

# Milan

## A migration hot spot developing long-term solutions

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# 1. Abstract and Takeaways

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## Key Takeaways:

# 1

Milan demonstrates a complex and multifaceted collaboration between public authorities and civil society in inclusion policy.

# 2

Integrated social services: The city is reorganising its social services around the concept of vulnerability and inclusion, to be addressed to its whole population.

## What is unique about the city?

**From emergency reactions to long-term solutions:** The main challenge for Milan over the last years involved the need to shift from an emergency approach to long-term inclusion solutions. Milan responded with a strategy that later became known as the “Milan model,” a welcoming system which seems to be significantly more open and efficient than the national average. Being a city of migration for a long time, Milan is still attracting people for its socio-cultural and economic resources. The last two left-leaning administrations have invested in a range of social and economic policies, directed to supporting migrant and refugee inclusion.

## What is the focus of local migration policies?

Innovation in multiple areas: Milan has an active administration and civil society that experiments with innovative approaches in multiple areas: the process of including migrants and refugees, service provision, health and social support, access to jobs, and collaboration with central government in the local management of reception centres.

## What are the key factors?

**A left administration meets thriving civic engagement:** The Milan welcoming system’s development has been possible under the mandates of two left-leaning administrations. The first was under former mayor Giuliano Pisapia (2011-2016), and then current mayor Giuseppe Sala (2016-), with the active participation of an engaged third sector. Public administration in Milan is committed to working on inclusion and to responding to the changing demands of refugees arriving and residing in Milan. Close cooperation between public institutions, local NGOs, and migrant communities is considered essential to improving social support and local services.

## What are the most outstanding results so far?

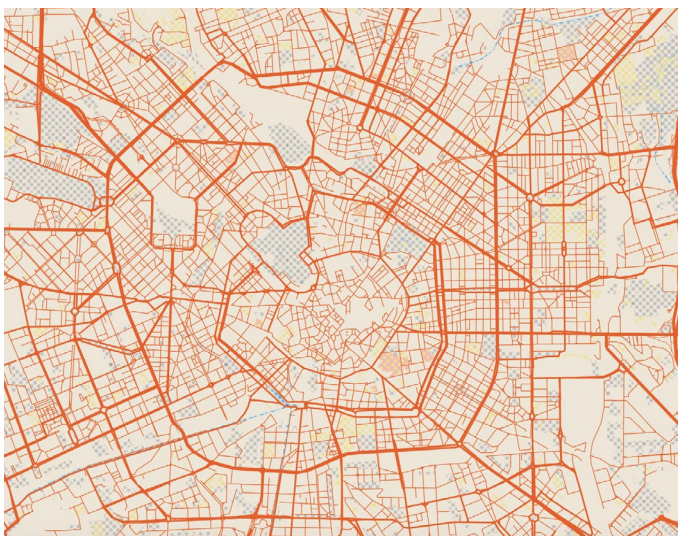
**Increased access to job markets and special programs for minors and families:** The Celav (Centro di Mediazione Lavoro) centre supports the introduction of foreign workers into the job market, targeting all unemployed who are resident in Milan, with a special focus on particularly disadvantaged groups such as persons with a disability and ethnic minorities. Second, a Service Centre for Unaccompanied Migrant Minors is an innovative, multifunctional centre entirely dedicated to unaccompanied migrant minors' needs. And third, a family reunification service supports family members who received authorisation for family reunification, as well as newly reunited families in Milan.

## Political activities and advocacy beyond the city level

Milan invested in building a public image of an inclusive city internationally, profiting from exchanges with other municipalities in Europe and worldwide. The city positioned itself against the restrictive policies of former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, such as by joining the “Comuni Disobbedienti” campaign (Disobedient municipalities) in 2018. It is part of several national and international networks in favour of a more inclusive migration policy. It also joined the EU Urban Agenda of Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees in 2020.

**“Milan is a community of peace and tolerance, seeking to become a capital of freedom where the responsibility to welcome and include migrants is a top priority.”**

(Giuseppe Sala, Mayor of Milan)



### Population

1.398.765

### Location/ Region

Milan is the capital of the Northern Italian region of Lombardy.

### Mayor

Giuseppe Sala (Green Europe)

## 2. Local background and context

*The city of Milan has historically been a city of migration since the post-war economic boom in Italy. Workers came from Southern Italy looking for jobs, and better opportunities in education and life. Today, Milan is still attracting people for its socio-cultural and economic resources and the last two leftist administrations have invested in a range of social and economic policies directed to support inclusion of migrants and refugees.*

In the last decade, the influx of newcomers has been staggering with two major events, namely the Syrian war after 2011 and the reintroduction of EU border controls by neighbouring countries in 2016. These events which impacted Italian cities dramatically, have led to an urgent need to find effective reception measures. The development of the Milan welcoming system has been possible under the mandates of two leftist administrations under mayor Giuliano Pisapia (2011-2016) and mayor Giuseppe Sala (2016-), with the active participation of a fervent third sector. The main challenge that Milan has been experiencing in the last years, being a city of both transit and destination for asylum-seekers, was the need to shift from an emergency approach to longer-term solutions for integration. Milan responded with a strategy which became known as the “Milan model,” a welcoming system that’s more open and efficient compared to the national situation.<sup>1</sup>

### The Milan Model: From emergency approaches to long-term solutions

The “Milan model” can be summarised by three approaches: The first policy approach responds to the immediate emergency of newcomers and follows a “stop-and-go approach.” The city functions as a service provider for the “transitanti,” or people allowed to stay in Italy for a short period of time without immediately asking for international protection. During the Syrian emergency, the city of Milan was considered a stop-over towards the most appealing Nordic countries for people fleeing the Syrian war, who had mostly skipped hot spot identification. Migrants mostly gathered in the areas around the railway station and first aid was guaranteed by local volunteers and NGOs inside municipal reception structures, such as the Sammartini Hub, established in 2016 and managed by the non-profit Progetto Arca Foundation.<sup>2</sup> The city’s approach was therefore to offer first aid, guidance, and shelter to people who were not willing to apply for long term staffing in Italy or in Milan. It is estimated that, from 2013 to 2017, immigrants accommodated in Milan’s territory were around 125,500, many of which stayed in the Sammartini Hub (approximately 700 guests per night).<sup>3</sup>

The second policy approach concerns what can be called the “readiness towards long-term integration.” The city reorganised its services following the reintroduction of border controls by neighbouring countries in 2016. Because of the new political situation, the welcoming structures previously put in place were not sufficient to host the growing presence

<sup>1</sup> Bini, V., Gambazza, G. (2019) ‘The reception of asylum seekers in urban areas: the case of the city of Milan’, *Belgeo - Revue belge de géographie*, 1:2019.

<sup>2</sup> In 2017, Sammartini Hub was shut down and converted into a CAS (Centro di Accoglienza Straordinario - Extraordinary Reception Center). <http://www.vita.it/it/article/2017/05/10/hub-sammartini-addio-ora-e-un-centro-daccoglienza-per-rifugiati/143311/>

<sup>3</sup> Bini, V., Gambazza, G. (2019) ‘The reception of asylum seekers in urban areas: the case of the city of Milan’, *Belgeo - Revue belge de géographie*, 1:2019.

of newcomers in the city. Since 2017, when asylum applications began to increase in Italy, the City of Milan developed a new reception approach, by including ready-to-use services dedicated to integration, such as professional training, volunteering activities and, above all, Italian language courses. At that time, a special agreement, unique in Italy, was established between the municipality and the Prefectures, allowing the management of the Extraordinary Reception Centers (CAS - Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria, usually managed by the central government through the Prefectures), by the municipality of Milan itself.

The third policy approach is “integrating services” together with civil society actors, which are crucial in the city’s social fabric and a distinctive feature of the “Milan model.” The municipality succeeded in reinforcing a multi-stakeholder coalition and co-production to face new emergencies, such as the ongoing pandemic crisis. As a consequence, the city is reorganising its services around the concept of vulnerability and inclusion addressed to the whole population. This aspect of integrating policies from education, health management, and social support for all vulnerabilities, has been successful especially in the capacity to reach out to people who are experiencing situations of disadvantage, and responding more efficiently to the needs of the population. The Immigration and Inclusion Policies Unit of the Municipality of Milan is mandated to develop and coordinate migrants’ integration policies.

## 3. Selected local approaches

*The public administration in Milan is committed to working on inclusion and to responding to the changing demands of the migrant population arriving and residing in Milan. Close cooperation between public institutions, local NGOs, and migrant communities has been considered essential to improving social support and local services.*

### 3.1 Milan’s reception approach

Facing the reintroduction of border controls by neighbouring countries in 2017, Milan went from a transit spot to an asylum city where migrants requested to reside. At that time, the City of Milan adapted to the new demands and developed a reception approach, creating a “Municipal” CAS (Centro di accoglienza straordinario - Extraordinary Reception Centre). In Italy, CAS are usually managed by the Interior Ministry through the Prefectures and provide for general first aid practices such as identification, health controls, formalisation and start of the reception procedure. In many cases, however, CAS have been criticised for poor quality services, excessive overcrowding, and irregularities with procurement procedures.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/migranti-troppe-gestioni-senza-gara-criticita-centri-accoglienza-straordinaria--AE5qwa6E?refresh\\_ce=1](https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/migranti-troppe-gestioni-senza-gara-criticita-centri-accoglienza-straordinaria--AE5qwa6E?refresh_ce=1)

### The Advantages of Municipal Reception Centres

By creating a “Municipal” CAS, Milan proposed itself as the referent for the centre and its management, with the assistance of local NGOs. This

passage has resulted in two advantages. First, it allowed the municipality to decide upon the location of the CAS. Secondly, activities offered inside the CAS had been innovated.

The protocol scheme developed in April 2017 by the Prefect of Milan with the municipalities of the “Homogeneous area” could represent a valid “model” to promote widespread reception in other prefectures. Specifically, it is an agreement with the Mayors that voluntarily welcome applicants on their territory. Membership guarantees coverage limited to 50% of the reception places provided for by the Plan between ANCI (Associazione Italiana Comuni Italiani - National Municipal Association) and the Interior Ministry. The agreement also provides for collaboration with third sector associations. The Mayors find housing units and communicate results to the Prefecture so the latter can select managers. It is estimated that in 2019, the municipality of Milan had 62 active CAS, hosting 2,398 guests (0.17% of the total population).<sup>5</sup> Even though not all the Municipal CAS have been successful examples (also due to the limited place and excessive overcrowding), the novelty here was “municipal management,” which potentially constitutes an example for other metropolitan areas.<sup>6</sup>

These Milan “Municipal CAS” adopt the logic of the national SPRAR system (Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers). Through SPRAR, Milan offers refugees housing solutions in small accommodation centres, apartments with Milanese families, material assistance, access to health care (including mental health) services, access to education, professional orientation, language courses, counselling, and cultural activities. While the SPRAR system has been in place in Italy for a long time and with successes, the SPRAR has not been sufficient in many cities to cover the housing needs and social services for migrants. The project in Milan hosted 422 adults and 150 minors at the end of 2020.

Along with the CAS system, the city of Milan has often underlined the importance of continuing reception practices through the SAI (former SPRAR/SIPROIMI) system, as a reaction to 2018’s former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, which limited SAI competences. Asking the Interior Ministry for an increase in capability, the city is willing to reach a capacity of 1000 units.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.openpolis.it/rassegnastampa/i-posti-persi-nel-laccoglienza-dei-richiedenti-asilo/>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.prefettura.it/FILES/AllegatiPag/1142/Rapporto\\_annuale\\_Buone\\_Pratiche\\_di\\_Accoglienza\\_Italia\\_31\\_maggio\\_2017.pdf](http://www.prefettura.it/FILES/AllegatiPag/1142/Rapporto_annuale_Buone_Pratiche_di_Accoglienza_Italia_31_maggio_2017.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.comune.milano.it/-/politiche-sociali.-il-comune-chiede-di-proseguire-l-accoglienza-sprar>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.comune.milano.it/servizi/minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati-msna>  
<https://www.comune.milano.it/documents/20126/118335452/Brochure+Centro+Servizi+per+Minori+-+febbraio+2021.pdf/f/69eb9222-d914-1d18-6020-289244264658?t=161277265555>

## A Service Centre for unaccompanied Minor Migrants

In November 2019, in response to the increasing number of unaccompanied foreign minors, the City of Milan created the MSNA (Minori Stranieri non Accompagnati - Unaccompanied Foreign Minors) Service Centre.<sup>8</sup> It is an innovative, multi-functional centre exclusively dedicated to unaccompanied minor migrants. The Service Centre originates from a Protocol signed by the Municipality and the Prefecture of Milan on 27th April 2018, following the adoption of national Law No. 47/2017, one of the most innovative and comprehensive laws on protection procedures for unaccompanied migrant minors in Europe.

The MSNA Service Centre is an experimental service, co-managed by the Municipality of Milan, social cooperative Farsi Prossimo and Spazio

Aperto Servizi and Save the Children Italy. It is aimed at improving and modelling MSNA's reception process with the support of a multidisciplinary team made up of social workers, educators, doctors, psychologists, legal consultants, Italian teachers, administrative staff, and experts. The Service Centre also ensures the coordination and training of Tutori Volontari (voluntary guardians, citizens designated by Juvenile Courts willing to volunteer, Social Cooperative, Spazio Aperto Servizi), in collaboration with the Municipal Guarantor of the rights for childhood and adolescence.<sup>9</sup>

The Service Centre stands out as a case study for the successful development of best practices, both in terms of the reception system, and through networking among various institutions and organisations involved in all phases of the protection process (Regional health care system, including child and adolescent neuropsychiatry departments, Prefecture, Questura, Juvenile Court, NGOs, etc.).<sup>10</sup>

## 3.2 Collaborative systems for an inclusive labour market

*Milan has been working hand in hand with a local network of small and medium enterprises, as well as international companies. To prevent migrants' exploitation and lay the foundations for durable integration, a specialised team focusing on refugees and asylum seekers' labour market integration was created within the "Employment Mediation Centre" (Centro Mediazione al Lavoro - CeLav) of the Municipality.<sup>11</sup> Through the project MeNTOR – Mediterranean Network for Training Orientation to Regular Migration," young professionals accessed traineeships, coaching on business start-up, and job placement in companies located in Lombardy and Piedmont regions.*

"Employment and education opportunities are among the main drivers for migration to Milan. The city especially attracts migrant workers with low to middle levels of education, who need specific support and assistance in the social inclusion and integration process. Non-EU nationals are mostly employed in manual and unqualified jobs (52.7%, a much higher percentage than the national average, which is 39.8%), while only 9.2% of foreign nationals are employed in management, high-skilled or technical roles. Family reunification has been another significant and constant migration channel over the years, with around 7,000 applications per year presented in the Milan Metropolitan Area (representing 40% of the entrances), among which over 3,500 are in the city of Milan".<sup>12</sup>

### Employment Mediation Centre (CeLav): Enabling Autonomy

CeLav is an innovative service in the Italian context, as it does not pursue the traditional idea of assistance to the disadvantaged, but rather pursues activation by overcoming obstacles, with the objective of making beneficiaries autonomous. Guided by this principle, CeLav offers a variety of employability services, with an increasing level of support depending on beneficiary needs. The project often includes a traineeship,

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.comune.milano.it/comune/palazzo-marino/garanti-comitati-e-delegati/garante-dei-diritti-per-l-infanzia-e-l-adolescenza>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.comune.milano.it/documents/20126/118335452/Brochure+Centro+Servizi+per+Minori+-+febbraio+2021.pdf/69eb9222-d914-1d18-6020-289244264658?t=1612772655555>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.comune.milano.it/servizi/centro-mediazione-al-lavoro/>

<sup>12</sup> About Milan and Migration, see Eurocities: <https://eurocities.eu/>

which allows beneficiaries to acquire or develop specific job-related skills. In this case, CeLav staff contacts companies that are interested in the service and have a position available, and pre-selects candidates. Traineeships typically last three months and can be renewed for another three months. During this period, beneficiaries receive a traineeship grant from the city. After the traineeship, the contract may be converted into an ordinary job contract.

There are ad hoc specialised teams for different disadvantaged areas, which entail long-term unemployed, addictions and psychic fragilities, penal issues, refugees, and people with various migration statuses.

Thanks to this pilot project, the Municipality of Milan expects to offer facilitated access to verified and updated information about hiring procedures for asylum seekers and employers; to enhance the collaboration with relevant Institutions, trade unions and private sector; and to reach the target of at least 200 contacts with companies to inform them about the opportunities offered. CeLav provides for approximately 2500 people per year. Around 600 foreigners are assisted per year.<sup>13</sup>

### **Mediterranean Network for Training Orientation to Regular migration (MeNTOR): Creating legal migration paths**

In addition, in order to avoid migrants being captured in underground economy networks, the City of Milan has been promoting legal migration paths through co-development cooperation projects such as the MeNTOR – Mediterranean Network for Training Orientation to Regular migration” (2017-2018). Through the opportunity offered by the Italian Immigration Regulation to deliver professional training to non-European citizens living abroad (Art. 27 mechanism), nineteen young professionals from Morocco and Tunisia had the possibility to do traineeships in companies located in the Lombardy and Piedmont regions, and attend coaching on business start-up and job placement during and after their stay in Italy. Thanks to the cooperation between the Moroccan, Tunisian, and Italian municipalities, employment agencies and NGOs involved in the project, “MeNTOR,” contributed to improving the interns’ access to the labour market.

## **3.3 Family reunification, social inclusion and education – an interdisciplinary approach**

*Over the last years, family reunification has become the most important legal channel for long-term migration to Milan. Usually, family reunification is a procedure entirely ruled and managed by the central government in Italy, and local authorities have no competencies on it. The Municipality of Milan has innovated in this sense by signing several agreements with local and national public institutions, aimed at strengthening the multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance of the family reunification process.*

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.ismu.org/progetto-mediazione-al-lavoro-celav/>



Through protocols or agreements with the “Single Desk for Immigration” (Sportello Unico per l’Immigrazione - SUI)<sup>14</sup> of the Prefecture of Milan, the local authority is in charge of coordinating family reunification authorisations. This collaboration aims at solving the problem of backlog (which had resulted in almost two years of delay by that time), to monitor the arrivals, get information on the expected characteristics of the prospective family members joining, plan personalised interventions and, finally, to orient and support the process of family reunification.

The “Lab’Impact” project<sup>15</sup> (September 2018 – December 2020), financed through the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and led by Lombardy Region, aimed at promoting better integration of migrants regularly residing in Milan going through family reunification. It did this through strengthening existing information, counselling, and mediation services in the areas of social inclusion and education, thanks to an interdisciplinary approach and a multi-professional expert team. Through the “Lab’Impact” project, and in particular its educational component, the City of Milan aimed at the qualification of the school system in multicultural contexts, including inclusion policies and fighting against school dropouts among newly arrived students involved in family reunification processes.

In 2020, the Municipality of Milan opened WeMi,<sup>16</sup> a hub dedicated to family reunification and multi-service centre that takes care of accompanying families during their reunification processes. The hub offers a counselling and information point, volunteering activities, guidance actions, school and legal counselling, and financial education courses.

### 3.4 Creating complementary services

*During the pandemic, the municipality of Milan launched a platform to bring together volunteers, local enterprises, and civic initiatives to help and assist people most in need. The city created the Milano Aiuta (Milan Helps) network to centralise information on available services, and mobilise volunteers, donations, and private sector support for those in need. This initiative guaranteed a volunteer based system of help, providing home care to citizens at risk but also people in quarantine and people with special needs, who were not able to take care of themselves.<sup>17</sup>*

The “Milano Aiuta” initiative was based on a specific system of emergency management established within the Civil Protection Department. It has the aim of building a direct channel of communication between the Municipality and all its residents. Through this channel, it was possible to let the needs of the city emerge and to find the proper solutions to face them. For this, a specific team was created by selecting staff inside the Municipality.

Furthermore, the Municipality issued a public call to select third sector organisations and citizen associations able and willing to collaborate with the Municipality to tackle the pandemic emergency. This call allowed a direct collaboration between the Municipality and the territory. Thereafter, the Municipality implemented a mapping of all the services

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.prefettura.it/milano/contenuti/Immigrazione-13310.htm>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.lab-impact.it/Home/About>

<sup>16</sup> <https://wemi.comune.milano.it/>

offered in its nine districts, and the services needed to address resident needs.

The special services provided by Milano Aiuta include grocery shopping, medicines, or prepared meals. The city infoline does the first screening, while a second one is managed directly by the social workers team of Milano Aiuta. At the beginning of the Covid-19 emergency, this group was involved in organising an effective response based on the mapping of public and private resources in only a few days. As part of this effort, Milan set up seven food distribution hubs across the city, and created a food delivery system to target the elderly and vulnerable. Milan created a dashboard and analytics system to track and measure the services provided by the Milano Aiuta initiative, including food aid, computers, online certifications, personal protective equipment, and more.

## **Administration and civil society working together**

Among the third sector organisations that joined the Milano Aiuta initiative, the Municipality of Milan partnered with the non-profit EMERGENCY to provide COVID-19 monitoring in shelters for homeless people, migrants, refugees, and unaccompanied migrant youth as part of the “Service Centre for Unaccompanied Migrant Minors” (part of the national SAI, former SIPROIMI and SPRAR). Through this joint “Welcome Project,” emergency teams of healthcare and logistics experts conducted daily monitoring in over 50 shelters in Milan. They worked to ensure proper social distancing practices and sanitation services, trained shelter staff, and monitored the health status of both guests and shelter staff. Thanks to EMERGENCY, the Municipality had a daily update on the needs of the centre’s guests.<sup>18</sup>

## **A Help Centre for Adults in Need**

The Municipality continued to offer, in collaboration with two third sector organisations, the services of the Sammartini Hub (formerly the Help Centre Central Station - CASC), a hub for adults experiencing serious social exclusion that concerns, including homeless people, asylum seekers, and irregular migrants. This project has been extensively described in literature and media as an example of local struggle, negotiation, and contestation between institutions, local NGOs, and volunteers.

The Hub works as an observation and listening centre for orientation and care of people in a situation of vulnerability. The Help Centre came to life first as a self-managed centre by volunteers and NGOs to respond to emergency situations of people arriving in the city and sheltering themselves near the railway station. The centre was officially inaugurated in May 2016, and has since welcomed more than 30,000 migrants. After border closures and the boom in arrivals, over the months it has changed from being a transitional centre to a reception place for asylum seekers. The aim of this current help centre is to direct users to public or affiliated facilities in order to support the social, economic, and housing inclusion of homeless adult people. Despite the Covid-19 emergency and the continuous challenges the Municipality of Milan is

facing, primary services for cases of serious social exclusion continue to be guaranteed.

Close to the Sarmartini Hub and just behind Milan's Central Station, a new multi-functional centre was inaugurated in June 2021. The Centro Diurno Bassanini-Tremontani (Day Centre Bassanini-Tremontani) involved the municipality, along with third sector foundations and NGOs, in creating a space in which disadvantaged people are offered a variety of services. Guests can have breakfast, showers, wash their clothes, and join recreational activities such as theatre, web radio, ceramics, or IT.<sup>19</sup>

## 4. Advocacy and network activities

*Since 2011, the city has been governed by centre-left coalitions. During Mayor Giuliano Pisapia's mandate (2011-2016), and in particular with Deputy Mayor Pierfrancesco Majorino in charge of social policies, migrant inclusion became an important priority on the public agenda. Later, mayor Giuseppe Sala (2016-) has followed the same approach, declaring Milan a borderless and welcoming city. To Sala, Milan should represent a community of peace and tolerance in which the welcoming and inclusion of migrants should represent a top priority responsibility.<sup>20</sup>*

This message has been repeated on many public occasions, restating the city's commitment to inclusiveness and anti-discrimination, often in clear opposition to centre-right national government approaches.

In 2018, the city of Milan joined the "Comuni Disobbedienti" campaign (Disobedient municipalities), in opposition to former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini's decree, composed by a package of laws aimed at removing humanitarian protection and making it more difficult to obtain Italian citizenship.<sup>21</sup> In 2019, the city of Milan also announced the implementation of a registry for asylum seekers previously excluded from registration by the Salvini decree. "What interests us is protecting these people," Mayor Sala commented. "We are talking about asylum seekers, a minimum of protection, so that if they go to the emergency room there aren't many problems."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.comune.milano.it/web/milanoaiuta>

<sup>18</sup> <https://en.emergency.it/projects/a-service-delivering-essential-items-to-vulnerable-people/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.blitzquotidiano.it/cronaca-italia/milano-sotto-stazione-centrale-apre-il-centro-caritas-enelcuore-oasi-per-senza-tetto-con-docce-e-laboratori-3371928/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://solidaritycities.eu/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.thelocal.it/20181129/salvinis-anti-migrant-security-decree-becomes-law-in-italy/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/15242/milan-opens-registry-for-asylum-seekers-excluded-by-new-law>

Sala's positions aroused local resentment among Salvini's Lega Nord party and supporters. Yearly events such as "Insieme Senza Muri" (Together Without Walls), "People first" march et al. organised with migrants' associations are a reference point for the identity and positioning of Milan in the debate around migrants and refugees. On 20 May 2017, during the demonstration "Together without any walls," the "Milan Charter: solidarity is not a crime" was launched.

While at the national level, a league of progressive mayors and solidarity cities has never been formalised, Milan invested internationally in building a public image of an inclusive city, profiting from exchanges with other municipalities in Europe and worldwide. Milan joined "Solidarity Cities," launched by EURO CITIES in 2016. This was one of the first for-

malised European city networks positioning members of local governments as inclusive towards migrants.

**Later, Milan joined other types of networks such as:**

- ◆ IOM’s “Equal(c)ity” project with other EU cities, to reinforce local services to better cope with sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in migrant communities;
- ◆ “ADmin4ALL - Phase 2” project, to strengthen the capacity of local social service providers and to enhance political engagement and support coordination among local integration stakeholders, to improve services for the social inclusion of migrants at local level, aside from promoting the exchange of experiences of local authorities across the EU;
- ◆ “City Initiative on Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe” (C-MISE), to raise awareness on issues related to irregular migration at local level;
- ◆ “REACH OUT” project, to raise and enhance awareness on voluntary return and reintegration with migrants who are in irregular stay situations;
- ◆ “Local Authorities Network for Migration and Development in the Mediterranean”, facilitating exchanges of knowledge, strategies, and best practices between cities (mutual capacity building and empowerment).<sup>23</sup>

For Milan, the more programmatic and politically relevant campaigns include the EU Urban Agenda and global campaigns. The EU Urban Agenda of Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees has been active since 2016, launched by the EU Commission, to redefine better regulations, funding and knowledge at the European level involving cities, Member States and international organisations (this partnership is coordinated by the city of Amsterdam and the DG HOME). Milan joined in September 2020.<sup>24</sup>

At the international level, Milan has been active within UNHCR (UNHCR Cities #WithRefugees)<sup>25</sup> and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Mayors engaged in the Mayors Migration Council (MMC), established in 2018.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> [https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/default/files/docs/city\\_of\\_milan\\_submission\\_to\\_the\\_ece\\_regional\\_review.pdf](https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/default/files/docs/city_of_milan_submission_to_the_ece_regional_review.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/eu-regional-and-urban-development/topics/cities-and-urban-development/priority-themes-eu-cities/inclusion-migrants-and-refugees-cities\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/eu-regional-and-urban-development/topics/cities-and-urban-development/priority-themes-eu-cities/inclusion-migrants-and-refugees-cities_en)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/wi-threfugees/cities/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.mayorsmigrationcouncil.org/>

## 5. Update: What is new in 2023?

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- ◆ The number of unaccompanied refugee minors sheltered in Milan has almost doubled compared to previous years, with over 1,200 people. The City of Milan has received funding from the Ministry of Interior specifically to accommodate this vulnerable target group from July 2023 to June 2026.<sup>27</sup>
- ◆ In June 2023, the Municipality of Milan announced that it would invest a significant proportion of its budget over the next two years in improving its reception policy for migrants and refugees. To this end, the municipality developed concrete guidelines for the co-design of relevant services with the third sector to strengthen the existing reception model.<sup>28</sup> Italy's immigration statistics show a steady increase in refugee arrivals in recent years. The Lombardy region currently hosts 13% of the national total of asylum seekers, most of them in reception centres in Milan.<sup>29,30</sup>
- ◆ Milan's mayors, in a joint **statement** by six Italian municipalities in April 2023, criticised the national government's plans to abolish "special protection" in laws protecting refugees. They oppose such changes to the reception system for migrants by declaring a 'state of emergency', as they curtail their basic rights and hinder their inclusion.
- ◆ In November 2022, '**Hub 126**', a multi-purpose emergency centre, was established in Milan to provide rapid social assistance. It focused on acute support for Ukrainian refugees arriving in Milan, but at the same time provides food, resources, information, a social wardrobe and a hair salon for homeless people. The project was developed in collaboration with the **Politecnico di Milano University** and the **Fondazione Fiera Milano** and underlines the city's commitment to a comprehensive integration policy that focuses on cooperation between institutions, volunteers and associations to meet the needs of vulnerable populations.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.milanotoday.it/attualita/investimento-progetti-accoglienza-migranti.html>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.milanotoday.it/attualita/investimento-progetti-accoglienza-migranti.html>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.ilgiorno.it/milano/cronaca/migranti-rotta-su-milano-la-lotteria-dei-documenti-dopo-il-caos-in-via-cagni-70a5dcb4>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.openpolis.it/i-comuni-dove-vengono-of-ferti-piu-posti-nei-centri-di-accoglienza/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.comune.milano.it/-/welfare.-in-via-sammartini-126-il-nuovo-hub-di-pronto-intervento-per-le-emergenze>

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The **Moving Cities** project provides an in-depth research of progressive cities in Europe, exploring their most inspiring and successful approaches to migration policies. Find more city reports at [www.moving-cities.eu/en](http://www.moving-cities.eu/en).

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