



Cofinanziato dall'Unione europea



## Newsletter n° 03



### The Anti-Unlawful Recruitment Helpdesk on tour to support migrant workers

*In addition to outreach activities in formal and informal settlements, information sessions are organised in Social Hubs*

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### Joint training in Sicily

*The meeting was described by participants as a moment of growth and sharing*

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### Focus Group on Strengthening the Interaction between Labour Supply and Demand

*A valuable opportunity to share ideas, experiences and projects aimed at promoting the construction of a fairer agricultural labour market*

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## The Anti-Unlawful Recruitment Helpdesk on tour to support migrant workers

*In addition to outreach activities in formal and informal settlements, information sessions are organised in Social Hubs*

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Operating in the regions of Apulia, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania and Sicily, the Inter-institutional Anti-Unlawful Recruitment Helpdesk is designed to offer concrete support to migrant workers, often vulnerable to exploitative conditions in the agricultural sectors and other seasonal work.

One of the distinctive features of the Helpdesk is its ability to operate in several languages including English, French, Arabic, Pidgin, Edo/Benin, Wolof, Mandingo, Fula and Pular. This multilingual approach is essential in order to break down the language barriers that often isolate migrants, making them more vulnerable to exploitation. The service is designed to assist migrant workers in the phase of emerging from exploitative conditions, directing them to the resources and services available to them at the territorial level.

In order to expand the scope of the service and directly reach the territories most affected by unlawful recruitment, the Inter-institutional Helpdesk is on tour from January to December in areas with a significant presence of migrant workers, often determined by the seasonality of agricultural harvests. The aim of the tour is to meet workers and groups of people who live in conditions of serious marginalisation and social exclusion, many of whom are victims or potential victims of labour exploitation. Through targeted outreach activities, the service intends to create direct and immediate contact with those in need of support.

In addition to outreach activities in formal and informal settlements, information sessions are organised in Social Centres, first and second reception centres and Provincial Adult Education Centres (CPIA), in order to ensure wider access to information and services dedicated to migrant workers.



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## Joint training in Sicily

*The meeting was described by participants as a moment of growth and sharing*

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Sicily was the scene of a training initiative organised by the Inter-Institutional Anti-Unlawful Recruitment Helpdesk with the aim of intensifying the fight against labour exploitation and irregular work.

The event involved legal operators and intercultural linguistic mediators, and members of the Support Team for the Labour Inspectorate in an update and comparison session.

The operational team of the Support Team for the Labour Inspectorate is composed of four groups, each formed by a legal operator and an intercultural linguistic mediator. These teams will be responsible for outreach activities throughout the Sicilian territory, covering all nine provinces.

In order to support the fieldwork, an on call Arabic-speaking mediator has also been provided, ready to intervene in the different territories based on operational needs, thus strengthening their response capacity in critical situations. Furthermore, the team of intercultural linguistic mediators will be expanded with the addition of a Bengali-speaking mediator, a strategic figure to promote contact with the working communities of Bengali origin present in the territory.

With the prospective outreach activities in mind, the training session was designed with a dual objective: to strengthen operator skills through a regulatory update and practical tools for identifying situations of labour exploitation, and to promote synergy between different professional figures, creating effective coordination to address the complexities of labour exploitation.



The team thus formed will have the task of intervening directly in the Sicilian territory, an area where labour exploitation, especially in the agricultural sector, represents a constant challenge. The activities in the field are not limited to identifying cases, but also include a strong awareness-raising component aimed at seasonal workers and local communities. The objective is to inform people about workers' rights and available support services, promoting greater awareness and encouraging the fight against irregular work.

In addition to outreaching activities, the team of intercultural linguistic mediators and legal operators will provide support to all Territorial Labour Inspectorates (ITL) in Sicily in inspection activities and in the reception desks present at the ITLs themselves. This support activity aims to strengthen the operational capacity of the Inspectorates, facilitating a quicker and more effective response to reports of labour exploitation.

The meeting was described as a moment of growth and sharing by the participants. The collaboration between the two groups represents a strong point to better address the challenges of the territory. The integrated approach allows for the combination of legal skills and cultural knowledge, which are essential when coming into contact with a heterogeneous and often vulnerable working population.



## Focus Group on Strengthening the Interaction between Labour Supply and Demand

A valuable opportunity to share ideas, experiences and projects aimed at promoting the construction of a fairer agricultural labour market



### DOMANDA E OFFERTA DI LAVORO: INCONTRO POSSIBILE?

### IV FOCUS GROUP

GIOVEDÌ 13 FEBBRAIO 2025 | ORE 15:00 | ONLINE



On February 13th, 2025, the “**Supply and demand of labour: a possible meeting?**” Focus Group, supported by the **Inter-Institutional Anti-Unlawful Recruitment Helpdesk** as part of the initiatives of the Su.Pr.Eme.2 Program, took place.

The thematic meeting examined the complex dynamics of matching between labour supply and demand in the agricultural sector, highlighting the problems and potential solutions regarding formal and informal intermediation of agricultural labour, which is continuously exposed to conditions of vulnerability and exploitation.

The Focus Group retraced the evolution of Italian regulatory framework, analysing the legislative path that has attempted to regulate the agricultural labour market since the early twentieth century. This historical excursus had the dual purpose of contextualising current practices and understanding how Italian legislation has intervened to limit forms of exploitation and illicit intermediation in the sector. By examining legislative turning points, the Focus Group highlighted both the strengths and critical issues that remain in a system that continues to face new challenges and changing scenarios.

Among the key objectives was the analysis of the procedures for matching labour supply and demand proposed by employment centres and evaluating their effectiveness in relation to the specific needs of the agricultural sector. The complexity of the agricultural context requires placement mechanisms to be capable of responding to seasonal fluctuations, local peculiarities and the need for specialised labour. However, a disconnection was found between current employment policies and the real needs of the sector, a discrepancy that continues to fuel the use of informal and, at times, unlawful recruitment channels.

Focus on the procedures of employment centres was integrated with the testimonies of former workers, unions and Third Sector organisations, offering a detailed picture of the different perspectives on the topic and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of these systems. The plurality of voices that animated the Focus Group represented an added value, allowing for a collective reflection that could pave the way for improvements in intermediation procedures.



From this perspective, particular attention was paid to the issue of “placement” as a tool to combat illegal labour intermediation. This process plays a central role in ensuring that the meeting between seasonal workers and agricultural companies takes place in a transparent and regulated context, reducing the possibility of abuse and strengthening the protection of workers’ rights.

Furthermore, the Focus Group offered a space for sharing territorial experiences developed in the five target regions of the Su.Pr.Eme.2 Program: Calabria, Campania, Apulia, Sicily and Basilicata. The initiatives tested provided concrete examples of actions implemented to facilitate the meeting between supply and demand of agricultural work and were the subject of an in-depth analysis. The comparison between different local experiences allowed us to identify extendable good practices and to highlight the factors that contribute to making the matching process between workers and companies more effective and transparent.

The first Focus Group involved the participation of over eighty people, including representatives of government bodies, Third Sector associations and representatives of the five regions of the South. With this thematic meeting, the Inter-Institutional Anti-Unlawful Recruitment Helpdesk has further consolidated the network of actors involved in the fight against exploitation and has stimulated a collective reflection on possible solutions.

Through an open and constructive dialogue, the Focus Group has not only identified possible corrective actions, but has also inspired innovative initiatives capable of responding to the real needs of workers and employers, confirming that it is a valuable opportunity to share ideas, experiences and projects aimed at promoting the construction of a fairer agricultural labour market.



# STORIES





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## Take back your life

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C.H. is a young man from Gambia who, like many others, left his country in search of a better life. After going through unimaginable challenges, he settled in Tito, in the province of Potenza, where he tried to build a new life. He found a job and began a two-month trial period before obtaining a year-long contract. He worked 8 hours a day for 40 euros. However, what was supposed to be a step towards stability soon turned into a situation of exploitation and uncertainty.

He soon discovered that his employer had been withholding part of his salary, claiming that he was being paid more money than he was owed. This unfounded accusation led to a confrontation, during which C.H. discovered that his employer still owed him 500 euros. When the truth came out, his employer reacted angrily, threatening to terminate C.H.'s contract, evict him from the house where he lived, and hinder the renewal of his residence permit.

C.H. contacted the Inter-Institutional Anti-Unlawful Recruitment Helpdesk and told his story. After several interviews with the intercultural linguistic mediator and a careful evaluation of the details that emerged from his story, the Helpdesk reported the case to a local organisation able to assist him both in the labour dispute and in reception.

Within a few days, a concrete plan was launched to help C.H. get his life back on track thanks to the coordination of the various actors involved. A legal team took charge of his case to ensure the renewal of his residence permit. In addition, another tool of the Su.Pr.Eme.2 Program was included in the integration budget, which would offer him a concrete opportunity for growth: a way to obtain a driving license, speech therapy to improve his slight stuttering, and support to achieve housing independence.

Thanks to the intervention of the Helpdesk and organised and coordinated tools to respond to the needs of people in vulnerable situations, C.H. has not only found a new job, but has also seen new opportunities open up that will give him a more solid foundation for the future.



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## Road to freedom

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Y.S. is a young man from Ghana who, after arriving in Sicily in 2014, faced a long and difficult journey to build a dignified life in Italy. His determination led him to obtain international protection in 2016 and, in 2022, to request its conversion into a residence permit. But behind Y.S.'s courage and strength lies a reality of exploitation and injustice that he has tried to endure in silence for years.

In 2017, Y.S. found work in the agricultural sector in the province of Trapani. The pay was just 25 euros a day with shifts starting at 7:00am and ending at 2:00pm without breaks and without any protection. There was no employment contract, only the tight control and absolute power of the employer who treated Y.S. more like an object than a human being.

With his residence permit expiring, Y.S. asked for a contract in order to renew it. The employer agreed, but only on one condition: Y.S. would have to pay him 100 euros a month to be "contracted". Without alternatives and driven by necessity, he accepted. However, even with the fake regularisation, the exploitation continued: the days worked did not correspond to those indicated on the pay slip, the wages were often incomplete and respect non-existent. He said that he was "forced to work under the sun every day without a day off".

Y.S. contacted the Helpdesk's toll-free number. Numerous meetings with the intercultural linguistic mediator and the legal operator were decisive to understand and reconstruct the events that characterised his path. Once all the necessary details were obtained, the case was reported to the local authority most suited to his situation and Y.S. was able to benefit from the legal, psychological and social support he needed.

Meetings with the project's lawyers and mediators were crucial. Not only did Y.S. understand the gravity of his situation, but he was presented with a concrete path to report his employer.

With the support of a legal team and the involvement of the Trapani Rapid Response Team, Y.S. formalised his complaint on January 26th, 2023. Labour inspectors were subsequently involved to investigate the case and verify the conditions in which Y.S. and other workers had worked.

Aware of his vulnerability, the project operators offered Y.S. the opportunity to join the unified social protection program, which not only guarantees him security and stability, but also concrete opportunities to rebuild his life.

The story of Y.S. is the story of a man who managed to transform years of exploitation into a chance for redemption thanks to personal courage and the support of a solidarity network. It is also evidence of how crucial the work between local authorities and the operators of the Inter-Institutional Anti-Unlawful Recruitment Helpdesk is, they not only listen to the voices of those in difficulty but act to ensure their emergence from labour exploitation.



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