



NEWLY ARRIVED IN A COMMON HOME

**BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF DIASPORA
STAKEHOLDERS AS COMMUNITY AGENTS
FOR THE INCLUSION OF NEWLY-ARRIVED
MIGRANTS**

Italian report (Perugia)

Tamat

Agreement Number: 957999 - NEAR - AMIF - 2019 - AG - CALL



CO-FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION'S ASYLUM,
MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION FUND



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Forewords | 2 |
| 1. Taking into account diaspora communities in selecting target areas..... | 4 |
| 2. Outreach and early engagement | 6 |
| 3. Identification of needs and final selection..... | 7 |
| 4. Organization of content for the training programme | 10 |
| 5. Training methods and tools | 11 |
| 6. On-going engagement of CAs | 13 |
| 7. Co-creation of communication campaigns and tools to best target newly-arrived migrants | 13 |

Forewords

NEAR (NEwly ARrived in a common home) is a European project that aims at fostering social orientation of newly arrived migrants during their settlement in the receiving countries. Funded under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), NEAR activates a process of mutual trust, knowledge and cross-cultural transfer between migrants and local communities, building a sense of belonging of “a new common home”.

The project is highly context-specific and offers a unique approach towards integration at local level in four target areas (Lisbon, Nicosia, Perugia, Milan) that cater to different groups of migrant beneficiaries and combines multiple strands of activities: building the capacity of and empowering diaspora stakeholders, facilitating access to services and labour market entry for asylum seekers and international protection holders, strengthening inclusion levels of newly arrived children, and enhancing orientation and opportunities for newly arrived university students.

NEAR is coordinated by Fondazione ISMU (Italy) and is implemented in partnership with Tamat NGO (Italy), CARDET NGO (Cyprus), AIDGLOBAL (Portugal) and the Catholic University of Milan (Italy).

Capacity building and empowerment of diaspora stakeholders (named “Community Agents, CAs”) plays a central role in the NEAR approach. Since the early start of the project, partners mapped diaspora and other migrant stakeholders in the four cities to identify the most suitable neighbourhood. After setting up an outreach campaign, they organised consultation meetings with interested diaspora stakeholders to identify the knowledge gaps and needs and co-design training programmes on relevant public, private and non-profit integration services by also partnering up with key service providers at local level.

This report takes stock of a year-long outreach, training and engagement of diaspora stakeholders. In doing so, it aims to facilitate the transfer of experiences, tools, knowledge and practices for organizations, practitioners and other interested groups to build the capacity of and empower diaspora communities as actors in the integration of newly-arrived migrants at local level.

1. Taking into account diaspora communities in selecting target areas

We then examined the overall data for the city of Perugia regarding the presence of citizens from third countries: the sources of the National Institute of Statistics show the presence of 21691 foreign citizens in a population of 166030 inhabitants, about 13% of the population. According to ISTAT data¹, the foreign population has increased by an average of 0.7% each year since 2011².

The population of foreign origin residing in the Municipality of Perugia, which in terms of extension corresponds more or less to the urban fabric of the city itself, is broken down as follows according to the registry data collected (in the census reported here the Municipality analyses the data of citizens of non-Italian nationality, including, as can be seen, also citizens of EU countries):

| Zone sub-comunali | Totale Res. Stranieri | Cittadinanza più presente n. |
|---|-----------------------|--|
| 1 Centro storico Porta sole | 2.703 | CINESE 375 RUMENA 228 ALBANESE 171 |
| 2 Centro storico Porta San Pietro | 3.797 | RUMENA 613 ECUADOREGNA 576 FILIPPINA 296 |
| 3 Stazione/Madonna Alta | 3.869 | RUMENA 726 ECUADOREGNA 619 ALBANESE 340 |
| 4 S. Marco | 845 | RUMENA 133 ALBANESE 112 UCRAINA 93 |
| 5 Ponte Pattoli | 649 | MAROCCHINA 147 ALBANESE 119 RUMENA 86 |
| 6 Ponte Felcino | 2.290 | ALBANESE 428 RUMENA 422 MAROCCHINA 348 |
| 7 Ponte Valleceppi | 610 | ALBANESE 134 RUMENA 79 MAROCCHINA 67 |
| 8 Ponte S.Giovanni | 2.473 | RUMENA 467 ALBANESE 383 MAROCCHINA 234 |
| 9 S.Martino in Colle | 751 | RUMENA 165 ALBANESE 78 ECUADOREGNA 78 |
| 10 S.Sisto | 1.903 | RUMENA 355 ALBANESE 255 ECUADOREGNA 203 |
| 11 Castel del Piano | 1.596 | RUMENA 350 ALBANESE 290 ECUADOREGNA 203 |
| 12 Ripa | 329 | RUMENA 98 MAROCCHINA 66 ALBANESE 64 |
| 13 Solfagnano Parlesca | 299 | RUMENA 66 MAROCCHINA 60 ALBANESE 40 |

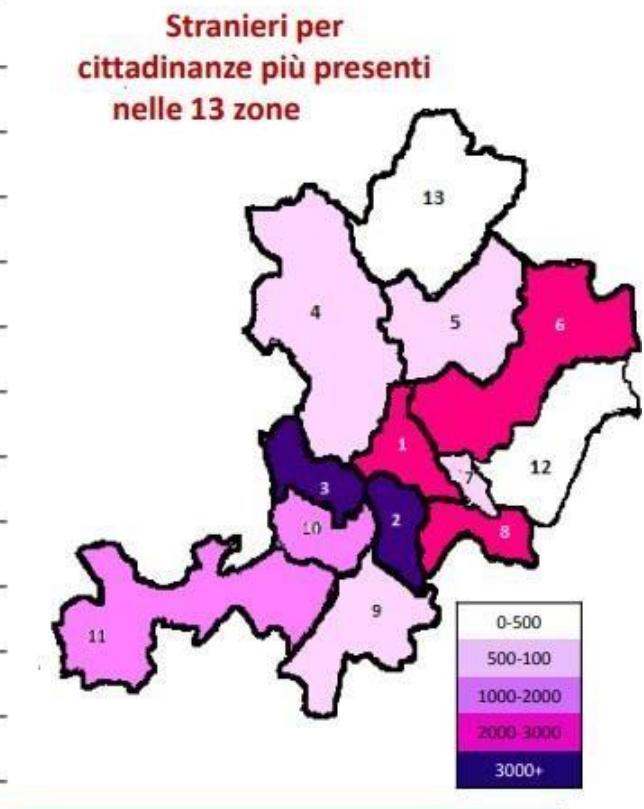


Figure 1 Perugia: how the city changes over time. Focus on neighbourhoods, Municipality of Perugia, 2019

Based on this, we further chose to focus our activities in the areas with the highest residence of foreign citizens as well as in the areas of the city where they transit for work, access to services and daily activities, i.e. zones 1, 2, 3 and 8.

¹ ISTAT, Data updated 01/01/2022, <http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?QueryId=26562>

² ISTAT, The permanent population census in Umbria, 17/02/2021, https://www.istat.it/it/files//2021/02/Censimento-permanente-della-popolazione_Umbria.pdf

In the areas indicated, we mapped institutions and public services aimed at newly arrived migrants (Prefecture, Police Headquarters, Social Services of the Municipality of Perugia), associations and organisations that could facilitate the process of integration on the territory (managing bodies of reception centres for refugees and asylum seekers, associations and patronages that provide support in the presentation of applications for renewal of documents, after-school care, student associations and neighbourhood associations). After mapping the services for the early integration of migrants, we decided to extend the area of intervention also to area 6, home to one of the largest reception centres in the city of Perugia.

In mapping the diaspora associations, we chose to start from the data on the Ministerial website www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it³, expanding it with the relationships already established by the professional experience of TAMAT, its collaborators and stakeholders. We chose to work through the personal and professional contacts of each of the actors involved, enhancing word of mouth as a practice of involvement, because in a small to medium-sized city like Perugia, social relations are still the basis for building institutional relationships between private actors. In the final choice of the associations we decided to involve, however, a peculiarity must be pointed out with respect to the other stakeholders: formal and informal associations were mapped, whose headquarters are not necessarily in the urban fabric of Perugia, but those who only carry out activities there were also included.

Strengths:

- The data on foreign citizens resident in the city of Perugia are easily available on the portal of the National Institute of Statistics, which is updated every year.
- the data on the distribution within the municipality were relatively easy to access, but not always up to date with the latest statistics;
- High concentration of services for third-country nationals in the identified areas, including places of gathering and daily activities (e.g. ethnic food)
- Good cooperation between the associations present, knowledge and prior links between the members of the various organisations. Ease of dialogue and creation of coordination tables.

Criticalities:

- Perugia is a relatively small city, a large area had to be identified (as already planned)
- Initially, little response from public institutions. Time and effective activities improved this condition.

³ <https://integrazionemigranti.gov.it/it-it/Ricerca-Associazioni>

2. Outreach and early engagement

As a formal definition of diaspora, we have taken into account the United Nations' publication "Strategy to Enable, Engage and Empower Diaspora". IOM refers to diaspora "as transnational communities, [...] they comprise people who are connected to more than one country. The transnational nature of diaspora implies that these people are crucial when it comes to connecting countries and communities, because they can call on multiple networks, relate to different identities and share a sense of belonging to more than one community"⁴.

We have chosen this definition, among the many, because it breaks down the concept of identification with the geographical space of origin and opens up an innumerable number of ideal places of identification. In this sense, it was possible to expand and enhance not only geographical origin, but also adherence to religious principles, ethnicity or values that go beyond the political definition of borders. Based on this assumption, we involved multicultural, political and confessional organisations in the mapping process, thus seeking to have in front of us not only a mapping of associations but also a multiplicity of identities.

A further principle in the selection process was the degree to which each association is rooted in and active in the area: to be a centre for linking various cultures, it is not enough to know them, but it is necessary to experience them and deal with them.

Diaspora organisations, in this sense, offered an excellent basis for surveying the needs of migrant communities present in Perugia, which were mostly conducted online, for reasons related to the pandemic.

With regard to the identification of CAs, we took into account the names that came to us from all the stakeholders involved, without using tools other than word of mouth. As mentioned above, the size and population of the city rewards this kind of approach. We therefore looked for people who were already working on the integration of third-country nationals and whose professional skills could already cover the widest range of accompanying services. Gender issues are also taken into high consideration, trying to involve as many identities as possible. The basic aim was to set up a multidisciplinary and multicultural team that could work as an informal association for cultural mediation and accompaniment of the integration process. In the individual interviews, during which we tried to bring out the profiles that interested us most, the project was presented as an opportunity to strengthen skills and as a pilot for the choice of a professional and project path as an autonomous work group.

Strengths:

- large number of stakeholders and extremely heterogeneous group in terms of profiles: nationality, religious denomination, gender

⁴ International Organization for Migration, IOM's Strategy to Enable, Engage and Empower Diaspora

- good level of integration of candidates on the territory, in some cases already carrying out cultural mediation activities
- good adherence to the general idea of group planning. In this sense, the intention is to continue to strengthen the group and individual skills through tutoring and coordination of the working team.
- The methodology for researching and engaging with CAs paid off in terms of adherence to the project and understanding of the activity to be undertaken.
- Good response of stakeholders in engaging in the search for possible candidates.

Criticalities:

- The need to negotiate the timing of the training courses on the basis of the CA's professional commitments. This led to meetings being held with difficulty and on days too far apart.
- Demand for fees: Some of the selected participants had to refuse due to our projected inability to pay for their mediation work. In this sense we had to give up involving some of the best profiles

3. Identification of needs and final selection

As far as the needs analysis is concerned, and thus mainly on which topics to focus the training and enhance the skills of the selected CA, we relied on the meetings held with the diaspora communities. In particular, in a series of 10 meetings, involving 12 associations, we asked those who participated to present us with the main difficulties their members had encountered in their personal integration process or on which topics and why the associations focused their activities. We chose the associations, and not the future CAs, because associations are able to offer a broader panorama than individuals.

A wide range of needs emerged from the meetings, from the need to set up a territorial network that would be able to present the references for issuing documents upon arrival and, therefore, a greater connection between public institutions and civil society organisations, the need for new narratives on migrants, on the reason for migrating and on deconstructing the propaganda rhetoric that for years has afflicted, and in many cases still afflicts, the territorial context of the city of Perugia and the Italian context in general.

The issue of housing was a cross-cutting one, touched on by all the associations. A great deal of unease emerged in terms of the possibility of obtaining decent housing in terms of quality and cost; there was an opportunity to reflect on the lack of control by public institutions over the conditions governing the housing market, a world in which highly discriminatory dynamics and speculation reign.

Surprising, in positive terms and in terms of awareness of the difficulties that a migrant encounters, was the emergence of the need for correct information and that, in some cases, it is fellow countrymen themselves who are the architects of distortions for reasons of personal gain or the inclusion of people in exploitative dynamics.

The interviews carried out further convinced us of how good the choice of the criteria for selecting the participants was: we needed people prepared in many fields, active in the territory, respected for their professional skills and who had a good territorial network to refer to. Moreover, because of the particularity of some migratory paths, one's own personal history of migration is fundamental, having passed through similar life experiences builds an important bond of sharing with the beneficiary of the mediation activity. Obviously, another essential point was to involve people who spoke as many languages as possible. In this sense, the selection criteria for each CA had to be relevant and complementary to the others selected. The aim was to build a team that would be able to intervene in as many contexts as possible.

However, the CA participated in the selection interviews in order to identify needs. We encouraged the sharing of professional experiences, so as to build a pathway targeted on the group that would participate in the lesson. We then decided to submit to each one the findings of what emerged from the associations and asked them to integrate.

We list what emerged from those who already work professionally in cultural mediation:

- Greater attention to gender issues is needed in health care. In many cases, ethnoclinical interventions are needed to avoid errors of judgement due to misunderstandings. This emerged from the testimony of two Algerian mediators, who in the past offered to accompany Arab-speaking migrant women to the consultancies. They shared what they had seen during this previous experience: they described the situation of two women waiting for counselling at the counselling centre. They were there for two different reasons: one of them was waiting

for checks to evaluate the progress of her pregnancy, the other one was there to terminate it. The absence of mediators in the previous interviews had meant that the doctors had not understood the intentions of the former and were carrying out all the necessary examinations to terminate the pregnancy. The intervention of the mediators ensured that this process was interrupted and that the woman was able to go ahead with the pregnancy in the way she had hoped.

- Lack of professional recognition of mediators: in Italy there are no training courses that guarantee qualifications. This leads in many cases to people who are not able to carry out this activity.
- Lack of economic recognition of mediators: as the profession does not exist, mediators in many cases have to accept unrewarding economic conditions. This leads them in many cases to choose other professional paths in the long run, resulting in a loss of knowledge and competence capital.

Moreover, since most of CAs were asylum seekers, and they themselves suggested to us, during the preliminary meetings, that it would be necessary to have a specific focus on the legislative part related to immigration, mainly to the asylum application process.

Strengths:

- great willingness of diaspora associations to share needs
- a large number of shared elements for the construction of a comprehensive training and project pathway
- Detection of the need to work also on the construction of empowerment paths for the professional figure of the cultural mediator.

Criticalities:

- Emergence of the need for stringent and broad selection criteria to ensure the effectiveness of CA activities.
- In perspective, the lack of adequate professional and economic recognition will presumably lead some of the ACs to change professions.

4. Organization of content for the training programme

Given the wide range of needs that emerged in the previous meetings and in order to enhance the skills of the selected CA, we chose to have 4 meetings, 3 training modules of 8 hours on the themes that emerged and on team building and 1 workshop for the development of the Unconventional Map.

With regard to the training modules, we decided to cover the planned 24 hours of training in as few meetings as possible. Many of the Cas would have had to take time off work to be present, so we tried to reduce these days to a minimum, agreeing them with the whole group via a WhatsApp group.

The contents of the CA training programme were chosen, as mentioned before, on the basis of the needs of the users present in the territory, since most of them were asylum seekers, and they themselves suggested to us that it would be necessary to have a specific focus on the whole legislative part related to immigration, mainly to the asylum application process. For this reason, we chose to contact ASGI (Associazione studi giuridici sull'immigrazione - Association for legal studies on immigration) was involved for this part and "lent" us lawyers who have been working for years specifically on international protection and have numerous cases related to appeals of asylum applications denied by the Territorial Commission. ASGI decided to collaborate due to close professional relationships with some of the collaborators appointed by TAMAT and due to knowledge of some of the CAs that would take part in the training.

The second meeting dealt with another fundamental topic: healthcare, both from the bureaucratic point of view and in terms of accompanying people to services. Here we had the opportunity to involve of a gynecologist who has worked for years between Africa and Italy and is one of the few experts in the field of female genital Mutilation.

The final part of the training focused on the main public and private reception services for new arrivals and how they work, and on the construction of the conventional and unconventional map.

Thanks to the good level of skills already acquired by the CAs, time was allowed for informal moments. During these moments, some of the issues raised in the individual interviews emerged, in particular on the professional and economic recognition of the figure of the cultural mediator. It was interesting to observe how there was no group conscience among them, even though they work in the same profession. The TAMAT collaborators tried to stimulate reflection on this by organising a real moment of collective bargaining. The meeting, in which we did not participate directly, was well received both in terms of economic demand (well-balanced in terms of accessibility to the service and decent for the mediator) and in terms of building a cohesive group.

An interesting finding during an informal moment among the trainers was that, at the end of the day, the participants did not have a great need for capacity building (although it was useful) but for empowerment of the group and, more broadly, of the professional category.

Strengths:

- good strategy developed for the organisation of training sessions due to the high level of collaboration and interest of CAs
- good participation of local stakeholders in the training sessions
- activities to strengthen networking between TAMAT, stakeholders and CAs
- informal moments: group building and enhancing perspectives as a professional category

Criticalities:

- Initial difficulties in organising the sessions: All CAs who have other work activities in parallel, all of whom have families, and also the commitments as external consultants.
- The prospect of forming as a formal mediation group was not reached

5. Training methods and tools

During the meetings, the trainers made use of a variety of teaching methods capable of responding to the needs and requests of the workshop participants. The workshops alternated between frontal lessons, cooperative learning, peer-to-peer learning, role play and individual exercises.

Each module began with a circle time, during which the trainers shared the themes, objectives and methods of carrying out the workshops; the circle time was also an opportunity to identify the needs and expectations of the workshop participants with regard to the training pathway undertaken and to bring out skills and knowledge they already possessed. As far as the frontal lessons are concerned, an attempt was made to make them as dynamic and interactive as possible. The trainers produced slides that could facilitate the transmission of knowledge and alternated the more theoretical/notational moments with the presentation of examples and good practices; this not only added a concrete aspect to the topics dealt with, but also demonstrated the usability of the knowledge that was being acquired, thus strengthening the level of engagement of the participants in the workshop. Each moment of frontal lesson was followed by a feedback moment, in the form of a plenary discussion. The second part of each meeting was more specifically a workshop. By means of cooperative learning, peer-to-peer learning and role-playing activities, the participants tried to consolidate the theoretical knowledge they had learnt, but also, transversally, to work on the skills of leadership, team work and team building, problem solving and effective communication. At the end of each module there was a moment of feedback in which the results achieved during the meetings were shared and the participants were asked whether and to what extent the skills acquired during the course had enriched the individual tools for the construction of their CA figure. A final consideration on the didactic methodologies adopted is that as far as the group that took part in the workshops was concerned, the use of multiple, dynamic and interactive didactic methodologies, each time calibrated on the participants' levels of response, broadened the range of languages that could be used (from dramatisation to formal language, from drawing to non-verbal communication) and allowed the creation of a dynamic and inclusive learning space.

Given what emerged during the informal moments highlighted in the previous section, we had the opportunity to discuss whether, when directly involved in project activities, they needed compensation at least for transport. The CAs agreed, especially those living in other cities. As for the others, TAMAT staff considered the possibility of picking them up directly and accompanying them (on the occasions when staff are also involved in activities).

6. On-going engagement of CAs

At the end of the lessons, a vehicle not only for knowledge but also for the construction and strengthening of professional bonds, it was decided to keep the collaboration between the group and the staff open, in a condition of mutual facilitation of exchange of knowledge that also went beyond the terms of participation in the project activities. To date, contacts remain constant between the CAs and between the CAs and the staff. We have tried and succeeded in every way to facilitate the exchange of information also during the execution of other assignments in order to strengthen collaboration, knowledge and the sharing of opportunities.

With regard to the direct activities carried out within NEAR, as mentioned above, the group now works as an informal mediation agency with specialists in different fields. The fields of application of the knowledge acquired and the terms of intervention were defined according to the professional inclinations of each of the participants. In practical terms, the group was divided into different intervention teams based on the different types of beneficiaries in the project. This allows each of them to enter more and more into the dynamics of the activities, suggesting in many cases possible beneficiaries to be taken in charge or orientation strategies. By increasing the degree of participation within the specific activities, it allowed the project to be more pervasive on the territory, reaching beneficiaries and organisations with whom they were already in contact, thus expanding the number of stakeholders participating in the project.

The cohesion with the CAs group also led to collaborations outside the project area, collaborating in taking care of recipients in other activities or providing mediation in other contexts.

Strengths:

- Cohesive, professionally prepared and highly motivated team

Criticalities:

- As before, CA is a voluntary activity. The lack of possibility of remuneration could affect its sustainability. The solution has yet to be identified.

7. Co-creation of communication campaigns and tools to best target newly-arrived migrants

In structuring the communication campaign and devising tools to improve the taking in charge of migrants who have just moved to the urban context of Perugia, the CAs worked on making a large number of people aware of the project activities, focusing however on the valorisation of their training and professional paths, on the shared planning of activities and on the valorisation of the informal networks they had developed during their stay in Italy.

Concerning the workshop on the development of the unconventional map, we had difficulties to involve the whole group in one day, so we are getting individual feedback in their residual moments from work or other activities. The dimensions addressed were mainly those related to remembering, reliving experiences characterising their integration pathway.