



INSIGHT Action Policy Brief 4: The social protection programmes for survivors of trafficking in Italy. Focus on young Nigerian women.

Introduction

This policy brief has been written by the SSIIM Unesco Chair of the University Luav of Venice, as part of the INSIGHT Action and of a series of 4 policy briefs aimed at promoting and improving transnational cooperation in the fight against trafficking in human beings and in the protection of trafficked people. It is based on research and elaboration of qualitative (ethnographic observation and semi-structured interviews) and quantitative data carried out in the period June 2019 to September 2020. It mainly draws from Semprebon et al. (2021)¹. Its focus is on social protection programmes in Italy, which have been working with survivors of trafficking.

Okech et al. (2017) presented an overview of the (social work) literature dealing with anti-trafficking interventions, in the period 2000-2017. As they note, almost half of the papers were published in the most recent years, between 2012 and 2015. Most of them were written by authors affiliated with US academic institutions. Only a third provided empirical evidence and only 19% of these described interventions, pointing to a gap in the

literature. The e-book by Semprebon et al. (2021) aimed to contribute to the literature, by reporting on the INSIGHT research, with focus on the specific target of young Nigerian women. In this brief, we will be addressing the main policy issues that emerged from the research.

Social protection programmes in Italy have been set up relatively recently. The first dedicated funding dates back to 2000, but it was only in 2016 that projects started integrating both social protection and first assistance services. They are normally constructed as regional projects, with either a public or private leading partner and implementation, in local territories, is generally entrusted to non-profit organisations and NGOs. Local authorities hold primary responsibility as far as unaccompanied minors and particularly vulnerable targets are involved, although they often lack the specialist knowledge desirable to work with trafficked people.

This brief is timely as we are writing after the first 5 years of implementation of anti-trafficking projects in Italy (see also Degani, 2021²) and it addresses also the critical issues

¹ 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 Luav of Venice. Available: <https://www.insightproject.net/project/publications/>
Last access: 26.10.2021.

² See also Degani (2021) for some reflections (in Italian) on the anti-trafficking system in Italy. Available: https://www.osservatoriointerventitratta.it/report-lotta-alla-tratta-di-persone-e-diritti-umani-unanalisi-del-sistema-a-sostegno-delle-vittime-alla-luce-dei-fenomeni-di-grave-sfruttamento-in-italia/?_cf_chl_jschl_tk=%pmd_mQOSJbmXKEIs9eeGBaYQW

that emerged with the Covid-19 lockdown. At present it is still hard to measure the impacts of the pandemic, that is still in on-going, but it is a shared opinion that it has resulted in further challenges to the protection of the most vulnerable groups of the society³, including trafficked people.

Migratory movements from Nigeria: some data

Migratory movements associated with trafficking from Nigeria to Europe have been on-going for several decades. In the period 2017-2018, non-EU registered victims of trafficking were mainly of Nigerian origins (3,112 people)⁴. A peak of arrivals from Nigeria to Europe, particularly Italy and Spain, was recorded in the period 2015-2017, while in 2017 arrivals to Italy, either by sea or land, decreased. Looking at the profile of people registered as victims in the period 2017-2018, over 56% 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 total and a considerable increase was reported with respect to the period 2015-2016⁵. Nearly three quarters (72 %) of all registered victims were females, including both women and girls. Girls still represent 69% of child victims with non-EU citizenship and Nigeria is the first country in the list of the top 5 countries of female registered victims of

trafficking. These data clearly show that the target of young Nigerian women, on whom the INSigHT Action focuses, is relevant.

In the period 2017-2018, Italy was the second country (in the EU-27) with the largest number of registered victims, after France, the Netherlands, Germany and Romania. Nigeria was still the main country of citizenship of non-EU victims, but the total number of victims decreased (one third less than in the period 2015-2016). This decrease has been arguably the result of border policies and bilateral agreements between Italy and Libya. It does not mean, however, that the number of survivors on the European territory has decreased. Data regarding migratory movements, particularly those associated with smuggling and trafficking, is generally underestimated. Largely unaccounted for are movements internal to Europe⁶ and they are reported to be on the rise⁷. We should also consider the outcomes of asylum applications. Out of 23,057 Nigerians that applied in 2017, only 5% obtained the refugee status, 2% subsidiary protection, 20% humanitarian protection, while more than 70% did not receive protection at all⁸. It is evident that only a residual part of Nigerian applicants received protection. Anti-trafficking professionals suggest that in face of rejected applications, many Nigerian women searched for asylum and protection elsewhere in northern Europe.

[9TTSU66VJLsywa8W2fpALC-1635520180-0-gqNtZGzNAuWjcnBsZQjR](https://www.unodc.org/islamicrepublicofiran/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: 20.10.2021.

³ 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/islamicrepublicofiran/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.

⁴ EU Commission (2018) Data Collection on

Human Trafficking in the EU. Available: <https://bit.ly/2msM72d> Last access: 23.09.2019.

⁵ See note 4.

⁶ Frontex (2020). Risk Analysis. Available: <https://bit.ly/3qtl7et> Last access: 04.12.2019.

⁷ EU Commission (2018) *2nd Report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3l1b1xe> Last access: 04.12.2020.

⁸ Data available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics Last access: 10.01.2021.

Normative Framework

International Framework

- UN Palermo Protocol (2000 - ratified by Nigeria in 2001)
- EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000)
- Council of Europe Convention Against the Trafficking in Human Beings (2008)
- EU Directive 2011/36 on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting its Victims (2011)

EU Framework on Returns and Cooperation with Third-Countries

- Common Agenda for Migration and Mobility (CAMM) and Valetta Summit Declaration and Action Plan (2015)
- Return Directive 2008/115/EC (2008)
- Action Plan on Return (2015 – amended in 2017)
- Several Cooperation Agreements with Benin, Niger, Italy⁹ and the UK¹⁰
- Antitrafficking strategy (2021)
- New Migration Pact (Proposal) (2020)

Italian Framework

- **Art. 18 of Legislative Decree 286/1998** Unique Text with provisions relating to immigration and norms on the condition of foreigners
- **Law 228/2003** Measures against the trafficking of human beings
- **Legislative Decree 24/2014** (transposing EU Directive 2011/36/EU)
- **2016 National Anti-trafficking Plan** (currently under revision).

⁹ A first agreement was signed in September 2000; three agreements on mutual extradition, mutual assistance in penal proceedings and transfer of individuals prosecuted and charged with trafficking crimes were signed in 2016.

¹⁰ See Ikeora M. (2018). Bilateral Cooperation and Human Trafficking. Eradicating Modern Slavery between the United Kingdom and Nigeria. Global Ethic Series. Palgrave: Bristol.

Main policy issues

The changing profiles of beneficiaries and the need for specialist support

Our research looked at the N.A.Ve project (Anti-trafficking Network of the Veneto Region – since 2021 N.A.V.I.G.A.Re) in particular, but it still provides with insights on the challenges that are relevant to anti-trafficking projects in the wider national context. Changes have been observed throughout Italy in the profiles of the targets of social protection programmes, particularly in the last few years. Concerning people of Nigerian origins, there has been an increasing call for support by young lone mothers with children, in terms of pregnancy and motherhood. Many of these women have become pregnant as a result of unsafe sex work and exploitation; many have travelled throughout Europe and have been exploited, sexually but not only, in various locations, pointing to diversified dynamics of trafficking networks, with impact on the mobility of individuals. This element emerged, for example, in our research on the Brenner border area, in northern Italy¹¹. The vulnerable conditions of these women have been made even more vulnerable by a system of protection that is not easily accessible. Critical aspects concern scarcely effective identification and referral mechanisms, but also the poor integration of interventions. This specific target group requires integration between social services, anti-trafficking and reception professionals but they often intervene in fragmented ways, thus forcing many women to long waiting times (if they ever manage to access services at all). As a result, many have been forced to constant

mobility in search for protection, within Italy or also outside it. Paradoxically, this has contributed to facilitating the functioning of exploitation networks: they have offered support whereby institutional support was missing or insufficient. We should not forget that even after extinguishing the debt contracted for travelling to Europe, many survivors may still experience forms of bondage (i.e. through relationships with partners) to the exploiters.

A second target group that has become increasingly complex to deal with comprises young male and female adults (of Nigerian and other origins) who were forced to commit a crime (i.e. drug transportation) while still in their minor age. Italy is among the few European countries that have not introduced the non-punishment principle for victims of exploitation. At the same time, since 1998, the national normative framework provides for the protection of young people offenders and victims of crimes (box 3)¹². In this context, young people have been often identified (if they have been identified at all) during a trial or while serving a sentence in jail, after reaching their majority age. This means that protection and support often arrived late and it suggests that early identification is crucial.

A third target group is that of Nigerian men (as well as men of other nationalities) exploited in labour sectors, such as agriculture. Some have been exploited in begging too. Only in rare cases have these men contacted the Anti-trafficking Hotline, however, as they are afraid of losing the only income available to them. Anti-trafficking projects, on their side, are still mostly focused on sexually exploited women and tend to overlook individuals subjected to labour and other forms of exploitation, with

¹¹ Sempredon M. and 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 luav of Venice. Available: <https://www.insightproject.net/project/publications/> Last

access: 20.10.2021.

¹² Sempredon M. et al. (2021) Victims or offenders? The principle of non-punishment and the critical protection of unaccompanied minors exploited in criminal activities in Italy. *Sociologia del Diritto*, 3: 190-218.

less investment in outreach activities dedicated to them, for example. Similar forms of exploitation are de facto mostly likely to fall outside the remit of anti-trafficking projects. Notwithstanding, some of them, including the N.A.Ve, have developed specific multi-agency approaches to address the challenges associated with labour exploitation (see box 1). The evolution in profiles we have described above calls for a thorough assessment of individuals' needs, with the involvement of relevant specialists, including psychologists, intercultural and ethno-psychiatric experts, as will be explained. A working group of professionals with a background in psychology has recently been created within the N.A.Ve with this scope in mind (box 2). A crucial role rests also in the hands of cultural-linguistic mediators who are an integral part of N.A.Ve, as well as other anti-trafficking projects in Italy. They contribute to the active listening of beneficiaries and to the understanding and interpretation of migration and trafficking-related phenomena. Experimental collaborations have been activated with peer-educators, that promise to provide an added value to social protection programmes, as they can provide a positive role model for beneficiaries.

While adequate support is undoubtedly crucial, there is no support nor protection without effective identification and referral and these require a constant attentive monitoring of the multiple phenomena of exploitation, through the activation of outreach units; and improved awareness on

the evolution of trafficking dynamics among stakeholders.

Identification and referral

Identification and referral are terms fraught with misunderstandings, including first and foremost who should be identified, how, by whom, for what scope and what referral should entail. There is no standardized system in Europe, nor any formal definition in EU law¹³. The latter does not require Member States to establish formalised mechanisms. Referral is generally voluntary (EC 2018) and discretionary. Specific arrangements have been put in place by stakeholders in European Member States (i.e. law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organisation, anti-trafficking actors), but they are still uneven across services and locations (Shepherd and Wilkinson 2021¹⁴). At the national level, all but one Member State (Germany) have built mechanisms of cooperation that are considered rather ineffective (EC 2016¹⁵). Various agencies have underlined the need for methodological improvement¹⁶ and several other critical issues remain to date: lack of language and mediation support services; poor awareness and skills of front-line professionals; low levels of self-perception as victims on the side of survivors and low level of trust in institutional authorities (EC 2018¹⁷).

As far as Italy is concerned, it was first Legislative Decree 24/2014 that addressed the issue of identification. In 2016, the first National Action Plan against Trafficking¹⁸,

¹³ However, referral mechanisms generally intend (and implement) referral by means of collaborative efforts among governmental authorities, civil society and international organisations.

¹⁴ Shepherd, Rowena & Wilkinson Mick, 2021. Operating in the dark: The identification of forced labour in the UK. *Critical Social Policy*, 41,2: 208-228.

¹⁵ EC (2016). *First report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking*. Available: <https://bit.ly/3xzFv0I> Access: 20.07.2021.

¹⁶ UNHCR, *The Identification and Referral of Trafficked Persons to Procedures for Determining International Protection Needs*, Geneva, 2009; ILO, *Operational indicators of trafficking in human beings*, Geneva, 2009; ICMPD, *Guidelines for the Development of a Transnational Referral Mechanism for Trafficked Persons in Europe*, Vienna, 2010.

¹⁷ EC (2018). *Study on reviewing the functioning of Member States' National and Transnational Referral Mechanisms*. Available: <https://bit.ly/3f0BeRk>. Access: 20.07.2021.

¹⁸ Available: <http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Piano-nazionale-di-azione-contro->

covering the period 2016-2018 provided for the setting up of a mechanism for rapid identification. A few years later, the GRETA Group¹⁹ raised concern about the absence of standardised guidelines and procedures and the risk for victims to be detained in repatriation centres and subjected to forced return, in violation of the non-punishment principle.

More recently, attention to the topic was cast in the UNHCR referral guidelines for victims of trafficking (2020)²⁰. These guidelines are targeted to Territorial Commissions (Asylum Officials) as, in the most recent years, they have directed an increasing number of referrals to anti-trafficking professionals. The guidelines aim at improving the overall referral mechanism, by favouring and promoting the collaboration among relevant actors. However, the INSIGHT research showed that Territorial Commissions often expect anti-trafficking professionals can “certify” whether asylum applicants are true or bogus victims, while their role is provide protection and shelter. This highlights an evident misunderstanding of the respective roles, but also of the timing of identification and evaluation processes. Anti-trafficking practitioners undertake interviews with asylum seekers who are potential victims of trafficking but it often takes considerable time for people to report their experience, especially if they are traumatised or still exposed to danger. On their side, Territorial Commissions must take decisions with considerable time constraints and cannot always wait for long. 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 requires the collaboration of multiple actors, including anti-trafficking professionals based outside Italy. To the best of our knowledge, this hardly happens. Arguably, the increase of internal movements calls, more than ever, for improved collaboration among European countries to ensure early identification and transnational referral and protection accordingly. This cannot be achieved unless a transnational referral mechanism is activated, as stated also in the new EU Anti-trafficking Strategy 2021-2025. In fact, in absence of a such a mechanism, we could track only isolated cases of collaboration between the N.A.Ve professionals and anti-trafficking professionals in Italy and other EU countries.

It must be added that, while anti-trafficking projects, at least in Italy, can normally count on professionals with specialist knowledge and skills on identification, the same cannot be said for reception professionals, nor for other stakeholders that are involved in the fight against trafficking (i.e. law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judiciaries, etc.). Capacity to identify victims not only requires specific preparation, but also regular trainings to keep up with evolving trends. In the Italian context, lack of capacity is evident among law enforcement officers, for example - with exceptions in specific territories - and the impact on individuals’ identification is detrimental. With 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 people, particularly unaccompanied minors, are criminalised (which often derives from a failure to identify them as victim) and

[la-tratta-e-il-grave-sfruttamento-2016-2018.pdf](#) Access: 12.12.2020.

¹⁹ See also GRETA Report concerning the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Italy. Available: <https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-28-fgr-ita/168091f627>

Last access: 26.07.2021.

²⁰ Available: <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: 26.07.2021.

the capacity for the same people to claim their rights and be protected).

Length of social protection programmes and the challenges associated with the programmes and their completion

Social protection programmes should last for one a half year, as the normative framework states, but the INSigHT research highlighted that in numerous cases they have been extended beyond this timeframe, particularly following the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Extensions apply for beneficiaries who have not achieved a sufficient level of autonomy. As far as unaccompanied minors are involved, a specific provision was made by Law 47/2017 for the extension of their protection, involving the transfer from facilities dedicated to minors to facilities for adults. At wider European and international level²¹, it has been pointed out that the achievement of the majority age is characterised by changes and disruptions and still represents a critical moment in the lives of minors. With reference to Italy, while the extension of protection has been reported to be extremely positive, it is not easily authorised by the responsible institutions, Juvenile Courts.

While the extension of the protection programmes applies to specific cases only, it must not be underestimated that the final phase of protection programmes is generally challenging for all beneficiaries. They experience difficulties in accessing housing and a stable employment but also in regularisation (i.e. residence permit and renewal). Anti-trafficking professionals have been providing support to beneficiaries in these terms beyond programmes' completion.

Solutions have been also under scrutiny to address obstacles to inclusion (i.e. introduction of a "guarantee funds" for potential landlords to favour beneficiaries' access to decent housing).

Generally speaking, the actual challenges that survivors face upon entrance and during their permanence in the programmes (ie. access to adequate socio-sanitary services, such as sexually transmitted diseases tests and voluntary interruption of pregnancy, but also to regularisation procedures) and the increasing complexity of the profiles of some of them have pointed to the need for individualised programmes. For example, with reference to lone mothers, particular attention must be posed to motherhood needs, but also to family unit and partners' roles and to possible forms of domestic violence; with reference to unaccompanied minors, particular attention must be posed to guardianship and the many aspects relating to child protection. Not least, social protection programmes do not always take people's migratory project, their possible resources and their individual expectations into consideration, suggesting beneficiaries should be more involved in the definition of their own protection trajectories. Over time, the experience of N.A.Ve and the reflections shared by professionals have led to the development of diversified programmes, including the so-called "territorial projects". These are programmes for beneficiaries who have already an accommodation. Whereby they only need some specific support services, their entrance into a social protection programme may prove detrimental as it may frustrate their call for autonomy. Hence collaborations have been activated to articulate integrated interventions involving

²¹ 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.

the anti-trafficking and the asylum system, as well as specialist welfare services for women and children. In these cases, accommodation may be provided by reception facilities, while anti-trafficking professionals may provide support for regularisation, while also sharing specialist knowledge with reception workers (and social workers). This is particularly crucial as integrated interventions undertaken by multiple stakeholders carry the risk of resulting in fragmented and discontinuous assistance to beneficiaries, with negative impacts on their lives.

The Italian experience has shown that the interlinkage and overlap of the anti-trafficking and the asylum systems has become and is still a crucial issue. Dynamics of trafficking are ever changing and survivors may be entering an anti-trafficking or an asylum facility alike, depending on more or less effective early identification, and proceed with an asylum application accordingly. Cases were also reported, particularly for the period 2015-2016, whereby applications were encouraged by exploiters, as access to regularisation could paradoxically “keep away” law enforcement controls - thus facilitating “undisturbed” exploitation. As a result of this and of increased advocacy by practitioners on the right to asylum for survivors, the number of applications grew, to then decrease again, as professionals realised the dynamics at play and restricted access to the asylum procedure.

Upon transposition of the Qualification, Procedure, and Reception Directives, 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 24/2014 and of 142/2015, which set out the ambitious objective to overcome the fragmented approach to asylum seeker assistance, while improving the implementation of the national referral mechanism. The INSigHT research shows that,

to date, there is scarce coordination between the asylum and anti-trafficking systems, but also between these systems and municipal social services, that hold the primary responsibility for vulnerable individuals, such as lone mothers and children. Explanatory factors include the uncertain and hardly flexible funding of anti-trafficking and asylum seeker reception projects and their short timeframe, as well as the limited resources (i.e. severe funding cuts, shortage of specialist skills) of municipal social services. Additionally, engagement on the side of municipalities is strongly dependent on political orientation and the willingness of local councillors to dedicate attention to trafficking and exploitation.

Regularisation

Italy has been known for the right spelt in art. 18 of Legislative Decree 286/1998. This article gives people who are victims and potential victims of trafficking entitlement to a residence permit “for social protection”, not only whereby they collaborate with law enforcement agencies (*judicial procedure*), but also if they choose not to (*social procedure*). In practice, whereby an individual enters a social protection programme, the professionals who supervises the beneficiary can ask the relevant authorities to issue a residence permit. The judicial and the social procedures are not mutually excluding. There can be cases in which beneficiaries enter the social procedure to then proceed with the judicial one. The former remains the most significant and peculiar aspect of art. 18, as it takes into consideration, among other things, that people may not want to report for fear of retaliation and yet protection is crucial to them. It should be also underlined that the social procedure does not prevent the fight against trafficking, but can provide important grounds for investigation. This is because

public officials, upon issuance of art. 18 residence permits, have the duty to report to judicial authorities any elements pointing to forms of violence and/ or exploitation. Furthermore, receiving a residence permit and accessing a social protection programme can result in increasing trust on anti-trafficking professionals, on the side of beneficiaries, which, in turn, can become an incentive for their cooperation²². This further highlights the importance of putting people's need for protection first. Their protection should not only be the overarching priority of anti-trafficking projects, but it should be recognised as crucial to favour their (potential) collaboration in contrasting trafficking. At the same time, in line with the opinion expressed by some prosecutors we interviewed, investigations should be carried out as much as possible without the direct involvement of victims. When cooperating they 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 several following grounds. First, art. 18 residence

permits expire after six months, although they are renewable. They can be converted to a work or study permit, but conversion to the former is dependent on securing a regular employment contract, 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. Moreover, art. 18 has been interpreted in an increasingly restrictive way. Various stakeholders have testified that the relevant public authorities, throughout the Italian territory, rarely authorise the issuance of residence permits associated with the social procedure. In other words, the implementation of article 18 has been poor and more advocacy should be carried out to call for its implementation. Finally, socio-legal professionals testified that access to the asylum procedure is not always allowed to holders of an art. 18 residence permit, although the normative framework grants the right to access both the asylum and the art. 18 procedure. Resistance on the side of authorities has been reported and can be associated with the misguided perception of providing a double form of protection. Professionals have repeatedly challenged this interpretation of the law, but there is still much room for advocacy.

²² See for example the recent reflections of the 2021 OSCE Conference. Available: <https://www.osce.org/event/alliance20> Last access:

10.01.2021. See also Mancini D. (2008) *Traffico di migranti e tratta di persone. Tutela dei diritti umani e azioni di contrasto*. Franco Angeli: Milano.

Promising practices of the N.A.Ve Network

Box 1: Multi-agency work on labour exploitation

Following the introduction of Law 199/2016 against irregular employment and labour exploitation²³, the N.A.Ve outreach unit structured a dedicated system of interventions. Ad hoc workshops were organised at N.A.Ve premises and at various asylum seeker reception facilities to meet potential victims of labour exploitation, to explain how people can work regularly in Italy, what are the risks of exploitation and how help can be searched, hence with a scope of both prevention and protection. The activity of the outreach unit has also consisted in visits to employment sites, in collaboration with local labour inspectorates and law enforcement agencies, particularly in sectors that are most often associated with forms of exploitation (i.e. agriculture, construction industry, catering, massage centres). Access to employment sites has been important to establish a first contact with workers and arrange post-access interviews for a follow-up in a more adequate setting. On the 31st of December 2019, a Circular Letter was issued by the Ministry of Interior to encourage labour inspectorates' engagement in the fight against irregular employment and exploitation, particularly in cities and areas considered to be most at risk. A taskforce of 8 dedicated law enforcement officers was established: 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.

Box 2: "Psicologhe a bordo" (Psychologists on board)

A specific Working Group, "Psicologhe a bordo" (Psychologists on board), has been recently established by some N.A.Ve professionals, who work in different units of the social protection programme and share a background in psychology. Their main aim is to address the need for psychological support, for which, anti-trafficking projects have not received national funding so far, as part of their mission. 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 also started elaborating individual psychological files in view of preliminary screenings.

Box 3: The "Inside Out" Project for unaccompanied minor offenders and victims of crime

The Inside Out project was a pilot project targeting unaccompanied minors and young adults of immigrant origins, aged 15-21, who were offenders and victims of a crime, associated with exploitation by a criminal network. The project lasted for a year (Mar. 2019 - May 2020), was funded by the Department for 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 the project were the following: 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 target group. The protection of minors who were forced to commit a crime, in association with the condition of exploitation, is a theme still insufficiently dealt with. Yet, people who are victims of this type of trafficking can be victimized twice: first through enslavement; second, by the actual act of identification, as they often emerge as offenders liable for criminal activities carried out while being exploited.

²³ 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.

Recommendations for improved transnational cooperation to fight trafficking and protect survivors

1. To provide funding to support transnational and multi-disciplinary research and multiply the occasions for dissemination on the following topics: the new trends of human trafficking (i.e. internal and transnational movements associated with trafficking and the varied multiple forms of exploitation connected to it); follow-up activities with beneficiaries, to monitor their path to inclusion and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of social protection programmes versus individual factors of inclusion (i.e. profiles of beneficiaries); multi-sited transnational research on trafficking, by means of innovative and experimental methodologies;
2. To develop specific shared methodologies and outreach activities to monitor the various forms of trafficking and exploitation (i.e. indoor sexual exploitation and begging) and reach out to potential victims and victims of exploitation in the most effective of ways;
3. To develop a shared monitoring mechanism to verify the extent to which: art. 18 of Italian Legislative Decree 286/1998 is being implemented and residence permits for social protection are being granted, in other EU countries, to survivors who are not collaborating with law enforcement and judicial agencies; asylum seeker victims of trafficking have access to the asylum procedure;
4. To continue monitoring to what extent unaccompanied minor victims of trafficking are granted the continuation of protection, where necessary, upon achievement of the majority age; and are granted prompt guardianship by adequately trained guardians;
5. To continue developing transnational co-operation between EU countries and between EU and third-countries, as far as investigation and prosecutions are concerned (i.e. thorough initiatives such as the Migration Partnership Framework);
6. To promote the EU Civil Society Platform against Trafficking in Human Beings and participation to it to favour increased collaborations among EU member states, particularly on the following issues: the collaboration between the anti-trafficking and the asylum systems; the development of a transnational system of referral (as indicated also in the new EU Anti-trafficking Strategy);
7. To promote the development and sharing of good practices focusing on improving the involvement of beneficiaries, particularly women and children, in the design of programmes;
8. To ensure systematic capacity building for all anti-trafficking stakeholders (law enforcement, prosecutors and judges, social workers and professionals, cultural-linguistic mediators, etc.) on multi-agency collaboration;
9. To consider reviewing the new Migration Pact (Proposal) on the following issues: revision of the Dublin system (particularly as far as the rights of unaccompanied minors); increased investment in resettlement schemes; introduction of strengthened measures at border areas to ensure effective identification and risk assessment procedures that grant the full respect of human rights; introduction of measures to expand legal migration channels in order to address push factors and the vulnerability to trafficking.

This policy brief was prepared by Michela Sempredon, SSIIM Unesco Chair, University Iuav of Venice (Italy), as part of the INSigHT Action (Building capacity to deal with human trafficking and transit routes in Nigeria, Italy, Sweden) that aims at increasing the capacity of key local stakeholders in the Veneto region (Italy), Edo and Lagos states (Nigeria) and Sweden to tackle human trafficking and to deal with its evolving dynamics. The Action will focus on the trafficking of young Nigerian women while promoting knowledge-based policymaking in the respective countries and reinforcing transnational cooperation on the topic.

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Contacts:

Palazzo Tron, Santa Croce 197, Venezia

<http://www.unescochair-iuav.it/en/>

Website: insightproject.net

Email: insight-action@unescochair-iuav.it

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