# Community Matching









inclusive communities.

supportive,



Bari, Turin, Rome

Palermo, Milan, Naples, Parma



Creation of the Toolkit

1Jan Launch of the project in Milan and Palermo





the first match



18 Feb Adoption of the Charter for the integration of refugees



Bergamo, Bologna, **Padua** 





20 Jun First story published for World Refugee Day



1 Jun Extension of the programme to Ukrainian refugees also in the city of Parma

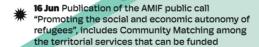


🗯 10 Jun

23 Feb Start of qualitative research: first focus group in Parma

21 Mar Conference presenting the results for 2022 in Rome

20 Jun Events in Rome, Parma, Turin, Milan, Naples, Bari and Palermo for World Refugee Day





is added

**Ivrea** 



10 Jun Event presenting the 2023 results and kick-off for World Refugee Day: Launch of the Community Matching Network Milan



Aug The Community Matching is included among the good practices of the Global Compact on Refugees

25 Set **Community Matching** presentation event at the Municipality of Padua



October: Finalisation of the Advocacy Tool

12 Jun Presentation of Community Matching during the UNHCR Global Consultations in Geneva at an event organised by the UNHCR Asylum and Migration Unit, together with Soka Gakkai International (SGI)



The Community Matching Network is consolidated in cities already active and expands to new cities:

Ravenna, Verona...

### 21Nov

Presentation in Parma of the research carried out as part of the programme and published in the book ""One plus one does not equal two. Promoting Intercultural Communities: Community Matching between Refugees and Italians" by Chiara Marchetti



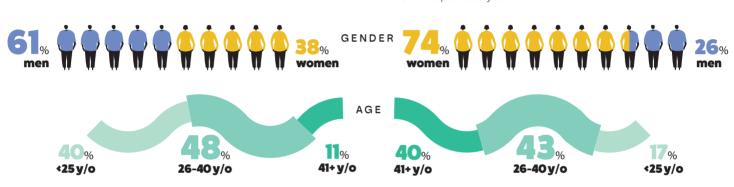
# Refugees

Refugees come from 53 different nationalities (+6 compared to 2023 and +12 compared to 2022). The main one is still Ukrainian (10.3%), but unlike the two previous years, it is now almost on par with two others (Afghanistan 9.9% and Burkina Faso 9.4%). The majority (61%) are men (54% in 2023), and 32% hold a form of international protection (43% in 2022). The percentage of asylumseeker buddies has increased considerably (43%).

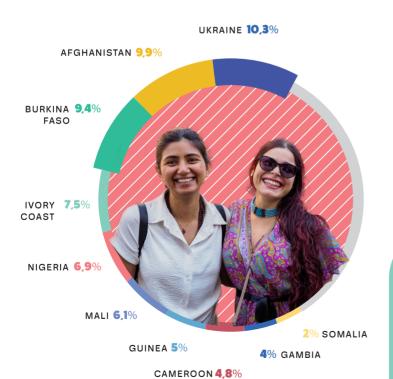
There is also a slight increase in the share of buddies in the SAI reception system at the time of the match (36%, compared to 32% the previous year), while the figure rises to 61% if we consider those within any form of institutional reception (compared to 45% the previous year). Most refugees have been in Italy for two years or less (73%; 70% in 2023).

## **Volunteers**

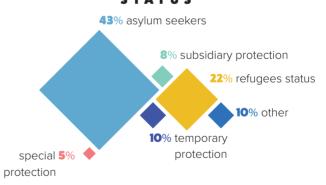
The predominant nationality among the volunteers involved is Italian (89%). However, compared to the previous year, the share of buddies with other nationalities or Italians with a migrant or mixed background has increased (11%). The following nationalities are also represented: Afghan, Argentine, Austrian, Bangladeshi, Burkinabé, Colombian, Filipino, French, Franco-German, Indian, Iranian, Italo-Australian, Italo-Egyptian, Italo-Georgian, Italo-Ghanaian, Italo-Moldovan, Italo-Venezuelan, Malian, Mexican, Nigerian, Pakistani, Peruvian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Senegalese, Syrian, Somali, Spanish, American, German, Ukrainian, Venezuelan. Most volunteers are female (74%), a slight decrease compared to 2023 (when they were 79%), and are over 26 years old, equally distributed between the 26–40 age group and the over-40 group, as in the previous year.



### COUNTRIES



### STATUS



The reality of Community Matching in Naples is collective and truly wonderful. It allowed me to cultivate the relationship with my buddy in a calm and joyful atmosphere, giving me the opportunity to meet other people and build a network together!

MATILDE, BUDDY VOLUNTEER, NAPLES

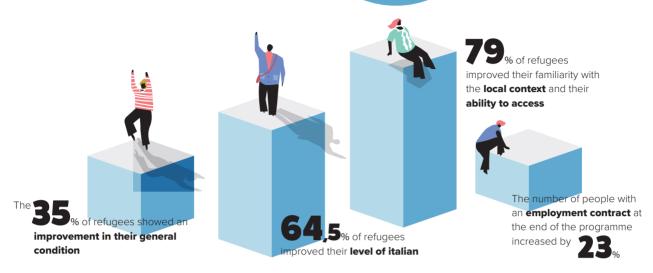


2022	2023	2024	2025 JAN-JUN	TOTAL	
13	21	30	6	70	BARI
 0	26	33	15	74	BERGAMO
0	20	45	13	78	BOLOGNA
98	74	9 4	50	316	MILAN
25	45	48	17	135	NAPLES
 0	30	29	18	77	PADUA
28	25	23	5	81	PALERMO
24	65	59	15	163	PARMA
110	97	100	44	351	ROME
60	5 2	60	23	195	TURIN
0	12	11	12	35	OTHERS

# TOTAL AS OF 30/06/2025 1.575







\*Data has been collected here for a total of 452 matches that ended in 2024, for which indicators were recorded both at the start of the match and six months later.

# **Objectives**



The agreement signed by the buddies sets out a number of specific objectives for the match. Fourteen objectives have been codified, grouped here into three macro-categories of social support (Vescan et al. 2023), to which is added the cross-cutting objective of support in learning the Italian language.

**Informational support**: refers to the exchange of knowledge, facts, advice, or feedbacks. (Objectives: language tandem; guidance in discovering the city and opportunities in the area; accompaniment to institutions/associations).



**Emotional support**: related to empathetic behaviors, including the expression of care, sympathy, or concern. (Objectives: expanding the social network/building connections in the community; sharing common interests/hobbies; participation in social activities/events).

**Instrumental support**: this can take the form of practical and material support (objectives: educational support; legal and bureaucratic support; support in preparing for driving tests; support in finding accommodation; support in finding work; healthcare support; work-life balance).



**8,5** people (on average) that buddies talk about Community Matching.

1.500 matches,
more than 25.000
people directly engaged by
buddies in their networks

I like Community Matching because I found not only a buddy for the project, but a true friend with whom I can spend time, who helps me a lot with the language and helps me understand Italians and Italian culture. She is a very kind and friendly person, and we have a lot in common.

PRECIOUS, BUDDY REFUGEE, PARMA

+114% Expansion of volunteer buddies' social networks with refugees

+74% Expansion of relational networks with italian people by refugee buddies

+64% Increase in awareness of the reality of refugees in Italy by volunteer buddies after starting the Community Matching experience

+59% Increase in knowledge of Italian culture among refugee buddies after starting the Community Matching experience

Publication and dissemination of the research

"Uno più uno non fa due. Promuovere comunità interculturali: il Community Matching tra rifugiati e italiani": Chiara Marchetti's book, published by EditPress (Florence) at the end of 2024, presents the results of research carried out in 2023 which involved more than **300 Italian buddies and refugees**. Their testimonies highlight the inseparable link between personal well-being, the promotion of social cohesion and inclusive communities, the fight against racism and the development of new meaningful intercultural **bonds**. Moving from more personal experiences to the potential for change through encounter and, why not, conflict, to the impact on communities and cities, the book recounts the necessity and beauty of opening up to the many differences that surround us. Because, ultimately, intercultural bonds are an extraordinary training ground for citizenship and participation. Between late 2024 and early 2025, the book has already been presented in six cities and at two international conferences, as well as to national SAI projects (more than 200) and the Manifesto on an Inclusive University network (more than 10 universities) through inperson events and two online webinars.





Launched in June 2024, the Network aims to connect public and private actors that recognise Community Matching, and more generally civil society engagement practices, as a key factor in the integration of asylum seekers and refugees under international and temporary protection. It provides a space to connect existing and emerging initiatives, promote the exchange of practices, and contribute to the development and dissemination of a common model.

**2024** 

Eight organisations formalised their participation in the Network. 32 teams were trained in the CM methodology: Pietrangolo, Misericordia Certaldo, Misericordia Tavernelle, COP21, Oxfam, Coeso Empoli, Tahoma, Oxfam Intercultura, Rock your Life, Municipality of Ravenna, Municipality of Prato, Living Better - Ivrea, SAI Borgotaro (PR), 4 SAI teams from the province of Cuneo; SAI Putignano/Noci (BA), 3 teams in Genoa (2 SAI + 1 CAS), 1 team in Verona, SAI Schio - Vicenza, SAI Cesena, S. Tomaso network, SAI BG, SAI Levate and Osio, CAS Sudorno (BG); Casa Makeba (BO), Arca (BO), Vesta (Cidas/Asp Bologna).

<sub>in</sub> 2025

Several new teams are formalising their participation in the Network and, once trained, will begin directly implementing the CM methodology. The launch of the FAMI projects, expected in the second half of 2025, will provide further momentus in this regard.

Margherita is magnificent, we walk together, we talk every day... it seems strange to think about when she wasn't in my life.

PEACE, BUDDY REFUGEE, ROME

# **Looking ahead**

In 2024, the programme proved to be an effective tool for an increasingly diverse audience, regardless of their origin, legal status and stage of integration in Italy. A growing number of **asylum seekers**, often placed in reception systems with limited services, have benefited from early contact with the local community, facilitated by buddies who have expanded their opportunities for interaction and made the cities they are exploring more familiar.

Research evidence and analysis of integration indicators have encouraged the involvement of other refugee groups from the moment they arrive in Italy: after initial trials with refugees in **university corridors** (in Parma, Naples, Turin, Padua, Rome and Milan), in 2025 Community Matching will also be offered to the first refugees involved in **labor pathways**. Community Matching continues to be firmly rooted in the integration policies and practices pursued with local councils under the **Integration Charter** and the **Spazio Comune** programme. In agreement with **ANCI** and in the territorial protocols signed by UNHCR and partners with the municipalities of Turin, Bologna, Rome, Naples, Milan and other territories, the Community Matching programme is one of the main areas of collaboration. The **dissemination** of the methodology, through training, exchanges of practices and harmonisation of interventions, is taking root in new contexts and with new actors, thanks in part to the inclusion of Community Matching in the National Integration Plan and in the public notices of the AMIF Funds. By the end of 2025, we expect CM to take root in **at least 10 new cities** and to be implemented by at least **20 new local teams**.

# **Corporate Volunteering**

Thanks to the network of companies developed as part of the **Welcome – Working For ReFugee Integration** programme, over the last two years, interest from the private sector has proved to be a real driving force for the expansion and diversification of the programme's networks. Following initial trials in 2024, in 2025 several companies – including Orienta, Mediobanca, EY, SACE and DLA Piper – launched corporate volunteering programmes with CM, involving their employees in the role of buddies alongside refugees. This experience represents an innovative model of corporate social responsibility, capable of strengthening the inclusion of refugees and, at the same time, generating a positive impact within the corporate communities involved.

# **Labor Pathways**

They represent a specific regular entry channel which, through a legal provision known as the "extra quota" route, allows Italian companies to select and hire refugees upon completion of a training course carried out abroad. The labor pathways for refugees are the result of a process strongly supported by UNHCR, Diaconia Valdese, Talent Beyond Boundaries, and Pathways International, incollaboration with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour, and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. All refugees involved (around 70 people by 2025) are also offered the support of a buddy through the Community Matching programme.

We all share a responsibility and a role in building welcoming, inclusive, and supportive societies. You can contribute too, visit the website: www.buddy.unhcr.it





Special thanks to all those who chose to participate in the programme, contributing their skills, enthusiasm and commitment to building more open, inclusive and supportive communities together. Thanks to you, the programme continues to thrive as a vibrant and transformative experience!



### **CENTRAL COORDINATION**

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