

INTEGRATED SOCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEES: GOVERNANCE DYNAMICS IN TUSCANY'S RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION SYSTEM PROJECTS

ATENCIÓN SOCIAL INTEGRADA PARA PERSONAS REFUGIADAS: DINÁMICAS DE GOBERNANZA EN LOS PROYECTOS DEL SISTEMA DE ACOGIDA E INTEGRACIÓN EN TOSCANA

Costanza Gasparo¹

Università di Firenze (Italy)

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8382-340X>

Stella Milani

Università di Firenze (Italy)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5265-8782>

Correspondence:

¹costanza.gasparo@unifi.it

Funding:

This publication has been prepared within the framework of the European Project "Global-ANSWER: Global social work and human mobility: comparative studies on local government and good social work practices in the euro-mediterranean region (2020-2025)" and reflects only the authors' opinion. This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 872209. The Agency and the European Commission are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
24-03-2025	14-08-2025	25-09-2025	28-10-2025

Abstract

Introduction. Overcoming methodological nationalism is essential to understanding how social assistance policies for refugees and asylum seekers operate within the Italian context. Persistent delays by the national government in the implementation of reception and integration policies have long been offset by the efforts of local authorities and civil society organisations. As a result, significant territorial disparities have emerged, becoming a structural feature of the Italian context. Given these disparities and the central role played by local actors, Italy represents a particularly relevant case for examining how localised social work practices with refugees address these ongoing challenges. Social workers can play a pivotal role as mediators among diverse stakeholders—including institutional actors, migrant families, and local communities—fostering mutual engagement and promoting integrated models of intervention.

Methods. Drawing on a multilevel governance perspective, this article explores the provision of social assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in Italy, with particular attention to the challenges and good practices emerging from the heterogeneity of reception projects and territorial welfare systems. The analysis combines secondary sources—such as institutional documents, project reports, and existing literature—with primary data. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with coordinators of SAI (Reception and Integration System) projects in Tuscany to gain deeper insights into stakeholders' perspectives and the operational dynamics of the reception system. The article is based on research carried out within the *Global-ANSWER* project and focuses on the Tuscan model of reception, characterised by small- and medium-sized facilities and an integrated governance approach. This model offers a valuable case for analysing how social assistance is organised and implemented at the local level. **Results.** The analysis of qualitative data gathered through interviews with SAI project representatives identifies three distinct governance models of social assistance, each reflecting varying degrees of institutional coordination, resource integration, and modes of social workers involvement. The findings point to notable differences in how services are structured across territories, while confirming the key role of social workers in linking reception interventions with local welfare systems. **Discussion and conclusions.** Persistent resource constraints, service fragmentation, and the delegation of welfare responsibilities to third-sector organisations emerge as key obstacles to effective and sustainable interventions. By examining an example of good practice developed in Tuscany to strengthen coordination among social workers, public institutions, and third-sector actors, the article underscores the importance of investigating localised social work practices with refugees to better understand both the systemic barriers and the innovative strategies shaping social work with displaced populations. Future research should further examine how local governance configurations influence these practices, identifying the conditions that support or hinder inclusive and effective interventions.

Keywords: Multi-level governance; Social worker; Integrated governance model; Refugee reception; Tuscany; Social assistance.

Resumen

Introducción. Superar el nacionalismo metodológico es esencial para comprender cómo operan las políticas de atención social dirigidas a personas refugiadas y solicitantes de asilo en el contexto italiano. Los retrasos persistentes por parte del gobierno nacional en la implementación de políticas de acogida e integración han sido compensados durante mucho tiempo por autoridades locales y organizaciones de la sociedad civil. Esto ha dado lugar a importantes disparidades territoriales que se han convertido en un rasgo estructural en Italia. Dada esta situación y el papel central de los agentes locales, este país constituye un caso especialmente relevante para analizar cómo las prácticas localizadas de trabajo social con personas refugiadas abordan estos desafíos. El personal de trabajo social desempeña un papel clave en la mediación entre instituciones públicas, familias migrantes y comunidades locales, favoreciendo la colaboración y promoviendo modelos de intervención integrados. **Métodos.** Desde una perspectiva de gobernanza multinivel, este artículo explora la prestación de atención social a personas refugiadas y solicitantes de asilo en Italia, con especial atención a los desafíos y a las buenas prácticas derivadas de la heterogeneidad de los proyectos de acogida y de los sistemas territoriales de bienestar. El análisis combina fuentes secundarias —como documentos institucionales, informes de proyectos y literatura existente— con datos primarios. Para profundizar en las perspectivas de los agentes implicados y en la dinámica operativa del sistema de acogida, se realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas en profundidad con personal de coordinación de proyectos del Sistema de Acogida e Integración (SAI) en la región de Toscana. El artículo se basa en una investigación llevada a cabo en el marco del Proyecto Europeo *Global-ANSWER* y se centra en el modelo toscano de acogida, caracterizado por dispositivos de pequeña y mediana escala y un enfoque de gobernanza integrada. Este modelo representa un caso valioso para analizar cómo se organiza e implementa la atención social a nivel local. **Resultados.** El análisis de los datos cualitativos permite identificar tres modelos de gobernanza de la atención social, que reflejan distintos niveles de coordinación institucional, integración de recursos y modalidades de implicación del personal de trabajo social. Los resultados muestran diferencias relevantes en la estructuración de los servicios a nivel territorial y confirman el papel esencial del trabajo social en la conexión entre las intervenciones de acogida y los sistemas locales de bienestar. **Discusión y conclusiones.** La escasez de recursos, la fragmentación de los servicios y la externalización hacia el tercer sector constituyen obstáculos importantes para la eficacia de las intervenciones. A través del análisis de una buena práctica en Toscana orientada a mejorar la coordinación entre el personal de trabajo social, instituciones públicas y organizaciones del tercer sector, el artículo destaca la relevancia de estudiar las prácticas locales para comprender mejor las barreras estructurales y las estrategias innovadoras en el trabajo social con poblaciones desplazadas. Futuras investigaciones deberían examinar cómo las configuraciones locales de gobernanza condicionan estas prácticas, así como las condiciones que favorecen enfoques más inclusivos y eficaces.

Palabras clave: Gobernanza multinivel; Trabajador social; Modelo de gobernanza integrado; Acogida de refugiados; Toscana; Atención social.

1. Introduction

Social work with refugees and asylum seekers has become an increasingly central focus in academic research, particularly in Europe, following the so-called “refugee crisis” (Boccagni & Righard, 2020). This growing interest reflects the broader sociopolitical transformations that have reshaped migration governance across Europe and, with it, the practices of social work with displaced persons. Numerous studies have examined the evolving challenges faced by social workers as they address forms of human mobility that are increasingly restricted by policies and political resistance in the Global North. To fulfil its mission of promoting social justice (Marsh, 2005), social work requires a critical and reflexive approach to prevailing normative frameworks of integration and to stigmatising and racialised depictions of migrants perpetuated by xenophobic discourse (Fazzi, 2013; Gustafsson et al., 2023). Research has shown that, in political contexts marked by exclusionary and conditional reception systems, social workers frequently encounter frustration, ethical conflicts, and a sense of professional disempowerment (Guhan & Liebling-Kalifani, 2011; Masocha, 2014). Nevertheless, their everyday practices offer potential avenues for advocacy, resistance, and the promotion of bottom-up policies (Finno-Velasquez & Dettlaff, 2018; Giacomelli, 2021). However, a critical gap persists in understanding how these macro-level challenges translate into localised social work interventions, particularly in contexts marked by territorial heterogeneity.

Italy's distinctive governance structures and the delayed engagement of the national government in immigrant policies provide a particularly relevant context for analysing how localised social work practices respond to the aforementioned challenges. Although Italy — like other Southern European countries — is often described as a relatively recent country of immigration, policy recognition of the transition from a country of emigration to one of immigration lagged well behind the reversal of the net migration balance. National integration policy instruments were introduced comparatively late, while municipalities, Regions and third-sector actors developed solidaristic reception and integration practices in the prolonged absence of clear national provisions defining the social rights of foreign residents (Ambrosini, 2006). These features, shared with other Southern European cases, support the notion of a Mediterranean migration pattern (Boffo, 2002).

Social workers can play a crucial role as mediators among diverse stakeholders—including institutional actors, migrant families, and local communities—facilitating mutual

engagement and advancing integrated intervention models (Pattaro & Nigris, 2018; Reich & Di Rosa, 2021). In Italy, this mediating function is heightened by a distinctive welfare-and-reception architecture, where heterogeneous local governance and uneven opportunity structures (e.g., funding availability, third-sector capacity, municipal participation in reception projects) produce a highly differentiated landscape of social assistance. This complexity requires social workers to navigate institutional ambiguities, adjusting their practices to align with the local configurations of welfare services and migrant reception systems. The realisation of the potential inherent in social work is, therefore, contingent upon the constraints of territorial opportunity structures and the characteristics of the actor networks engaged in social intervention. Understanding these dynamics is central to the present study, which seeks to uncover how such contextual factors shape social workers' capacity for effective intervention with displaced persons. Adopting a multilevel governance perspective is crucial for understanding not only the complexity of migration policies and their implementation in general (Garcés-Mascreñas & Penninx, 2016; Scholten & van Ostaïen, 2018) but also, specifically, the implementation of social assistance for refugees and asylum seekers. This perspective enables an analysis that bridges macro-level policy frameworks with micro-level social work practices, potentially revealing the varying degrees of scope for action available to social workers.

Overcoming methodological nationalism in the study of social work with displaced populations (Cox & Geisen, 2014) is particularly useful in analysing social assistance policies for refugees and asylum seekers in Italy. The country stands out within the European context for its unique migratory dynamics and for the comparatively late policy engagement at national level in immigration policies (Ambrosini, 2006). In this vacuum, local social actors and civil society initiatives have shaped migrant reception and integration practices, resulting in significant territorial variations, often described as a "localism of rights" (Zincone, 1994). Likewise, the national social services system is characterised by significant heterogeneity and distinctiveness in local social assistance development (Kazepov, 2010). The growing outsourcing of social work within social assistance and migrant reception has also added another layer of differentiation by distinguishing between governmental and non-governmental approaches to the provision of social interventions (Thomas, 2004).

This article builds upon research conducted as part of the *Global-ANSWER* project (*Global social work and human mobility: comparative studies on local government and*

good social work practices in the Euro-Mediterranean region). In particular, it draws on the study carried out by the Local Research Unit at the University of Florence (*Case Study 8–Regional Reception Systems for Migrants in Tuscany*), focusing on Tuscany's Sistema di Accoglienza e Integrazione (SAI–Reception and Integration System) projects. The proposed analysis seeks to identify challenges and best practices in the delivery of social assistance to refugees and asylum seekers, taking into account the local heterogeneity of reception projects and the territorial variability in how social assistance is configured.

The article is organised as follows. The following pages provide an overview of Italy's Reception and Integration System (SAI)—its structure, operating approach, and distinctive features—together with an outline of the roles and responsibilities of social workers within SAI projects. The research design and methods are then set out. The subsequent section presents findings from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with SAI project representatives, identifying three local governance models of social assistance and delineating the associated strengths and challenges for social work with displaced persons. This section also examines a local initiative which, in line with the *Global-ANSWER* project's definition of “good practice”, addresses the identified challenges while supporting a more integrated system of social services for asylum seekers and refugees. The discussion interprets these results in light of the Tuscan regional context and the measures adopted to harmonise reception practices. The article concludes with the main implications and directions for future research.

This section examines the system initially established as the Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (SPRAR), which was officially renamed in 2020 as the Reception and Integration System (SAI). It is essential to emphasise that this system represents only one component of the broader Italian reception framework. In response to the surge in asylum-seeker arrivals during the so-called ‘refugee crisis,’ the government introduced Extraordinary Reception Centres (CAS) to supplement the ordinary system. Although originally intended to provide temporary accommodation for asylum seekers and refugees while awaiting places within the regular system, these centres have ended up representing the most developed component of the entire reception system. For further details, see (Acocella, 2024, Campesi, 2018). The Italian reception system for refugees and asylum seekers, although continuously redefined and adjusted over the past decade, originated in the early 2000s, clearly demonstrating structural and organisational affinities with the Integrated Social Services System

introduced shortly before by Law No. 328/2000 (*Legge 8 novembre 2000, n. 328*) — *Framework Law for the Implementation of the Integrated System of Interventions and Social Services*—. In continuity with pre-2000 territorial arrangements in social assistance (Ascoli & Ranci, 2002; Kazepov, 2010), Law No. 328/2000 codified a decentralised governance model that the 2001 reform of Title V of the Constitution (Constitutional Law No. 3/2001 [*Legge Costituzionale 18 ottobre 2001, n. 3*]) subsequently entrenched—assigning exclusive legislative competence for social assistance to the Regions, while State responsibility for the governance of migratory flows and asylum procedures remained as provided by the Consolidated Immigration Act (Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 [*Decreto legislativo 25 luglio 1998, n.286*]) and subsequent national/EU legislation. Taken together, these reforms established a comprehensive, decentralised approach to social service delivery that informed the reception system's structure and operating logic¹. At the core of the Italian reception system lies the concept of “integrated reception”, which combines the provision of basic material services—such as food and accommodation—with measures aimed at fostering the acquisition of tools necessary for restoring autonomy (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior, 2018). This is grounded in a holistic approach designed to comprehensively address the needs of individuals by identifying and enhancing their personal resources (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior, 2018). Within this personalised project framework, beneficiaries of territorial projects can access services including social assistance, language instruction, work orientation, housing support, legal assistance, and psychological support. The system also includes designated projects such as “DM-DS”, which cater to individuals experiencing psychological or socio-medical distress, as well as projects for unaccompanied foreign minors and “Ordinary” projects targeting single adults and families.

Following the reform of Title V of the Constitution, the National Fund for Migration Policies, established by Legislative Decree No. 40/1998 (*Decreto legislativo 6 marzo 1998*), was merged into the National Fund for Social Policies without earmarking, thereby increasing regional discretion to allocate resources for immigrant integration within broader territorial welfare plans (Ambrosini, 2006). At the same time, a “conflictual decentralisation” emerged in immigration policy, marked by recurrent tensions between central government and the regions over the scope of foreign citizens' social and political rights (Barberis, 2009). Situated at the intersection of State competences in immigration and regional/municipal competences in welfare, the establishment of the Italian

Reception and Integration System (SAI) reaffirms two key characteristics that define Italy's social policy framework. First, its localised nature: territorial projects are initiated by local authorities on a voluntary basis, following participation in an annual call for proposals issued by the Ministry of the Interior through the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services. Consequently, the distribution of projects across the country is inherently uneven and often contingent on the political will of local governments to join the national network. Second, with over 90% of projects managed by third-sector organisations (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior, 2023), the system exemplifies a broader trend towards outsourcing, a phenomenon already observed in territorial social services. Given the historically variable role of third-sector organisations across Italy, this outsourcing further contributes to the territorial heterogeneity of reception projects, depending on the resources and competences mobilised by local networks of actors involved in service provision (Barberis & Boccagni, 2014). One persistent feature of this policy domain is its structural precariousness, stemming from annual project-based funding, which—as the following section will demonstrate—has significant implications for the working conditions of social workers.

Maintaining the initial approach developed in the early 2000s and in line with its holistic framework and ambition to design personalised inclusion pathways, the Italian SAI system employs a diverse, highly qualified workforce. Over time, the system has expanded job opportunities for young graduates, particularly within the SAI network, which has seen steady growth in its personnel. In 2022, 23,999 professionals were employed, reflecting a 14,4% increase from 2021 (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior, 2023). Surveys indicate that over 76% of staff hold university degrees, with the most common areas of study being social work (18,6%), educational sciences (17,6%), and psychology (13%) (Accorinti & Giovannetti, 2023).

The operational framework of SAI projects highlights the significance of interdisciplinary collaboration, continuous professional training, and structured supervision mechanisms. The *Operational Manual for the activation and management of integrated reception services* mandates the inclusion of key professionals in each project, including social workers, professional educators, psychologists, and legal experts (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior, 2018). Monitoring data from 2022 indicate that multidisciplinary teams convene weekly in 58% of projects, while more than 96% of personnel participated in training sessions covering topics such as psychosocial support, legal assistance, and project management. Psychological supervision remains a key

component, with collective sessions held monthly in 75% of projects and individual sessions provided as required (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior, 2023).

Within this framework, the social worker occupies a pivotal role in the SAI system's multidisciplinary teams. The SAI Operational Manual emphasises this role, defining social workers as "essential for the definition and implementation of the reception intervention" (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior, 2018, p. 11). The manual further specifies that "through their professional expertise, social workers enable beneficiaries to articulate and communicate their needs" (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior, 2018, p. 11). Additionally, social workers "facilitate engagement with local services by drawing on their knowledge of relevant regulations, as well as the available opportunities and procedures for beneficiaries to access them" thereby positioning themselves as key mediators between SAI initiatives and the broader territorial welfare system (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior, 2018, p. 12). This role reinforces the centrality of social workers in creating integrated social service networks (Campanini & Fortunato, 2008). As a result, social workers act as vital links within the broader network of stakeholders, ensuring that beneficiaries' social rights are recognised and upheld (Pattaro & Nigris, 2018).

Collaboration with local social services is particularly critical in instances where SAI projects are required to address the needs of individuals with specific vulnerabilities (ANCI-Ministry of the Interior, 2018). This involvement is especially relevant when beneficiaries, whether individuals or families, have officially recognised vulnerabilities². At the same time, to ensure specialised and tailored support, the multidisciplinary team is responsible for identifying any vulnerabilities that have not yet been formally certified. Furthermore, early cooperation with local services plays a key role in assisting single women and families, whose pathways to social integration and autonomy often involve additional challenges.

The regulations governing SAI projects provide two main pathways for integrating social workers and other professionals into the multidisciplinary team. Social workers may either be directly employed within the project via project funds or work within local social services, engaging in structured and ongoing collaboration. In theory, hiring social workers through SAI project funding can be seen as a means to prevent reception centres from placing additional strain on local social services. This is a significant concern, particularly in areas where these services are chronically overstretched. Given that participation in the SAI network is voluntary, the risk of further burdening social services may discourage local institutions from initiating territorial reception projects.

However, this arrangement risks creating parallel systems, with reception centres and local services operating separate and often poorly integrated lines of intervention (Barberis & Boccagni, 2014). These two pathways also correspond to different categories of professionals: those employed in the public sector and those employed by third-sector organisations. Although they share similar responsibilities, their professional conditions may vary significantly. While permanent contracts are the predominant form of employment for staff in SAI projects, job stability for employees of third-sector organisations largely depends on the project's renewal or continuation within the same organisation. In the absence of such continuity, these workers risk having their hours reduced or losing their jobs altogether (Accorinti & Giovannetti, 2023).

2. Methods

This study, conducted within the framework of the Horizon 2020 project "Global social work and human mobility: comparative studies on local government and good social work practices in the Euro-Mediterranean region" investigates the complex dynamics of refugee integration within the Italian context, specifically focusing on the role of social workers in Tuscany's SAI projects. This broader Horizon project aims to examine the multifaceted challenges of human mobility in the Euro-Mediterranean area and to identify and share effective social work practices that promote successful integration. By focusing on Tuscany, the study conducted by the Local Research Unit of the University of Florence (*Case Study 8—Regional Reception Systems for Migrants in Tuscany*) has contributed to a deeper understanding of how local governance structures and the specific characteristics of the Italian welfare system influence the implementation of integration policies and the everyday work of social workers. The research has concentrated on SAI projects designed for single adults and families.

Employing a multiple-methodological approach, the study first undertook a comprehensive secondary analysis of diverse sources. Official policy documents (such as national migration strategies and regional action plans) were used primarily to provide a normative framework and to situate the institutional context of refugee reception in Tuscany. Media reports from local, national, and international outlets were examined to capture the dominant narratives and discursive framings around refugee inclusion, while the websites of relevant stakeholders (including local authorities, NGOs, and advocacy

groups) were consulted to identify the main actors involved in the SAI system and to understand their roles.

This initial phase of secondary research has allowed for a broad understanding of the SAI landscape in Tuscany, identifying key actors, prevalent narratives, and existing gaps in service provision.

Building on this foundation, the study has then proceeded with the selection of six SAI projects for in-depth, qualitative analysis. These projects have been strategically chosen to represent a diversity of contexts within Tuscany, considering factors such as geographic location, the type of local authority formally responsible (ranging from small municipalities to the metropolitan administration of Florence, as well as inter-municipal unions and *Società della Salute* — mixed consortia between local authorities and local health agencies), the involvement of third-sector organisations acting as managing bodies (mainly cooperatives and associations), and the specific needs of the immigrants supported. This purposeful sampling strategy has aimed to capture the variability of SAI implementation across the region. The primary analysis has been based on in-depth interviews with the coordinators of the six selected projects. Before each interview, an informed consent form was provided for reading and signing. This form covered awareness of the research content, interview recording, data protection, and privacy compliance, following the template formulated in accordance with the ethical requirements of the *Global-ANSWER* project³.

A key aspect of the analysis has been the focus on social support activities and the crucial role that the social worker has played as a mediator between SAI interventions and local welfare services. Through this perspective, concrete cases have been identified that have highlighted the strategic role of the social worker as a bridge between SAI programs and territorial welfare resources. Finally, drawing from the definition of “good practice” developed within the *Global-ANSWER* project, the analysis has identified a Tuscan best practice showcasing the successful operation of a well-functioning reception system.

A key strength of the SAI (Reception and Integration System) lies in its geographically dispersed reception strategy. The widespread reception approach favours small and medium-sized structures, based on the belief that this model promotes social inclusion more effectively than large, centralised structures. The preference for widespread accommodation stems from various factors, such as the creation of a less

institutional and more welcoming environment, which facilitates the transition for newcomers and promotes interaction with the host community. Over time, this has generated a management of hospitality that has built social networks engaged both in the material assistance of foreigners and, more complexly, in their socio-cultural inclusion (Amato & Matarazzo, 2021). The main actors of the Tuscan reception system, in addition to the Region and the Prefectures - Territorial Offices of the Government (UTG), are local authorities (municipalities, single or associated, provinces), health authorities and hospitals, Health Societies⁴, and the third sector/social private sector. Coordination and information sharing are guaranteed both vertically (between Region and Prefecture, in collaboration with the territories), and horizontally (between Prefectures, local authorities and the Third Sector) (Acocella et al., 2021).

A reception system based on shared and widespread responsibility can only be successful if the territorial distribution of hosted migrants is balanced between the various regions. This implies the redesign of the reception model, identifying the optimal territorial areas to design and manage integrated reception services, in line with territorial planning. A supra-municipal territorial level, particularly in small and medium-sized municipalities, is fundamental to assess the resources available and guarantee efficient responses, based on collaboration between local communities.

At the centre of this model is the inclusion of migrants in local communities, recognizing them as an integral part of a wider social fabric. To achieve this objective, it is essential that the territory is the focus of the governance system, based on solidarity and social cohesion. This implies support for projects based on territorial collaboration, which exploit the historical networks of local actors, together with local government bodies, voluntary associations, the third sector, universities and schools.

In this context, multi-professional teams play a crucial role in the reception and integration of migrants. These teams represent an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to the management of services, bringing together various professionals to address the complex needs of beneficiaries, guaranteeing a holistic response and promoting effective integration within the local community.

This model is also based on interactions with host communities, aimed at integrating migrants into the labour market, often with useful qualifications or skills, bringing benefits to local economies, such as trade, the real estate market and community services (Cresta & Greco, 2018). By distributing the responsibility of hosting

newcomers, the burden is shared equally, reducing pressure on a single community (Cresta & Greco, 2018). As noted by Dematteis et al. (2019), this can resemble “family” support, providing a sense of belonging that is crucial for migrants navigating a new and unfamiliar context.

In Tuscany, this approach is rooted in Regional Law 29/2009 (*Legge regionale 9 giugno 2009, n. 29*) —*Norme per l'accoglienza, l'integrazione partecipe e la tutela dei cittadini stranieri nella Regione Toscana* (Rules for the reception, participatory integration and protection of foreign citizens in the region), in particular in article 6 which defines the support tools at the territorial level. This law has represented a model of reference for other Italian regions, despite the differences in the number and characteristics of migrants (Berti et al., 2017). The law reflects the commitment to building inclusive communities in which newcomers can fully participate in social, economic and cultural life, also thanks to the active participation of various stakeholders in the development of programs and actions. This commitment was evident during the North African migration crisis of 2011 (Bracci, 2013). When the central government proposed to establish a large tent city in Coltano (Pisa) to host about 500 people, Tuscany firmly opposed it, instead supporting a model of “widespread reception” with smaller structures scattered throughout the territory. This choice arose from the conviction that large, centralized centres would lead to social isolation, while the widespread model would favour interaction and mutual understanding, creating a fairer and more sustainable reception system.

It is important to remember that the Region has adopted various tools, such as a coordination plan to unite the efforts of local governments and the third sector, and a monitoring system entrusted to the Regional Social Observatory, established by Regional Law 41/2005 (*Legge regionale 24 febbraio 2005, n. 41*) —*Sistema integrato di interventi e servizi per la tutela dei diritti di cittadinanza sociale* (Integrated system of interventions and services for the protection of social citizenship rights). The regulations reflect the principles underlying regional policies in favour of migrants, such as the creation of an integrated service for social citizenship and specific provisions for immigrants and people vulnerable to social exclusion, as provided for in articles 56 and 58 of the same law (Gasparo & Milani, 2024).

The structure of law 29/2009 was formalized in the *Libro Bianco sulle politiche di accoglienza di richiedenti asilo politico e protezione internazionale* (White Paper on Reception Policies for Asylum Seekers and International or Humanitarian Protection

Holders) (Regione Toscana & Anci Toscana, 2017), where the important role of an integrated and supportive governance model was underlined, fundamental to guarantee effective, sustainable and non-emergency system responses. The objective is to provide concrete and sustainable responses, based on shared responsibility between public and private actors, in a context of horizontal subsidiarity (Acocella & Bulli, 2024).

3. Results

One initial finding is the situation where the social worker is employed with project funds by a third-sector organisation. As previously highlighted, employing new social workers through SAI project funds could provide an opportunity for reception centres to strengthen local services. However, collaboration with local territorial social services appears limited and often translates into a delegation of responsibility from the public service to the third sector. This scenario, while guaranteeing immediate support to refugees within the SAI project, risks creating a form of “parallel” assistance that is not integrated with territorial services (Milani, 2024).

This dynamic, also highlighted by interviews, reveals a weakness in the system. The fact that the social worker is employed through SAI project funding, while being an advantage in terms of the immediacy of intervention, can paradoxically hinder integration with the network of public social services.

“We decided to have a project social worker, so the project recruited one. But we discovered that this caused a problem because the local social services we asked for help told us, ‘But you already have a social worker; why should we take care of it?’” [Int. n°5]

This interview excerpt underscores how local territorial social services tend to delegate their responsibilities to SAI staff. This creates a duplication of services and a fragmentation of interventions, with the risk of compromising the overall care of the person and generating “compartmentalized” assistance (Boccagni, 2017). Furthermore, as emerges from another interview, the social worker hired on a project basis, despite being a valuable figure, cannot perform some fundamental functions such as processes through the local welfare system.

“Not being a social worker of the territory, they cannot perform some functions that are fundamental, such as if an allowance needs to be requested for people,

if a contribution needs to be requested and given, certain processes need to be carried out, well, they still cannot do it. So, they have to act as a bridge between the project and the social service. This has created some friction.” [Int. n° 5]

The “bridge” role played by the social worker, while essential, cannot replace full collaboration between the various institutions.

A completely different situation occurs when social workers are involved in SAI as employees of the local social service, with which systematic and continuous collaboration is planned. In this scenario, the social worker, inserted in a top-down model, assumes a central role. Their figure, in fact, is fundamental to guarantee the integration of beneficiaries within local social services, coordinating the reception activities and collaborating with other entities in the territory to ensure a complete intervention aimed at the well-being of the people welcomed. This model, characterized by an approach in which decisions and strategies are defined at the central level (in this case, by the local authority) and then implemented at the territorial level, values the experience and competence of the social worker for the integration of SAI in the management of social services:

“The social worker responsible for immigration has always been a key member of the SAI team. In our case, they either coordinate or supervise the project, given that the SAI reception system is integrated within the social services system.” [Int. n° 2]

The local authority, while favouring collaboration with the third sector, maintains control and direction of the entire reception process. Although third sector organizations may be involved in operational management, it is the local authority that sets the guidelines.

From the interviews, a final case emerged where the social worker plays a crucial role, despite not being an employee of the local authority responsible for the SAI project. This involves a bottom-up integration model, where the initiative and decisions start from the bottom, from the community and individuals. In this context, the experience and competence of the social worker are fundamental, but it is above all their way of working that makes the difference. Their attention to the community, the dedication in following individual cases, the humanity in understanding the difficulties of immigrants, and the holistic approach that considers the person in their entirety, are all characteristics that clearly emerge from the interviews. The social worker does not limit themselves to

carrying out bureaucratic tasks but takes charge of people, establishing relationships of trust and offering personalized support. Their ability to collaborate with various professional figures and coordinate services is essential to guarantee effective integration.

“She [the social worker] manages everything, and it is not easy because, in addition to our cases, she has her own. I believe a lot comes from the collaboration we have, the human relationship we’ve built, and, in a sense, the friendship. Aside from her professionalism, the relationships we’ve built make her a cornerstone of the team.” [Int. n° 3]

However, this model, while valuing local resources, has a significant weakness: its effectiveness strongly depends on the will and capabilities of the individual professional. Like a chain that can break at its weakest link, a bottom-up model risks failure if not supported by competent and motivated professionals.

In the context of reception and integration projects, good practices can help ensure an effective, respectful, and humane process, based on principles of equity, inclusion, valuing diversity, and respect for human rights. As highlighted by the *Guide on conceptual and methodological issues in social work research in the field of human mobility* (Di Rosa et al., 2023) developed within the *Global-ANSWER* project, good practice refers to a local governance and social work practice that proves effective in working with migrants in vulnerable situations. A “good” practice in migrant reception must include four key components: coherence (relevance and alignment with human rights principles), awareness (incorporating global and local competencies), reflexivity (openness to cultural diversity and critical reflection), and sustainability (long-term impact with stable funding and evaluation). Additionally, it must ensure the active participation of beneficiaries and adopt a gender and intersectional perspective.

During the analysis, it was found that especially in contexts where the social worker is employed by a third-sector organization, there is a risk of creating an obstacle to migrants’ access to local social services. In this regard, it seems useful to illustrate a good practice that seeks to foster greater integration between social work interventions carried out in reception projects and those implemented in local services. This is the good practice of the “Integrated Governance Model Between Territorial Social Services and the Reception System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees.” The Mugello SAI Integrated Social Services Model seeks to address these challenges by integrating social

workers into multidisciplinary teams and creating a network with key institutional actors like ACOT (Agenzia di Continuità Ospedale Territorio)⁵, SEUS (Sistema di Emergenza Urgenza Sociale)⁶, and Codice Rosa⁷. Even in other legislative or organisational frameworks, the core practice that can be replicated is the institutionalized collaboration between reception projects and mainstream welfare services, rather than leaving them as parallel systems.

The goal, as outlined in the *Delibera 29/2023 - Approvazione del modello di integrazione del servizio sociale integrato Mugello SAI (Resolution 29/2023 - Approval of the integration model for the Mugello SAI integrated social service of the Mugello Health Authority)* approved by Mugello Health Authority (Società della Salute del Mugello, 2023), is to develop an organisational response that integrates social services with migrant reception pathways, focusing on medium to long-term care. The model aims to leverage past experiences to establish stable structures that support social workers, enhance community integration, and define service access methods. Key objectives include ensuring continuity for individuals transitioning out of the SAI project, minimizing emergency interventions, and optimizing resources for home-based support, job guidance, and housing.

The plan outlines specific roles within the Integrated Social Service structure, such as the Social Coordinator and P.O⁸. for socio-health integration, to address key social work issues. Staff will collaborate with ACOT, Codice Rosa, and housing emergency representatives to monitor critical situations, ensure coordination with local services, and maintain safety and resource management.

While the Italian context is specific, several practical elements are relevant elsewhere:

- Defining stable roles (e.g., Social Coordinator, liaison officer) to clarify responsibilities and avoid overlaps.
- Creating permanent coordination mechanisms between local welfare structures and reception services, ensuring information flow and shared monitoring of cases.
- Embedding reception-related social work into the ordinary welfare system, so that services like housing support, job guidance, and healthcare access are planned as part of community services rather than as temporary or parallel measures.

- Developing continuity pathways for beneficiaries exiting reception projects, reducing emergency responses and avoiding service gaps.

Coordination with the local health and welfare governance bodies (in this case the *Società della Salute*) is operationalized through the role of the SAI Project Coordinator, who ensures systemic collaboration, and the Project Social Worker, who acts as a bridge figure between the SAI multidisciplinary team and municipal social workers. Even if organisational titles differ in other contexts, the transferable practice is the creation of bridging roles that facilitate communication and operational coordination without duplicating decision-making power.

This resolution exemplifies good practice by establishing a structured, integrated approach that reduces reliance on emergency interventions, promotes early support, and ensures more rational use of resources. Importantly, it shows how clearly defined responsibilities, formalized cooperation across agencies, and embedded social work roles can lead to more effective support for vulnerable populations and improve long-term integration outcomes.

While the Mugello model is still recent and requires further evaluation—particularly in terms of stable funding, formal assessment mechanisms and active beneficiary participation—it highlights practical directions that can inspire adaptation in other national contexts: building cross-sectoral networks, institutionalizing liaison roles and embedding reception into ordinary welfare systems rather than treating it as an exceptional or temporary intervention.

4. Discussion

The analysis of the role of social workers in SAI projects in Tuscany reveals a series of frictions that manifest at various levels. These frictions, such as the fragmentation of services and precarious funding, are not merely operational issues but are deeply rooted in the theoretical framework and the state of the art of research on reception and integration policies. Pre-existing studies have extensively documented how outsourcing to the third sector and discontinuous funding can compromise the quality and continuity of services (Fazzi, 2016; Gualdani, 2018; Zolini et al. 2018). In the Tuscan context, these frictions act as a brake on the implementation of the "widespread reception" model, which, although theoretically robust, risks being weakened by

governance that is not always cohesive and by a constant negotiation between top-down and bottom-up approaches.

A crucial implication emerging from the research is that integrated governance is not a linear and frictionless process. "Moments of friction" among actors and services, far from being just a problem, function as triggers for collective reflexivity: by forcing the different stakeholders to pause, question their practices, and confront diverging perspectives, these tensions can be transformed into opportunities for organisational learning and innovation. This concept, central to the *Global-ANSWER* project and in line with theories on reflective practice (Di Rosa et al., 2023), suggests that the constructive management of conflicts can lead to the creation of more effective protocols and coordination models, such as the "Integrated Governance Model Between Territorial Social Services and the Reception System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees."

In particular, such a protocol could significantly enhance the work of social workers by fostering clearer inter-institutional coordination, establishing systematic monitoring procedures, and reducing the uncertainty generated by fragmented services and unstable funding. By providing shared guidelines and communication channels between territorial services and reception structures, the protocol would not only streamline workflows but also support social workers in managing complex cases, ensuring greater continuity and quality of care.

These reflective processes therefore represent a distinctive element of good practices: they show how friction—rather than being merely disruptive—can become a catalyst for shared problem-solving, the refinement of governance tools, and the strengthening of social workers' professional capacity. This signals a promising area for future research. It would be particularly interesting to investigate how and under what conditions conflicts can be transformed into opportunities for organisational learning and service improvement. Further studies could also explore the role of continuous training and professional support in strengthening social workers' ability to manage these complexities.

5. Conclusions

The study analysed the crucial role of social workers in SAI projects in Tuscany, confirming that they act as central mediators between refugees, local communities, and

institutions. The research objective of understanding the dynamics of this role was achieved, highlighting that the effectiveness of their actions is closely linked to their ability to navigate different governance logics and address systemic weaknesses, such as fragmentation and precarious funding.

From a practical applicability standpoint, the results suggest that integrated governance tools, while not without friction, are essential for the success of reception projects. The activation of reflexivity as a response to conflicts proves to be a key element for the professionalization and improvement of services. At the local and regional levels, the Tuscan experience emphasizes the need to promote models that not only integrate services but also institutionalize mechanisms for the constructive management of conflicts. On a broader level, the results support the formulation of policies that ensure stable funding and more robust intersectoral coordination, recognizing the fundamental role of the social worker as a catalyst for social inclusion. This study confirms that investing in the professionalism and autonomy of social workers is not just an ethical choice, but a pragmatic strategy for improving the effectiveness of reception and integration policies.

References

- Accorinti, M., & Giovannetti, M. (2023). *Agire l'accoglienza. Percorso di ricerca sul lavoro sociale all'interno del Sistema di Accoglienza e Integrazione*. Romatre-Press.
- Acocella, I. (2024). Reception measures for asylum seekers and refugees in Italy: policies and evolutionary dynamics. In I. Acocella, & G. Bulli (Eds.), *From the 'White Paper' of the Tuscany Region to Replicable Best Practices in the Reception of Persons in Need of International Protection* (pp. 17-26). FrancoAngeli.
- Acocella, I., & Bulli, G. (Eds.). (2024). *From the 'White Paper' of the Tuscany Region to Replicable Best Practices in the Reception of Persons in Need of International Protection*. FrancoAngeli.
- Acocella, I., Cellini, E., Cuevas, M., & Tizzi, G. (2021). La governance dell'accoglienza straordinaria in Toscana. In G. Bulli, & A. Tonini (Eds.), *Migrazioni in Italia: oltre la sfida* (pp.113-154). Firenze University Press. [10.36253/978-88-6453-965-2.07](https://doi.org/10.36253/978-88-6453-965-2.07)

- Amato, F., & Matarazzo, N. (2021). Immigrazione e accoglienza nelle città italiane medie e piccole: feedback dalla rete SPRAR-SIPROIMI in Campania. In F. Dini, F. Martellozzo, F. Randelli, & P. Romei (Eds.), *Oltre la globalizzazione – Feedback, Memorie geografiche, NS 19* (pp. 251-257). Società di Studi Geografici.
- Ambrosini, M. (2006). In prima linea: integrazione degli immigrati, politiche locali e ruolo degli operatori. In M. Ambrosini (Ed.), *Costruttori di integrazione. Gli operatori dei servizi per gli immigrati* (pp. 17-50). Fondazione Ismu. <https://hdl.handle.net/2434/19717>
- ANCI-Ministry of the Interior. (2018). *Manuale operativo per l'attivazione e la gestione di servizi di accoglienza integrata in favore di richiedenti e titolari di protezione internazionale e umanitaria*. <https://www.retesai.it/attivazione-e-gestione-di-servizi-di-accoglienza-e-integrazione/>
- ANCI-Ministry of the Interior. (2023). *Atlante SAI 2022. Rapporto annuale Sistema di Accoglienza e Integrazione*. <https://www.retesai.it/rapporto-annuale-sai-atlante-sai-2022/>
- Ascoli, U., & Ranci, C. (Eds.). (2002). *Dilemmas of the Welfare Mix: The New Structure of Welfare in an Era of Privatization*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4757-4992-2>
- Barberis, D. (Ed.). (2009). *Il prodotto del lavoro sociale. Un percorso per definirlo, valorizzarlo e valutarlo: Un percorso per definirlo, valorizzarlo e valutarlo*. FrancoAngeli.
- Barberis, E., & Boccagni, P. (2014). Blurred Rights, Local Practices: Social Work and Immigration in Italy. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 44(suppl_1), i70-i87. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcu041>
- Berti, F., Nasi, L., & Valzania, A. (2017). Il modello toscano dell' "accoglienza diffusa" dei richiedenti asilo. Quattro diverse esperienze nel territorio senese. *Fuori Luogo Journal of Sociology of Territory, Tourism, Technology*, 2(2), 13-20. <https://doi.org/10.6092/2723-9608/6890>
- Boccagni, P. (2017). Il lavoro sociale con popolazioni "mobili", tra bisogni locali e sfide comuni. *Welfare Oggi*, 1, pp. 64-70.

- Boccagni, P., & Righard, E. (2020). Social work with refugee and displaced populations in Europe: (dis)continuities, dilemmas, developments. *European Journal of Social Work*, 23(3), 375-383. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2020.1767941>
- Boffo, S. (2002). Il modello mediterraneo nel quadro delle nuove migrazioni internazionali. *La critica sociologica*, (142-143), 88-104.
- Bracci, F. (2013). *Emergenza Nord Africa. I percorsi di accoglienza diffusa. Analisi e monitoraggio del sistema*. Pisa University Press.
- Campanini, A., & Fortunato, V. (2008). The role of the social work in the light of the Italian Welfare Reform. In V. Fortunato, G. Frisenhahn, & E. Kantowicz (Eds.), *Social Work in Restructured European Welfare Systems* (pp. 27-40). Carocci. <https://hdl.handle.net/10281/9766>
- Campesi, G. (2018). Between Containment, Confinement and Dispersal: The Evolution of the Italian Reception System before and after the 'Refugee Crisis'. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 23(4), 490-506. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2018.1501995>
- Cox, P., & Geisen, T. (2014). Migration perspectives in social work research: Local, national and international contexts. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 44(suppl_1), i157–i173. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcu044>
- Cresta, A., & Greco, I. (2018). Percorsi e processi di accoglienza ed integrazione territoriale: rifugiati e richiedenti asilo in Irpinia. *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana*, 14(1), 109-123. <https://doi.org/10.13128/bsgi.v1i1.93>
- Dematteis, M., Di Gioia, A., & Membretti, A. (2019). *Montanari per forza. Rifugiati e richiedenti asilo nella montagna italiana*. FrancoAngeli.
- Di Rosa, R.T., Gijón, M.T., & Gucciardo, G. (Coords.). (2023). *Guide on conceptual and methodological issues in social work research in the field of human mobility*. Global-ANSWER Network "Social Work and Human Mobility". <https://hdl.handle.net/10481/102643>
- Fazzi, L. (2013). Social work, exclusionary populism, and xenophobia in Italy. *International Social Work*, 58(4), 595-605. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872813503855>
- Fazzi, L. (2016). *Il servizio sociale nel terzo settore*. Maggioli Editore.

- Finno-Velasquez, M., & Dettlaff, A. (2018). Challenges to Family Unity and Opportunities for Promoting Child Welfare in an Increasingly Punitive Immigration Landscape. *Advances in Social Work, 18*(3), 727-744. <https://doi.org/10.18060/21716>
- Gasparo, C., & Milani, S. (2024). The governance of policies for the integration of immigrant citizens in Tuscany. In I. Acocella, & G. Bulli (Eds.), *From the 'White Paper' of the Tuscany Region to Replicable Best Practices in the Reception of Persons in Need of International Protection* (pp. 27-45). FrancoAngeli.
- Garcés-Mascareñas, B., & Penninx, R. (Eds.). (2016). *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe: Contexts, Levels and Actors*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-21674-4>
- Giacomelli, E. (2021). The Emergence of New Street-Level Bureaucracies in Italy's Asylum Reception System. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies, 19*(3), 272-286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2021.1939471>
- Gualdani, A. (2018). Il sistema delle esternalizzazioni nei servizi sociali: antiche questioni e nuove prospettive. *Federalismi, 12*(12), 1-30. <https://www.federalismi.it/nv14/articolo-documento.cfm?artid=36435>
- Guhan, R., & Liebling-Kalifani, H. (2011). The experience of staff working with refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom: A grounded theory exploration. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies, 9*(3), 205-228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2011.592804>
- Gustafsson, K., Norström, E., & Åberg, L. (2023). Social workers as targets for integration. *Nordic Social Work Research, 13*(4), 550-562. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2023.2256737>
- Kazepov, Y. (2010). *Rescaling Social Policies: Towards multilevel governance in Europe*. Ashgate.
- Marsh, J.C. (2005). Social justice: social work's organizing value. *Social Work, 50*(4), 293-294. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/50.4.293>
- Masocha, S. (2014). We do the best we can: Accounting practices in social work discourses of asylum seekers. *The British Journal of Social Work, 44*(6), 1621-1636. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bct048>

Milani, S. (2024). Social assistance. In I. Acocella, & G. Bulli (Eds). *From the 'White Paper' of the Tuscany Region to Replicable Best Practices in the Reception of Persons in Need of International Protection* (pp. 99-108). FrancoAngeli.

Parlamento Italiano. Decreto legislativo 6 marzo 1998, n.40, Disciplina dell'immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero. *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 59, 12 marzo 1998.

<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1998/03/12/098G0066/sq>

Parlamento Italiano. Decreto legislativo 25 luglio 1998, n.286, Testo unico delle disposizioni concernenti la disciplina dell'immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero. *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 191, 18 agosto 1998.

<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1998/08/18/098G0348/sq>

Parlamento Italiano. Legge 8 novembre 2000, n. 328, Legge quadro per la realizzazione del sistema integrato di interventi e servizi sociali. *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 265, del 13 novembre 2000.

<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2000/11/13/000G0369/s>

Parlamento Italiano. Legge Costituzionale 18 ottobre 2001, n. 3, Modifiche al titolo V della parte seconda della Costituzione. *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 248, 24 ottobre 2001.

<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2001/10/24/001G0430/sq>

Parlamento Italiano. Decreto legislativo 18 agosto 2015, n.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. *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 214, del 15 settembre 2015.

<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/09/15/15G00158/sq>

Pattaro, C., & Nigris, D. (Eds.). (2018). *Le sfide dell'aiuto. Assistenti sociali nel quotidiano dell'integrazione*. FrancoAngeli.

Regione Toscana. (Italy). Legge regionale 24 febbraio 2005, n. 41, Sistema integrato di interventi e servizi per la tutela dei diritti di cittadinanza sociale. *Bollettino Ufficiale*, 19 parte prima, del 7 marzo 2005.

<https://raccoltanormativa.consiglio.regione.toscana.it/articolo?urndoc=urn:nir:regione.toscana:legge:2005-02-24;41>

Regione Toscana. (Italy). Legge regionale 9 giugno 2009, n. 29, Norme per l'accoglienza, l'integrazione partecipe e la tutela dei cittadini stranieri nella Regione Toscana. *Bollettino Ufficiale*, 19 parte prima, del 15 giugno 2009. <https://raccoltanormativa.consiglio.regione.toscana.it/articolo?urndoc=urn%3Anr%3Aregione.toscana%3Alegge%3A2009-06-09%3B29>

Regione Toscana, & Anci Toscana. (2017). *Libro Bianco sulle politiche di accoglienza dei richiedenti asilo politico e protezione internazionale*. <https://www.regione.toscana.it/-/libro-bianco>

Reich, H., & Di Rosa, R.T. (2021). Introduction. Social Work with newcomers: entering into the field. In H. Reich, & R.T. Di Rosa (Eds.), *Newcomers as Agents for Social Change: Learning from the Italian Experience: A Recourse Book for Social Work and Social Work Education in the Field of Migration* (pp. 11-19). FrancoAngeli.

Scholten, P., & van Ostaijen, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Between Mobility and Migration. The Multi-Level Governance of Intra-European Movement*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77991-1>

Società della Salute del Mugello. (2023, 1 agosto). *Delibera n. 29/2023, Approvazione del modello di integrazione del Servizio Sociale Integrato Mugello/SAI*. <https://www.sdsmugello.it/2023/08/01/n-29-del-01-08-2023-approvazione-modello-di-integrazione-servizio-sociale-integrato-mugello-sai/>

Thomas, A. (2004). The Rise of Social Cooperatives in Italy. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations*, 15, 243-263. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:VOLU.0000046280.06580.d8>

Zincone, G. (1994). *Uno schermo contro il razzismo. Per una politica dei diritti utili*. Donzelli.

Notes

¹ Although the SAI system is not directly derived from Law No. 328/2000, its structural design and localised implementation echo the principles of integration, decentralisation, and cross-sectoral collaboration embedded within the law.

² According to the provisions of Decree No. 142 of 2015 (*Decreto legislativo 18 agosto 2015, n. 142*), the categories of asylum seekers considered vulnerable include minors, unaccompanied minors, persons with disabilities, the elderly, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of human trafficking, individuals suffering from severe illnesses and/or mental disorders, those verified as having experienced torture, rape, or other serious forms of psychological, physical, or sexual violence, and victims of genital mutilation.

³ Article 7.2 of Annex 1 to the Grant Agreement: number 872209 - AMENDMENT Reference No AMD-872209-15. The research protocol of the Global-ANSWER project received a positive opinion (no. 92 of 29 May 2020) from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Florence (Prot. no. 0084467 of 17 June 2020).

⁴ Società della Salute (SdS) in Tuscany represents an innovative model of local governance in the social and healthcare sector. These SDSs are partnerships between the municipalities within a specific social-health area and the regional health authority. Their primary function is to coordinate and deliver integrated health, social, and welfare services at the local level (as mandated by Regional Law no. 60/2008, which amends Regional Law no. 40/2005).

⁵ The ACOT (Hospital-Territory Continuity Agency) is a service present in every district of Tuscany. Its main role is to guarantee an effective and seamless transition for patients who are discharged from hospitals and need care and support at home or in residential facilities.

⁶ The SEUS Toscana (Social Emergency and Urgency System) is a fundamental service provided by the Tuscany Region to address situations of social emergency and urgency that may affect.

⁷ The Codice Rosa (Pink Code) project started in Tuscany and consists in a priority emergency room access for violence victims, particularly women, children, and those discriminated against.

⁸ In Italian public services, "P.O." stands for Organisational Position, a managerial role assigned to highly skilled employees for the leadership of complex units or the performance of high-responsibility tasks, with managerial autonomy and direct accountability for results.