

# Addressing the gendered dynamics of asylum seeker and refugee integration provision in Calabria

## Key findings and recommendations

### Executive Summary

Italy is characterised by its offer of integrated reception involving the regions and municipalities but, above all, for being a border and crossing point, where those seeking international protection pass through first and second line reception, sometimes with minimal differences.

Migration flows come mainly from the Mediterranean routes and therefore make a gender-sensitive approach essential in the management of the integration process, especially considering the presence of female victims of trafficking and forms of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV). Over recent years, a series of reforms have been carried out in order to introduce concrete measures to stop violence against women in Italy. Some legislative measures have represented significant steps forward, including legislation against stalking, the allocation of financial resources and an extensive network of victim support services for victims of gender-based violence and the protection of orphans affected by domestic crime.

In Calabria, local governance for refugees is entrusted to the Region, which provides specific programmes and interacts with the municipalities and prefectures, which function as guarantors of first reception projects (CAS) and integrated reception for migrant children and refugees (SIPROIMI).

For the analysis of SGBV, qualitative interviews were conducted with stakeholders specialised in violence against refugee men and women (e.g. sexual and family violence; gender-based violence toward LGBTQIA refugees; trafficking).

The stakeholders were selected based on their expertise in the field and contacted through associations and institutions to which they belong: semi-structured qualitative interviews were used. To complete the analysis, all the interviews collected during the entire research period were analysed from a gender perspective. The latter is a methodology that focuses on the points of view and experiences of people, considering their gender identity, highlighting both the gender imbalance and specific problems in the evaluation – in this case, of the policies and practices affecting refugees. Empirical research focused on the social aspects and policy implementation in the cities of Cosenza and its province, Lamezia Terme and Villa San Giovanni.

The GLIMER (Governance and the Local Integration of Migrants and Europe's Refugees) Project is jointly funded by JPI Urban Europe and Horizon 2020. Bringing together researchers and practitioners from five lead institutions – the University of Edinburgh, the University of Glasgow, Università della Calabria, Malmö Universitet and the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies – it researches how issues relating to governance impact displaced peoples' experiences of integration in contemporary Europe

Web-page: [glimer.eu](http://glimer.eu)

### Methods and empirical research

The GLIMER project is informed by a combination of policy analysis, and qualitative research with multi-party stakeholders.



## Context

### Overview

Italy is progressing towards gender equality significantly faster than the other EU Member States. However, this progress should not overlook the fact that gender inequalities remain in social and political participation and the world of work. The most positive achievements are those relating to the health care and education.

One of the best examples of the Italian strategy that can help to analyse migrants from a gender perspective is the National Code of Equal Opportunities. As a result of these regulations, direct and indirect discrimination is defined and prohibited, and a network of equal opportunity consultants was created that provides legal assistance to women (for all legal situations) affected by discrimination. In 2009, the law against stalking and violent and persecutory behaviour forcing the victim to change his or her life conduct offers an opportunity for migrants who were victims of this form of gender violence to apply for residence permits for humanitarian reasons.

Data collection and control is carried out by the Observatory for Security against Discriminatory Acts (OSCAD), a joint police/carabinieri inter-force structure. The Observatory facilitates the submission of claims regarding discriminatory acts constituting a crime, in order to bypass under-reporting and, therefore, encourage the detection of discrimination-based crimes. In the regional territories, local prefectures promote information and awareness-raising initiatives to fight gender-based violence as soon as it arises through: a) training in schools; training courses for social and healthcare workers; b) forms of collaboration with local

authorities and associations to strengthen reception and support for victims; c) task forces and working groups to plan initiatives and disseminate best practices.

### Gender and national policies for migrants' integration

While recognising the progress achieved to promote women's rights, attention must be given to how gender equality still faces resistance in Italy: there is a growing trend of reinterpreting and re-orienting the notion of gender equality in terms of family and maternity policies. With regard to asylum rights, our research shows that the absence of effective vulnerability screening procedures, which do not allow for the correct identification of victims, can lead to expulsion or repatriation. Recent policies aimed at stopping sea rescues and strengthening the deterrence of potential migrants, combined with the closure of Italian ports for migrants arriving with rescue boats at sea, are increasing the risks in the future for vulnerable migrants.

### Gender integration of migrants in Calabria

The strategy of regional integration policies, within a gender perspective, is based on the guidelines of the Interior Ministry and Equal Opportunities, as well as the multi-level management entrusted to the Extraordinary Reception Centres (CAS) and centres for refugees and unaccompanied minors (SIPROIMI). In fact, the regional government of Calabria can only operate in support (e.g. economic, financial) and has identified guidelines for the drafting and implementation of temporary policies during the period 2019-2021. Most of the political actions relating to integration and gender policies are referred to the municipalities as coordinators of local reception projects, and to third sector organisations which implement these municipal policies.



## Findings

GLIMER research findings can be categorised into four key themes. Below, we summarise the key points of our research.

### 1. Housing and Accommodation

- a. There is a considerable gap between what is required by the small number of regulations and what can be achieved in practice;
- b. The locations where displaced migrants can be accommodated are often overcrowded, and lack safe spaces for women and girls;
- c. Women and girls are exposed to multiple risks: potentially suffering further violence, being sexually exploited, and experiencing inadequate health care;
- d. Trafficked persons seeking international protection are placed in Extraordinary Reception Centres (CAS), conceived as 'parking structures';
- e. Segregation of residential accommodation represents a significant obstacle to any integration process.

### 2. Language and Education

- a. The lack educational provision in their countries of origin penalises refugee women in particular compared to men;
- b. The trauma and violence that migrants have endured is often not picked up, even in the first reception procedures;
- c. There is a difficulty in reconciling the care of children with attendance at Italian language courses due in part to the absence of early childhood services in a context of high educational poverty;
- d. Places of learning (CPIA, SIPROIMI) are often distant and not very accessible even by public transport services;
- e. In some specific cases, women have limited access to public space, which makes language learning even more difficult.

### 3. Labour Market access

- a. Women and girls may often be less inclined to develop their skills in order to enter the labour market;
- b. The lack of policies for the care of single women or young mothers discourages attendance at job training courses;
- c. Women have easier access to low-skilled jobs, even when they are included in a host project, which leads them to abandon vocational training projects;
- d. The integration activities are mostly at the local level and with the collaboration of third sector associations but their efficacy depends on the awareness of local administrators;
- e. In general, it is very difficult for women to join the labour market if they have caring responsibilities, not only for refugees but also for those who come from mixed marriages;
- f. Women and girls, who are generally more employed in temporary jobs, may also be victims of illegal recruitment methods (e.g. gang masters).

### 4. The incidence of SGBV

- a. Reception projects dedicated to LGBT migrants are very limited and often with staff unable to carry out personal inclusion plans;
- b. Despite improvements in the legislative framework, the effective and efficient implementation of measures to combat SGBV crimes is limited, mainly because of the lack of funds and specialised professionals;
- c. The legislation does not provide adequate funds and support to existing anti-violence centres and shelters that play a central role in supporting women. In general, the implementation of these policies is not homogeneous at the national level and varies greatly between and within regions;
- d. In an area where health services suffer from a lack of resources, specific services for migrants, and in particular for unaccompanied minors, are insufficient considering the number of people arriving in recent years.



## Recommendations

Below, we make ten recommendations designed to foster a gender-sensitive approach to policies for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Calabria. Recommendations are grouped in pairs into five distinct themes, and are as follows:

### **Improve the relationship between public/private entities for migrants' housing integration:**

1. The housing management system should reflect the voluntary participation of private individuals and the sensitivity of local reception projects;
2. An increase in specialised staff and specific housing integration pathways for migrant and refugee women, especially if they are victims of trafficking, is recommended.

### **Redesign policies that take into account the needs of migrant women and girls:**

3. Regarding educational integration, there is a need for gender-sensitive measures to support the participation and inclusion of migrant women in society.
4. Proposed measures could include the provision of childcare services and training opportunities for migrant women, including courses to strengthen language skills.

### **Introduce measures to reduce women's dependence on the family unit in finding a job and recognising the residence permit:**

5. Reducing this dependency in line with EU guidelines on family reunification and minimising administrative delays in granting residence permits would be crucial;
6. Specific services to support self-employment should be designed, not according to the skills already obtained (which are often hard to detect), but by focusing on the work skills needed within the labour market.

### **Improve the approach to integration for those affected by SGBV:**

7. New qualitative research is needed on some aspects of SGBV, for example domestic violence among refugees or violence against refugees in reception centres or the consequence of violence on reproductive health;
8. Reception centres specifically addressing the needs of LGBTQIA refugees are needed. In the case of transgender people, cases of specific violence occur even in reception systems, where there is no adequate knowledge to recognise and interact with transgender refugees.

### **Coordinate local and national action to implement targeted policies regarding SGBV, migrant women and girls:**

9. Better communication and coordination between different public and private organisations dealing with refugees, and in particular for those affected or particularly vulnerable to violence;
10. There is a low degree of specialisation of NGO workers dealing with refugees that, among other things, prevent women's participation and empowerment.

*GLIMER Italian Team: Prof. Donatella Loprieno; Prof. Anna Elia; Dr. Claudio Di Maio, Dr. Valentina Fedele, University of Calabria.*

*This policy brief is supported by our full report available at: [glimer.eu/outputs](http://glimer.eu/outputs) | Further enquires: [michaelagh.broadbent@ed.ac.uk](mailto:michaelagh.broadbent@ed.ac.uk)*

