

An aerial photograph of a historic European city, likely Gdansk, Poland, featuring a dense cluster of buildings with red-tiled roofs and a harbor area with a large blue and white ferry boat. The image is split diagonally, with the top right portion showing a sunset sky over the city.

The impact of migrants and asylum seekers on the homeless sector in Italy

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Italy, a gateway to Europe: latest trends on migrants and asylum seekers arrivals

In 2016 Italy has registered a new record:

over 181.000 migrants and asylum seekers arrived on the Italian coasts, 18% more than in 2015.

This has seriously put to test the Italian Authorities and reception system, as the impact of the arrivals, together with the implementation of the hotspot approach has been considerable

What is the consequence of the hotspot approach on the reception options?

According to this approach, those who are identified as economic migrants are notified with an expulsion order, those who are identified as asylum seekers are channelled to regional hubs / reception centers.

As the available places in the Italian Asylum Reception System (SPRAR) are 23.000, new extraordinary emergency accommodation centers (CAS) have been set up

These places, are supposed to be for “*emergency and temporary accommodation*”, very often become the only accommodation possibility for the asylum seekers.

Reports made by MEDU denounced that these places are often overcrowded, and that the precarious living conditions present in many of these centers make people more vulnerable to homelessness



What is the impact of migrants and asylum seekers on the homeless sector?

In order to study the impact of migration flows on the homeless sector, Fiopsd has promoted a Feantsa study in different regions/cities of Italy.

The findings of the research have highlighted that the homelessness of migrants assumes different forms according to the territories in which they find themselves

In Southern Italy....

Asylum seekers together with the irregular migrants end up in the hands of gangmasters, who use their vulnerability to exploit them in the agricultural sector.

Recent reports show that 49.5% of agricultural workers are third country nationals without a regular residence permit, and that the majority of them live shantytowns ,or abandoned buildings in a condition of extreme housing exclusion.

Their condition is worsened by:

- the weak legal position that workers are put into;

- the lack of awareness that migrants have of their rights;

- the weakness of national and EU directives on issuing compensatory residence permits for the ones that report abuses.



The exploitation of migrants comes from a system of production that is present in Italy as in the other countries of Southern Europe, and that relies on the manpower of migrants who are easily exploitable because of their irregular status



What happens to the others ?

In Southern Italy, as well as in the rest of Italy, irregular migrants or asylum seekers who cannot access assistance find a place to stay in makeshift homes

This arrangement starts out as temporary but often becomes permanent, creating a serious form of housing exclusion



In one recent MSF report, over 35 big shantytowns have been mapped , 26 of which have been the object of MSF analysis

As shown by the report, the phenomenon of informal settlements is widespread and growing



These informal settlements and shantytowns are present:

-near the reception centers,

-in rural areas,

-in the abandoned reception shelters(Turin,Bari,Padoa)

-in the big Towns (Rome, Milan)



Who remains stuck in these places?

MSF survey counted over 10,000 people:

- irregular migrants,
- migrants whose access to asylum procedures is blocked on the spot through the 'hotspot' approach,
- migrants who have voluntarily removed themselves from the reception system;
- asylum seekers who succeeded in their asylum claim but haven't reached a good level of inclusion during the procedure

What about homelessness in the big cities?

The homelessness of newcomers asylum seekers/migrants assumes relevant forms in the months in which arrivals reach the peak,

While



The homelessness of asylum seekers that end up to be undocumented, seems to have a long -term character

The data collected in the city of Milan by Arca shows that almost 50% of the people welcomed in the emergency shelters opened in the winter months of 2016/2017 were destitute migrants, who ended up to be undocumented at the end of the asylum claim process

Fiopsd research highlighted that there are three vulnerable targets that are increasing :

- unaccompanied minors
- Women/women with children
- Vulnerable migrants (asylum seekers with medical psychiatric diseases)

These targets need:

- a different type of accommodation;
- specific medical and psychological care services;
- qualified legal advice

In Sicily, as well as in Lombardy, many of these services have been provided by actors working in the homeless sector

At a national level, the research findings have underlined the need to:

- adopt a long-term approach in the development of the reception and inclusion policies ;
- develop differentiated actions rather than emergency interventions;
- have a specific care in terms of accommodation and services to provide, in particular for what concerns vulnerable targets

Last but not least.....

It is urgent that the relocation system starts to work in synch with the arrivals flows, as only this can :

- reduce the pressure of the asylum claims on the arrival countries and the impact they have on the national accommodation system ;
- improve asylum seekers inclusion possibilities in the arrivals countries;
- lead to the development of common strategies for migrants and asylum seekers inclusion in the EU