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SYNTHESIS DOCUMENT 

# THE PERCORSI PROJECT

## FIVE YEARS TOGETHER WITH YOUNG MIGRANTS (2016-2020)

FIRST STEPS, JOB ORIENTATION, INTERMEDIATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The informational booklet "Five years together with young migrants (2016-2020)" was created as part of the PERCORSI project with financial support from the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (Directorate General of Immigration and Integration Policies), and within the framework of the ESF-funded National Operational Program PON Inclusion 2014-2020.

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## Introduction

**PERCORSI (Italian for *pathways*) is a project dedicated to the training, employment and integration of young migrants.** The project is operated by the Directorate General of Immigration and Integration Policies (a department of the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies), and implemented in collaboration with ANPAL Servizi S.p.A. within the framework of the ESF-funded National Operational Program *PON Inclusion* (with €11,680,000 in total funding). Aimed at **building an integrated system for the care of unaccompanied foreign minors (UFM), the project is intended to provide assistance to young people on their journey towards autonomy**, in particular during the delicate transition phase which occurs when they reach the age of majority.

The **general objective** of the PERCORSI project is the consolidation of socio-occupational integration policies and services dedicated to helping unaccompanied foreign minors and other young migrants up to 23 years of age. This was achieved using an **innovative inclusion strategy** in which **personalized occupational integration pathways** were developed. The pathways included activities such as **skill assessments, job orientation sessions, and internships**, as well as the creation of social support networks. Working from many angles, the project aimed to improve the migrants' overall situation and **to counteract phenomena such as exploitation, illegal work and social exclusion**.

Two **specific objectives** of this project were:

- **The implementation of 2,048 socio-occupational integration pathways using an array of individualized employment support initiatives (collectively known as *dote individuale*)** aimed at UFM and other young migrants (up to 23 years old) who had previously entered Italy as UFM. The participant group was composed of unemployed individuals who had either been granted political asylum or who were in the process of applying for international protection. It should be noted that Italian statistics further subdivide the category of unemployed persons into those who have previously been in the workforce (*disoccupati*) and those who have never been in the workforce and are therefore searching for their first job (*inoccupati*).
- **Strengthening the relationship between public-sector institutional partners (especially local institutions) and key private-sector stakeholders by more accurately defining the governance structure between the groups.** Specifically, these changes would allow for the development of a shared sustainable project model and sustainable operational solutions for the coordinated care and socio-occupational integration of UFM. Theoretically replicable at the national level, the model is solidly based on an existing network of local employment and training support services.

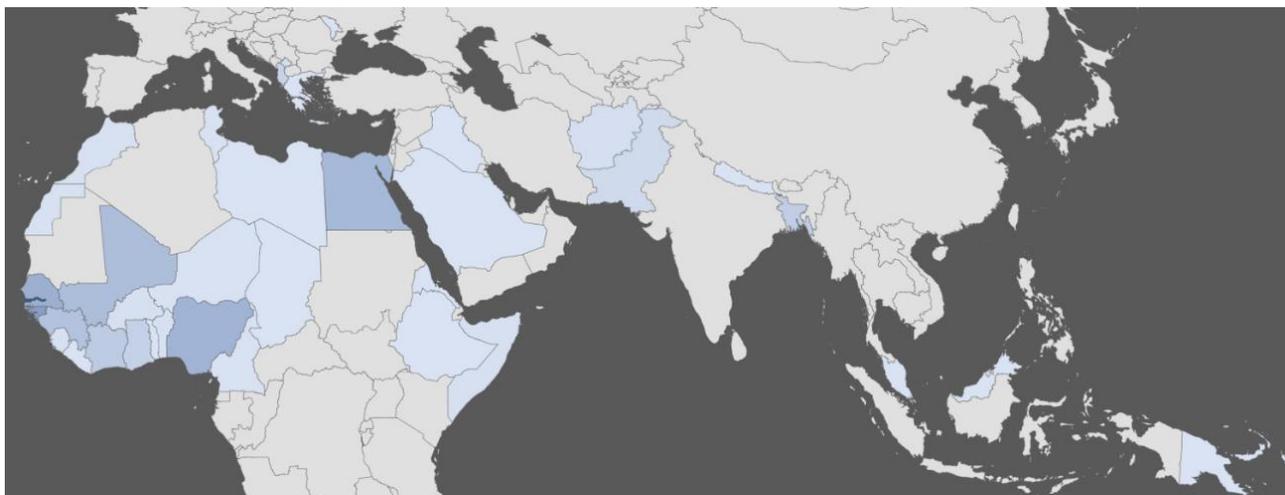
On 28 September 2016, ANPAL Servizi issued a nationwide **public notice** inviting various Italian *service providers* to be partners in developing and managing integration pathways for the project's intended **recipients** (UFM and other young migrants). The **beneficiaries** (service providers in this case, called *beneficiari* in Italian as they receive funding to provide the services) in this project included operators who were authorized to carry out intermediation activities at the national level, as well as public and accredited private operators on the regional level who provided employment services. After an initial assessment to ensure their suitability for the project, the service providers requested official permission (the so-called ***nulla osta***) to begin each of the structured individual pathways.

The duration of the socio-occupational integration pathway for each young person was a maximum of **8 months** which included participation in a **5-month internship**.

## Results and follow-up

The unaccompanied foreign minors and former minors who completed their pathways and finished their internships came from **36 different countries of origin**. Nearly 90% of the young migrants came from just **eight countries in coastal West Africa, Egypt and Bangladesh**. In particular, citizens of **The Gambia** were the most common (465), followed by **Guinea** (224) and **Senegal** (167). In 11th place we have **Albania**, the first of four European non-EU countries present, with 54 immigrants (roughly 3% of the total number of participants who completed the program). More than three quarters of the young migrants who completed an internship had reached the age of majority at the moment their internship started (1,359).

Source: ANPAL Servizi, PERCORSI Project



A full 65% of the participants did not possess any **Italian educational qualifications**. Among the remaining participants, 6% had primary education, 27% had received secondary education, and only 2% had reached the post-secondary level or higher.

The most common **type of residence permit** among the young trainees was related to requests for political asylum (42%). Other participants received residence permits on humanitarian grounds (30%), but also due to their status as minors (15%), or because they had been placed in foster care (4%).

In terms of the businesses where trainees completed their internship, 23% were in **restaurant services**, 8% were in **agricultural cultivation, the production of animal products, and hunting and related services**, and 7% were in the **retail industry**. A significant number of internships (11%) were also completed in the **social services** sector. Beyond this, 5% of internships were completed in the food industry, and positions doing work for various municipalities also played an important role (4%). With reference to the type of work involved in the internships, 29% was unskilled labour in various capacities including sales, manufacturing, agriculture, the maintenance of green areas, and jobs in the areas of domestic, recreational and cultural services, 26% was related to artisanal craftwork or specialized trades, 25% was comprised of skilled positions in sales and services, 9% was engaged in office work, and 8% involved technical professions.

A full **74% of completed integration pathways** were implemented in **southern Italian regions**; in particular, 41% of them were concentrated in **Sicily**, followed by **Campania** (10%), **Puglia** (9%), and **Calabria** (8%). Among the northern regions, Lombardy had the highest number of completed internships (5%), while in central Italy the Marche region stands out at 6%.



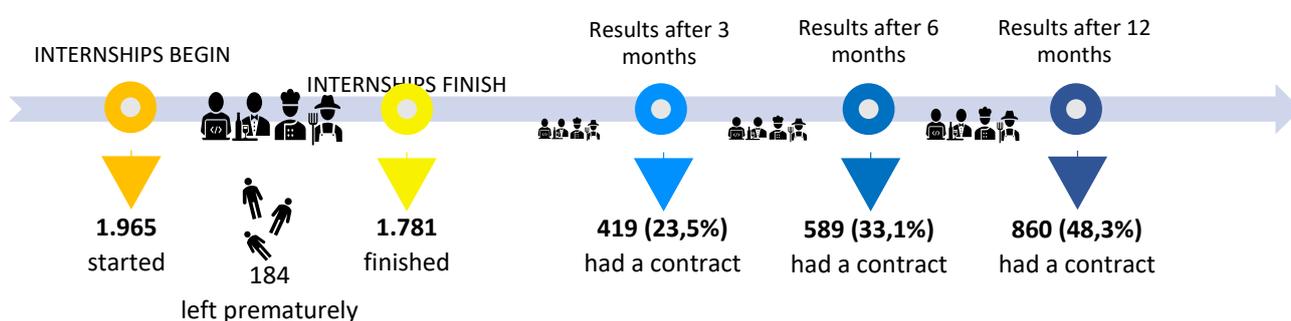
*Project participants (both sexes) who completed their internship, organized by region*

#### **Female migrants who completed integration pathways**

There were **48** girls and young women who completed internships as part of the PERCORSI project after initially arriving in Italy as unaccompanied minors. Their countries of origin are in the same area of Africa from which many the boys came: **coastal West Africa**, just above the equator, with most of them arriving from **Nigeria** (33). There were proportionally fewer minors in the female group compared to the percentage of minors in the male group, and there were also slightly fewer who had obtained some level of educational qualification in Italy (none of the female participants had more than a lower-secondary level). Thirty-five of the female trainees had a residence permit based on their request for political asylum. The businesses that hosted the internships of the young female migrants were in the sectors of restaurant services (12 internships), residential social services (8) and non-residential social services (7), personal services (6) and sales (6). A quarter of the female project participants had at least one contract in the 12 months following the conclusion of their internship.

## Employment outcomes

Of the **1,781** young migrants who completed their internship, almost a quarter (419) had at least one work contract (1.2 on average) within 3 months after the internship had ended. At 6 months after the internship, that figure rose to one third (589 with 1.5 contracts each), and at 12 months nearly half of all participants had a contract (860 with almost 2 contracts each).



Most of the migrants' contracts were **temporary (i.e. fixed-term) contracts**. After the end of the internships, the proportion of these temporary jobs decreased over time as the participants continued to search for work, and this difference was made up for by a relative increase in the number of **apprenticeships**, from 18.6% to 21.6%, and in the number of **permanent contracts**, which rose from 10.3% to 15.2%.

## Assessment after 5 years of the PERCORSI project

There were several elements of this project which required ongoing assessment. Here we can mention: the interventions aimed at strengthening and redefining the administrative structure between public institutional partners and the main private stakeholders, the systemization of the intervention model (which is firmly rooted in the system of regional employment services), the training opportunities offered, the integration strategies used, and the replicability of the model at the national level. In an effort to improve the efficacy of the interventions and to increase the overall level of satisfaction with the services provided by the PERCORSI project, feedback was collected using tools such as questionnaires and focus groups. The results of that feedback allowed us to identify and monitor issues which were in need of improvement, but they were also very useful in highlighting the positive reactions received during the entire duration of the project. This invaluable information, gradually collected in various reports, functions as a sort of compass, i.e. as a reference point which can be consulted each time challenges arise on the path towards the integration of vulnerable migrants.

Several modifications and improvements were made throughout the entire duration of the project in order to facilitate the pursuit of the stated objectives; these changes were necessary for procedural reasons but also in response to difficulties deriving from external factors such as updates to sector legislation or changes in the project's funding sources.

Many structural challenges still remain in terms of the systematization of the intervention model, particularly with respect to the strengthening and redefinition of the governance structure. Moving forward, and in line with the strategies outlined in the new Action Plan for integration and inclusion 2021-2027, these challenges will be analyzed with a view towards expanding the individualized support initiatives which promote the inclusion of the project's participants

### Description of key remaining challenges

Issues	Challenges
Short duration of internships with respect to the training needs identified.	Personalizing training interventions in relation to the existing knowledge and skill levels demonstrated at the beginning of the project.
Internship pathways not always in line with previous experience.	Emphasizing the value of existing skills (formal and informal) and encouraging participants to list them. Facilitating the recognition of qualifications acquired in third countries and increasing their compatibility with European qualifications, enabling young foreigners and UFM's to access courses aimed at completing the educational course of study they had started abroad.
High percentage of interrupted internships among migrant youth and UFM's during their transition to the age of majority.	Differentiating interventions in order to facilitate transitions not only to adulthood, but also from school to work, which are typically more difficult for newly-arrived unaccompanied foreign minors and those close to the age of majority.
Poor integration of language training and job training.	Strengthening the collaboration with language training services and attempting to move beyond low and intermediate levels of proficiency by tailoring lessons to students' individual needs.
Greater interconnectivity needed among the various players involved in the integration processes of young migrants and UFM's (e.g., municipalities, reception and integration systems, employment centers, provincial centers for adult education, etc.).	Ensuring an integrated approach between housing policies, labour policies, the education system, the healthcare system, and social services.

<p>Low percentage of project participants who were enrolled in further educational activities or engaged in additional training programs at the end of their internship (including for the purpose of achieving compulsory schooling).</p>	<p>Encouraging more effective collaborations with other programs which will make it easier for migrants to continue their education and training pathways.</p>
<p>Low number of training pathways started and completed by young migrant women and female UFM.</p>	<p>Supporting the continuing integration pathways (both the ones initiated and those already completed) of UFM and other young migrants. This can be achieved by using a differentiated approach to the interventions (e.g., with regard to schedules, sectors, or cultural mediation services to support emancipation processes within specific cultural groups). The details of these personalized interventions are to be defined after the participants have officially started the project.</p>
<p>Few socialization opportunities during the internship period, which by extension means fewer opportunities to develop important soft skills.</p>	<p>Sensitizing service providers to the importance of organizing social encounters with other young people, for example through recreational activities or sports activities, especially in cooperation with groups like local non-profit organizations.</p>
<p>Difficulties experienced by some service providers in the management of certain procedures. This was especially an issue for smaller providers or providers which had limited knowledge of the target group and its specificities.</p>	<p>Disseminating and promoting best practice procedures within the network of service providers. In particular, this means promoting methodologies aimed at resolving administrative-procedural issues at various stages in the project (e.g., issuing declarations of immediate availability to work; municipalities issuing declarations related to the possession of educational qualifications, etc.).</p> <p>Multilingual project information documents also need to be created (brochures, individual action plans, participant questionnaires, etc.) in order to assist both service providers and project participants, especially at the beginning of the migrant's pathway and during the orientation phase, as foreseen by the plan of personalized support initiatives (the <i>dote individual</i>).</p>
<p>Discovery of non-work-related issues that hinder the integration process for some migrants in the initial stages of the project.</p>	<p>Ensuring an integrated approach between housing policies, labor policies, the education system, the healthcare system, and social services.</p>

<p>Additional job orientation support services need to be provided in the phase when the internship is ending (in cases where participants do not continue working with the companies that hosted the internships).</p>	<p>Increasing employment opportunities as the internship ends, including the possibility of self-employment.</p>
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