 17/06/2020). The final phase often involves tension and conflicts accordingly. Where available, towards the end of the phase of “sgancio” beneficiaries are offered the possibility to move to “semi-autonomous” or “autonomous” apartments, under the supervision of Reception professionals, with the objective to facilitate beneficiaries’ self-organisation with everyday routines.

## The Socio-legal Unit

### *Structure of the Unit, professionals' profiles and areas of intervention*

This section was compiled by drawing from the data collected during the interview with the two Socio-legal professionals of N.A.Ve - where not otherwise specified.

The Unit is composed of two female professionals who have been working together since 2017. One has been working as an employee at the Municipality of Venice, with a background in pedagogy and considerable experience as street outreach worker. She has been covering tasks associated with legal support since 2011. Before N.A.Ve was established, she had worked within the art. 18 programme in Venice, where socio-legal support was only one of a range of duties. As socio-legal support was fragmented, a second Socio-legal professional was later employed, who started collaborating with the Equality social cooperative in Padova. Her position has been paid through the "Vie d'uscita" project<sup>95</sup>, funded by Save the Children, and targeted to unaccompanied minors. Her background is in anthropology and she developed considerable experience in legal support in SPRAR reception projects. Both professionals explained that the term "Socio-legal professional" best represents their role. They emphasised the "social" nature of the legal support they provide as they put particular efforts in building a relationship with the people they assist, an aspect that, in their view, is not necessarily taken into consideration by lawyers and legal practitioners who work with reception facilities.

Two are the main areas in which the Socio-legal professionals work: on the one side, regularisation; on the other, collaboration in penal proceedings. The former includes activities aimed to inform and orient the N.A.Ve beneficiaries on their legal status and the channels they can use for regularisation, such as art. 18 (social or judicial channels) and the asylum procedure. It builds on the street outreach experience matured by one of the professionals. She had observed that legal support was crucial to integrate the harm reduction approach of outreach units, as various sex workers expressed this need. The professionals generally accompany beneficiaries to the Questura, particularly in the very first steps of the regularisation procedure (i.e. fingerprinting), not only to support them but also to maintain and develop good relationships with authorities. This is crucial to advocate for the rights of beneficiaries and to question any illegitimate practice (i.e. delays and additional documents requested for residence permits). They also support beneficiaries throughout the asylum procedure whereby they apply for asylum. In this context, their work has been precious also in developing relationships with Territorial Commissions, to ensure they know N.A.Ve and have a good understanding of the individual and contextual issues regarding asylum claims based on grounds of trafficking. More work is needed in this respect, particularly to improve understanding of cultural issues that Commissioners may be not familiar with. For example, as it emerged during a meeting, they were unaware that when a woman returns to Nigeria she is likely to face a very negative stigma on the basis of which her family does not welcome her back. In turn this is likely to contribute to a high risk of re-trafficking (fieldwork notes, meeting between Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals and the Territorial Commission of Verona, 20/01/2020). Another example regards stereotypes connected to claims based on sexual orientation. As the Socio-legal professionals explained, similar stereotypes (concealing of identity) have had a negative influence in credibility assessment, with a negative impact on the final decision.

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<sup>95</sup> For more information see the relevant website: <https://www.savethechildren.it/cosa-facciamo/progetti/vie-duscita> Last access: 01/12/2020.

As far as the second area of engagement is concerned, collaboration in penal proceedings, the work of the Socio-legal Unit consists in assisting beneficiaries when reporting traffickers to law enforcement agencies and throughout the entire penal proceeding, in collaboration with lawyers. While the social protection programme normally lasts for one and a half year, penal proceedings are likely to extend over a much longer period of time, hence continuous assistance is all the more crucial.

The Socio-legal professionals explained that Nigerian women and girls have not been particularly prone to reporting, at least compared to women from Eastern Europe. The reasons are multiple, but include particularly the fear of being threatened or harmed (if not killed) by traffickers and of exposing their own family to a dangerous situation, as well as the lack of trust towards law enforcement agencies. Interviews with the Squadra Mobile in Padova, Venice and Verona confirmed that the number of reports by Nigerian women have been very low (interview, Squadra Mobile, Padova, 24/06/2020; Venice, 10/09/2020; Verona, 29/10/2020). Although no precise figures were made available, police officers estimated less than 5 reports in each city since 2016 and even less in prior years.

A slightly higher number of reports has been recorded in Verona. According to the local Crisis and Evaluation Unit professional, this derives from a consolidated collaboration with the Squadra Mobile, which has resulted in increasing understanding of the reciprocal roles, languages and approaches (interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Verona, 28/05/2020). On the one side, the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professional has familiarised with the work of the Squadra Mobile and she can more easily understand, during her first interviews with a beneficiary, whether there are grounds for reporting; on the other, the Law Enforcement Officers have familiarised with the Crisis and Evaluation Unit and have learnt to relate to women in a much more women-friendly approach. Considerable work has been done with Nigerian women to address and overcome their mistrust towards the police and to encourage their collaboration. In the view of the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professional, mistrust remains strong. Possibly it has even increased as in very rare cases investigations based on their reports, have led to prosecutions.

### ***Collaborations with N.A. Ve Units and other relevant stakeholders***

While collaborations with the colleagues of other Units are not frequent, exception made for the Crisis and Evaluation Unit, the Socio-legal professionals put considerable efforts in reporting the outcomes of their work to beneficiaries and all N.A. Ve colleagues. It is an occasion for them to stress the importance of regularisation in beneficiaries' process of inclusion. As we observed many times during our fieldwork, there is widespread agreement on the relevance of regularisation, but some professionals focus on other priorities, including first and foremost the inclusion programme (i.e. Italian language learning and training). This is one of the crucial nodes reported by Socio-legal professionals. They suggested that basic legal training should be provided across units to shared minimum knowledge of legal issues. Efforts in this direction are on-going.

The work of the Socio-legal Unit has also involved the promotion of operative protocols with various stakeholders, such as the Anti-mafia District Directorate, the Questura, the Labour Inspectorates and more recently the Territorial Commission of Verona. While these protocols have been useful to strengthen multi-agency cooperation, their effectiveness depends on whether officials share them with their team and provide guidelines for the implementation. A protocol is still missing with the Dublin Unit and no reference person is available for cases of trafficking. According to narrative evidence, potential cases of trafficking are "treated" as vulnerable cases more generally, thus without attention to the specific needs of this target group.

Since 2016, the Socio-legal professionals and the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals based in Verona, have been co-operating with the CIR helpdesk in the same city. CIR, Consiglio Italiano per i Rifugiati (Italian Council for Refugees) is an independent Italian humanitarian organisation, founded in 1990 under the initiative of the UN. It operates in Italy, other EU countries and Africa. In Italy, among other things, it operates legal helpdesks to support migrants and seekers of international protection. One of these helpdesks, has been operating in Verona since 2001, with a service dedicated to SPRAR and SIPROIMI beneficiaries. Contacts between CIR and N.A.Ve have been favoured by similar targets in the respective activities and by the proximity of their officers (within the same building). The collaboration increased particularly with the growing arrival of Nigerian women, in 2015, who visited the helpdesk and reported stories suggesting strong indicators of trafficking. In coincidence with this situation, an informal agreement was reached whereby the CIR Professionals would conduct a first interview to provide an initial general overview of the asylum system and the N.A.Ve Crisis and Evaluation Unit professional would conduct a second interview focused on identifying potential elements of trafficking. While steps forward have been certainly made in the co-operation, the opinion was reported that more systematic reflections are needed to share the respective experiences with beneficiaries and to define common procedures and a common set of objectives for protection their protection.

### *Steps forward and pending challenges*

One of the main challenges identified by the Socio-legal professionals is connected to the fact that they do not have the capacity to ensure systematic support to all N.A.Ve beneficiaries, as they can hardly cover the entire territory of the Veneto Region. Looking beyond the Veneto Region, it is important to stress that the role of the Socio-legal professionals is not clear, nor homogenously present in all anti-trafficking projects in Italy. This is per significant per se. Additionally, as the Socio-legal professionals recently reported, whereby their role exists, it is often one of the many roles covered by a single professional (fieldwork notes, Workshop SIAA “Institutional and biographical times of human trafficking at the time of COVID-19 and beyond”, 05/12/2020), thus suggesting that its relevance is barely recognised and that more specific training is needed in this sense with all anti-trafficking professionals. More attention is also needed on the collaboration of Socio-legal professionals with other N.A.Ve Units. Since the beginning of 2019, they have been involved in street outreach activities by Equality social cooperative. This approach was already adopted by other anti-trafficking projects in Italy, particularly (but not only) by CIAC Onlus, in Parma, that invested considerably on socio-legal support. It has proven positive in outreach work but again limited resources are available to increase the capacity of the professionals to cover more activities across the regional territory. Another area of work is relatively recent and remains relatively unexplored to date: that of labour exploitation (fieldwork notes, N.A.Ve monitoring meeting, 11/09/2020).

Finally, the Socio-legal professionals have been striving to build stronger collaborations with the Questure across the Veneto Region, to ensure homogenous practices and equal access to rights for beneficiaries, irrespectively of where they live. All throughout Italy it has long been noticed that the Questure - as other institutions - adopt diverging discretionary practices based on divergent interpretations of the law. In this sense, we recommend that, at a higher national level, steps should be made to build a national platform of Socio-legal professionals to facilitate the sharing of thoughts on critical nodes while also undertaking advocacy work.

## The Cultural-linguistic mediation Unit

The definitions of mediation and the roles associated with it are very heterogeneous, both at national and international level.

According to the definition by Johnson and Nigris (1996) and Favaro (2004), mediation can be articulated into several intervention levels: the informative and orientation level, the linguistic and communicative level, the cultural and intercultural level, the psycho-social and relational level. Each level involves a variety of tasks. Luatti (2011) defines mediation as a “mosaic-tiled profession” (*professione a mosaico*) to underline the complexity inherent in this role. The academic literature distinguishes two main approaches: the inter-linguistic approach, based mainly on translation, interpreting and language studies (see Gentile, 1996; Russo and Mack, 2005; Wadensjö, 1998), and the inter-cultural approach, which focuses on the anthropological and sociological aspects of mediation (see Bowling and Hoffman, 2000; Castiglioni, 1997; Johnson and Nigris, 2000; Luatti, 2006). On its side, the Council of Europe proposed a definition of cultural mediation, its roles and tasks, which differentiates it from other two professional roles that may facilitate intercultural communication: the interpreter and the community interpreter. Specifically, mediation is considered as a “*multifaceted role in which the mediator acts essentially as an outside third party and cultural intermediary between a person or community and an institution’s department*” (Council of Europe, 2011: 86). In this document, EU member states are also called on to reinforce the process of standardisation of the mediator’s role, but still references in normative documents and institutional discourses are very different throughout European countries and similarly different are implementation practices (Tonioli, 2016).

With regard to the Italian context, the debate on mediation, and in particular mediation in public services, emerged alongside a growing presence of the foreign population, at the end of 1980s. The main policy fields in which mediation was introduced were school and education and socio-health services (Luatti, 2006). Gradually, their presence was extended to other areas, such as law enforcement (jails, detention centres, police offices), employment-support, legal-support. Despite several attempts to define and standardize this professional role (CNEL, 2009; Casadei and Franceschetti, 2009), no common normative definition has been agreed upon so far, nor has a professional register been created. To date, contractual conditions and training programmes are very diversified across the country and within regions.

Research on mediation was mainly conducted in the first decades of the new millennium, mainly with a focus on school and on the socio-health system. More recently, there has been a revival of interest, with a specific focus on work with asylum seekers (Veglio, 2017), suggesting the analysis of practices in the construction of asylum seekers’ narratives to be used with asylum authorities. Nevertheless, the modes and approaches of mediation with asylum seekers are still understudied. Even less attention has been placed on mediation with people who have been trafficked. Hence analysing the role of Cultural-linguistic mediators within N.A.Ve is particularly significantly not only for the relevance of this function in the network but also for the limited reflections in the anti-trafficking field.

### *The profiles of Cultural-linguistic mediators*

The Cultural-linguistic mediation Unit is a structural part of N.A.Ve. Before the network was established, cultural-linguistic mediation was provided, if available, on an ad hoc basis, as it often happens in other policy fields. Since 2016, the service has been outsourced to a social cooperative - an exception within N.A.Ve - that coordinates the work of mediators across the regional territory (fieldwork notes, Social Inclusion Unit coordination meeting with Cultural-linguistic mediators, online, 25/05/2020). The service covers interventions in the entire Veneto Region. For logistical reasons, mediators operate in distinct "territorial macro-areas": Venice/Treviso, Padova/Rovigo, Verona/Vicenza.

Cultural-linguistic mediators in N.A.Ve are mainly female, with an exception: a young man from Cameroon, who is mainly involved in labour exploitation interventions. Their average age is 35-45. They come from francophone and anglophone areas of sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb, from Romania, Albania and Bangladesh. The majority of them have long-term professional experience in various fields, such as school, socio-health services, prison and detention centres, law enforcement offices, asylum seeker reception facilities. Some of them - particularly mediators of Nigerian, Romanian and Albanian origins - have also been working in the anti-trafficking field since the early 2000, well before the establishment of N.A.Ve. Most mediators reported having attended several trainings over the years, generally focused on methodological issues and techniques of mediation, but not specifically on human trafficking. N.A.Ve has not provided specific training. Mediators have learnt by doing, hands-on experience.

According to some N.A.Ve professionals, Cultural-linguistic mediators should have a migratory background and should ideally come from the same country of origin of the beneficiaries they work with. This is expected to favour an emphatic relationship and to help professionals understand the background of origin of beneficiaries. Mediators generally share this view. However, we found that this aspect has not been analysed sufficiently. We wonder to what extent Mediators may equally contribute to reinforcing stereotypes of the countries of origin, partly if they have not returned to their country for a long time and unless they are regular contacts with the diaspora.

### *The Cultural-linguistic mediators' roles in N.A.Ve*

Generally speaking, mediators are considered as a crucial resource to facilitate communication with beneficiaries, particularly when they first approach N.A.Ve, but also to develop stronger relationships based on trust. Most professionals stress that mediation cannot be assimilated with mere translation, but there are nuances in opinions, as will be explained. What is evident is that Cultural-linguistic mediators' role is de facto still undermined. Mediators are rarely involved in coordination meetings, exception made for the meetings of the Crisis and Evaluation Unit and the Outreach Unit. Although they have been always invited to express their opinions during these meetings, many mediators consider these occasions as insufficient. They insist that specific coordination meetings should be organised for mediators only so that they can feel totally comfortable in sharing their views. Furthermore, during the focus group that we organised in September 2020, the need emerged for their self-organisation into a dedicated Unit, to ensure stronger representation within N.A.Ve (see also interview, Cultural-linguistic mediator, Venice, 23/06/2020; Cultural-linguistic mediator, Verona, 30/07/2020; Cultural-linguistic mediator and Anti-trafficking Helpline Professional, 19/06/2020; fieldwork notes, focus group with Cultural-linguistic mediators, Venice, 08/09/2020).

Cultural-linguistic mediators regularly collaborate with the Outreach Unit, particularly in accompanying beneficiaries to medical consultations and check-ups. Their support is invaluable to ensure that beneficiaries fully understand information and procedures, thus ultimately facilitating the role of health professionals too (interview, Outreach Unit Coordinator, 06/05/2020).

In specific situations, for example during the COVID-19 lockdown, mediators provided precious advice to N.A.Ve professionals. The Outreach Unit put in place a food-delivery service for street sex workers - who were unable to work. Nigerian Cultural-linguistic mediators suggested the Unit should give vouchers instead of providing food, so that individuals could choose their preferred food. They stressed that attention to eating habits was particularly important for people's mental and physical health (see also Codesal, 2010), even more in what was a rather unusual time of isolation. Mediators further helped counter fake news that spread, particularly across Nigerian communities, in relation to the virus (fieldwork notes, Outreach Unit coordination meeting, 03/04/2020).

Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals consider the collaboration with mediators very important in the very initial contacts with potential beneficiaries. On the one side, they facilitate the communication from a linguistic point of view, as beneficiaries rarely speak Italian or have a sufficient fluency to understand specific information (i.e. legal procedures). Beneficiaries often carry with them traumatic experiences and communicating in their mother-tongue can facilitate (emotional) communication. The possibility for Nigerian women and girls to speak in pidgining or broken English or Edo - as opposed to English that they do normally speak too - has been often observed as central, as it provides for a more familiar setting. While speaking the same language is clearly crucial, some N.A.Ve professionals have wondered whether beneficiaries may sometimes be more uncomfortable with a mediator of the same country of origin, whether they may fear their "judgment". On the other side, in the view of the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals, working in team with Cultural-linguistic mediators facilitate the preparation and conduction of interviews with beneficiaries as it enables them to share observations on attitudes and dynamics and it ultimately facilitates the preparation of a more comprehensive and thorough evaluation (interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Verona, 28/05/2020). The evaluation process may consist in several interviews and the role of Cultural-linguistic mediators is pre-negotiated each time, depending on the agreed objectives and based on individual situations, thus requiring considerable flexibility on their side. The mediator may be asked to adopt a reassuring attitude, if the Crisis and Evaluation professional has to adopt a strict attitude on his/her side or viceversa (ibidem). In other cases, it may be agreed that mediators should act more autonomously, depending on the specific goal of the interview (fieldwork notes, meeting Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional with victim of trafficking, Padova, 23/01/2020; fieldwork notes, meeting Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional with victim of trafficking, Mestre-Venice, 13/01/2020).

The collaboration between the Crisis and Evaluation Unit and mediators has improved over the last years, but the role of mediators continues to raise methodological questions in N.A.Ve. If trust between a professional and the mediator is not consolidated, the conduction of interviews can be tiring and fraught with difficulties: much more time may be needed, for example, to discuss objectives and misunderstandings during interviews may be more likely (interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Verona, 28/05/2020).

Regarding the Social Inclusion Unit, collaboration is not constant and it is less codified in methodological terms. Normally, mediators take part in individual monitoring meetings with beneficiaries. Some Case Managers question the need for their presence in the advanced phases of the social protection programme, if beneficiaries are sufficiently fluent in Italian. Some professionals believe that mediation in the advanced phases of inclusion can actually represent an antithesis to the process of inclusion

(interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Verona, 28/05/2020; interview, Reception facility for Women “La Tenda” Professionals, 23/06/2020; fieldwork notes, Social Inclusion Unit coordination meeting with Cultural-linguistic mediators, online, 28/05/2020). Interestingly, this observation points to an understanding of mediation as strictly and mainly connected to language translation.

Cultural-linguistic mediators are aware of professionals’ varied perceptions of mediation and in turn negotiate and adapt their role depending on the setting and professional they work with. At the same time they lament the lack of symmetry in working relationships with other N.A.Ve professionals. For example, beneficiaries’ individual fact-sheets are not shared with them. Apparently, this is because of bureaucratic and logistic issues connected to modes of archiving, but it results in Cultural-linguistic mediators being isolated in their role (fieldwork notes, Case Managers and Cultural-linguistic mediators coordination meeting, 28/05/2020, online) and they are rather critical about this.

Cultural-linguistic mediators rarely visit reception facilities. Generally speaking, priority is given to their collaboration with Outreach Unit and Crisis and Evaluation Unit activities. Mediation in reception facilities is perceived as less crucial, because in these contexts beneficiaries start learning the Italian language and are busy with trainings and internships. At the same time, Reception professionals stated that their role may be in fact extremely useful to prevent conflicts but also to highlight critical issues (fieldwork notes, Social Inclusion Unit coordination meeting with Cultural-linguistic mediators, online, 28/05/2020; interview, Cultural-linguistic mediator, Venice, 23/06/2020; interview, Cultural-linguistic mediator, Padova, 10/06/2020; interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Padova, 20/05/2020). Mediators, on their side, lamented their late involvement, when conflicts have already exploded or problems have already emerged (fieldwork notes, Case Manager individual monitoring meeting with beneficiary, Venice-Mestre, 21/01/2020). According to them, interventions in reception facilities can favour the mutual understanding between professionals and beneficiaries and can equally help anticipate critical issues, such as processes of racialisation (interview, Cultural-linguistic mediator, Padova, 10/06/2020). During a monitoring meeting, a Nigerian girl explicitly asked if the colour of her skin could be an obstacle for labour inclusion in Italy, somehow suggesting she was perceiving a similar obstacle or had perhaps already experienced it. The mediator, of Nigerian origin, explained in this occasion that she often talked about her experiences of racism with beneficiaries and that the perception of racial boundaries and colour-based discrimination was evident in several socio-economic sectors. She thereby encouraged both the Case Manager and the Reception facility professional not to underestimate racialisation and to take the topic onboard early enough with beneficiaries to prevent unpleasant (if not aggressive) situations from happening (fieldwork notes, Case Manager individual monitoring meeting with beneficiary, Venice-Mestre, 22/01/2020).

Reception facility professionals particularly stressed that the presence of a mediator would be invaluable upon beneficiaries’ arrival at reception facilities, as this could help them familiarise with a whole set of (not always pleasant and easily understandable) rules (fieldwork notes, Reception facilities coordination meeting, Padova, 15/01/2020).



### *The role of cultural-linguistic mediation: an emic perspective*

Next, we will describe and discuss the self-representation of Cultural-linguistic mediators, drawing from the focus group that we organised, in September 2020<sup>96</sup>.

Three are the key intertwined elements that Cultural-linguistic mediators associate with their role: language, culture and relationship.

Language is the first. The language used in the practice of mediation is not neutral, rather it is “culturally interpreted” and adjusted to the setting and to each beneficiary’s profile and background. It is a language rich in nuances and idioms and situated in the specific region (not just the country) of origin of beneficiaries. The choice of the specific language - for Nigerians English, pidgin English, Edo, broken English, etc. - is carefully made and it is central in cultural-linguistic mediation, differently from language interpretation, as it has a strong impact on the mediation setting. On the one hand, beneficiaries feel more comfortable in explaining details of their cultural and biographical background in the language in which they are most fluent and which is most familiar to them, especially when they first approach N.A.Ve. Sometimes, if they don’t feel comfortable in expressing themselves, they know they can delegate explanations to mediators. On the other hand, mediators feel the responsibility, given their knowledge of cultural practices, to provide non-generic descriptions of beneficiaries’ experiences and cultural values and beliefs. Sometimes, they (unconsciously) accept to play the role of cultural “certifiers”<sup>97</sup>.

Culture was described as a set of practices, including not only linguistic ones but also behaviours and beliefs. For instance, Nigerian mediators explained that it is a custom for Nigerians not to watch elder people in their eye, when talking, as it would be a sign of disrespect. This is in contrast with Italian (and European) practices, that rather consider such a behaviour as duly respectful. Mediators help filling similar knowledge gaps to prevent any tension among interlocutors and make the conversation more fluid. This has been crucial in meetings and interviews organised by N.A.Ve professionals and even more in employment/internship settings, with employers. A mediator narrated that she often explained the different meanings of laughter: Nigerians can laugh to react to a difficult situation, not to mock nor disrespect a speaker<sup>98</sup>.

It is not easy for mediators to position themselves with regard to cultural practices and it is hard for them to share their meanings in a way that can be easily understood and respected. Reflecting on positionality requires mediators to reflect on the self-perception as migrants and co-nationals of beneficiaries, but also on their professional role as mediators and on the N.A.Ve colleagues’ expectations on it. The N.A.Ve professionals normally expect mediators not to speak in the name of beneficiaries but to make the conversation smoother by translating and dealing with any misunderstanding that may emerge in relation to verbal and non-verbal communication (interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Verona, 28/05/2020). Reflecting on positionality requires also consideration for “cultural needs”. A Nigerian mediator explained she finds it easier to talk to young Nigerian girls and put herself into their shoes when they share the same beliefs. She fully understands the strong sense of bondage to rituals, such as the juju oath<sup>99</sup>, as she deeply believes in its power too. On the one side, this is arguably a positive aspect, as it can facilitate the building of a relationship of

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<sup>96</sup> Fieldwork notes, focus group with Cultural-linguistic mediators, Venice, 08/09/2020.

<sup>97</sup> This was suggested by Natale Losi, an ethno-psychiatrist and trainer, who was involved in the INSigHT training for mediators (fieldwork notes, INSigHT training for Cultural-linguistic mediators, Padova, 3/12/2019).

<sup>98</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>99</sup> See note 61.

trust. On the other, it can carry some dangers, whereby mediators consider cultural needs but ignore all other needs of beneficiaries that can come into conflict with each other. One case was particularly illuminating in this sense.

A girl insisted she needed to free herself from the juju. In the view of helping her and taking her needs seriously, the Cultural-linguistic mediator provided support to plan her flight back to Nigeria and organise for her a visit to a native doctor. This choice was not discussed with the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professional that was then working with the young girl. When the professional was eventually informed, it was decided, together with the mediator, that the girl should be carefully explained that her flight to Nigeria could compromise her legal status as a refugee, and with it the possibility of returning to Italy. The mediator had not considered the legal aspects of the issue as she is not familiar with them, which is why team work is always stressed as crucial in N.A.Ve, as it ultimately aims to ensure all aspects of beneficiaries' situations are considered. What needs stressing, as explained above, is that there is still scarce understanding among all N.A.Ve professionals, including also Cultural-linguistic mediators, of the legal precariousness of beneficiaries and a basic thorough training is strongly recommended.

The third key element associated with mediation is relationship. Cultural-linguistic mediators stated that the main objective of their activity is to support the development of positive relationships among all interlocutors of any mediation setting. They used the metaphor of the bridge to describe their role and further specified that they normally mainly stand right in the middle of it, which made them reflect on the fact they tend to occupy a temporary position - not on one side, nor on the other of the bridge. This opens the question of the extent to which power is distributed, in mediation settings, or is not rather unbalanced. It does require further exploration.

All mediators share the view that mediation more generally entails facilitating communication between people and institutions, to ensure effective access to services and inclusive protection programmes, based on shared decision-making and conflict management. They underlined mediation should help interlocutors, starting with beneficiaries, to feel well. Arguably, the well-being of beneficiaries is often forgotten, in social protection programmes. Professionals are busy with ensuring that beneficiaries make all the steps that are assumed to be crucial to protect them and favour their autonomy. However, this does not necessarily mean ensuring their well-being which is crucial for the empowerment though. Thus, mediation has a central role in bringing well-being back into focus. Not to be underestimated is that mediators are part of N.A.Ve and thus share an institutional culture which is likely to influence their profession and that, at the same time, they are called to question.

A mediator used another metaphor to describe their role. They described themselves as mechanics, as they (help) put (scattered) pieces (of biographical stories) together when beneficiaries interact with professionals. Another described mediation as a "pregnant woman" to illustrate that mediation is a particularly long and complex process, whose responsibility is born by many but one person mainly, whose outcomes are uncertain but filled with hope and positive expectations. Not only. Mediation, particularly in anti-trafficking projects, implies a significant emotional involvement, precisely as pregnancy. But mediators are challenged by emotions normally associated with beneficiaries' severe trauma that do impact on mediators' psychological well-being too. Hence mediators reclaimed the need for dedicated spaces for psychological support. Some of them have learned how to "protect themselves" from overwhelming emotional involvement, for example by means of a clear and rigid separation of work and personal life spaces and times; others find it difficult to keep firm boundaries. Self-protection is important not only for emotional distress but also because of the multiple delicate collaborations that mediators can take up. Some have collaborated with law enforcement agencies in

the context of investigations. Whereby their co-nationals associate them with “informants” - a term used by the police for people who collaborate in investigations - they can be marginalised from their own communities and possibly put themselves in a risky position - with respect to traffickers and criminal organisations (interview, Cultural-linguistic mediator, Venice, 23/06/2020).

Generational variables are also very important in mediation. Mediators consider generational differences as an important element to be accounted for in their profession, as it affects relationships with beneficiaries. Nigerian mediators reported a significant change in the profiles of the women and girls they have been working with. From their point of view, increasing difficulties are evident in developing trustful relationships with girls who have recently arrived through the Central Mediterranean route and Libya, because of the degrading and traumatic treatment they most often experienced, but also their very young age. All mediators belong to a different generation and recall having had a different, more respectful attitude, when they arrived in Italy. They argued that Nigerian women have grown more distrustful towards social services, not to mention Law Enforcement Officers (interview, Cultural-linguistic mediator, Venice, 23/06/2020). A last point is worth considering: generational gaps.

Generational issues were mentioned also with respect to fellow mediators who arrived more recently or were born in Italy. In the view of the N.A.Ve mediators, they cannot do a good job, because of their little knowledge of Nigerian habits and traditions, an opinion linked to the perceived necessary skills to be a good Cultural-linguistic mediator, but also to the intersecting biographical profiles of mediators (when and how they arrived in Italy, their migratory experience, the challenges of their settlement in Italy, including also their efforts to achieve a recognised professional status), their connection with the diaspora and the methods to keep up with the evolution of Nigerian culture. In our view, it opens up a wider reflection on what it takes to be a mediator. Arguably, updating professional competences is essential and this also includes keeping an eye (and involvement) with country of origins’ affairs and cultural practices as new generations come with cultural changes. To what extent is it necessary for a mediator to be active in the diaspora? To what extent is it necessary for a mediator to go back to the country of origin regularly? Or is sufficient to keep connected through social media? What does this entail for their profession and for their personal life? These are all questions that require in depth attention.

## The Labour Inclusion Working Group

Access to internships, job placements and employment is considered one of the pillars of the social inclusion phase of the N.A.Ve social protection programmes, alongside regularisation, Italian language learning and access to housing. Economic independence is key to inclusion and crucial to reduce the risk of re-trafficking (interview, Case Managers, Municipality of Venice, 26/05/2020-24/06/2020). This is why the principal objective of N.A.Ve professionals is to ensure beneficiaries can find their way to stable employment conditions before leaving N.A.Ve. Yet, they are aware of the fragile job market that characterises Italy, even more as far as people of immigrant origins are concerned.

Critical issues concerning labour inclusion are regularly discussed in the regional coordination meetings of the Social Inclusion Unit and of a dedicated working group, the Labour Inclusion Working Group, thus confirming the importance attached to employment. Case Managers focus more on the progress made by beneficiaries, while the Labour Inclusion Working Group has a more strategic mission, consisting in matching internship and employment opportunities with beneficiaries' profiles, networking with the stakeholders of the local economic system (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Venice and Labour Inclusion Working Group Coordinator, 29/05/2020) and analysing beneficiaries' trajectories to re-adapt support strategies, where needed.

A first Labour Inclusion Working Group was established locally, in Venice, before the creation of N.A.Ve. It operated in the framework of the art. 18 inclusion programmes managed by the Municipality of Venice - in other territories, anti-trafficking professionals also dealt with employment issues, on an autonomous basis. At that time, work placement opportunities were available mainly in the field of cleaning. Professionals soon realised that more and diversified opportunities had to be sought in other economic sectors, by developing new partnerships and that their efforts would benefit from enlarging the working group and defining standard procedures (interview, Labour Inclusion Working Group Coordinator, 29/06/2020). Hence a regional working group was created. The Coordinator of the newly created Labour Inclusion Working Group was and still is one of the Case Managers of the Municipality of Venice, who has drawn practices and strategies from long-term experience. For each provincial territory, a Reception facility professional was identified to act as local contact person and make communication and coordination smoother.

The Working Group meets on a regular monthly basis. Recently, the members based in Padova have established a smaller local working group to further strengthen networking activities in this territory (interview, Labour Inclusion Working Group member, Padova, 09/06/2020). Diversity of experiences and resources across territories emerged as soon as the Working Group started operating, leading to the harmonisation of objectives and strategies in three main steps. The first step consisted in identifying and agreeing on shared definitions of key concepts and procedures; the second step consisted in the development of common tools and in the sharing of resources; the third led to the creation of a common database of companies and training centres that offered training, internship and employment opportunities. To ensure effective coordination and the implementation of consistently standardised procedures, the task of internship activation was centralised to the Comunità dei Giovani Social Cooperative, based in Verona.

### *Internships: objectives, propaedeutic steps, sectors, approach and outcomes*

When the social inclusion phase begins, Reception professionals and Case Managers explain to all beneficiaries that one of the main goals of the programme is job placement. The assigned Reception professional starts with a process of “skills evaluation”, which implies support in writing a CV, the analysis of the skills acquired in any previous training or job activity, the observation of the beneficiary in daily life, in order to assess basic competences and soft skills, and attendance to an Italian language course. Where courses are available, beneficiaries attend public schools for adults, the so-called CPIA (Centri Provinciali per l’Istruzione per Adulti – Provincial Centres for Adult Education), otherwise Reception professionals often ask for the support of volunteer teachers.

Based on beneficiaries’ specific profiles, one or more internships can be activated, including the following three typologies:

- **observational internship** (*tirocinio osservativo*): it is a short internship (160 hours, with no costs for the internship employer), aimed to support people who enter the labour market for the first time, observe how they behave in a labour context, enhance soft skills and the ability to learn specific competences. This kind of internship has been introduced as an integrative tool for the “skills evaluation”, whereby the observation of daily life activities has not provided sufficient insights. These internships are activated in a “protected context”, generally with companies and organisations which work with vulnerable individuals;
- **training internship** (*tirocinio formativo*): it starts at the end of an internship, with the main aim to reinforce competences in a specific employment sector (280 hours, with a financial contribution provided by the internship employer);
- **internship for job placement** (*tirocinio per inserimento lavorativo*): it can involve full-time or part-time activities, up to 5 or 6 months long (up to 440 hours). Its aim is to favour access to a job contract, with a preliminary match between the company’s needs and beneficiaries’ skills.

Following dedicated reflections, developed in occasion of a specific training, the Labour Inclusion Working Group members realised that beneficiaries’ ambitions and expectations are normally too high with respect to opportunities in the Italian job market. Whilst striving to consider beneficiaries’ desires and preferences as well as their attitudes, professionals must weight them against limited opportunities in a few employment sectors. Many beneficiaries have low qualifications - often only a primary school certificate - and many are illiterate, not to consider the multiple vulnerabilities they carry with them (interview, Labour Inclusion Working Group Coordinator, 29/06/2020).

In this scenario, the main sectors available for work placement are normally hotels and restaurants, and more generally the tourism industry (mainly in Venice), cleaning services, agriculture, large scale retail-trade and care assistance, especially for female beneficiaries.

When contacting new potential internship employers, the Labour Inclusion Working Group adopts a specific shared approach: interns are not presented as victims of trafficking, in order to avoid any form of re-victimisation that could contribute to producing and reproducing stigma or stereotypical representations. If the collaboration with the employer consolidates, the objectives of N.A.Ve are made more explicit and a formal partnership may be proposed (interview, Labour Inclusion Working Group member, Padova, 09/06/2020). In the meantime, beneficiaries are presented as “disadvantaged”

individuals - following the normative category adopted by the Veneto Region to facilitate access to work of the following groups: asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and serious exploitation<sup>100</sup>.

Importantly, the Regional Authority set up a dedicated fund to cover internships and job placements costs for disadvantaged individuals. Additionally, N.A.Ve has recently introduced a specific budget to organise trainings tailored to the actual needs of beneficiaries and to develop new collaborations with new employment sectors. It has been supplemented by other resources, such as a funding by Save The Children - a partner of N.A.Ve - and by Cariparo Foundation, a bank foundation based in Padova and Rovigo.

According to the most recent available data a total of 62 internships were carried out in N.A.Ve 2 and 77 N.A.Ve 3, of which 8 were continuing from N.A.Ve 2. In both projects, that is to say for the period December 2017-February 2019 and the following period March 2019 - May 2020, the number of internships for job placements prevailed, with an increase in 2019-2020, with respect to the previous year. This was a positive sign for the job market, but with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic things change. Data is not yet available for the last year but professionals reported that over 20% of internships were suspended because of the pandemic and it was not sure if and when they could restart.

It is worth noticing that the outcomes of internships for job placement are particularly positive: 11% internship lead to seasonal contracts and 33% to a fixed-term job. For the period March 2019-December 2020 data only show so far that in 68.8% of cases internships for job placements lead to a seasonal contract. More than 30% were on-going, again due to the on-going pandemic.

Nr of beneficiaries who started an internship	Total of internship	observational internship	internship for job placement
62	62 (?)	16	34+12

TABLE 14: N.A.VE INTERNSHIPS FOR THE PERIOD DECEMBER 2017 - FEBRUARY 2019 (SOURCE: N.A.VE 2 FINAL REPORT).

On-going	Seasonal contract	Fixed-term contract	No contract for reasons related to the intern	No contract for reasons related to the employer (no resources)
15%	11%	33%	21%	20%

TABLE 15: OUTCOME OF INTERNSHIPS FOR JOB PLACEMENT AS OF FEBRUARY 2019.

<sup>100</sup> Regione Veneto, Disposizioni in materia di tirocini ai sensi dell'art. 41 della legge regionale 13 marzo 2009, n. 3 (Veneto Region, Provisions for internships under art. 41 of Regional Law 13 March 2009, 3). Available at: [https://www.regione.veneto.it/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=21f82db9-7ff8-4c81-bf74-6934ded81490&groupId=60642](https://www.regione.veneto.it/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=21f82db9-7ff8-4c81-bf74-6934ded81490&groupId=60642). Last access: 10/12/2020.

Nr of beneficiaries who started an intership	Total of internship	observational internship	internship for job placement
67	77	36.2%	63.8%

TABLE 16: N.A.VE INTERNSHIPS FOR THE PERIOD MARCH 2019 - MAY 2020 (SOURCE: N.A.VE 3 FINAL REPORT).

On-going	Seasonal contract
36.2%	63.8%

TABLE 17: OUTCOME OF INTERNSHIPS FOR JOB PLACEMENT AS OF DECEMBER 2020 (SOURCE: N.A.VE 3)

If we look at sectors, the main sector that offered internships in the last 3 year is the hotel sector, that, at the end of the internships, could offer a job to over 50% of interns. Unfortunately, this is the sector that was mostly hit by the pandemic and it remains to be seen to what extent it will recover. Considering the period March 2019 – May 2020, these are other main sectors of internships, besides the hotel one (33%): cleaning (18.2%), agriculture and flower (9.1%), commerce (6.8%), baking (3.4%), textile (6.8%), others.

As of August 2020, the general impression of the Labour Inclusion Working Group members was of increasing difficulties for beneficiaries to get a fixed-term job contract also because of the changing profiles of beneficiaries, who are generally younger, more vulnerable and less qualified (interview, Labour Inclusion Working Group Coordinator, 29/06/2020; Labour Inclusion Working Group member, Padova, 09/06/2020).

### *Internship monitoring policies and emerging challenges*

An important aspect of internship organisation is the monitoring of activities, which is carried out both by a dedicated guardian, provided by the internship employer and formally appointed when the internship agreement is made, and by a Labour Inclusion Working Group member. The objective of this joint monitoring is to ensure the internship proceeds well and to motivate both the interns and the internship employers to engage fully. On the one hand, the Labour Inclusion Working Group monitors the progress of and the competences acquired by interns and their attitude to job activities. On the other hand, the Labour Inclusion Working Group monitors employers to ensure the internship agreement is respected, including: working hours, assigned tasks, potential opportunities for employment at the end of the internship. Whereby any critical issue emerges, such as non-compliance with the agreement on either side, the Working Group organises a meeting (interview, Reception facility “Il Gabbiano” Coordinator and Professionals, 26/06/2020) and if the problems persist, the internship can be suspended.

The main critical issues reported by the Working Group concern the difficulties for employers to find a good balance between training and working hours: employers tend to forget that internships are first of all about training and do not dedicate sufficient time to teaching, while at the same time asking

interns to work more hours than initially agreed. A second critical issue is connected to stereotypical representations of African interns who are assumed not to be fast enough, while the actual apparent slowness may be connected to other factors including insufficient explanations provided.

The Labour Inclusion Working Group's overarching goal is for beneficiaries to be hired as soon as they acquire the required skills. The internship is considered as a training activity, but preliminary to a job contract. During the social inclusion phase, beneficiaries can have the possibility to participate to several (usually up to three) internship programmes in different companies and economic sectors, but all of them must be focused on increasing employment chances. There is in fact a problem with the tendency, by some employers, to abuse of internships, as it emerged, over the last year, during several joint meetings between the Labour Inclusion Working Group and the Outreach Unit. The latter explained that, during their monitoring activity, in conjunction with the local Labour Inspectorate, they had observed the inappropriate use of internships, particularly in agriculture, with evident signs of labour exploitation. There are employers that use internships as "alternatives to employment contract" (see also Smith, 2016; De Briant and Glaymann, 2013), in order to save money. This practice clearly points to ethical concerns that can be associated with exploitation and with the neo-liberal restructuring of labour, along increasing forms of precariousness (Smith, 2016; (De Briant and Glaymann, 2013). However, it is not easily overcome. For instance, employers can renew an internship more than once, without clear training objectives, and this is not illegal per se, thus the Labour Inspectorate cannot intervene (fieldwork notes, Labour Inclusion Working Group coordination meeting with Coordinator of Outreach Unit, Venice-Mestre, 18/11/2019). This has encouraged the Labour Inclusion Working Group to plan some informative workshops, aimed also to address some episodes of racism (fieldwork notes, Labour Inclusion Working Group coordination meeting, Padova, 12/12/2019; fieldwork notes, Labour Inclusion Working Group coordination meeting, Padova, 10/01/2020).

On their side, employers have expressed administrative concerns over residence permits and their short timeframe (fieldwork notes, meeting of Labour Inclusion Working Group with Administrative Assistants, Venice, 12/02/2020) and it pointed out to the scarce knowledge of employers of bureaucratic issues, as well as their fear of ending up hiring people who could become undocumented before they complete the internship or can start a job, with an evident waste of resources on their side. For the rest, the perspective of employers has rarely emerged during out fieldwork, exception made for that of employers that are particularly sensitive to the inclusion of vulnerable people. It is the case of QUID, a social enterprise<sup>101</sup>, based in Verona, with the mission to produce ethical fashion products and offer employment opportunities to women in disadvantaged conditions.

The QUID Welfare Officer, who among other things monitors the progress of internships, underlined that psychological support may be needed for some interns during the internship (fieldwork notes, Ubuntu project meeting, Verona, 19/06/2019). With reference to a specific internship, of a lone mother with a child, she highlighted the fact she was often late. While she expressed the criticism, she recognised the progress made by the woman and discussed with the Case Manager, the Reception profession and the woman herself to try and find a solution for the way forward, while also addressing her difficulties and worries regarding her daughter's care (fieldwork notes, Case Manager monitoring meeting with Crisis and Evaluation Unit, Reception professional, legal guardian and beneficiary, Verona, 06/08/2019). Similar examples of collaboration are particularly useful to favour the inclusion of interns and contribute to strengthening the collaboration between N.A.Ve and potential employers.

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<sup>101</sup> For more information see the website: <https://www.guidorg.it/> Last access: 02/02/2021.



## *Networking activities with private and public associations*

Since the establishment of the Labour Inclusion Working Group, increasing collaborations have been developed or strengthened with stakeholders at wider regional level, including for example the LegaCoop, a consortium of social cooperatives. By developing partnership agreements, the Working Group does not only aim to foster beneficiaries' labour inclusion, but also to raise awareness on trafficking and severe exploitation among relevant stakeholders. The agreement is beneficial for both parties: for the stakeholder becoming a partner of N.A.Ve means acquiring social prestige, because it testifies an ethically virtuous approach; on the other hand, for N.A.Ve, a partnership can increase chances for internship matching and create a preferential channel for employment.

When the Labour Inclusion Working Group started operating, it started with building a network of small virtuous local companies, known by virtue of personal contacts. At a second stage, the Working Group members started reaching out to trade association too. More recently, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdown, the possibility was considered to develop collaborations with larger companies and retailers, as well as multinational enterprises. The positive aspect of similar collaborations would clearly be enhanced chances for employment, given the higher numbers of open positions in some sectors, such as logistic providers of multinational e-commerce companies. The negative aspect resides in the fact that these positions are likely to be rather precarious and doubts are high on the risk for N.A.Ve beneficiaries to be subjected to exploitative working conditions (fieldwork notes, Labour Inclusion Working Group coordination meeting, online, 27/05/2020).

Partnerships have been developed with public institutions too, with the aim to increase awareness on trafficking but also to lobby for increased attention on the relevant target groups. The collaboration with Veneto Lavoro, an operative arm of the Veneto Region,<sup>102</sup> has been crucial in this sense, although no formal partnership had been signed at the time this e-book was being completed. For instance, during the COVID-19 lockdown, Veneto Lavoro provided prompt updates on evolving norms and practices related to the upholding and re-activation of internships in different employment sectors (fieldwork note, joint Labour Inclusion Working Group coordination meeting with Case Managers, online, 15/05/2020). The main task of Veneto Lavoro is in fact connected with the provision of support and advice on regional labour policies. Furthermore, discussions were in progress regarding potential support by Veneto Lavoro in developing improved collaborations with local Employment Centres that, since a few years, it coordinates (interview, Labour Inclusion Working Group, Coordinator, 29/06/2020). The Employment Centres are public offices with the main function to implement social policies aimed to foster employment, particularly with reference to vulnerable groups. Some forms of collaborations have been developed by N.A.Ve with the Centres, but their effectiveness has been variable across territories, depending on the capacity and engagement of individual officers to match supply and demand (Ibidem; fieldwork notes, N.A.Ve monitoring meeting, 29/05/2019).

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<sup>102</sup> Veneto Lavoro is an operative arm of the Veneto Region, with the role to provide support and advice on regional labour policies and since a few years it coordinates the local Employment Centres at regional level.

## *Pending challenges*

Cultural-linguistic mediators have repeatedly reported the frustration felt by beneficiaries whenever internships do not lead to job contracts. This sparked discussions on the importance of providing clearer information to beneficiaries but also of a more effective communication between the Labour Inclusion Working Group and other N.A.Ve Units, to share information on internship trends, outcomes and difficulties (fieldwork notes, Crisis and Evaluation Unit coordination meeting, Padova, 19/02/2020). The Coordinator of the Labour Inclusion Working Group often participates to coordination meetings of the Crisis and Evaluation Unit and is always present, as a Case Manager, in the coordination meetings of the Social Inclusion Unit. Moreover, as anticipated above, a contact person of the Working Group has been identified for most local territories that is called to raise awareness among local N.A.Ve professionals. Yet, all N.A.Ve Units reclaim more information should be shared. Several proposals have been put forward to improve internal communication, for example through joint coordination meetings involving more units (*ibidem*).

Internships and job placements are a crucial part of social protection programmes. Whereby job placements are not activated, N.A.Ve professionals, particularly Case Managers and the Working Group members feel they have failed (an important part of) the social protection programme (interview, Coordinator of Reception facility, N.A.Ve Network, Venice-Mestre, 26/06/2020). Hence objectives must be coherent with the overall programme and all involved professionals should define and agree, since the beginning of the programme, on common objectives.

A pending challenge of labour inclusion is connected to the timing and long delays that beneficiaries often experience to obtain a regular residence permit. Ideally, they should have it by the time they start the social protection programme, but most often it is not so and this slows is detrimental to the progress of their objectives fieldwork notes, (Labour Inclusion Working Group coordination meeting, 18/06/2020), thus calling for N.A.Ve professionals to put pressure on institutions, particularly the Questura, to speed up procedures, in respect of the normative framework and the rights of beneficiaries.

The long-term economic effects of the pandemic are further soliciting reflections on bureaucratic delays as they have worsened.

## Section 6: Transversal themes

### The protection of lone mothers with children

Lone mothers with children are beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries who, particularly over the last year, have been increasingly challenging for the N.A.Ve professionals to protect and assist. As stated in the official N.A.Ve project proposal for the period 2017-2018, N.A.Ve has been aware of the growing relevance of this target group and has been planning to provide assistance accordingly. However, as discussed in various coordination meetings, a specific type of assistance is required, with critical issues in terms of administrative procedures and of implementation that will be pointed out next (interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Coordinator, 28/05/2020; fieldwork notes, Social Inclusion Unit coordination meeting, Venice-Mestre, 16/01/2020).

First, following the administrative rules concerning the funding of anti-trafficking projects, no coverage can be provided by the Department of Equal Opportunities with respect to services for children, as according to the Italian normative framework children are under the (administrative and budget) responsibility of municipal social services. Coverage for lone mothers can be therefore provided only for the mothers as vulnerable adults (interview, Mimosa/Equality President, 25/05/2020).

As the N.A.Ve Coordinator explained, specific budget for lone mothers was provided for the N.A.Ve 2 project, in the period 2017-2018. It had been requested based on the increasing requests for assistance by lone mothers with children. Contrary to forecasts, the actual number of requests was rather low that year, hence the budget could not be used, as there is very limited flexibility in public budget management (interview, N.A.Ve Coordinator, Venice, 03/06/2020) hence money cannot be moved from one type of cost to another. No specific budget was requested for N.A.Ve 3 and yet it would have been useful.

Second, with the increasing request for help by lone mothers with children, although at irregular intervals, N.A.Ve professionals have been forced to revise their approach to try and adapt their operative strategies to this specific target. Adaptation includes first of all the involvement of a team of multiple social workers and professionals, who deal with children, lone mothers, people victims of trafficking respectively.

Thirdly, this particular target has specific needs and requires specific protection and assistance accordingly: parental support, child welfare, work-family conciliation services, (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020).

As stressed by Case Managers and Reception facility professionals, lone mothers with children need more support and time to achieve a minimum level of autonomy. The few cases experienced in N.A.Ve demonstrate that the social protection programme for this target group requires an extension to cover at least 9 months (interview Case Managers, Municipality of Venice, 26/05/2020-24/06/2020; interview, N.A.Ve Reception facility “Comunità dei Giovani” Reception Director and Coordinator, 17/06/2020; interview, Reception Facility “Il Gabbiano” Coordinator and Professionals, 26/06/2020). These women normally need a part-time job, that is often hard to find, as to be able to take care of their child/ren. They also need some babysitting support to cover their working hours, dedicated socio-health services for feeding, weaning and childrearing and not least an adequate housing environment. All the N.A.Ve professionals we interviewed stressed the need for well-designed programmes that differ considerably from standard adult ones (see for example interview, Reception facility professional,

Venice-Mestre, 26/06/2020; fieldwork notes, Case Managers monitoring meeting with Reception facility “Il Gabbiano” and beneficiary, Venice, 06/11/2019).

Similar observations have been made also by Reception professionals working in a CAS facility in Verona, among the very few in the Veneto Region that have received specific funding for the target of lone mothers. They were interviewed as part of a small research project carried out in 2019 which involved one of the authors of this publication (Della Puppa et al., 2019). They also underlined that the experience of “*maternage*” is a crucial and yet thorny element to be dealt with. The socio-anthropological literature has taught how the individual meanings of motherhood and inter-generational relationships vary substantially based on the cultural background of each individual and often cause serious misunderstandings, if not conflicts, with social workers (Pinelli, 2011; Erel and Reynolds, 2018; Taliani, 2019), particularly regarding what it means to be a “good mother”.

Because of their increasing experience with pregnant women, some N.A.Ve professionals have been further exploring the theme of sexual health and prevention. The Case Managers based in Verona have addressed the topic and shared advice in dedicated workshops organised for young girls beneficiaries of N.A.Ve. They recalled the impression that young girls, particularly Nigerians, are at ease when talking about sexuality but do not quite understand the sense of pregnancy prevention, pointing to the need to explore the theme further and provide much more information (fieldwork notes, Ubuntu project meeting, Verona, 28/01/2020).

According to some Case Managers, assisting lone mothers with children has revealed that ‘territorial projects’ may be most adequate for this target group. As explained in previous sections, territorial projects are normally constructed ad hoc for beneficiaries who have already have a relatively high level of autonomy and do not need full support by N.A.Ve, at least not in terms of accommodation. Providing support but not in a dedicated facilities may be sensible in the measure it would allow to assist these women, while putting to value their competences in terms of childrearing and at the same time avoiding to any infantilising approach (interview, Case Managers, Municipality of Venice, 26/05/2020-24/06/2020).

Territorial projects can be a good solution also in consideration of the fact that there are very few dedicated facilities for lone mothers in N.A.Ve and in the asylum system in Veneto (interview, Reception facility professional, Venice-Mestre, 26/06/2020).

Some of these women approached N.A.Ve during their pregnancy; others became pregnant during their permanence in a N.A.Ve reception facility. Many of them were first met by Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals in occasion of an interview, following the referral of a Territorial Commission. In several cases they declared they were no longer being exploited but still asked for support to find a decent accommodation and a job. Some doubts emerged among professionals that children may be used by these women to access welfare support but no evidence confirmed it. What has been rather confirmed in the experience of Reception professionals is the incapacity of the asylum seeker system to address their needs – because of a shortage of dedicated structure and of specialist support services that could for example integrate asylum seeker and anti-trafficking interventions (fieldwork notes, Reception facilities Unit coordination meeting, 03/03/2020; interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Padova, 20/05/2020). This is why it has proven difficult for Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals to negotiate the access of lone mothers with children to CAS facilities. In Padova, the C.A.V. (Centro Aiuto alla Vita - Centre for Help on Life), a catholic-based organisation, offers temporary economic resources for young mothers with children and help them find an emergency shelter but it is an exception.

Many of the women interviewed by Crisis and Evaluation professionals in the last year and a half are Nigerians and many are lone mothers with children who returned to Italy after having being re-

trafficked to Germany or another northern European country, either from Spain or Italy. Their stories provide little evidence that their exploitation is over, while they demonstrate they are still in precarious conditions. In some cases it emerged that they continued prostituting, apparently without the intermediation of traffickers - and without giving them any money -, to cover specific expenses (i.e. medical care for a family member, expenses for their babies) that they cannot cover with alternative economic resources. Occasional forms of prostitutions have been reported for example by Reception facility professionals. Clearly, the extent to which such solution is freely chosen or rather derived from a precarious condition remains to be explored in more detail.

Concerning their children, they were often born in Italy or in another EU country. Professionals could hardly find any ground to apply for family reunion with their father either because he did not recognize them upon birth, or because he did not have a regular legal status. Cases were also recorded in which the mother in fact had a partner that was still present but he may have been in an even more precarious situation (i.e. with a job in the informal economy and an expired residence permit). In similar situations, some Cultural-linguistic mediators repeatedly encouraged Case Managers to try and support the mother to keep the family together, notwithstanding the difficulties this can involve (fieldwork notes, focus group with Cultural-linguistic mediators, Venice, 08/09/2020). Some Case Manager also stressed the necessity to explore family units and their dynamics more closely, including why the partner has left or is still with the women, both to take into consideration positive resources and to prevent women from being exposed to any danger (fieldwork notes, Social Inclusion Unit coordination meeting, 22/04/2020).

Whereby women have explicitly asked to be reunited with their children's father, N.A.Ve professionals tried to support them in their project, but not before having fully analysed the father's situation into depth, including risks of trafficking. In some cases, reunification was made possible thanks to collaboration with the local social services and the SIPROIMI network (fieldwork notes, informal chat with Case Manager, Venice, 8/10/2020). At the same time, some mediators suggested that, in their experience, women with children are very focused on the children and are often not ready to take any step in the relationship with their partner before settling more permanently in an autonomous way.

An example of the complexities involved in the protection of lone mothers with children is provided by the case of a young Nigerian lone mother aged about 20 that was discussed in a meeting we attended during our fieldwork. In January 2020, a Venetian Case Manager organised a meeting to discuss the delicate situation of this mother, together with a municipal social worker, the professionals of a local N.A.Ve reception facility and a Cultural-linguistic mediator (fieldwork notes, Case Manager monitoring meeting with Reception facility Professional, Social worker working with unaccompanied minors and children, Venice, 21/01/2020). The Case Manager called the meeting to clarify what resources could be mobilised by social services to support the woman, in taking care of her child. She was going through a difficult time, because of an unsuccessful process of labour inclusion, strong feelings of loneliness and lack of relational resources. The Reception facility professional expressed her frustration associated with the willingness to help the women and yet the feeling, as professional, to be short of resources and specialised skills. The social worker was mostly focused on the child and the capacity of the mother to deal with her. She lamented that while some daily support could be made available for the mother by the Municipality, she was considering the possibility of foster care, because of what she perceived as a high risk of the child mistreatment. The mediator strongly disagreed on the option of foster care, stressing the importance of being consulted before such a decision in order to be given the possibility to explore the full picture. In her view, based on repeated conversations with the mother, she rather needed extra support because of the lack of relational resources that severely compromised her

capacity to deal with her precarious situation. Eventually a SIPROIMI facility was identified in which the mother could be transferred with her child, one of the very few dedicated facilities in the Veneto Region.

As explained in the section, the target of lone mother with children requires a complex social intervention and the close collaboration of N.A.Ve and non-N.A.Ve professionals, as well as the full support of social services, particularly as far as children are concerned. The collaboration of a Cultural-linguistic mediator is equally necessary and it is crucial to address the best interest of the child and to help assess the conditions of the mother. Some N.A.Ve professionals are strongly convinced that N.A.Ve must take increasing responsibility to support women with children who are victims of trafficking, to ensure they are not left stranded. They are also convinced that specific support is needed as far as socio-legal assistance but also labour inclusion are involved. The latter, in some cases, should be under the responsibility of asylum seeker reception facilities, but nodes are still evident in the distribution of roles (interview, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Coordinator, 28/02/2020; interview, Case Managers, Municipality of Venice, 24/06/2020-24/06/2020; interview, N.A.Ve Coordinator, 03/06/2020). While fully aware of the complexities associated with this target and while focusing on ensuring social services take their own responsibility, efforts have been made by N.A.Ve to think how dedicated resources could be made available (fieldwork notes, Social Inclusion Unit coordination meeting, Venice-Mestre, 16/01/2020). We believe that given the high professional expertise of many N.A.Ve professionals and mediators, the network should play an active role in building integrated services and programmes for lone mothers with children. An active role should also be played to ensure an intercultural and ethno-psychiatric perspective is adopted. This can arguably best help assess and understand maternity skills and experiences, with due consideration for the context of origin of women and the socio-cultural practices they embody. It can help embrace a post-colonial and racialised perspective (Taliani, 2012; 2018) that prevents an uncritical embracing of consolidated western values, beliefs and practices of what is required to be a “good mother”.

## “Dublin cases” and secondary movements as experienced by N.A.Ve

European border controls and migration management have not led to the elimination or reduction of movements of people and it is unlikely that these measures will be effective in this respect. They have, however, contributed to making migration progressively more risky, forcing people into constant circular mobility (Tazzioli, 2017). People seeking international protection are forced to continuously move within European borders, in a perpetual wait for regularisation and therefore the possibility of permanent residence (Caroselli, 2020). This constant mobility is the consequence of restrictive policies, characterised by border controls, the absence of effective referral and protection mechanisms, a complex Dublin regulation that does not always protect people (Ammirati and Sommaruga, 2018) and unequal inclusion possibilities for different categories of migrants.

### *The Dublin Regulation and people survivors of human trafficking*

The Dublin III Regulation aims to determine rapidly the Member State responsible for an asylum claim and provides for the transfer of an asylum seeker to that Member State. The main aim of the Regulation is to prevent an applicant from submitting applications in multiple Member States and to reduce the number of asylum seekers transferring from one state to another. The country in which the asylum seeker first applies for asylum is generally considered to be responsible for either accepting or rejecting the claim and the asylum seeker may not restart the process in another state.

Directive 2011/36/EU states that asylum seekers should not be transferred from one state to another where they are likely to face destitution, arbitrary detention, deprivation of health care or other necessary forms of support. In cases in which asylum seekers are victims of trafficking, the decision to transfer them should not be taken before a careful risk assessment is undertaken. Both the Qualification Directive 2011/95/EU and Directive 2013/33/EU state that victims of human trafficking are vulnerable persons with special care needs, hence any decision of transfer must comply with the obligation for states to provide individual guarantees and care standards. Notwithstanding, it is not clear to what extent Dublin Units actually take into consideration the vulnerable conditions of people victims of trafficking and on what evidence/documentation their decisions are based<sup>103</sup>. Arguably, in order to ensure the effective protection of people victims of trafficking, effective channels of communication should be activated between the Dublin Units of EU Member States and the respective national referral systems and punctual documentation should be shared on the vulnerable conditions of people. This is particularly relevant for Italy, considering that, in the first months of 2019, the number of people transferred to the peninsula under the Dublin procedure was higher than those arriving by sea. In the same period, Italy received 31,353 more requests than it sent<sup>104</sup>. Most of the people came from Switzerland, Germany, Austria Netherlands and Belgium.

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<sup>103</sup> We contacted the Dublin Unit based in Italy for the scope of this e-book and to explore this issue further, but no authorisation was granted for an interview.

<sup>104</sup> Data drawn from Eurostat data on Dublin procedures. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Dublin\\_statistics\\_on\\_countries\\_responsible\\_for\\_asylum\\_application#Dublin\\_requests](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Dublin_statistics_on_countries_responsible_for_asylum_application#Dublin_requests) Last access: 12/12/2020.

### *“Dublin cases” versus informal re-admission and the experience of N.A.Ve*

The “Dublin cases” that N.A.Ve has dealt with have mainly concerned Nigerian women who landed in Italy in 2015 and were re-admitted between 2018 and 2020 from Germany or Sweden. According to the most recent data available, 5 women arrived in Veneto in January 2020 (fieldwork notes, joint meeting of Crisis and Evaluation Unit and lawyers, Venice, 25/11/2019). They all arrived from Germany. The number is limited but it has to be considered that the transfer rate in 2019 and 2020, including also the period of the COVID-19 lockdown, was not very efficient, corresponding to less than 30<sup>105</sup>. Applying the Dublin Regulation has allowed these countries to “return competence to Italy”, although victims have often declared they had been exploited in Italy, thus making Italy unfit for their readmission (ibidem).

Whereby potential victims of human trafficking were transferred to north-eastern Italy - landing could be in Venice - and agreed to join the N.A.Ve protection programme, but could not stay in the Veneto Region because of security reasons (i.e. risk of re-trafficking and/or special needs) or because reception places were available, the National Anti-trafficking Helpline activated a procedure to transfer her/him to an anti-trafficking project elsewhere in Italy. It should be noticed that there is no obligation for the Helpline or N.A.Ve to provide protection and that formally they can only assess the conditions of the person, any risk of trafficking and any request for help (interview, National Anti-Trafficking Helpline, 03/06/2020), which suggests that protection system is quite weak because in fact there are no guarantees that the case will be taken in charge. Basically, no specific mechanism is in place to ensure the protection of people, that is provided on a discretionary basis. Yet, according to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Persons, Member States have the obligation to “*provide (...) a recovery and reflection period of at least 30 days, when there are reasonable grounds to believe that the person concerned is a victim [of trafficking]*” (art. 13). GRETA (2019), on its side, stressed that Member States must assist and protect victims, while avoiding risks of retaliation by traffickers, as indicated both art. 12 and 13 of the Convention, and that, as stated in art. 17.1 of the Dublin III Regulation, States can determine unilaterally the competence to examine an application for international protection, if adequate, including cases associated with particularly vulnerable individuals. In principles, the Dublin procedure can be activated by the competent body of the potential sending country that should fill in a form, including also an entry with details, if available, on potential victims of trafficking. As anticipated, it is not clear how this procedure works and to what extent information on people’s vulnerabilities are shared or not, thus making it questionable whether they are protected. with the closure of the file following the notification of arrival at the airport by the Italian

As reported by various N.A.Ve professionals, no direct collaboration has been established so far with the Dublin Unit. This seems to be the case also for other anti-trafficking projects in Italy. More work needs to be done in this direction and the collaboration of Dublin Units is clearly vital to shed light on current procedures and related critical issues.

An experimental project was carried out in Veneto in recent years, although not with specific reference to people victims of trafficking. An informal agreement had been made between the Italian Dublin Unit and the Prefettura of Venice, to ensure adequate support for asylum seekers upon arrival at the Venice airport. Considering the Prefettura is partner of N.A.Ve, this could be a good avenue to pursue to carry the collaboration further, but at the time being it is not being explored.

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<sup>105</sup> ECRE, August 2020. The implementation of the Dublin III R in 2019 and during the COVID-19. Available at: [http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/aida\\_2018update\\_dublin.pdf](http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/aida_2018update_dublin.pdf)  
Last access: 20/01/2021.



Our fieldwork has also highlighted that arrivals to Italy from northern European countries, Germany in particular, are more often the result of informal returns, via land borders, that is to say internal movements that are not taking place through the Dublin procedure (interview, Socio-legal professionals, 25/05/2020; see also N.A.Ve 3 progress report). This means that secondary movements are often invisible to institutions, so the experience of trafficked women, whose mobility depends on exploitation and control networks, is therefore even more risky, especially where there is no rapid identification system, as in the case of European borders, of which the Brenner Pass is an example<sup>106</sup>. The tightening of European asylum policies has created more and more obstacles and difficulties in the trajectories of individuals (Papastergoadis, 1999; Fontanari, 2017), and these include secondary movements, as well as the interruption of inclusion programmes and the continuous suspension of expectations and plans (Caroselli, 2020). Movement is embedded in the experience of migrants, but it is also a cognitive and existential experience (Griffith et al., 2013, Radu, 2010) which, in the case of trafficked women, makes it even more complex to escape exploitation, even with (spatial) mobility, in order to move towards self-determination (Caroselli, 2020).

About 20 Nigerian women arrived in Venice through informal re-admissions and were eventually assisted by N.A.Ve, in the period 2017-2018. Considerable doubts remain on whether other women have also arrived but never managed to contact N.A.Ve and be assisted at all. According to the N.A.Ve Socio-legal professionals and Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals, the stories of the women they met clearly pointed to continued exploitation in the EU Member States they returned from and this raised many concerns on the risks they are likely to be still exposed to. It raised even more questions as many of them were pregnant or had children (fieldwork notes, Crisis and Evaluation Unit coordination meeting, 13/01/2020).

Other cases were recalled, during a dedicated meeting. A vulnerable Nigerian girl did not want to return to Italy where she had been sexually exploited since her arrival, including the period of permanence in an asylum seeker facility. She had left the facility to (forcefully) move to Switzerland where the exploitation continued. She was eventually forced to return to Italy but was afraid to stay because of evident dangers (fieldwork notes, meeting between Crisis and Evaluation Unit and lawyers, 25/11/2019). As pointed out by the N.A.Ve professionals, similar cases highlight that collaborations with colleagues of other EU Member States would be crucial. It would help understand whether the person received any assistance at all and, if so, how further support can be best articulated.

Other four cases of Nigerian women arriving from Germany were mentioned. All of them had left Italy after having received an expulsion order that would force them to return to Nigeria. Professionals have lost track of them (ibidem). In the same meeting, it emerged that some Pentecostal churches have a role in the mobility of young women for the scope of exploitation (see also Cabras, 2015) and this theme deserved more in-depth exploration.

One case of return concerned Sweden. It refers to a woman who arrived in Spain, in 2013, then moved to France and then to Norway, to then move again to Spain and Sweden where she continued being sexually exploited for two years, until she fled by bus to reach Italy because of various health problems and the increasing fatigue and distress she had been experiencing with forced prostitution and the constant pressure from traffickers to repay her debt. In September 2017 she arrived in Italy in Milan and headed to Verona where she started the procedure for regularization and obtained an

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<sup>106</sup> See Sempredon M. Caroselli S. (2021) *The phenomenon of human trafficking along the Brenner route: secondary movements and the system of protection for Nigerian women in the city of Bozen*, Venice: SSIIM UNESCO Chair, University of Venice.

appointment at the CIR legal helpdesk. Thanks to the on-going collaboration with N.A.Ve, the CIR colleagues referred her to the local Crisis and Evaluation Unit professional. A lawyer supported her to appeal against the pending Dublin procedure that was notified to her from Germany and they won the case. Eventually she obtained a residence permit as asylum seeker and joined the N.A.Ve protection programme. It is clearly a case that points to the complex trajectories of exploitation including multiple situations of re-trafficking and the failure of the Dublin procedure to ensure a careful risk assessment. Additionally, it points to the importance of collaborations between different systems of protection, in this case the asylum system, with which CIR co-operates, and the anti-trafficking system, as they foster rapid referrals and ensure effective protection.

Generally speaking, all the “Dublin” cases and the cases of informal re-admission experienced by N.A.Ve. portray a series of similar characteristics that call for more reflection on how to improve protection for people, as also stressed by a Crisis and Evaluation Professional (20/05/2020 and 04/06/2020) and as it further emerged during a coordination meeting (fieldwork notes, Crisis and Evaluation Unit coordination meeting, 26/07/20219):

- long permanence (several years) within the European territory, characterized by continuous exploitation, exclusion from reception and general lack of protection;
- difficulty to access procedures for regularisation and to contact anti-trafficking professionals;
- complex life trajectories that require support and yet space for self-determination and autonomy that is hardly compatible with very strict reception programmes;
- presence of dependent children, that requires collaboration with legal guardians, who are not always sufficiently trained in this respect.

Following from the above, it is evident that the support that N.A.Ve tries to provide to women victims of trafficking is vital, but there is still space for improvement, particularly in the provision of programmes that favour rather than prevent or limit autonomy. In order to address internal European movements seriously, more collaboration is also necessary with the stakeholders involved in Dublin procedures, as well as with anti-trafficking professionals in other EU Member States to ensure an adequate exchange of information.

## Gender-based Violence and human trafficking in an intersectional perspective

Over the years, the jurisprudence as well as the social sciences have paid increasing attention to the issue of gender-based violence and the way it intersects with multiple levels of identity and vulnerability that characterise the experience of migrants, in particular women, who are asylum seekers and victims of trafficking and severe sexual and labour exploitation. In this section we would like to draw specific attention to the European humanitarian policies, the vision that emerges from their implementation and that guides social workers in their work both in the public and private sector, in connection with reception facilities and anti-trafficking projects.

To start with, it is important to consider how the "humanitarian regime" represents women and in particular the women we have dealt with in our research. The definition of sexual humanitarianism proposed by Nicola Mai (2016) is useful for highlighting how women (migrants and victims of trafficking) have been the main recipients of protection interventions often described through forms of media spectacularization. Insofar as they are identified and described as victims and vulnerable, they have often appeared as privileged subjects and deserving of help, based on a hierarchisation of vulnerability, closely associated with sexual and gender categories.

The humanitarian regime works alongside a system of inclusion and recognition in host countries, which are sometimes contradictory and closely dependent on the rules of the asylum system, with its many evolutions, often accompanied by criminalising, victimising and passive representations of migrants, in particular women migrants (Pinelli, 2011; 2017). The subject of this publication, Nigerian women who are victims and potential victims of trafficking, are therefore located within an ambiguous set of power relations, which makes access to effective protection complex.

Well before Mai's (2016, 2016a) work, which has the merit of having focused on the gender dimension in migration, other authors had advanced critiques of humanitarian governance. The work of Didier Fassin (2008) is very important. He argues that there is a growing overlap between what he calls "humanitarian governance" - characterised by the deployment of moral sentiments towards poor and deserving people - and political responsibility towards individuals and their well-being, an expression of "securitarian governance". In his analysis, the "humanitarianisation" that has characterised the reception of asylum seekers has created a new relationship between the "polis" and the "camp" (as asylum seekers define reception centres): since these humanitarian regimes defend the integrity of the polis, they have introduced the form of the "camp" in order to "contain" the undesirables who are not admitted into the spaces of citizens, but only into the spaces of those receiving aid.

Another useful perspective for reading the experience of Nigerian women is the intersectional approach that takes its cue from the work of Kimberly Crenshaw (1994), based on the claims and criticisms made by black feminism in relation to the hegemony of white and Western feminism. This perspective invites scholars to engage in an analysis that can account for the intersection between the variables of ethnicity, gender and class, all of which are fundamental to understanding the multiple levels of discrimination experienced by individuals and especially by women.

The debate within feminism and the social sciences (Anthias Yuvas-Duval, 1992; 2012, Dorlin, 2005; Ribeiro Crossac, 2013) has shown that this perspective has the advantage of not being static and of avoiding the crystallization of categories. The Nigerian women who are the focus of this publication are victims or potential victims of trafficking, they are black women and migrants, who come from a country that is characterised by forms of patriarchy, they come from poor social classes and disadvantaged families, they are young, of childbearing age, have experienced very severe trauma, and violence marks

the entire course of their experience. All these elements are crucial for understanding their history and journey and therefore need to be considered and incorporated into care and support practices and programmes to ensure there is a real impact on their lives.

The life trajectories of these women are located at the intersection of heterogeneous axes of oppression that they have experienced at different stages of their migratory journey and more generally in their life experience in countries of origin, transit and destination. Gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality are inextricably linked to a system of symbolic, structural and political aspects of violence. These dimensions intersect and determine women's choice within certain structures and from their own positionality. Some sociological analyses show that the protective capacity of some services is insufficient to prevent exposure to human trafficking and a relapse into exploitation both during and after going through the reception system (Serughetti, 2017; Abbatecola, 2018).

The intersectional perspective provides valuable insights for re-considering the experience of women asylum seekers who are victims of trafficking, also taking into account the characteristics of trafficking itself and of the asylum system, which create a field of forces and processes that seek to simplify the experience of violence experienced by women through the forced application of pre-packaged, isolated categories that, according to professionals, simplify experiences but prevent women from fully expressing their needs and aspirations.

The dimension of explicit and structural violence is considered by some scholars as an experiential continuum (Scheper-Huges, Burgois, 2004; Freedman, 2015) both on a temporal and geographical axis. In particular, added to the experience of explicit violence experienced in countries of origin and transit, is a structural violence (Farmer, 2006) connected to the failure of protection systems to assist subjects entitled to legal and social protection (see Nicodemi, 2017; Santoro, 2018).

The intersectional perspective is useful for considering the various forms of violence experienced by women in their migratory journey, where explicit and structural forms of violence are not separable but intrinsically connected (Speed, 2014; 2016): we are talking about domestic violence, violence experienced in countries of origin with respect to social, cultural and political models, including racist and sexist forms of discrimination that are traceable in the social models of the host and transit societies.

Drawing from the field of legal studies and feminism (Simone and Boiano, 2018), some Italian scholars have disarticulated the concept of violence against women and the related categories of 'vulnerability' and 'victim'. These are operational categories present in the asylum system, taken up as part of their identity by women themselves, in order to obtain international protection, making them 'deserving of a right'. The law is not yet effective in identifying what violence is and what indicators can identify it, nor is it yet effective in protecting all women from systematic forms of violence. Violence can be the result of discrimination experienced in the private and domestic, but also in the social and political, spheres (Boiano, 2014, 2017; Rigo, 2016).

### *The network of Anti-violence centres and the collaboration with N.A. Ve*

In the Veneto Region, both the N.A.Ve Network and the Di.Re, the network of Anti-violence centres, have been dealing with violence against women. Di.Re is a network involving municipalities and social cooperatives that manage protected shelters, targeted to women asylum seekers and holders or international protection. N.A.Ve is part of it. The collaboration between the two networks started in 2015, thanks to the activation of some volunteers of the Mimosa association (that is part of Equality in

Padova) who started sharing their expertise on trafficking, thus promoting the exchange of information, practices and approaches (interview, Anti-violence Centre, Padova, 11/06/2020).

The main goal of Di.Re is to promote the rights of women through awareness raising and protect them from violence. The Di.Re approach is based on active listening and the co-construction of the process to exit circuits of violence. Any intervention takes place only after the consent of women, with due consideration for the best interest of any dependent children. Women can interrupt the process at any time or choose not to report violence (*ibidem*).

The centres included in the network respond to a helpline that is active 24/7, they manage protected shelters and take care of women and their children. They also promote the development of protocols with health authorities, Prefetture, Courts, lawyers associations, social workers' association, law enforcement agencies and other relevant stakeholders, such as N.A.Ve, included in the anti-trafficking referral system. Recently, new anti-violence guidelines<sup>107</sup> have been drafted, in collaboration with the University of Padova and UNCHR to strengthen collaboration within the referral system, particularly as far as women asylum seekers are concerned.

Professionals and volunteers of the anti-violence and anti-trafficking systems have undertaken joint trainings, in collaboration with the University of Padova, to enhance collaboration. This is how they eventually started to conduct joint risk assessments of women's conditions. A recent case involved a Nigerian girl who reached out to the National Anti-trafficking Helpline and was then referred to Di.Re (fieldwork notes, Crisis and Evaluation Unit coordination meeting, 13/01/2020 and 20/01/2020).

Both migrant and Italian women contact anti-violence centres. 75% of these women are Italian and of other nationalities and are permanent resident in Veneto. Regarding migrant women, the main nationalities are the following: Moroccan, Nigerian, Romanian and Moldovan. The number of Nigerian women who have contacted the network is rather low (1-3 every year) (interview, Anti-violence Centre, Padova, 11/06/2020). They have rarely contacted the centres themselves. In most of cases, they have been referred by social services, which in turn they contact with income or parental support requests. The growing collaboration between N.A.Ve and Di.Re has shown that it is very hard for women who are trapped in circuits of sexual exploitation to report any violence associated either with exploitation and/or intimate relationships (*ibidem*), but for women victims of trafficking it is more likely that contacts with a helpline are made as a result of sexual exploitation.

Another aspect is worth reporting. Women who are victims of gender-based violence can apply for an art. 18 bis residence permit, as this article makes specific provision for it. Yet, elements of domestic violence are rarely identified by Territorial Commissions and, according to the anti-violence professional we interviewed (interview, Anti-violence Centre, Padova 11/06/2020), women have been *de facto* deprived of this channel of regularisation. The Questure, on their side, have preferred issuing residence permits for family reasons, with the result that women have been often deprived of the right to family reunion too - as it legally binds them to the status of their husband/partner who is often the agent of the violence suffered). The issuance of the art. 18 bis residence permits would certainly represent a positive contamination between the anti-trafficking, the asylum and the anti-violence systems and this theme should be further promoted.

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<sup>107</sup> "Seconde a Nessuno: Linee guida per l'emersione, l'identificazione, la valutazione e la presa in carico di donne sopravvissute e/o coinvolte in situazioni di violenza di genere nella protezione internazionale" (Second to none: guidelines on the emergence, identification, evaluation and support to women survivors and/or involved in situations of gender-based violence in the context of international protection). Edited by Degani P., Zanni M. and Lozzi E. Available at: [http://www.centrodonnapadova.it/images/lineeguida\\_web.pdf](http://www.centrodonnapadova.it/images/lineeguida_web.pdf) Last access: 12/12/2020.

## Nigerian girls in N.A.Ve

### *Unaccompanied minors and victims of victims of trafficking in Italy*

According to December 2020 data<sup>108</sup>, the number of unaccompanied minors in Italy corresponded to 7,080, 96.4% of whom were male. The main countries of origins included the following: Bangladesh (22%), Tunisia (15,3%), Albania (13,7%), Egypt (9,8%), Pakistan (8,1%). Nigeria only came 18<sup>th</sup> (0,9%). These data certainly contrast with 2018 data, when the majority of foreign unaccompanied minors hosted in reception facilities were from Nigeria (237 children, corresponding to 30.1% of the total number of females). In 2017, the total was even higher and corresponded to 501 (40.2% of the total number of females). However, the figures change if we look at the share of female unaccompanied minors only. In this respect, at the end of 2020, Nigeria was the 4<sup>th</sup> country in the top 10 list (9.1%), following Albania (17.5%), the Ivory Coast (17.1%) and Somalia (9.1%) and in May 2021, it raised to the 3<sup>rd</sup> place (9.3%).

Regarding age data is not disaggregated by nationality, but ministerial data outlines that the vast majority of minors were 17 years of age (66.9%), while other ages scored much lower: (21.8% 16 years, 6.6% 15 years, 44% 7-14 years, 0.4% 0-6 years).

Almost one third of minors were hosted in Sicily (28.9%), Friuli-Venezia Giulia (11%), Lombardy (9.9%) and only 3.3% in Veneto (the 10<sup>th</sup> Italian region in quantitative terms).

Sicily and Friuli are strongly associated with arrivals, via the Mediterranean and the Balkan routes, that are the main (and most dangerous) routes of arrivals at present.

As for the number of unaccompanied minors' victim of trafficking and serious sexual and labour exploitation, 86.36% are undertaking an art. 18 programme (Save the Children, 2019). 2020 Data by the National Anti-trafficking Helpline (Degani, 2021) suggest that a considerable decrease of young beneficiaries had been recorded in the two previous years. What has not changed is that the majority of them are victims of sexual exploitation, including particularly young girls (52 in 2017, 42 in 2018 and 12 in 2019).

Data is unclear about many may be hosted in asylum seeker reception facilities, depending also on the fact that professionals are not always trained to identify indicators of trafficking. What is most worrying is that a high percentage of minors is reported to have left reception facilities shortly after their arrival, including 35.2% Tunisians, 18.8% Afghans, 7% Egyptians - Nigerians were not in the top 10 list. They all went missing, with concerns expressed by Save the Children (2021) but also, more generally on Europe, by Lost in Europe (2021).

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<sup>108</sup> Data drawn from the following "Cruscotto giornaliero" (daily updated "dashboard") of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies: 31/05/2020, 31/12/2020, 31/05/2021. Available at: <http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/cruscotto-statistico-giornaliero> Last access: 01/06/2021.

### *Unaccompanied minors victims of trafficking in Veneto*

According to N.A.Ve data, in the Veneto Region, adult beneficiaries have largely prevailed over young people: 66 versus 6 in the period September 2016-November 2017, 124 versus 20, in the period December 2017-February 2019. No young people were recorded in 2019 nor in 2020, since N.A.Ve stopped accepting young people in the project starting from March 2019. Nevertheless, collaborations have been on-going with social services and asylum seeker reception facilities, although these are not counted in financial reporting.

During our fieldwork, most of the experience with Nigerian girls was reported by and collected through the Municipality of Verona. Not surprisingly, a higher percentage of arrivals has been recorded, with the respect to the overall Veneto Region, particularly since 2016; and it is in Verona that most anti-trafficking interventions have been carried out with young people of this nationality.

In the period 2000-2004, the Municipality of Verona recorded almost exclusively the arrival of young people from Albania and ex Yugoslavia. Young Romanians started arriving soon after, with the accession of Romania to the EU. Anti-trafficking professionals often came in contact with Romanian girls following police investigations that led to inspections in private apartments. The police found very young girls, even below 15, enslaved by their exploiters, after having been sold by their parents or forced into a marriage. As the Arab Springs were approaching, the Municipality was asked to provide reception to young people of Egyptian origins, to ease the pressure off municipalities in Southern Italy. They were facing increasing arrivals on Italian shores. 2016 represented a turning point: the Municipality of Verona, as many other in Italy, started experiencing the arrival of young Nigerian girls and it recorded a peak of about 20 unaccompanied minors. In the last two years, less and less girls and young women have been arriving from Nigeria in Veneto, but secondary movements within Europe have increased. Other arrivals of young people and children have concerned mainly boys from Albania, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh. As of June 2020, four Nigerian girls, two of whom had recently reached the age of majority, were being supported in collaboration with N.A.Ve (Case Manager, Municipality of Verona and Director of the Asylum Seeker Reception Office, Municipality of Verona, 25/06/2020). In the last months only a few.

While the presence of Nigerian girls in Veneto has decreased to minimum levels, a word of warning must be spent with regards to numbers. As explained above, secondary movements have increased considerably. Nigerian women are still arriving and it is young women, who arrived in Italy in the minor age, have travelled through one or more European countries to then return to Italy. Not to be underestimated is the extent to which these women may be still in conditions of severe exploitation outdoor or even indoor, as a result of the pandemic, hence not visible by street outreach units and largely invisible to institutions as we explained above (see also Save the Children, 2019). Narrative evidence by N.A.Ve Reception professionals suggest that some women may return to prostitution, unless they can secure a decent employment, to survive their precarious conditions, possibly again in conditions of exploitation. While some observers suggest that some women may actually freely choose to return to prostitution, we are very sceptical about this view, as women can rarely choose alternative employment options. Furthermore, it remains to be studied further whether, upon payment of the debt contracted before departure, Nigerian women are still subjected to forms of bondage.

### *The multiplicity of stakeholders involved in the protection of unaccompanied minors*

The protection of children and young people is characterised by the involvement of a plethora of actors, although it is the public sector that holds the main responsibility on them. Children and young people are considered a particularly vulnerable group, particularly if unaccompanied. However, as many professionals repeatedly stressed during out fieldwork, young people represent a heavy financial burden to the public finances.

As explained above, in 2019, N.A.Ve stopped accepting young people in its social protection programme. The decision was taken to avoid taking responsibility away from the public sector. In the period 2016-2018, N.A.Ve had contributed to cover the reception facilities costs for young people over 17, but the Department of Equal Opportunities, which funds anti-trafficking projects, did not agree on further coverage. Also as a result of this, the governance of unaccompanied minors interventions has been particularly fragmented. In Veneto, young people presumed to be victims of trafficking have been supported by municipal social assistants, in collaboration with N.A.Ve. Collaboration has mainly consisted in the search for adequate reception facilities, conduction of interviews and risk assessment to identify potential indicators of trafficking and exposure to risks of exploitation, provision of comprehensive legal information on regularisation. Still, some misunderstandings have arisen with respect to whom should invest resources and how. For example, N.A.Ve has continued providing Cultural-linguistic mediators, but some N.A.Ve professionals claim that Case Managers should activate mediation services through the respective municipalities.

One of the main difficulties regarding the protection of young people is connected to the multiplicity of actors involved, including many of the stakeholders that adult migrants encounter, but also others, particularly legal guardians. It is therefore crucial to ensure full coordination among them, as well as a common approach. Arguably, all professionals involved in the protection of children and young people should develop some basic intercultural, technical and legal skills. Most importantly they should actively listen to minors, while striving to identify their resources in order to grant the right to be heard (see also fieldwork notes, webinar Cismai “Requisiti minimi per la presa in carico integrata dei minori stranieri non accompagnati”, Maria Grazia Foschino, Barbaro, Coordinatrice Commissione Cismai, 04/05/2020).

Legal guardians should be appointed as soon as possible, but as N.A.Ve professionals reported, considerable delays – even several months, have applied, including appointment shortly before the achievement of the age of majority (interview, Reception facility for unaccompanied minors Professional, Mimosa/Equality, 16/06/2020), to the detriment of minors’ rights<sup>109</sup> (see also EMN, 2015<sup>110</sup>).

During monitoring visits carried out by the Ombudsperson for Childhood and Adolescence in Italy, between November and December 2017, many of the unaccompanied minors interviewed in CAS facilities explained the guardian was simply going to accompany them to the Territorial Commission. Critical issues were collected regarding adequate active listening, the provision of sufficient legal

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<sup>109</sup> As stated by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and by various EU law instruments, such as the Anti-Trafficking Directive (Directive 2011/35/EU), the EU asylum acquis, the EU’s Victim’s Directive (Directive 2012/29/EU) and the Directive on sexual exploitation of children (Directive 2011/92/EU)

<sup>110</sup> European Migration Network (EMN), Policies, practices and data on unaccompanied minors in the EU Member States and Norway, May 2015. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn\\_study\\_policies\\_practices\\_and\\_data\\_on\\_unaccompanied\\_minors\\_in\\_the\\_eu\\_member\\_states\\_and\\_norway\\_synthesis\\_report\\_final\\_eu\\_2015.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn_study_policies_practices_and_data_on_unaccompanied_minors_in_the_eu_member_states_and_norway_synthesis_report_final_eu_2015.pdf) Last access: 20/10/2020.



information and assistance<sup>111</sup>. In principles, Law 47/2017 should have positively impacted on the system of legal guardianship and on the overall system of minors' protection, but critical issues are still evident. To mention a few, as again reported by N.A.Ve professionals<sup>112</sup>, significant differences exist in the commitment of individual guardians - in spite of various guidelines produced<sup>113</sup> - the level of cooperation with the stakeholders involved and difficulties in communication with the Questura (ie. long waiting times for procedures).

As one of the authors experienced in the role of guardian – although limited to the territory of Verona and Vicenza - scarce preparation is also evident as far as some institutional and socio-sanitary actors are concerned, who are not always knowledgeable about the role of guardians nor the rights of unaccompanied minors.

### *The critical nodes in the protection of unaccompanied minors experienced by N.A.Ve*

In line with Save the Children (2019)<sup>114</sup>, our fieldwork has highlighted a number of critical issues that must be addressed further including first and foremost identification and early identification, the related collaborated with law enforcement agencies, age assessment, reception in dedicated reception facilities and the follow-up upon achievement of the age of majority, regularisation procedures. We will focus on these next.

#### *Collaborations with law enforcement agencies in early contacts and identification*

The majority of early contacts with young Nigerian girls in the streets, in Veneto, were made in Verona, where a higher presence has been reported by the local Outreach Unit, compared to other provincial cities. Interviews with the Local Police in Padova and Venice and the Squadra Mobile in Verona, Padova and Venice confirmed it<sup>115</sup>. Officers in Padova and Venice could recall only one or two young Nigerian girls they met in the streets in the respective cities. Next, we will focus on the approach adopted in Verona to facilitate early contacts and identification.

As the Case Manager explained (26/05/2020), the Social Inclusion Unit has been collaborating with the N.A.Ve Outreach Unit, the Outreach Unit of the Association Papa Giovanni XXIII and law enforcement agencies, including the Volante<sup>116</sup> and the Local Police (Outreach Unit volunteer, Papa Giovanni XXIII, 08/06/2020). Coordination has been stimulated by an approach which values collaborations with local actors, which is embedded in the mission of social services in Italy, as spelt out in their deontological code. This is particularly so as far as minors' protection is concerned, also as a result of normative

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<sup>111</sup> ASGI, AIDA, ECRE (2018) Legal representation of unaccompanied children. Italy. Available at: <https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy/asylum-procedure/guarantees-vulnerable-groups-asylum-seekers/age-assessment> Last access: 20/11/2020.

<sup>112</sup> Similar issues emerged during coordination meetings for legal guardians in Verona to which one of the authors participated as legal guardian (ie. fieldwork notes, legal guardians coordination meeting, Verona, 03/06/2019).

<sup>113</sup> See for example: Save the Children (2018) Guida per i tutori volontari dei minori stranieri non accompagnati; ASGI, Intersos (2018) Quali percorsi per i minori non accompagnati in seguito all'abrogazione del permesso per motivi umanitari? Scheda per i tutori e gli professionali che seguono minori non accompagnati.

<sup>114</sup> Save the Children (2019) Piccoli Schiavi invisibili. Available at: <https://www.savethechildren.it/cosa-facciamo/pubblicazioni/piccoli-schiavi-invisibili-2019> Last access: 10/12/2020.

<sup>115</sup> Interview, Local Police, Venice, 10/09/2020; Local Police, Padova, 24/06/2020; Squadra Mobile/Questura, Padova, 24/06/2020; Squadra Mobile/Questura, Venice, 10/09/2020; Vice-Questore and Head of the Squadra Mobile/Questura, Verona, 29/10/2020.

<sup>116</sup> (Squadra) Volante: it is a department of the Ufficio prevenzione generale e soccorso pubblico (Office for general prevention and public rescue) of Polizia di Stato (National Police) that ensure immediate interventions on a 24/7 basis. It is directed by an Official of Polizia di Stato in each Questura.

provisions. As stated in the Regio Decree Law 1404/1934 (art. 25bis)<sup>117</sup> - and later in Law 269/1998 (art. 2)<sup>118</sup> Public Officers are required by law to report, to the Public Prosecutor's Office, any person under 18 years of age who is presumed to prostitute.

According to informal agreements, whereby the Outreach Unit Professionals meet a young person who evidently looks younger than 18 years of age, they should call the Volante to activate an immediate intervention. In turn, the Volante is required to contact the Public Prosecutor's Office to report the minor and ensure a protected shelter is made available. If the professionals are unsure about the age, they should inform the Case Manager who, the day after, calls the Volanti and asks for an intervention. While this collaboration has been important, its implementation has proved complex. First, it is challenging to define what a person's age is, particularly if within a limited range, which in this case may be on average between 16 and 20. Second, while the Outreach Unit must swiftly call the Volante, professionals must pay attention to ensure no confusion is generated in terms of roles. Calls can only be made after the contact with the young person is terminated and the professionals must not be there when the Volante arrives. This procedure is particularly important as migrant women rarely trust Law Enforcement Officers, or can even be afraid of them, because of negative experiences in Nigeria and in Italy. Unless the roles of the Outreach Unit and of law enforcement agencies are clearly distinguished, the risk is high for outreach work to be severely compromised. Third, various cases were reported in which in spite of calls to the Volante, by either the Outreach Unit or a Case Manager, no intervention was carried out. The Case Manager has often reported in writing, sometimes directly to the Public Prosecutor's Office, to press for intervention, but with little results. Failure to intervene has been connected to various factors. On the one side, the Volante has different priorities depending on the day and week of the year. For example, in periods in which trade fairs are on – Verona is an important centre for national and international trade fairs – they must be focused on these and they are unlikely to have additional capacity for other activities. On the other, the Volante has been experiencing difficulties in identification. When asked, young girls would often tell they were older than 18 and the Volante would not question their age, although their physical appearance suggested otherwise. Yet, as the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals explained several times, young girls are likely to declare their adult age because exploiters force them to do so (fieldwork notes, outreach unit evening monitoring, 20/06/2020; Case Managers, Municipality of Verona, 26/05/2020-24/06/2020). A further factor is connected to the difficulty for Law Enforcement Officers to ensure the prompt transfer of minors to a protected shelter. Until a few years ago, situations had been faced by Officers, whereby a young person was stopped during the w-end or in evening/night hours - when the municipal social services offices are closed - and had no choice but to keep the young person at the police station - which is clearly not an adequate place for young people -, until the social services office would re-open. A step forward was made in this sense, with the activation of a dedicated telephone line, outsourced by the Municipality to a local social cooperative. All law enforcement agencies can use it, on a 24/7 basis and the respondent can provide an updated list of available places so that the person can be transferred swiftly.

Fourth, some Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals pointed to the need for an improved woman- and child-friendly approach by Law Enforcement Officers. They highlighted that when the Volante

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<sup>117</sup> Regio Decree Law 1404/1934 "Istituzione e funzionamento del Tribunale per i minorenni", art. 25 bis "Minori che esercitano la prostituzione o vittime di reati a carattere sessuale" ("Establishment and functioning of the Juvenile Courts", art. 25 bis, "Minors who prostitute or victims of crimes associated with sexual activities").

<sup>118</sup> Law 269/1998 "Norme contro lo sfruttamento della prostituzione, della pornografia, del turismo sessuale in danno di minori, quali nuove forme di riduzione in schiavitù", art. 2 "Prostituzione minorile" ("Normative provisions against sexual exploitation, pornography, sexual tourism involving minors, as new forms of slavery").

intervenes, women and girls are taken to the Questura and their fingerprints are taken, with no assistance of a social worker or a Cultural-linguistic mediator who can explain the procedures and ensure their rights are granted. Furthermore, it must not be underestimated that the Volante must necessarily wear a uniform and this does not favour any contact with people in first place whereby there is a lack of trust towards Law Enforcement Officers, as explained above. To our knowledge, the Volante does not have a specific training on anti-trafficking, nor on how to approach potential victims of exploitation. We were only informed that, in 2017, the EVA Protocol (Esame Violenze Agite – Examination of perpetrated acts of violence)<sup>119</sup> was introduced. It was proposed by the National Anti-Criminality Directorate to improve investigations connected to gender-based violence as well as the approach with women victims of gender-based violence. None of the N.A.Ve professionals was knowledgeable about this protocol, nor have they noticed any remarkable change in attitude by Law Enforcement Officers. Clearly, any change may become evident with time. At the same time, it remains unclear to what extent the protocol has actually been implemented widely.

The collaboration with law enforcement agencies has involved work with the Local Police. The Local Police can more easily interact with young people, at least to have a first contact, as they do not have to wear a uniform, which means they are less likely to generate feelings of mistrust even before starting talking to them. At the same time, while the Volanti cover specific part of urban areas, the Local Police can intervene in any part and can ensure wider coverage. It has also to be born in mind that the specific role of the Local Police is that of controlling the territory and ensuring urban safety. Hence, their role has been rather that of enforcing public safety mayoral orders and regulations, including anti-prostitution policies which resulted in fined to clients and sometimes to sex workers too.

### *Evolving collaborations regarding minors authors and victims of a crime.*

In relation to collaboration with law enforcement, on-going discussions have been promoted during the Inside Out project, a pilot project targeting unaccompanied minors and young adults of immigrant origins, aged 15-21, who were victim of trafficking and were forced to commit a crime while still minor. The project lasted for a year (Mar. 2019 - May 2020), it was funded by the Department of Equal Opportunity of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers and included the following partners: the Municipality of Venezia, as leading partner (and leading partner of N.A.Ve), USSM Ufficio Servizio Sociale presso il Tribunale Minorenni, Venezia (Social Services Office of the Juvenile Court in Venice – Veneto Region), IPM Istituto Penale Minorile di Treviso (Juvenile Detention Centre, Treviso – Veneto Region), the social cooperative Dedalus, based in Naples (Campania Region). Both N.A.Ve and Dedalus have been operating anti-trafficking projects since the early years 2000. The main objectives of Inside Out were: to raise awareness on trafficked children exploited in criminal activities and encourage or else consolidate the involvement of stakeholders working with this target group; to share a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the systems of identification, evaluation and protection; to define operative guidelines for joined intervention and to experiment a unique program of identification, assistance and social inclusion for this specific target<sup>120</sup>.

The protection of minors who were forced to commit a crime, in association with the condition of exploitation, is a theme scarcely explored by the academic literature. Some of the few scholars who

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<sup>119</sup> For more details see the relevant website: <https://www.stopstalkingitalia.it/stalking/protocollo-eva/> Last access: 16/12/2020.

<sup>120</sup> More information on the project will soon be uploaded on the website of N.A.Ve. Available at: <http://www.progettonave.it/> Last access: 21/01/2021.

dealt with this topic (Burland, 2017; Villacampa and Torres, 2019; Rodríguez-López, 2020) have all stressed the challenges of protecting this target group. People who are victims of this type of trafficking can be victimized twice: first through enslavement; second, paradoxically, by the actual act of identification, as they often emerge as offenders liable for criminal activities carried out while being exploited. There is arguably an inverse relationship between the extent to which a person is criminalised and the capacity for the same person to ensure his/her rights are protected.

Here is where the collaboration with law enforcement, as well as other actors, becomes crucial.

On the one side, minors rarely report their exploiters to the police as most of them are not aware of being exploited, nor do they have any alternative source of income than collaborating with the criminal network – a few cases where recorded in which the minors were actually risking their lives (interview, Crisis and evaluation Unit professional, 28/05/2020). On the other side, whenever Law Enforcement Officers arrest minors (and similarly adults), they tend to see them as offenders, not as potential victims of trafficking and exploitation, although they may have hints of their forced involvement in illegal activities. This can be explained by a more or less conscious process of “labelling” (Zetter, 1991). This is why some N.A.Ve professionals have encouraged Law Enforcement Officers to contact anti-trafficking operators for an evaluation whenever they arrest a minor, whereby elements pointing to potential exploitation emerge (ibidem), including drug abuse, that can be connected to drug dealing (N.A.Ve Monitoring Meeting, 4 Oct. 2019). In fact, cases have been experienced of Nigerian girls who after having been sexually exploited were lured into criminal activities and exploited in the transportation of drug, as a result of which they started make use of drugs themselves too.

What has emerged is that improvements should be promoted, by means of training, as far as identification is concerned, not only among Law Enforcement Officers, but also officers of Juvenile Detention Centers and Social Services of Juvenile Courts. Furthermore, more work needs to be done to raise minors’ awareness on what being a victim of exploitation entails. At the same time, continuous efforts must be done to promote the adoption of the provision made by article 18/ paragraph 6 of Italian Legislative Decree 286/1998 that addresses the needs of this specific group of minors. While paragraph 6 is a good juridical tool, some critical issues are evident regarding its implementation, starting with limited availability of ad hoc assistance/inclusion programs (Aria Group-ASGI, 2020), but also in the identification system as explained above.

### *Age assessment*

Age assessment is one of the most critical issues in relation to unaccompanied minors’ protection. As the European Migration Network reported (2015)<sup>121</sup>, confirming the findings by EASO (2013)<sup>122</sup>, the grounds, timing and methods of age assessment can vary considerably across and within EU countries. Several doubts have been cast on the scientific reliability of existing techniques and improvements have been recommended, starting with giving primary consideration to the benefit of the doubt towards minors<sup>123</sup>. EASO, in its handbook, also encouraged EU Member States to make use of multiple methods. In Italy, age assessment has been carried out mainly through x-rays, contrary to provisions made by the

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<sup>121</sup> European Migration Network (EMN), Policies, practices and data on unaccompanied minors in the EU Member States and Norway, May 2015.

<sup>122</sup> EASO (2013) EASO age assessment practice in Europe. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7d181c3b-48f4-4ae8-98af-d8e82b1612d1>  
Last access: 20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2020.

<sup>123</sup> UNHCR, Council of Europe, Unaccompanied and separated asylum-seeking and refugee children turning eighteen: what to celebrate? March 2014. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16807023ba> Last access: 10/12/2020.

Zampa Law that provides for the adoption of a holistic multidisciplinary approach. According to the latter, age assessment should be undertaken only whereby there is a well-founded doubt on age and it should involve primarily socio-psychological forms assessments, while medical ones should only be made in case of persisting doubts and as a last resort step of the procedure. Criticism has been advanced, pointing to the unclarity of the Zampa Law with respect to implementation. With specific reference to unaccompanied minors victims of trafficking, a recent Decree has introduced some improvements. We are referring to the President of the Council of Minister Decree 234/2016<sup>124</sup> that came into force in January 2020 and defined the gradual steps that should characterise age assessment, while also specifying that each step should be as least as invasive as possible.

Some Regional Authorities, including the Region Puglia – with the Giada project<sup>125</sup> - have agreed on and signed specific protocols identifying, among other things, a specific team of professionals that should carry out the assessment, and specifying how it should be carried out. In the Veneto Region, no professional team has been identified yet (fieldwork notes, informal chat with Socio-legal professional, 28/04/2020). In Verona a protocol was prepared, a few years ago, by the Local socio-health Authority and the Questura, but relevant stakeholders, including for example N.A.Ve Case Managers and professionals, were not involved, and, to our knowledge, protocol has not been implemented.

The role of legal guardians must be mentioned too. Guardians should be trained to ensure that any procedure associated with minors, including also age assessment, is carried out in full respect of their rights. However, they are not always sufficiently trained, as highlighted by the results of a questionnaire we prepared, as INSigHT Research Team. In July 2020, following informal contacts with UNHCR representatives working in Territorial Commissions in the Veneto Region, we agreed to prepare a questionnaire on age assessment for guardians in Verona, Trento and Bolzano, that is to say the territories covered by the Veronese Territorial Commission. 30 guardians responded. While some of the questions may have been ambiguous, it clearly emerged that most did not have sufficient knowledge of the procedure and their role as guardians in this respect.

### *Inclusion in dedicated reception facilities*

Only a few dedicated reception facilities for minors are available in the Veneto Region and are accredited with N.AVe. These facilities are very small and host a maximum of 5 young people each. Two of them have various types of beneficiaries, including unaccompanied minors victims of trafficking, unaccompanied minors, and Italian minors. This choice was made with full awareness of the complexity that managing facilities with multiple groups of beneficiaries can involve. Their experience, over the years, has shown that this choice can actually be beneficial, particularly in the measure it can encourage interactions among young people, it can also help challenge widespread stereotypes and it can also bring up conflicts, thus providing a chance to address them (“Expert Professional”, Equality, 25/05/2020). Cultural-linguistic mediators do represent a precious resource in this sense, but they are hardly ever present in facilities because of limited availability (see section The Reception facilities Unit).

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<sup>124</sup> President of the Council of Minister Decree 234/2016 “Regolamento recante definizione dei meccanismi per la determinazione dell'età dei minori non accompagnati vittime di tratta”, in implementation of art. 4(2), Legislative Decree 24/2014.

<sup>125</sup> See Progetto Giada. Available at: <http://www.giadainfanzia.it/> Last access: 18/12/2020.

In response to the challenges associated with reception, the Case Manager based in Verona, has organised a series of workshop<sup>126</sup> for unaccompanied minors (who are fully or in part) beneficiaries of a N.A.Ve protection programme. It must be explained that normally, until they are 18, minors are hosted in facilities for minors and a social worker specialised in minors is the main reference person. After, they can enter the N.A.Ve protection programme or in some cases an asylum seeker reception facility for adults and a new social worker is entrusted with responsibility over the case. The Veronese Case Manager has been working with some young girls both before and after the age of majority, to avoid disrupting their path towards inclusion. In his opinion, this aspect has contributed to building a relationship of trust, as more time is available to work on inclusion. Going back to the workshops, they started in 2019. Initially they took place every 4 weeks, more recently every 6 or 8 weeks, while they slowed down during the lockdown – when interaction was stimulated through a whatsapp group. The workshops have involved about 10 young girls, all of Nigerian origins, and have been led by two Case Managers, a Cultural-linguistic mediator and a Nigerian peer-educator, all females apart from one of the Case Managers. The idea derived from the increasing arrival of young Nigerian girls in 2016 and the need to promote further reflections on how to approach them, with the main objective to activate mechanisms of mutual help among girls and provide a space to share the difficulties experienced in facilities and during the protection programme more generally. Collective animation techniques have been used to facilitate interaction and stimulate participation and convivial spaces organised to share meals. Continuity in participation suggests it is a positive experience for participants and the peer-educator confirmed the importance of providing positive role models. Furthermore, participants have had the chance to meet different stakeholders and receive information on issues that are relevant for them, ranging from legal information associated with regularisation, to information on social services and on sexual health and prevention. From our limited observation, including the participation to one session (fieldwork notes, Ubuntu project meeting, Verona, 28/01/2020) and several informal exchanges with N.A.Ve professionals, we suggest that organisers' attention should focus more on encouraging participants in sharing any worry, than on educating participants and receiving feedback on their work. The risk is also evident for participants to consider the workshops as a place to merely give vent to their own problems and find ready-made solutions to them without any active engagement on their side. Besides, some relevant themes have not been explored and yet it would be important to explore them. Religion and faith are an example. Many Nigerian girls state they believe in God and the Holy Providence and consider both as crucial agents in their lives. Some girls regularly ask to attend the church but many Reception professionals are reticent as negative rumours have been reported about their untrustworthiness (Reception facility for unaccompanied minors, Professional, Mimosa/Equality, 16/06/2020). During our fieldwork, we perceived that in fact little knowledge is available within N.A.Ve on Nigerian Pentecostal communities and improved understanding would be useful. Another example regards psychological support. A specific session was organised to explain that psychological help could be available but with a limit. No systematic psychological support is available within N.A.Ve, nor are relevant public services available for the N.A.Ve beneficiaries and for unaccompanied minors. Access could be available for those who succeed to have a residency certificate, which is however difficult in the first place. In many coordination meetings it strongly emerged that psychological support is needed (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona and Director of the Asylum Seeker Reception Office, Municipality of Verona, 25/06/2020; "Psicologhe a bordo", 05/06/2020; Reception facility for

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<sup>126</sup> For more information see: Zanon V., Igiehon B., Ajibola V. (2020) Reflections on anti-oppressive interventions with young Nigerian women victims of trafficking in Italy. Social Dialogue, Magazine of the International Association of Schools of Social Work, Issue 23, Nov. 2020.

unaccompanied minors, Professional, Mimosa/Equality, 16/06/2020), particularly in minor's transition to adulthood (see also recommendations by UNCHR and Council of Europe, 2014<sup>127</sup>). Many professionals have highlighted the growing challenges associated with beneficiaries' multiple vulnerabilities, including for example drug and alcohol abuse, multiple years of homelessness experiences in Europe, severe traumas. The more beneficiaries are vulnerable the more they are likely to need some support to ensure positive trajectories of inclusion and to prevent them from falling victims of exploitation again. Improved understanding of how minors use social media is a further crucial element of vulnerability to be explored, as traffickers are using more and more these channels to attract and re-attract people into their web of exploitation (Antonopoulos et al., 2020) (see section The Reception facilities Unit).

### *Regularisation procedures*

As already mentioned (see section The Socio-legal Unit), regularisation is a transversal areas to various phases of the social protection programme and to the work of all N.A.Ve Units.

We cannot stress enough that delays in regularisation, including for example delays in the issuance of residence permits, can in turn cause other delays, such as the activation of internships and job contracts, and more generally in the social protection programme and in the path towards inclusion. They also cause severe limitations for access to health services, even for unaccompanied minors.

Not to be underestimated is that one of the main rights of unaccompanied minor is the right to information. However, cases are not rare in which they are not provided sufficient legal information to allow them to take an informed decision on the regularisation channel to choose (asylum application, art. 18 residence permit, etc.). As the Socio-legal professionals argued, basic legal information should be provided as soon as an unaccompanied minor enters approaches N.A.Ve (interview, CIR Socio-legal professionals, 15/06/2020; Socio-legal professionals, 25/05/2020 - 06/07/2020).

A practice has developed within N.A.Ve, whereby most unaccompanied minors victims of trafficking are supported in applications for a residence permit for minor age, while explanations on the right of asylum is postponed, although application for both is not incompatible. On the contrary, the best protection for minors may be precisely an asylum application, as it sometimes from family tracing activities undertaken by IOM. in other words, postponing an asylum application can compromise the rights of minors. In our view, such choice can be associated with insufficient knowledge and/or understanding of the normative framework, as the Socio-legal professionals also suggested. Joint training with all N.A.Ve professionals would be useful to address these gaps and favour coordination among units. As we explained in other sections (see The Social Inclusion Unit), some Case Managers see asylum applications by minors as instrumental to regularisation only and as a quick way out of the programme. They have expressed concerns that the social protection programme could not be effective as a result, being motivated by regularisation only, and that minors could decide to leave the programme before having achieved the set objectives. We are sceptical about this position. In the first place, it denies minors' access to their right to asylum. Second, there is not sufficient evidence pointing towards a generalised "instrumental" use of asylum applications by minors which, as some professionals seem to underestimate, consists in a long and complex procedure that requires patience and often involves re-victimisation and emotional distress. Third, it does not take into consideration

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<sup>127</sup> UNHCR, Council of Europe, Unaccompanied and separated asylum-seeking and refugee children turning eighteen: what to celebrate?, March 2014. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16807023ba> Last access: 10/12/2020.

other factors that may lead minors to leave a protection programme, starting with insufficient understanding of how they can truly benefit from it. From our observations, beneficiaries are not just focused on residence. Nigerians may seem more focused on obtaining it because other beneficiaries, such as Eastern European, do not need a residence permit in the first place - since the entrance of Romania and other Eastern European countries in the EU. It should also be considered that the profiles of beneficiaries have changed over time. Generally speaking, more recent beneficiaries are older, they have been in Europe for longer and may have been in other EU countries too. They have lower educational levels and have more difficulties in accessing the job market.

Thorny access to regularisation procedures, particularly asylum procedures, is made even more frustrating by potential negative outcomes. The professionals of CIR who have been collaborating with N.A.Ve reported that Territorial Commissions do not always take into considerations the specific rights associated with childhood, nor the fact that, according to European directives, children are vulnerable by definition. Cases were reported whereby the Commissions did consider aspects of vulnerability, but only based on certified reports by professional psychologists, pointing to the overarching importance assigned to certifications. The same professionals expressed concerned over what is an evident violation of human rights, but also with respect to the fact that it proves hard for minors (as for adults!) to understand why their rights are ignored, particularly in consideration of the tiring and painful experience to report personal detail to people that are strangers to them (fieldwork notes, CIR Professionals, 20/01/2020). A N.A.Ve Socio-legal professional, on her side, warned on the risks of structural violence. It is not legally binding for Territorial Commissions to interview asylum seekers, especially if they are particularly vulnerable, nor do they need to ask personal details on their migration experience unless relevant for assessing the case. They can take a decision based on reports written by anti-trafficking professionals. As it emerged, much more attention should be paid to avoid re-victimisation.

Socio-legal professionals explained that they normally organised several meetings “to prepare” asylum claimants face the hearing and the distress it involves, but this is paradoxical. To some extent they have to prepare asylum claimants “survive” their hearing, while it should be the moment when their rights and their claims are addressed. The support of Cultural-linguistic mediators has often helped, but not always. Some young people refuse to speak in their mother tongue and do not feel comfortable in speaking in the presence of a co-national which make cause feelings of shame. At the same time, the presence of a fellow friend may reassure them. In order to support asylum claimants in the asylum procedure, the Socio-legal professionals generally write with them a memoir, which is also an occasion to provide some sociological and anthropological insights to Territorial Commissions (Socio-legal professionals, 25/05/2020. These memoirs can also be accessed by lawyers, upon request, to prepare appeals, whereby asylum claims are rejected.

### *The last phase of the protection programme, the age of majority and the follow-up*

Unaccompanied minors normally conclude their protection programme when they turn 18 years old. The achievement of the age of majority is a complex time in itself and it is characterised by radical changes and disruptions, as also pointed out by IOM and ECRE<sup>128</sup>. The risk is high that all the efforts

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<sup>128</sup> See IOM, Unaccompanied Minor Asylum-seekers: Overview of Protection, Assistance and Promising Practices, ‘Chapter 15 - Former UAMAS: what has changed?’, Dec. 2011; ECRE (2018) ECRE/ELENA legal notes on ageing out and family reunification. The right of unaccompanied children who “age out” to family reunification in light of international and EU law. Jun. 2018. Last access: 02/01/2021.



made to ensure effective protection and facilitate minors' path towards autonomy are lost. They lose the right to special protection that they are entitled to during their minority age. This happens from one day to another. Accommodation is no longer available, nor are opportunities for training and support for job seeking, unless they have granted international protection. In this case they may have access to a reception facility for adults. Difficulties generally apply to regularisation too, as the conversion of the residence permit for minor age into a permit for work or study is not automatic and often requires a passport, that is hard for minors victims of trafficking to obtain. An alternative for regularisation, but also to ensure accommodation for a longer period, include applying for an art. 18 residence permit or for the so-called "prosieguito amministrativo", meaning that a Municipality takes further responsibility to assist the minors for up to a maximum of three years. The Zampa Law encourages the prosieguito amministrativo whereby minors who turn 18 need further support to reach a sufficient level of autonomy regarding employment and housing. More implementation details were reported in a Circular Letter signed by the Ministry of Interior on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019<sup>129</sup>, stating that from the age of majority minors can be transferred to or continue staying in a SIPROIMI - now SAI - facility. As explained by the Case Manager of the Municipality of Verona, it has been easier to take up the opportunity of the prosieguito for Nigerian girls, as N.A.Ve can help find an adequate reception facility and cover the costs. It is relatively easy also whereby minors can enter the SAI, as the accommodation costs are equally covered, or whereby fundings can be mobilised through dedicated projects<sup>130</sup>. Generally speaking, however, the prosieguito amministrativo in Northern Italy is scarcely used. Social workers are often unaware of this opportunity for minors or are reticent whereby funding for reception is not made available. More awareness raising work needs organising in this respect.

The relevance of the prosieguito became even more evident during the lockdown, as many internships and trainings were interrupted thus delaying the potential transition to a stable employment, while also putting at risk the legal status of beneficiaries. The lockdown provided with the opportunity to think about the actual organisation of the prosieguito. Whereby it is approved, continuity in the protection programme could be granted, for example by ensuring that the same Case Manager who was responsible for the minors before they turned 18 continues taking responsibility for their case. This is often not possible, as each social worker normally works with either minors or adults. However, where continuation was experimented, positive feedbacks were reported, as explained above (interview, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona, 27/05/2020). It was explained that what really makes a difference in these cases is the availability of a sufficiently long time to build a relationship of trust with beneficiaries and to follow up on their progress. This is important also in consideration of the fact that the function of the legal guardian comes to an end, at least formally, when the age of 18 is reached, although increasing reflections are being put forward in Italy on how a mentor could be identified for minors to be further supported and guided in their progress.

Before the minor turns 18, or even afterwards, whereby an asylum application is still pending, the right for family reunification should also be explored, in line with the Family Reunification Directive<sup>131</sup>, as a

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<sup>129</sup> Available at:

[http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/circolare\\_post\\_decreto\\_sicurezza\\_dicembre\\_2018\\_v\\_18\\_dic.pdf](http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/circolare_post_decreto_sicurezza_dicembre_2018_v_18_dic.pdf) Last access: 10/08/2020.

<sup>130</sup> The Municipality of Verona has the "Bridging Project" (see:

[https://www.comune.verona.it/nqcontent.cfm?a\\_id=65027&tt=verona\\_agid](https://www.comune.verona.it/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=65027&tt=verona_agid)) which targets young adults and allows to place them in semi-autonomous flats before they turn 18 years old to then move them to a SPRAR reception centre for adults. In Verona there is another project, carried out by CIR (Consiglio Italiano Rifugiati), which is partner of the Municipality in the local SPRAR project: <http://www.cir-onlus.org/progetti/progetti/>.

<sup>131</sup> Family Reunification Directive, Article 10(3); see also ECRE/ELENA, Information Note on Family Reunification for Beneficiaries of International Protection in Europe, Jun. 2016.

self-standing child's right to family and private life<sup>132</sup>. Without being reunited with their family, refugee and asylum-seeking minors have poorer integration prospects and can endure further psychological sorrow<sup>133</sup>. Family reunification has not always been an option for Nigerian girls in N.A. Ve as for many reunification would run counter their best interest, whereby their own families facilitated their trafficking.

What happens when Nigerian girls eventually complete their protection programme and the prosiegua programme too? As with adult beneficiaries, professionals normally keep contacts with them, for at least six months, to follow up on their path and ensure they are available if help is needed. Some of them never show up again, nor answer the phone if called – or even change the number. Many do keep in touch and call to ask for advice or visit reception facilities to say hello. The risk remains high for Nigerian girls to fall again into the trap of traffickers, even if they complete paying their debt. It would be particularly useful to follow up on beneficiaries in short but also medium term to follow up on their life trajectories and also to evaluate to what extent protection programmes actually manage to provide effective support for their inclusion. No systematic data has been collected however, partly due to the fact that, as explained, only a few beneficiaries keep in touch. We strongly suggest this should be the focus of a dedicated project that should also focus on collecting feedback from beneficiaries. Feedback has been collected in part during the INSigHT Action. 16 interviews were organised with beneficiaries who were reaching the end of their programme or had finished it in recent times. The material collected is part of a publication that is in progress.

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<sup>132</sup> Joint General Comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return.

<sup>133</sup> Red Cross, EU Office and ECRE (2014) Disrupted flight: the realities of separated refugee families in the EU, Nov. 2014. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ymwqPH> Last access: 10/12/2020; Oxfam Ireland, Nasc and the Irish Refugee Council (2018) A family belongs together: Refugees' experiences of family reunification in Ireland, Mar. 2018. Available at: <https://nascireland.org/publications/family-belongs-together-refugees-experiences-family-reunification-ireland-2018> Last access: 10/12/2020.

## Section 7

### Conclusions

This e-book has focused on the social protection programmes implemented by the N.A.Ve Network, in the Veneto Region. We have concentrated particularly on Nigerian women and girls who have been sexually exploited. This was the main target of beneficiaries in the period 2015-2018, when a peak of arrivals was recorded. More recently, arrivals from Nigeria have diminished, but migratory movements have not stopped and have gradually included multiple movements internal to Europe.

Anti-trafficking interventions in Italy have been implemented for more than two decades, since the early 2000s. Various reports have been written over time on anti-trafficking systems in EU countries, but most attention has regarded the respective normative frameworks. Empirical evidence is still limited on organisational and implementation issues and this publication aimed to contribute to filling this gap. We have studied N.A.Ve, with a micro-sociological method to analyse its governance approach and the organisational and institutional cultures that characterise it. This analysis is timely as it allows to a partial revision of the features of anti-trafficking projects in Italy, as they emerged, in 2011, from the research presented by Castelli (2014). Our main theoretical perspective is that of superdiversity, which is focused on the increasing diversity of social service users' profiles in Italy (but also at wider international level). We have also drawn from the literature on the local governance of migration and on asylum seeker reception. While looking at the structural institutional variables that have affected anti-trafficking projects (i.e. political orientation, inclusionary versus exclusionary forms of governance, multiplicity of actors at different territorial levels, discretion), we have addressed individual variables too, associated with service users and beneficiaries, including their migratory experience, cultural and linguistic issues, forms of vulnerability and legal status to try and understand to what extent they have also influenced social services and related interventions. In this direction, we have adopted an intersectional approach that is sensitive to the multiple dimensions of people's experience and vulnerabilities (i.e. age, gender, nationality, type of exploitation, etc.).

Beyond looking at N.A.Ve and anti-trafficking efforts in the Veneto Region, through our analysis we have also aimed to explore the most recent trends of the phenomenon of trafficking in Italy and the challenges faced by professionals to address them. While various forms of exploitation have emerged, for the scope of this publication we have focused on sexual exploitation only. Attention to other forms of exploitation, such as begging, has been dedicated in other INSigHT publications. Originally, we planned to include in this e-book the voices of the N.A.Ve beneficiaries. We eventually opted to report their point of view in a separate publication, in order to value their contribution to the research. Another note of warning: our research could not be longitudinal in nature, hence we have proposed a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses that we identified in N.A.Ve, in the wider debate of anti-trafficking projects. We could not carry out an evaluation in the sense strict, which would require a longer timeframe, that, in our case, was also affected but the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

N.A.Ve was established in 2016, but anti-trafficking interventions in Veneto, and particularly in Venice, date back to the 1990s and build on the Municipality of Venice engagement on sex work and sexual exploitation. In the most recent years, arguably as a result of a change in political orientation, the mission of the Municipality has evolved. Interventions on sex work have been gradually abandoned to leave space to trafficking only. N.A.Ve, since its launch, started dealing with sexual and other forms of exploitation too, including labour exploitation and forced involvement in criminal activities.

The N.A.Ve Network is a unique and integrated system that provides assistance and social protection to victims of trafficking and severe exploitation. It is structured in units, each focused on specific phases which make up its social protection programme. More recently, two working groups have been established: the Labour Inclusion Working Group and, in the last year, the Working Group “Psicologhe a bordo” (Psychologists on board). While the structuring in units and phases demonstrates a strong vision and clear objectives, our fieldwork has shown that some fragmentation is evident, that can go to the detriment of beneficiaries and their individual paths and needs.

Local authorities hold a central role in N.A.Ve. It is the Case Managers who take up responsibility on the N.A.Ve “cases” and they are social workers working in local authorities. However, engagement has been varied, depending on the political orientation and the willingness of local councillors to dedicate attention to trafficking. Besides the public sector, private third sector actors, including mainly social cooperatives, have had an important role, as they implement the actual social protection programme. N.A.Ve has a capillary presence over the regional territory, with at least one professional for each unit in most provincial cities in Veneto. In spite of diversified workloads, connected to the diverging number of beneficiaries in each territory - in the last years it has been higher in Verona – the mechanism of workload distribution has not been re-organised. While some discussions have been on-going among Case Managers and some redistribution has been operated, the main criterion is still based on a bureaucratic principle that is not necessarily efficient: cases are assigned depending on the territory in which they are first referred to. As a consequence, some Case Managers may be more under pressure than others.

The multi-agency approach is a strong component of N.A.Ve, particularly for the Outreach and the Crisis and Evaluation Units. Precisely for this reason N.A.Ve professionals would arguably benefit from a collective reflection on what multi-agency means and how it has evolved in the experience of each professional. It is an approach that is used with law enforcement agencies and other relevant actors operating in the labour exploitation field and it normally implies a form of collaboration with implies the sharing of common procedures and objectives. Other forms of more general collaboration regard other stakeholders.

With over 50 partner, N.A.Ve has built a strong network including both institutional and non-institutional actors. Such a large network does require constant efforts in terms of maintenance. During our fieldwork we have observed that different levels of collaboration apply to each of them: some are more formal, some are operational too. In some cases, collaboration requires considerable improvement. It is the case for local socio-health authorities, whose stronger collaboration, in some territories, would result in improved access for beneficiaries to sexually transmitted diseases tests and to the voluntary interruption of pregnancy.

Generally speaking, the N.A.Ve professionals are all highly specialised (see also Degani, 2021 on anti-trafficking projects in Italy generally). It needs stressing that, with respect to the asylum system, a much lower rate of personnel turnover applies. This is extremely positive as it allows knowledge building and provides good grounds for strengthening internal collaboration. At the same time, it made us reflect on the need to provide professionals with organisational and psychological support to prevent forms of burnout and emotional stress, considering that the anti-trafficking field is emotionally intense. The same reflection applies to the many volunteers active in N.A.Ve activities, although with a much lighter workload.

We have repeatedly experienced the quality of interventions implemented by all units, in terms of the strong engagement towards constant improvement of the social protection programmes and attention to beneficiaries’ needs. Regular coordination meetings are scheduled by each unit. What is perhaps

missing is a higher level of coordination bringing together representative of all units to reflect across units and phases - which is currently done only to a limited extent.

Cultural-linguistic mediators are a central figure in many phases of the protection programmes, but there is space for improvement in their involvement. They could be a leading figure, as they normally follow up beneficiaries throughout their entire programme, but they do not participate to all coordination meetings and the type and level of their collaboration in each programme phase depends on each N.A.Ve professional's personal style. Increasing involvement would be precious to address racialisation processes and conflicts emerging in reception facilities, as well as to prevent the excessive "culturalization" of cases. Mediators themselves are not exempt from this risk. While according to many professionals and the mediators themselves, being a Cultural-linguistic mediator requires first and foremost a specific migratory background, we feel it also requires frequent updating on the country of origin and on-going contacts with the diaspora as of course countries' histories and cultures constantly evolve and so does the experience of mediators who have been long living in Italy. These are open challenges for them at the wider national level, with reference to their professional role that is still not fully recognised in Italy - in spite of numerous efforts by various associations in promoting professional registers and qualified trainings<sup>134</sup>.

Some examples were reported in which the involvement of peer-educators was experimented, with a positive impact on beneficiaries' motivation and trust in programme's professionals.

Another figure who has joined N.A.Ve more recently is that of the Socio-legal professionals. Many projects in Italy involve at least one, but in many cases socio-legal support is one of the many tasks they undertake. Paradoxically, while there seems to be widespread agreement on the importance of the tasks connected to regularisation, there is still a tendency to prioritise resources on the implementation of the social protection programmes, as if regularisation was of secondary importance. In our view, the establishment of a dedicated national platform would be beneficial to promote the central role of these professionals and increase awareness of all professionals on the extent to which regularisation permeates the lives of migrants in many ways over the short but also the medium and long-term. It would also serve to advocate for the full application of art. 18 provision, as far as the issuance of residence permits is concerned, not only through the judicial but also the social channels, that to date remains a challenge.

Social protection programmes comprise a package of services aimed at addressing the needs of beneficiaries and the main challenges they face in achieving autonomy. While the Case Managers are normally involved only once the actual programme begins, we suggest they should be involved earlier - as it happens already in some cases -, to improve the collaboration with the Crisis and Evaluation Unit professionals and ultimately start building the relationship with potential beneficiaries as early as possible.

While the normative framework provides for programmes to extend over a period of one a half year maximum, observations by many N.A.Ve professionals, and in particular the Case Managers, have suggested that extensions are more and more frequent and necessary to achieve the set objectives. The idea has also been put forward to introduce specific tools to support beneficiaries once they complete their programme, including specific "guarantee funds" that could help find housing. For some cases, the best solution is not necessarily the extension of the social protection programme but an individualised project that can take the shape of a "territorial project", that is to say a project including

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<sup>134</sup> Among others see Amis Onlus: <https://www.facebook.com/amisonlus.assnemediatoriinterculturalisalento/>  
Last access: 20/06/2021.

access to some social protection services only. Experience has demonstrated that this could represent a viable option for potential beneficiaries who have already achieved some level of autonomy and only need partial support by N.A.Ve.

Case Managers share overall objectives and procedures and discuss about them during coordination meetings, but they all have personal styles, as all professionals in each unit. While this is certainly positive, the risk is evident for tensions to emerge between beneficiaries whereby personal styles prevail over shared procedures. Beneficiaries with different Case Managers can live in the same reception facilities and perceive differences in styles as a form of discrimination or unjustified differential treatment that can in fact result from discretionary powers. Not only. Improved coordination by Case Managers with Cultural-linguistic mediators and Reception facility professionals would prevent confusion among beneficiaries and ensure that (at least key) decisions are shared and clearly communicated, by considering all professionals' point of view.

Not all beneficiaries terminate their programme. Some drop out, others are asked to leave because of incompliance with rules. We have perceived some frustration on the side of the Case Managers accordingly, whereby programmes' objectives are not achieved. As they realised themselves, in some cases objectives may be unrealistic, because of beneficiaries' scarce resources and/or structural factors (not least the on-going pandemic). Sometimes insufficient attention is paid to beneficiaries' migratory project, which may clash with the social protection programme. In this sense, the Case Managers sometimes assume a paternalistic attitude towards beneficiaries based on the belief that the programme is the best solution for them thus running the risk of infantilising them, rather than stimulating their autonomy. We strongly suggest N.A.Ve should collect disaggregated data to analyse beneficiaries' trajectories in more detail, for an accurate understanding of the reasons why some beneficiaries decide to leave a project. This would also contribute to reflecting on how to define "failed cases", an element that rightly worries all Case Managers: should failure refer to the interruption of the programme, regardless of the reasons or to the missed achievement of the set objectives or the failure to ensure beneficiaries' well-being in the programme? To what extent does failure depend on professionals' work, on beneficiaries' engagement and/or motivation or on external variables? In our view, people's trajectories are connected to a series of both individual and more structural factors, but whether they can be described as "failed" should always be checked against the perceptions of beneficiaries over the long-term. This has never been done systematically so far. Additionally, while all professionals arguably engage to support beneficiaries, their efforts are often more concerned with the achievement set objectives - that may not even be totally shared by beneficiaries - than on beneficiaries' well-being overall.

As we explained, the focus of our work has been on the operational and organisational aspects of N.A.Ve, but our long ethnographic observation provided some insights on the more strategic level of policy-making and advocacy. The Network has been involved in the process that lead to the "zoning policy" in Venice, first, and Vicenza, afterwards. While this involvement was important to put critical issues on sex work and exploitation on table, it did not prevent the marginalisation of sex workers. Both municipalities eventually adopted prostitution policies that addressed the protection and rights of sex workers only to a very limited extent - if any. In Venice, the responsibility for outreach activities was eventually transferred to the Unit in Padova. N.A.Ve has experimented various pilot projects (on indoor exploitation, forced involvement in criminal activities, etc.) and these would deserve further discussions at the national level to ensure the dissemination of good practices across the national territory and the scaling up of projects. N.A.Ve is in a privileged position in this sense. It leads the task force against labour exploitation in Veneto, as proposed by the central government, it collaborates on a regular basis

with the National Anti-trafficking Helpline which is based in Venice, and the N.A.Ve Coordinator was member of the Anti-trafficking Round Table - that is currently suspended.

Our findings cannot be generalised to describe the anti-trafficking protection programmes in Italy, as they focus specifically on N.A.Ve. They can be generalised, to some extent, with reference to the trends of the phenomenon of trafficking in Italy and the capacity of anti-trafficking professionals to address the related challenges - although specificities apply to each territorial contexts. According to Donadel (2014), four were the main critical issues of anti-trafficking projects in 2011: (a) absence of a centralised coordination system including also the implementation of the national referral mechanism and the collaboration with the asylum system, relevant welfare systems and with law enforcement agencies; (b) fragmented implementation of the social protection programmes, associated with insufficient operational capacity to construct individualised programmes especially for specific targets; (c) uncertainty in funding and limited (annual) length of programmes; (d) scarce political attention on the phenomenon of trafficking and absence of a national anti-trafficking plan. We will address these issues next, with reference to what emerged from our research within N.A.Ve.

Identification is still a term fraught with misunderstandings on who should be identified, how, by whom and for what scope. Improvements have been certainly made regarding the implementation of the national referral mechanism, although critical issues remain. They have been partly addressed by the recent guidelines by UNCHR, but the role of some professionals is still unclear. Over the last few years, an increasing number of referrals have been made by Territorial Commissions to the Crisis and Evaluation Unit. Our research showed that the Crisis and Evaluation professionals are often expected to “certify” whether asylum applicants are or not victims of trafficking. This points to insufficient understanding of the evaluation process and of the tension between people’s biographical times and institutional times. On the one side, it may take considerable time for people to report their experience, especially if traumatic or when exposed to danger; on the other, institutional actors, such as Territorial Commissions, need to decide on asylum applications with considerable time constraints. Adding to this complexity, the referral of people who have been subjected to a Dublin procedure or have returned to Italy by means of an informal re-admission would require the collaboration of multiple actors, including Dublin Units, but also international actors, such as anti-trafficking professionals based in different EU Member States. In absence of a transnational referral mechanism, we could track only isolated cases of collaboration within N.A.Ve. We therefore recommend the swift activation of such as mechanism, as the new European Anti-trafficking Strategy 2021-2025 has also highlighted. Further work on referral should also concern the improvement of early identification. With specific reference to forced involvement in criminal activities, the experience of N.A.Ve shows that there is an inverse relationship between the extent to which a person, particularly an unaccompanied minor, is criminalised and the capacity for the same person to be protected and have his/her rights ensured. When Law Enforcement Officers arrest a person, they are faced with the fact this person may have committed a crime, while attention on actual conditions that lead to committing the crime - for example exploitation - is not automatic. This calls for dedicated training involving anti-trafficking professionals and law enforcement agencies more generally. A similar argument can be put forward regarding the early identification of unaccompanied minors, in view of the alarm launched by international organisations on the high estimated number of minors who become invisible to institutions after escaping from reception facilities, if ever arriving there.

Improved collaboration has been reported by N.A.Ve professionals with the asylum system, the anti-violence system as well as other women- and children related welfare systems, although they still tend to operate on parallel lines. Vulnerable people normally require specific assistance that may not always

be available within N.A.Ve and collaboration between different protection systems promises to be beneficial. Improved collaboration between systems is certainly important in terms of prevention too and not least in terms of the fight against trafficking. While people victims of trafficking are generally resistant to collaborate in investigations, for reasons associated first and foremost with their own safety, some N.A.Ve professionals have experienced positive cases of collaborations, but these have been decreasing over time for a number of reasons, including the limited outcomes in terms of prosecutions and the lengthy exposure to risks for victims.

The N.A.Ve Network has been operating based on annual funding streams which have repeatedly emerged as too limited in timespan and at the same time not sufficiently flexible to address the continuous rapid changes that have been investing the phenomenon of trafficking, including forms of exploitation that involved men, women and transgenders. Increasing flexibility would have been helpful to address the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, when swift changes to outreach activities was necessary and yet could not be planned and could eventually be implemented only to some extent due to rigid bureaucratic procedures. The increasing diversity of beneficiaries' profiles characterised more and more by multiple forms of vulnerability, have pointed to the need for more individualised programmes. If we think of women, this may mean posing more attention to forms of domestic violence, to motherhood needs, but also to family unit and partners' roles. If we think of minors, this may mean ensuring integrated interventions with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, legal guardians and child protection specialists who should play a leading role in all procedures concerning them, not only during their minor age but also beyond the achievement of their majority age, a time characterised by various disruptions. For both women and children but also vulnerable individuals more generally, intercultural and ethno-psychiatric professionals could certainly provide useful support.

Political attention on trafficking is not missing. Dedicated funding has been provided over the past twenty years to anti-trafficking projects. Notwithstanding, while a National Anti-trafficking Plan was eventually published in 2016, its revision is still pending, as well as the re-nomination of the Anti-trafficking Round Table that had been set up and whose activities were terminated a few years ago. Furthermore, Italy is still missing a national awareness raising campaign addressing the wider theme of trafficking. Some research has been undertaken on the phenomenon of trafficking but more would be needed. More research is needed first of all on: the outcomes of social protection programmes, looking at the long-term impacts on beneficiaries' lives; in-depth analysis of the various interlinked forms of exploitation that characterise trafficking and involve multiple transnational movements internal and external to Europe; the pending limits of referral mechanisms, in view of developing a transnational system aiming to promote the early identification of victims. We cannot stress enough the importance of adopting an ethnographic approach that has the merit to promote the full involvement of research participants throughout the research and their reflexivity, thus offering multiple occasions for knowledge sharing and building, even more when multi-sited transnational ethnography is carried out, while also ensuring the production of evidence-informed and policy-relevant findings.



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## Appendices

### *Appendix 1: Table of interviews with Stakeholders in Padova*

Name/Surname/Role	Date/time/place
Roberta Amore, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Padova (female)	20/05/2020 3-6 pm Meet
Giuseppina Di Bari, Expert Professional and Socio-legal professional, Devisri Nambiar, Socio-legal professional, N.A.Ve (females)	25/05/2020 10 am-1 pm Zoom  06/07/2020 4-5 pm Meet
Barbara Maculan, Mimosa/Equality President and Expert Professional, (female)	25/05/2020 4-7 pm Meet
Gaia Borgato, Outreach Unit Coordinator, Equality, Padova (female)	01/06/2020 10 am-1 pm Meet
Gianfranco Della Valle, National Anti-trafficking Helpline Coordinator (male)	03/06/2020 10:30 am-1 pm Meet
Luca Favarin, Outreach Unit Coordinator “Percorso Vita” (male)	06/06/2020 10-11:45 am Meet
Maria de Las Mercedes Martìn Diaz, Stefano Cosmo, Outreach Unit Professionals, Padova (female and male)	08/06/2020 3-5 pm Meet
Andrea Costa, Labour Inclusion Working Group member, Padova (male)	9/06/2020 10 am-1 pm Meet
Ureoma Ozoze, Cultural-linguistic mediator, Padova (female)	10/06/2020 10 am-1 pm Meet
Mariangela Zanni, Eleonora Lozzi, Professionals, Anti-violence Centre (females)	11/06/2020 10 am-12 pm Meet
Marica Maracani, Case Manager, Municipality of Padova (female)	11/06/2020 4-7:30 pm Meet

Suor Tina, Suor Gabriella, Reception facility for women “Francescane con i Poveri” Practitioner and Coordinator (females)	15/06/2020 3-4:45 pm Meet
Nuria Carme Pujol Moliné, Reception facility for unaccompanied minors, Professional, Mimosa/Equality (female)	16/06/2020 9-11:30 am Meet
Esma Zani, Cultural and Linguistic Mediator/Professional, Anti- trafficking Helpline (female)	19/06/2020 10:30 am-12:30 pm Meet

*Appendix 2: Table of interviews with Stakeholders in Venice*

Name/Surname/Role	Date/time/place
Barbara Penzo, Expert Professional and Case Manager, Municipality of Venice (female); Riccardo Sartorel, Case Manager, Municipality of Venice (male); Annunziata Veronese, Case Manager, Municipality of Venice (female)	26/05/2020 11:30 am-2 pm N.A.Ve Office, Mestre, Venice  24/06/2020 9:00-11:00 am Meet
Elisa Bedin, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Coordinator and Expert Professional, Municipality of Venice (female)	28/05/2020 3 -5 pm Skype  9/06/2020 3:30-5.00 pm Meet
Barbara Penzo, Case Manager of the Municipality of Venice and Labour Inclusion Working Group Coordinator (female)	24/06/2020 11:00-11:30 Meet  29/06/2020 2:30-4:00 pm Whatsapp video
Francesca Sguotti, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Padova (female)	04/06/2020 10:00-12:00 am Meet  18/06/2020 10:00-11:30 am Meet
Sabrina Scarone, Outreach Unit Coordinator, Municipality of Venice (female)	06/05/2020 10 am-12:15 pm Meet
Elizabeth Akioyamen, Cultural-linguistic mediator, Venice (female)	23/06/2020 10:00 am-12:30 pm N.A.Ve Office, Mestre, Venice
Cinzia Bragagnolo, N.A.Ve Coordinator, Municipality of Venice (female)	03/06/2020 2:30-4:30 pm Zoom
Franz Pevierieri, Reception facility “Il Gabbiano” Coordinator (male); Giorgia Bordin and Elisa Massariolo, N.A.Ve Professionals (females)	26/06/2020 10:30 am-1:30 pm Gabbiano Project Office, Mestre, Venice

Elisa Bedin, Francesca Sguotti, Sabrina Scarone, Elisa Massariolo, Giorgia Bordin, Paola Carnio, Gaia Borgato, N.A.Ve professionals with background as psychologists - newly constituted Working Group “Psicologhe a bordo” (females)	05/06/2020 2:30-4:30 pm Zoom
Gianfranco Guarnieri, Deputy Commissioner, Squadra Mobile, Venice (male)	10/09/2020 2-4 pm Squadra Mobile, Venice
Gianni Franzoi, Head of Local Police, Venice (male)	10/09/2020 10-12 am Local Police Office, Venice
Roberta Zanovello, Director of Department for Minors, Municipality of Venice	03/07/2020 11:30-12:30 am Municipality of Venice
Patrizia Marcuzzo, Anti-violence Centre, Professional (females), Venice	22/07/2020 9:30-10:30

*Appendix 3: Table of interviews with Stakeholders in Verona*

Name/Surname/Role	Date/time/place
Serena Giorgiotti, Case Manager, AULSS 9 - Local socio-health Authority 9/4 District, Bussolengo District (female)	19/05/2020 5:30-8:05 pm Zoom
Vittorio Zanon, Case Manager, Municipality of Verona and Expert Professional" (male)	27/05/2020 12 am-3:15 pm Whatsup video call  (with Valentina Maraia, Director of the Asylum Seeker Reception Office, Municipality of Verona) 25/06/2020 2-5:30 pm Municipality of Verona Office
Erika Lerco, Crisis and Evaluation Unit Professional, Verona (female)	28/05/2020 10 am-12:15 pm Zoom
Silvia Etrari, Caterina Righetti, Sandra Faith Erhabor, Outreach Unit Professionals, Azalea (females)	04/06/2020 9-11 am Zoom/Whatsup video call
Marco Lucchi, Outreach Unit volunteer (not N.A.Ve) "Papa Giovanni XXIII", Verona (male)	08/06/2020 5-6:45 pm Whatsup video call
Francesca Cucchi, Francesca Albertoni, Socio-legal professionals, CIR and Legal Professionals of SPRAR Project of the Municipality of Verona (females)	15/06/2020 9:30-11:30 pm Skype
Marco Angelini, Alessia Urban, Reception facility "Comunità dei Giovani" Director and Coordinator, Verona (male, female)	17/06/2020 10:30 am-12:30 pm Comunità dei Giovani Office, Verona
Paola Bertolini, Reception facility for Women "Papa Giovanni XXIII" Professional, Vicenza (female)	18/06/2020 2:30-4:30 pm Reception facility for Women "Papa Giovanni 23", Vicenza
Monica Crivellaro, Idana Casarotto, Reception facility for Women "La Tenda" Professionals, Rovigo (females)	23/06/2020 5-7 pm Zoom
Andrea Boscarollo and Mauro Menegazzo, Police Officers, Local Police, Padova (males)	24/06/2020 11:30 am-1:30 pm Local Police Office, Padova



<b>Davide Boaretto, Senior Inspector, Squadra Mobile, Padova (male)</b>	24/06/2020 2:30-4:30 pm Squadra Mobile, Padova
<b>Marta De Felice, Reception facility for Women “Casa della Giovane” Director (female)</b>	25/06/2020 10-11 am Zoom
<b>Massico Sacco, Vice-Questore and Head, Squadra Mobile, Verona (male)</b>	29/10/2020 10-11 am Zoom video call
<b>Massimo Pennella, Commissioner and Head of the Area “Territory control and Large Events”, Locale Police, Verona (male)</b>	Unavailable because of health issues
<b>Blessing Igiehon, Cultural-linguistic mediator, N.A.Ve (female)</b>	30/07/2020 3-4:30 pm Municipality of Verona Office
<b>Elisabetta Segal, Anti-violence Centre, Professional (female)</b>	Unavailable because of health issues



**INSight**  
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Deal with  
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Nigeria, Italy, Sweden

