# Community Matching

## *Communities and Refugees **Together** for Integration*

2025 RESULTS

***Building welcoming, supportive and inclusive communities.***




UNHCR Agenzia ONU per i Rifugiati

Refugees Welcome Italia

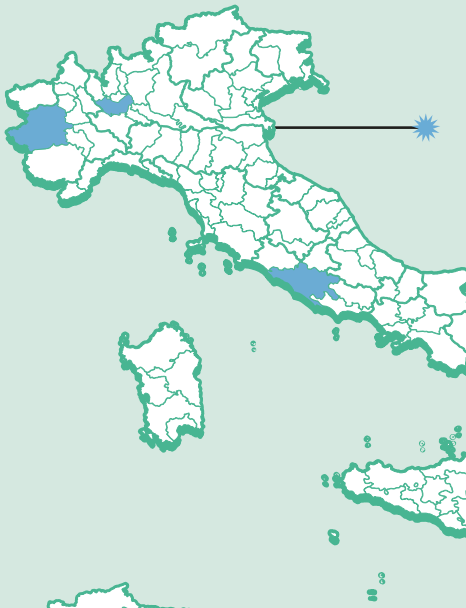
CIAC Centro immigrazione Asilo Cooperazione internazionale di Parma e provincia

With the support of otto per mille

SOKA GAKKAI ISTITUTO BUDDISTA ITALIANO

# The network

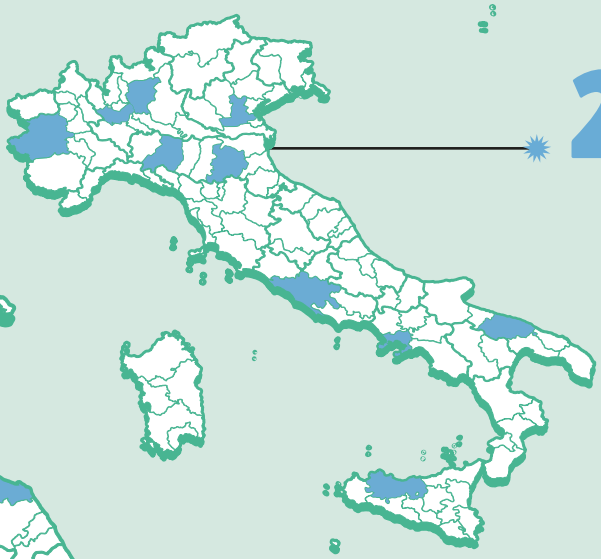
The ***Community Matching*** programme aims to connect refugees with volunteers who can support them along their integration pathways in Italy, helping to strengthen social networks and build welcoming and inclusive communities. The programme is based on a model that places ***social relationships at the heart*** of integration and social cohesion. To this end, it has developed and consolidated a methodology set out in the CM Toolkit and promoted the Community Matching Network, a space dedicated to disseminating the methodology and sharing good practices.



## 2021

**3 provinces**

(Bari, Turin, Rome)



## 2023

**10 provinces**

(Bari, Turin, Rome, Palermo, Milan, Naples, Parma, Bergamo, Bologna, Padua)



## 2026

**11 regions, 25 provinces, 53 municipalities**

**Ancona** (Senigallia); **Arezzo**; **Bari** (Bari, Gioia del Colle, Molfetta, Ruvo di Puglia and Corato); **Barletta-Andria-Trani** (Barletta, Trani and Bisceglie); **Bergamo** (Bergamo, Osio, Levate and Val Cavallina); **Bologna** (Bologna); **Brescia** (Brescia); **Campobasso** (Sepino); **Florence** (Empoli, Barberino Tavarnelle, Castelfiorentino, Certaldo, Fucecchio, Gambassi Terme, Montelupo Fiorentino, San Casciano in Val di Pesa and Empolese Valdelsa); **Forlì-Cesena** (Cesena); **Livorno** (Castagneto Carducci, Cecina, Piombino and Suvereto); **Milan** (Milan); **Naples** (Naples and Gragnano); **Padua**; **Palermo**; **Parma** (Parma, Fidenza and Valli Taro e Ceno); **Ravenna**; **Reggio Emilia**; **Rome**; **Taranto**; **Turin** (Turin, Chivasso, Ivrea, Canavese and Eporediese); **Treviso**; **Venice** (San Donà di Piave); **Verona**; **Vicenza** (Schio and Marano Vicentino).

## 30 organisations in the Network

ADL a Zavidovici, AMIS, ARCI Solidarietà Roma, ASP Cesena, ASP Città di Bologna, Caritas Roma – SAI Ferrhotel, Casa della Gioventù, CIDAS, Comune di Bologna, Comune di Sepino, Consorzio Fantasia, Consorzio Matrix / SAI Gragnano (NA), Consorzio Solco Città Aperta, Coeso Empoli, Coop 21, Cooperativa Ekopra, Cooperativa Ruah, Etnie Onlus, Il Mondo nella Città, Isola Lginet, La Pietra d'Angolo, Mondo Nuovo, Nemo Informa Città, Oasi 2, One Bridge To, Oxfam, SAI Padova, Tahomà, Una casa per l'uomo and Vesta.



# Participant profiles

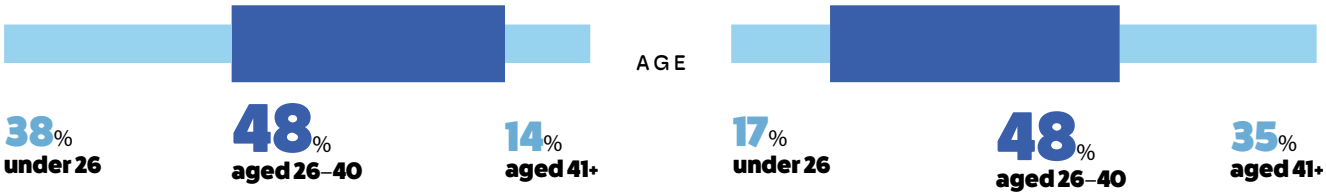
## Refugees

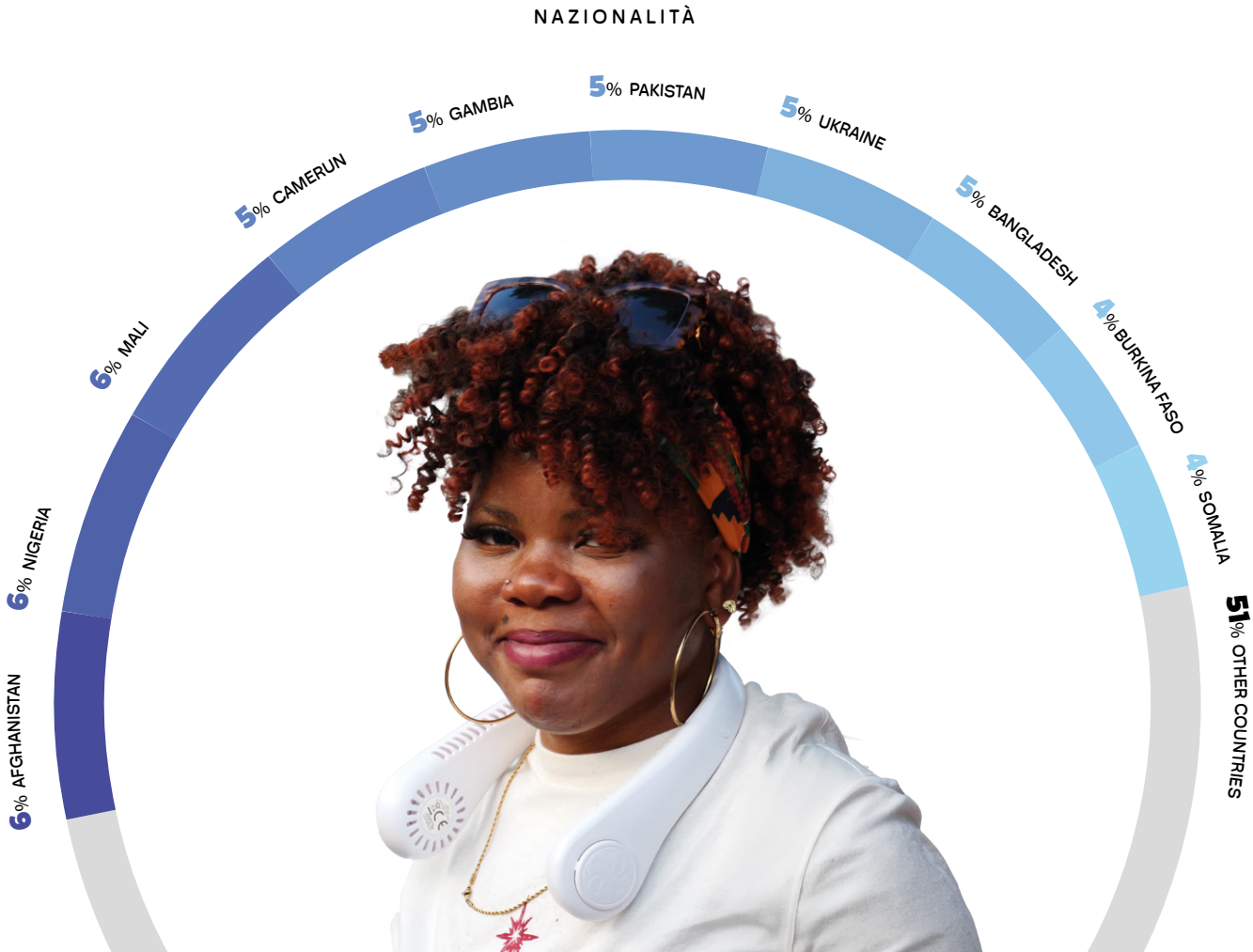
The refugees involved come from more than ***50 countries***. They are predominantly men (65%) and relatively young: only 14% are over 40. Countries of origin are highly diverse: the ten most represented countries account for 51% of participants overall. Afghanistan, Nigeria and Mali are the most common nationalities (6% each), while asylum seekers continue to represent a substantial share of participants (38%).

## Volunteers

Women clearly predominate among volunteers (74%). The age distribution is more balanced and, on average, older than among refugee buddies: 48% are aged 26–40 and 35% are over 40. There is also a significant, although minority, presence of volunteers with a migration background: around 10% have a foreign nationality or dual citizenship.



# Matches

**Between 2022 and June 2026, 2.002 matches were started in 20 cities**

| | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 JAN-JUN | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 358 | 467 | 532 | 427 | 218 | |
| BARI | 13 | 21 | 30 | 15 | 5 | 84 |
| BERGAMO | 0 | 26 | 33 | 26 | 9 | 94 |
| BOLOGNA | 0 | 20 | 45 | 37 | 16 | 118 |
| MILAN | 98 | 74 | 94 | 74 | 42 | 382 |
| NAPLES | 25 | 45 | 48 | 40 | 14 | 172 |
| PADUA | 0 | 30 | 29 | 36 | 19 | 114 |
| PALERMO | 28 | 25 | 23 | 10 | 2 | 88 |
| PARMA | 24 | 65 | 59 | 39 | 12 | 199 |
| ROMA | 110 | 97 | 100 | 86 | 48 | 441 |
| TURIN | 60 | 52 | 60 | 42 | 19 | 233 |
| RAVENNA | 0 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 12 | 24 |
| OTHER LOCATIONS | 0 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 20 | 53 |



> ***The impact of the project goes beyond the one-to-one relationship. I have spoken about it with friends who then decided to sign up as buddies themselves, with colleagues, with people I happened to meet and with potential employers.***
>
> N., VOLUNTEER BUDDY, ROME





# Match objectives

In the Start-up Agreement, buddies define the objectives of the match. These are grouped into four categories of social and language support.

## 1 INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT

Exchange of knowledge, facts, advice or feedback (objectives: language tandem; support in discovering the city and local opportunities; accompaniment to organisations/associations).

**19%**

## 2 EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Expressions of care, empathy or concern (objectives: expanding social networks/building local ties; sharing common interests/hobbies; taking part in social activities/events).

**34%**



## 3 INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT

Practical and material support (objectives: support with education and training; legal and administrative support; support in preparing for the driving licence test; housing search support; job search support; healthcare support; work-life balance).

**25%**

## 4 SUPPORT IN LEARNING ITALIAN

**23%**



> ***My understanding of Italian culture has increased thanks to our meetings, conversations and shared activities. My buddy helped me improve my Italian, understand everyday expressions and better understand how people communicate here.***
>
> B., REFUGEE BUDDY, NAPLES

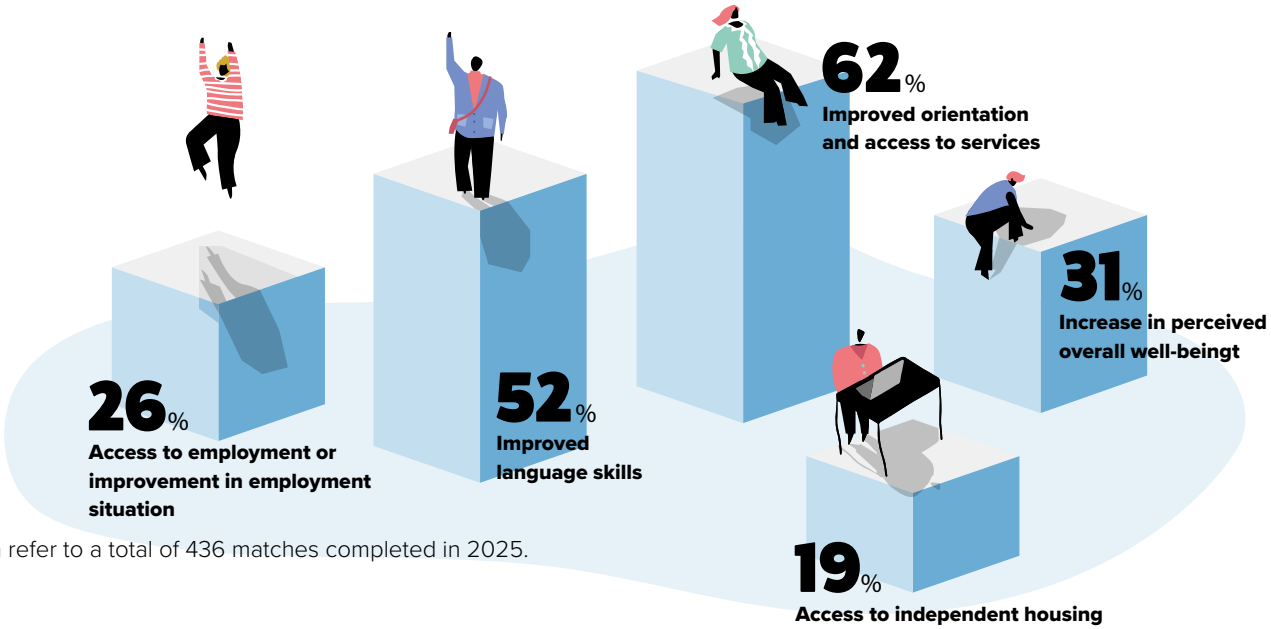


# Impact on participants

RESULTS ACHIEVED SIX MONTHS AFTER THE START OF THE MATCH*

## Integration pathways

Monitoring based on ***20 consolidated indicators*** shows positive and stable results over time.




*Data refer to a total of 436 matches completed in 2025.

## Empowerment and participation

Community Matching fosters individual and collective empowerment by strengthening relational and language skills and participants' ability to navigate the local area. A growing number of refugee and volunteer participants take on active roles as community facilitators or buddies, contributing to the local sustainability of the programme and extending its impact beyond the one-to-one relationship. Overall, around ***120 community facilitators*** supported local teams by helping to organise events, carrying out informal monitoring and providing support for more complex matches.

> ***It was an essential experience that changed my perspective, and it does not end when the match ends.***
>
> H., VOLUNTEER BUDDY, ROME

## Cultural knowledge

End-of-match questionnaires show a significant increase in mutual knowledge. In 2025, the average increase, expressed as a percentage of the scale used, was approximately ***+61% for refugees and +63% for volunteers***.

## Impact on communities

Participation in Community Matching significantly expands social networks for both refugees and volunteer buddies. ***In 2025, volunteers' network of contacts with refugees increased by an average of +48%, while refugees' networks with Italian citizens increased by +42%.*** The experience facilitates access to new places, settings and relationships, helping to build a more inclusive and shared relational geography.



# Methodology and recognition

The programme has developed and consolidated a methodology set out in the CM Toolkit, which has received institutional recognition at national level (National Integration Plan, AMIF calls for proposals, agreement with ANCI, Integration Charter, Manifesto on an Inclusive Universities) and internationally (Global Compact on Refugees, UNHCR Global and EU Consultations, Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, European Migration Network international conference and several AMIF-funded projects). Community Matching is also included in the recommendations of the study Integration Between Challenges and Opportunities: Socio-Economic Conditions of Refugees, carried out by Lattanzio KIBS and FIERI in collaboration with UNHCR and published in 2025.



# Collaboration with other programmes

## Corporate volunteering

In recent years, Community Matching has also benefited from corporate volunteering initiatives. Ernst & Young, Orienta and Mediobanca, EOS–Edison, Decathlon, Amplifon, DLA Piper, SACE, Rotary and Rotaract have offered their employees the opportunity to volunteer alongside refugees.

## Universities

Collaboration with universities is particularly widespread and mainly involves protocols linked to ***university corridors (UNICORE)***, with matches set up for students arriving through this pathway. It also includes participation in research, teaching and awareness-raising activities, as well as curricular internships developed in synergy with Community Matching teams.

## Labour pathways for refugees

In 2025 and 2026, Community Matching supported the first beneficiaries arriving through labour pathways (12 matches set up among the 25 refugees who arrived during the year, plus 16 virtual buddies activated to support Italian-language learning in the pre-departure phase), confirming the flexibility of the model also within regular mobility pathways. The first refugees matched in 2025 - for whom indicators are therefore available at least six months after the start of the match - more than doubled their average level of local orientation (knowledge of local services and resources: approximately +113%), and their Italian language proficiency improved significantly in every case, by one or even two levels.



> ***The Community Matching team works to foster mutual understanding, helping local people get to know us better and helping us feel at home in this new place. [...] My buddy became my closest friend, the person I can trust to share my concerns about life with.***
>
> A., REFUGEE BUDDY, BERGAMO



> *It was a difficult time because I felt isolated, without family or friends around me. It is not easy to meet new people in a place where you do not know anyone. Activities such as Community Matching can have a much greater impact on people than one might imagine.*
>
> A., REFUGEE BUDDY, BERGAMO


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