

Case WORK

COUNTRY REPORT

ITALY

“SITUATION AND NEEDS OF THE VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH
REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS”



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1. Context and background of migration in Italy

1.1. Main characteristics of the migrants' presence

The number of foreign citizens residing in Italy in 2016 amount to 5.047.028¹ (Idos, 2017), just a few hundred more than the year before. It is worth recalling that, according to the consular registers, the Italians residing abroad are already over 5.383.199. Concerning their nationalities, they are less than 200, 30,5% of which is made of EU citizens (1.537.223, of which 1.168.552 Romanians), while 1.1 million come from other European countries. The top 5 communities of foreign origin in our country are Romanians (1.168.552), Albanians (448.407), Moroccans (420.651), Chinese (281.972) and Ukrainians (234.354).

The amount of people entering Italy due to economic or familiar issues has plummeted over the last few years, as we are currently witnessing migrations of people fleeing wars or political and religious persecutions through the Mediterranean route.

1.2. Recent situation of the “refugee crisis”

The number of refugees and asylum-seekers has increased noticeably in recent years, following irregular trends because of rising of several conflicts in the Middle-East area. The 1951 Geneva Convention² defines refugees as persons who lives outside their origin country, who cannot or don't want to come back home due to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. Under the same treaty, asylum-seekers are defined as individuals who move through borders seeking international protection. Since they often do not fall within the strict criteria laid down in the Geneva Convention, international organizations and governments had to envisage new categories and forms of subsidiary and humanitarian protection.

Arrivals in Italy increased from 22.343 in 1997 to 181.436 in 2016, and then decreased again to 119.369 in 2017, and to the 9.070 of last April after the adoption of the bilateral agreement between Italy and Libya (and the subsequent agreements between Mali and Niger)³ in July 2017.

Moving on to the data analysis, it is vital to point out that the Department for the Civil Freedoms and Immigration of the Ministry of the Interior mainly focuses on arrivals by sea neglecting the arrivals by land from the Balkan route and other EU countries.

¹ While analyzing the data concerning foreign people residing in Italy, it should be pointed out that they mostly concern the regular ones, that are part of the stable foreigners that have moved their residence to Italy and regularly entered the Italian register. Foreigners who are not permanently residents in Italy and have residence permits valid for less than one year cannot be included in the calculation.

² Under Article. 1, lett. a) of the 1951 Geneva Convention, a refugee is «a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it».

³ On August 2nd, 2017, the Italian Parliament approved the naval mission supporting the Libyan Coast Guard following the decision of the Council of Ministries and transit countries such as Niger, Mali, Ethiopia, Sudan and Chad, with a view to strengthening cooperation on the control of borders and deportation procedures, providing them with financial support and not asking them to comply with the EU standards in the protection of migrants' human rights.

When the data at disposal are cautiously being put together with the number of foreigners residing in Italy at the end of 2015 (5.026.153), it becomes evident that arrivals by sea hardly represent more than 3% of the full amount of foreign people in Italy.

In mid-February, 2018, the number of individuals in the Italian reception system were 179.936 (EU Parliamentary Committee, 2018), many of whom arrived in Italy since a long time and now experiencing security issues: they represent 3,5% of migrant population in Italy and 0,29% of the entire population. In 2015, the acquisitions of Italian citizenship by foreign individuals, representing the culmination of the migratory path, have increased to 178.000 compared the 155.000 landed and the 176.000 admitted to the reception system.

It is remarkable how the changes occurred in the migration routes and the points of departure have deeply influenced the national composition of people migrating into our country. The migration routes are often imagined and defined according to the conceivable combinations of desires and opportunities available. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has carried out a research on the socio-economic profile of migrants arrived in Italy over the last decades⁴, from which it seems clear that most of the interviewed has left their home countries without a set destination in mind. Only a few did actually think of emigrate to Italy from the start, whereas more than 25% wanted to stay in Libya. Migration routes are not planned in advance, but rather change from time to time according to the willingness of human traffickers. In some cases, the interviewed migrants did not even know the country they were being taken to and were forced to continue their journey until they got to Italy (Achilli *et al.*, 2016). When this kind of migrations occurs, mobility is in progress and external events are what drive the decision to migrate.

In 2014, the first three nationalities declared after landing were Syrian, Eritrean and Malian. In 2015 these data have changed, so we find the Eritrean nationality in the first place, closely followed by the Nigerian and the Malian ones. In 2016 Nigeria surpassed Eritrea, then in the second place, while Guinea was third. In 2017 the top nationalities declared after landing were Nigeria, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Bangladesh, while today, April 2018, they are Tunisia, Eritrea and Nigeria.

1.3. The asylum system

The Italian reception system did never reject the emergency assistance view that inspired it. This becomes clear when the data about the structural nature of the phenomenon of refugees are considered: in the light of the current economic, cultural and geopolitical dynamics it is easy to predict that it will remain stable, or maybe it will increase, in the coming years. Despite the drastic reduction in the landings to our shores since July 2017, migration flows always tend to find another route when the one they are following is shut down. The problem is that new routes often pose more dangers than the abandoned ones.

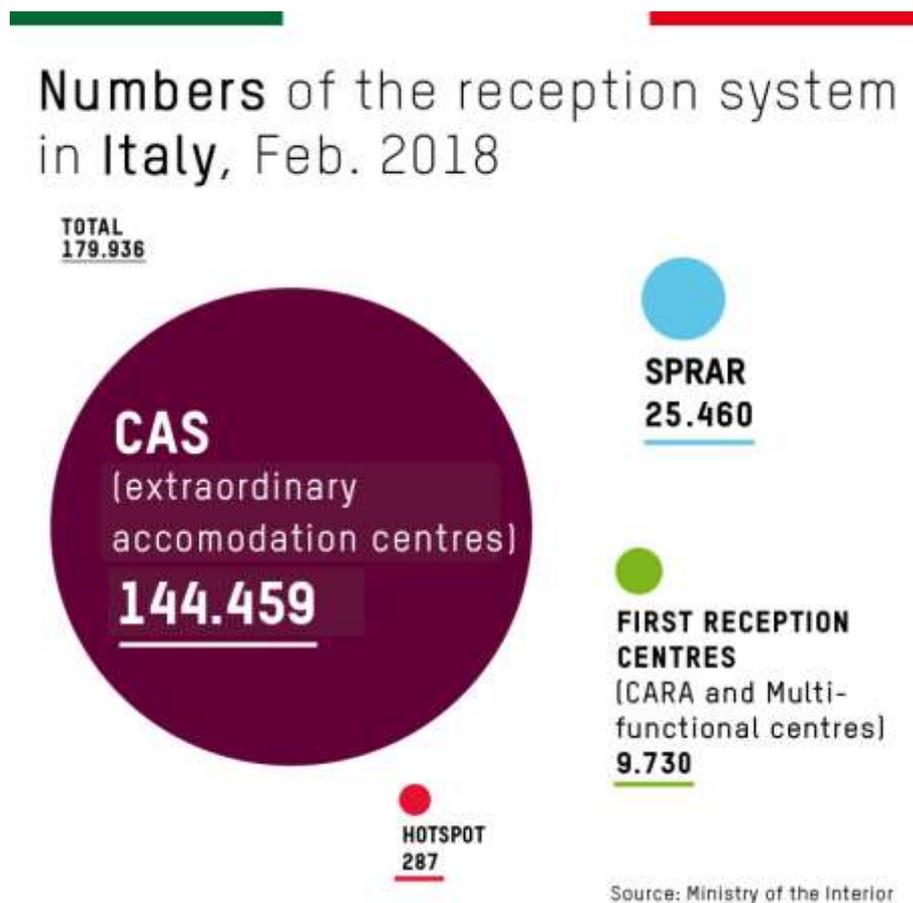
As Giuseppe Campesi observed, «over the last ten years, the border controls and the arrival of irregular migrants to the Italian shores have been managed as if we were in what can be described as a “permanent emergency” (Campesi, 2011, pp. 8-9).

⁴ The research, carried out in partnership with the European University Institute (EUI) and funded by the Department for International Development and Cooperation of the British Government (DFID), presents the statements of more than 100 migrants hosted in the Italian regions, collected through individual interviews.

The reception system is made of diversified structures according to the number of places available, the conditions and the standards of the services provided.

The core of the system is the SPRAR, the “System of Protection for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees”, coordinated by local authorities and matched, since 2014, by the CAS (Extraordinary Accommodation Centres). These latter temporary structures have been activated by local prefectures on behalf of the Ministry of the Interior and represent around 80% of all the beneficiaries of the reception system, distributed in 7.000 structures throughout the entire Italian territory.

Figure 1



Sleeping accommodations have been made available in flats, hotels, nursing homes and hostels by organizations, cooperatives, associations and other private bodies, for an average cost of EUR 30/35 a day for every host. Originated as a system responding to humanitarian emergencies in a short-term perspective, the CAS system is now proving to be biased and inappropriate to provide a solution to the reception of the hosted migrants, whose stay often goes on for years. In such a way, the SPRAR centralized system of small centres, directly managed by the local authorities, the heterogeneous CASs, the governmental centres CARAs and the First Reception Centres coexist.

The data on the presence of refugees and asylum-seekers in the diverse Italian regions have not changed significantly since 2015. The Lombardy region accommodates the greatest number of

immigrants with almost 25.000 individuals; Campania follows with 16.000 presences and the regions of Lazio and Sicily come right after them. If, on one hand, we notice a greater distribution of refugees over the national territory, on the other one the services provided by the 7.000 CASs definitely appear fragmented and uneven. In addition, due to the overload of the system and the shortage of space, refugees and other individuals with diversified statuses can stay in First Reception Centres for months, while the SPRAR program accommodates both those covered by protection and the ones seeking it. CASs, on the other hand, are this system's outlets, hosting heterogeneous beneficiaries, most of which have only just arrived.

2. The state of the art of volunteers' work with asylum seekers and refugees

2.1. Main characteristics of volunteer phenomenon in Italy

The Charter on the Values of Volunteers states that «a volunteer is a person who carries out activities benefiting society, by free will. These activities are undertaken for a non-profit cause, benefiting the personal development of the volunteer, who commits their time and energy for the general good without financial reward». Under the Art. 2 of the Italian Law n. 266/1991, named "Legge quadro sul volontariato" it is stated that «Voluntary activities are those carried out personally, spontaneously and free of any charge through the non-profit organization the Volunteer belongs to. Such activities can be carried out through indirect means but must be exclusively driven by solidarity purposes». As Vecchiato (2011) points out, this phenomenon can be analyzed under two different perspectives, the former focusing on ethics and values, the latter bringing to light its social value and the actions *in se*.

Associations, in accordance with Tocqueville, are schools of civic virtues, where people are trained to recognize and adopt broader forms of sociality and solidarity than those experienced within family contexts, where they learn to get to know and respect others. To sum up, associations help the processes of integration, helping people to connect and building links with other peoples, as independent and peculiar individuals, and the rest of community, as the elected space for individual and collective self-fulfillment. Due to this dual nature, volunteer work is a personal and group experience involving the volunteer both as a single individual and as a member of a group of people supporting and sharing its choice. It is a strictly personal activity, which is also socially shared (Ranci, 2006, p. 9).

The Volunteering Organizations (VO) set up under Law N.266/91 are nothing more than subsets of non-profit institutions⁵.

As Baglioni and Raffini (2012) point out, the social transformations of modern times noticeably impacted on the voluntary sector: after having achieved legitimacy and consolidation in the mid-1990s, a stagnation occurred, linked to the need of redefining the actual commitment of volunteers, which

⁵ A non-profit organization is a legal and financial entity (often with a legal status), private or public held, providing market and non-market goods and services and that, under the existing laws or statutory provisions, cannot share, even indirectly, its profits or provisions that differ from remuneration of the work performed by the individuals who set it up its shareholders.

has become overtime more discontinuous and short-lasting (*idem*, p. 47). The main national figures show that volunteers have decreased, remunerated workers have increased, and public funds have been increasingly used. What has been said has widened the internal polarization within the voluntary sector between full-scale organizations, widespread on several territorial levels, and small-scale organizations, operating through local micro-initiatives (*idem*, p. 49).

The 2015 CSVnet's report (National Coordination of the Service Centres for Volunteer Work)⁶ describes the average Italian volunteer through a sample survey carried out on 44.182 associations⁷. The main findings are that most volunteers work in the field of social assistance (11.812) and healthcare (9.098): these two categories alone make 55% of the total amount of associations. Other popular sectors are that of culture, sport and recreational activities. Elders and minors are usually the main targets (25,4%), while sick and handicapped people are being taken care of by 18% of the organizations and nomads, migrants and refugees by 5,7%.

As far as the territorial distribution is concerned, more than half the associations are located in Northern and Central Italy: Lombardy, Tuscany, Lazio, Piedmont and Emilia Romagna are the regions that more than all the others embody the reality of volunteer work.

Half the associations work with less than 16 volunteers: only 15% have a number exceeding 50. About shareholders, 50% of associations have less than 60, while more than 10% have more than 500 associates.

Over the last seven years, the number of newly setup associations has decreased drastically: in 2014 they decreased by 15% compared with the previous year. Smaller associations are the youngest ones as well. The ones of oldest constitution mainly operate in the field of healthcare (50% of which has been active for almost 30 years), while the recent ones are mainly committed in the field of environmental protection (since 2006), civil protection (since 2005) or international cooperation (since 2004).

According to the report, the average age of volunteer workers within associations is in line with that of population: 48,1 years old compared to the 48,7 of the population in its entirety. As far as the number of volunteers is concerned, Italy is home to 1,7 million people working as volunteers within voluntary organizations, accounting for 3,2% of the entire Italian population older than 14 years old. The highest territorial dissemination is in the Northern and Central regions, with peaks of 4,5% in the Veneto and Lombardy regions and close to 8% in the Trentino region. Volunteers spend an average of 20,4 hours per month on their activities: altogether, they account for 28,7 million hours of voluntary work in Italian volunteer organizations per month. Presidents of said organizations devote even more of their personal time: 25,6 hours per month, accounting for 4 full working days. On average, volunteer workers stay in the same organization for 6,8 years, whereas its presidents do it for nine years (CSVnet National Report, 2015).

⁶ CSVnet is a non-commercial network bringing together 70 out of the 72 the Service Centres for Volunteer Work (CSVs) established by Law N, 266/91.

⁷ Not just the ones included in public registers, but also those the ones entered in the CSVs databases.

2.2. The role of the volunteers in organization working with refugees and asylum seekers

The Italian volunteer organizations working in the field of international migration have increased in number over the last two decades, as the migration flows did.

The 2008 research carried out by ISFOL (Institute for the development of vocational training for workers)⁸ on a sample of 180 volunteer organizations working in the area of international migration highlights their main features.

Firstly, the analyzed entities express a *clear vocation* towards the phenomenon highlighted: in half the cases (48,9%) there is an exclusive commitment with migrants, and – for the remaining part – 1 out of 4 regards it as “predominant”. The mission of these organizations is always oriented towards one of these issues: promoting a greater integration and protection of human rights (32,3%); building a multi-ethnic society (20%); providing migrants with assistance and aid services (13,9%); promoting active citizenship (11,1%); facilitating access of migrants to public services (10,6%) (Gaudio, Caramelli, 2009).

A second aspect concerns the structural capacities of the organizations, that are usually *very limited* to the Municipality where they are located in. Most of them (59,4%) have only one office, and – despite the remaining ones have a number of offices ranging from 2 to 10 – less than 25% has more than 3. The other offices are usually located in the same region as the main one: only 10% have offices in another region and hardly more than 7% have an international office.

In the analyzed contexts we can find 16.500 volunteers, of which no more than one third has migrant backgrounds. The average consistency of the associates accounts for 92 people, numbering just the active workers. In more than half the cases (53,2%) they feature less than 20 members (Gaudio, Caramelli, 2009).

The third finding emerged is the *high variety in dimensions*, which reflects the deep heterogeneity of the Italian volunteer work, in which huge organizations coping with issues and problems of great concern coexist with modest entities, usually dealing with limited problems and contexts. In most cases (62%), these organizations carry out their activities without paid staff, that make the minority of its members (usually no more than 4%, i.e. 8,2% of the active members).

The fourth relevant aspect is that Italian Volunteer Organizations *associate less with public bodies* than general OVs. This is a consequence of a consolidate scenario in the so-called welfare mix, where one volunteer association out of two signs formal agreements of this kind, in most cases with Local and Health Authorities (Istat 2006).

Finally, with reference to mission and intra-sectorial specialization, four models emerge from the sample analysis.

The first one brings together the associations working for “mutual solidarity and fight against discrimination”, which presents a distinctive sectorial specialization and volunteers older than average. Even though these associations are less in number, they are broad-based (with an average of 199

⁸ ISFOL – Institute for the development of vocational training for workers – is a national research entity supervised by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies: <http://www.isfol.it/Istituto/chi-siamo>.

members) and a very large number of beneficiaries, namely migrants. These volunteer organizations usually work in the Northern regions and can rely on extended networks at national level, in what is commonly called “entrepreneurial associationism” (Ambrosini 2005, pp. 224-225): they frequently adhere to a national network (80%), usually sign agreements with relevant authorities (60%), and present paid (70%) and regularly hired (30%) staff members.

A second group brings together those associations working in the fields of “integration, identity, rights”, making the larger share of the sample. They are marked by an average level of sectorial specialization, are very popular in Southern Italy and mainly focus on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of active labor market policies.

The third group includes the volunteer organizations providing “supply of services”, as it is strongly marked by the delivery of social and health services (54,5% of the total activities) according to the typical profile of the “charitable associationism” (Ambrosini, 2005). These organizations mainly work in the Northern regions and its members usually are the oldest.

The fourth category comprised organizations working for “multi-ethnic societies and active citizenship”. The main features of the associations providing advocacy services for vulnerable categories (cfr. *ibidem*) are marked by a relatively low level of intra-sectorial specialization, widely diffused in Northern Italy (58,9%) and traditionally focused on migratory phenomena (Gaudio, Caramelli, 2009).

As the migration flows increased over the last few years, organizations working with migrants had to develop a system to respond to their needs and questions. As one of the interviewees claimed, «the number of volunteers goes up in direct proportion to the number of immigrants» (int. AC).

Since international migration to Italy is often regarded as a “permanent emergency”, i.e. as a fragmented and highly discretionary phenomenon whose practices are usually scattered throughout the Italian territory and have never been systematized, we carried out six individual interviews (2 of which on the phone) to representatives of formal and informal organizations pro-migrants.

Interviews have involved:

- the coordinator of the ARCI national reception system, which accommodate 6.466 people and is structured in 113 projects taking place in 13 Italian regions. ARCI has 1.500 regular employees and 400/ 500 volunteers (including the ones in “servizio civile” in its reception system);
- a volunteer from Naga-Har, a day-care reception centre based in Milan since 2001, partner of the secular and non-partisan Naga association, originated in 1987 with the goal of promoting and protect the rights and the health of foreign, Roma and Sinti people without discriminations. Only four people receive a salary within Naga; the other 300 workers are all volunteers;
- the volunteer coordinator of the Baobab Experience in Rome, a solidarity network in a camp providing assistance to migrants in transit (over 70.000 since 2015, with peaks of 900 per day). The 50 people working at Baobab are volunteers, intercultural mediators excluded;
- the supervisor migration area of the Italian Red Cross, which has 160.000 volunteers;

- the educator in charge of coordinating volunteer working for the Mediterranean Hope project promoted by the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy. There are three volunteers in the House of Cultures in Scicli and two in Lampedusa;
- the coordinator of the group of national reception of migrants at CNCA (National Coordination of Care Communities). From his work experience in the territory where their service is supplied, there are only 3 specialized volunteers for 250 guests, complemented by a network of people engaging in activities promoted by the cooperative he works for.

Two distinct groups of experiences emerge from our quantitative analysis: (i) that of the association originated by the needs of people exiting the reception system (or those who never entered it in the first place), usually more interested in the preservation of their own identity: «Baobab experience is all about volunteer work. We became an association to have access to EU funding opportunities» (int. AC); and (ii) that of associations providing services and answers to local institutions. Their actions are part of a complex structure: «the Italian Red Cross is so vast that volunteers can specialize in a broad range of activities, most of which can be applied and integrated within our centres» (int. FB).

At the same time, people join the volunteer organizations in the first groups in a casual way: «people go by and ask how they can be useful, the Facebook page, the word of mouth between volunteers, each one bringing friends and parents according to their own motivation» (int. AC); «it is actually them recruiting us... we do not look for them, it's them looking for information about us on our website. Lampedusa sparks their interest» (int. AM); in other cases, it is the reputation of the association that draws them in: «we do not advertise recruiting campaigns because we already receive many applications» (int. EB). In the second group, on the contrary, recruiting process is more structured: «we organize courses and we promote them through diverse channels» (int. FB); otherwise, the advocacy actions often reward associations by drawing in people sharing their same sensitivity to the needs and demands of migrant people.

Volunteers are being involved in the implementation of logistic activities, handling of catering, desk office duties, language teaching and recreational and ludic activities.

A final remark on the volunteers' profiles: they can be easily divided into a majority represented by university students (including international ones) with a deep interest on migration issues or young people looking for a job, and a minority comprising retired people, workers, activists and others drawn in by the word of mouth of acquaintances.

3. Working with refugees and asylum seekers: volunteers' needs

3.1. Who are they? Motivations, needs, attitudes, skills, expectations and beliefs

Who is the volunteer? And what are the constituent elements of the identikit of the "good volunteer" in the field of reception?

We will start by analyzing the results obtained by the two focus groups that were held respectively on the 27th February 2018 in Rome and the 21st March 2018 in Florence, attended by a total of 18 people (the profile of the participants is in the annex below).

The table below describes the definitions of who is “the volunteer” according to the different experiences of the participants. The strong passion and solidarity of the people involved, whose actions are strongly correlated with the emergency situation in which applicants for international protection and refugees find themselves in, emerges as a crucial aspect.

The key words are: connection, sharing, exchange, solidarity, empathy, coherence, listening, inconvenient substitute for the missing institution’s presence, activist and dreamer.

If, as it can be read from the table below, the motivations that lead the single individual to adhere to a given non-profit organization can lead to some sort of self-referentiality (Ranci, 2006). This tendency is augmented by the needs for subjectivation and recognition that are common in the current historical-social phase, in which volunteering compensates for the deterioration of the space for action of politics.

Faced with the shortcomings of the Italian welcoming system and the many inequalities, volunteering has often had to substitute for the functions of public institutions. What Vecchiato wrote on the actions of volunteering work in the 1990s (2011) is still valid in present-day: «the expression “not heroes, but citizens” (FIVOL, 1993) has contributed to better define the sense of social and political volunteering actions. On a value-based level, it meant making sense out of “getting close” and, on a political level, observing new styles of participation and democratization of the relationships between people and organizations. An elective ground to materialize these new methods of thinking about volunteering was the services to people, where fragility, inequality and injustice were all most concentrated. As a matter of fact, “giving” answers was not enough but also “caring and taking care” of was needed, in order to face the double requests for needs and rights, leveraging on the duties for solidarity». (Vecchiato, 2011, p.6). The volunteers, or activists for solidarity, of today make sense out of “getting close” answering to the many needs (from food, to medical care, to legal orientation, etc.) and taking care of others. A care that generates activism and “happiness” as reported by a participant: «in my case the work done is the typical you do for a living, and at the end of the day volunteering makes me happy and I feel fulfilled» (f. g. FS); but that can become a totalizing experience with negative consequences: «when you get to know them, you do not have a migrant in front of you but Mohammed that comes from a given country, with a given history: he becomes a person that if he has a problem it becomes your problem, you can’t sleep or focus on your job. I, for example, work in the commercial field, I do something totally uncorrelated but that follows you. It melds entirely together, but it is also subjective. In my case I put myself at disposal, I do not bring any professional experience with me» (f. g. FS).

Table 1: Who is the volunteer?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creates and connects - Creating opportunities to aggregate people who otherwise would be excluded from social contexts - For me the volunteer is a "receiver", he receives and understands the needs and the difficulties of people - A volunteer is a person, an ordinary citizen, who does not limit himself to living thinking of his own, "mere" realization and happiness but, on the contrary, he cannot really find it if not shared, thinking of those in difficulty in finding it - For me, the volunteer is someone who wants to be useful to improve a daily reality. Person, professional or citizen who offers his skills, experience, emotions at the service of a community in search of fun memberships - The volunteer is a person who helps the foreigner/migrant to integrate into the new society - Those in need/desire to integrate concretely to make the world a more welcoming place by practicing reciprocity and exchange. Who seeks and places the meaning of his life beyond himself. Often a "comfortable" substitute for absent institutions - The volunteer is (or should be) a person driven by the desire to improve the living conditions of the people to whom he turns his help, often he finds himself suffering from institutional deficiencies, triggering a perverse mechanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A person who engages in connection with others, making available his time and skills - The volunteer is the one who identifies himself both materially and psychologically with the reality he faces, empowers and acquires skills - Someone who chooses freely to dedicate time and energy to support individuals and groups in state of need - Empathy - Steadiness - Listens without prejudices and judgements, proposes solutions with the individual and for the individual (not for himself) - A person who fights all prejudices and values human relationships. A dreamer - Activist for solidarity - An activity of continuous learning and awareness. Empathy work
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intention, as a logical act, to work for a better result than present reality - Guide, role of mentor 	
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The good volunteer active with migrants:

- a. first of all, should not feel capable or take action to solve the problems of the world, but try to lend a hand, giving themselves goals;
- b. must be able to set limits and not to go beyond their role, both on practical and emotional level. They must not create confusion in the guests;
- c. must not act for hobby;
- d. must be a critical person, in the most constructive sense of the term, because it may not always be the case that what they think is a good action actually is good. There are often implications that one does not consider due to poor preparation;
- e. must have strong ethical sense and empathy;
- f. must be steady and serious because frequently intervenes “in institutional voids”;
- g. must be reactive and with problem-solving skills.

«But what makes you do it?» is the most frequent sentence that volunteers hear. In this specific context, “giving” time is a civic gesture endowed with a positive social value – it appears scarcely or not at all recognized by external people or even within the family and groups of friends. The relationship with the beneficiaries is not simple, often the latter do not distinguish the roles of operators from that of volunteers and, especially in the beginning, they are wary.

3.2. What are the main factors for success and the main critical points?

If we are going to accept the idea that voluntary effort is a form of self-realization, three fundamental reasons for practicing volunteer work also emerge in our study. The first, as noted by the sociologist Ranci, is to give substance to their moral and religious principles and beliefs; the second has to do with the interest in developing meaningful relationships, based on aid and sharing; finally, the third one concerns the possibility of testing oneself and their own abilities to acquire practical experience that may be transferable in other working environments (Ranci, 2006).

The following critical issues emerge from the interviews and focus groups:

- the need for a multidisciplinary training that considers juridical, sociological and psychological aspects with a focus on team work: «I would have preferred more clarity regarding my role» (f. g. GB);
- strictly linked to training, volunteers signal the need to train “on the field”, but through an initial coaching with operators or volunteers with greater seniority;
- a particularly important aspect related to psychological training and supervision, is the burn out: «we had a period in which we went into burn out, by staying here you put on a not indifferent skin of cynicism, just one story out of the thousands of migrants who have come here is sufficient to really hurt you... you absorb pain» (int. AC); «a girl who comes from our

churches and with experience in the camps in Greece, thus prepared, when she arrived in Lampedusa has collapsed and I know it was very difficult for the operators to give her back the motivation» (int. AM);

- a critical point is represented by the need to stimulate the institutions, protect the rights of the weakest, without being instrumental in replacing the shortcomings of public institutions;
- difficulties can often arise, and these do not pertain to the voluntary activity itself, but the way it works, how to coordinate and organize internally and externally. In particular, the ability to collaborate and network with other subjects, since often the commitment to others absorbs most of the energies and «each one pursues their own goal without looking around» (f. g. SB).

4. Conclusions and suggestions

Volunteers report four challenges: not replacing public bodies, properly funded according to the law and focused on guaranteeing welfare services (that should be provided anyway, even when voluntary work is missing); ensure a proficiency commensurate to the nature of the actions taken; avoid any overlap with professional actions; finally, contributing to improve the standards of protection of the most vulnerable groups.

In the light of the underlined element, it should be noted that the archipelago of solidarity organizations is increasingly becoming an area in which the institutions “willingly” delegate the presentation of services to a target of people considered “out of place” by the very characteristics of migratory flows, their diversity and the sense of otherness that they instigate.

All this, and the complexity inherent in the role played by volunteers, make two types of action desirable: one that is informative, wide-ranging and widespread sensitization, functional to overcome a negative narrative and necessary to build a network of actions for the “activists of solidarity” also for advocacy, and one of formative nature.

With regard to the topics and contents of the training, the training needs appeared very coherent with the peculiarities of the organizations. On a basic skills level, the volunteers call into question the reinforcement of the organizational and managerial ones. In the case of technical-specialist skills, the needs are concentrated on the psychological front, on the network, and on the knowledge of the migratory phenomenon with an interdisciplinary approach. Regarding the transversal competences, they are mainly focused on the area of intercultural communication and skills, useful for a more functional management of stress and conflicts.

The smoothness of situations and of the specific context, require a continuous effort to update and ability to solve problems, for this reason the training activities must not be based on an abstract or generalizing approach, but must be adapted to the context. In this sense, it may be important to use more formative practices as: action research, action learning, storytelling and autobiographies, as well as the organization and enhancement of those processes of interpersonal relationships between less expert and more expert people that are common in the volunteering work environments and not only (the so-called learning by networking).

Annex A – Info on interviews and focus groups

Table 1: Interviews

Organizations	Role	Initials	Where	When
ARCI	Reception system national coordinator	WM	Rome	15/02/2018
Naga-Har	Volunteer	EB	phone	07/02/2018
Baobab Experience	Volunteers coordinator	AC	Rome	02/02/2018
Croce Rossa Italiana (Italian Red Cross)	Migration area manager	FB	Rome and phone	15 and 20/02/2018
Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia (Federation of the Evangelical Churches in Italy)	Educator coordinating volunteers	AM	Rome	01/02/2018
Coordinamento Nazionale Comunità di Accoglienza (National Coordination of Reception Communities)	Coordinator of the group on national asylum for migrants	ST	skype	06/02/2018

Table 2: Rome focus group (27/02/2018)

Initials	Gender	Organization
SM	F	Baobab Experience
FS	F	Baobab Experience
GB	F	Federazione Italiana delle Chiese Evangeliche
CB	M	Federazione Italiana delle Chiese Evangeliche
VB	F	Altramente
VS	F	La città dei ragazzi
RF	F	Liberi Nantes
AD	M	Casetta Rossa
MF	F	Casetta Rossa

Table 3: Florence focus group (21/03/2018)

Initials	Gender	Organization
SB	F	Anelli Mancanti
PP	F	Arcobaleno
VP	F	Sulla stessa barca
GS	F	Sulla stessa barca
TC	M	Sulla stessa barca
LG	M	Ronda della carità
FE	F	ARCI
MT	F	MEDU
CC	M	MEDU

Annex B – Bibliography

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