



No way out

The dismantlement of the reception system for asylum seekers and refugees.

A qualitative study.

Executive summary

The December 2019 report is the third in a series of studies undertaken by Naga's Observatory group with the objective of monitoring and analysing the changes in the Italian reception system, with a particular focus on the situation of Milan where the association has been operating since 1987.

It describes both the consequences of the cuts in funding and of the directives of the new immigration law decree (e.g. the Salvini legislative decree on Immigration and Safety) on the reception system and the experiences of hundreds of people who find themselves without accommodation in Milan.

Just like the previous reports, this is a qualitative study with fieldwork both in reception facilities and in informal settlements, the so-called "places of those excluded from the reception system" and interviews with the people living there and the project workers involved.

The first chapter, *The reception system after the Salvini legislative decree* describes the new tender specification schemes for reception facilities and analyses the decree's impact on the system. From the reduction of the quota per person per day, which had the immediate effect of penalising small scale and decentralised projects, to the cuts in integration services (for example Italian language classes, professional training courses and sporting activities). Also those working in the reception facilities have been affected, for example there has been a reduction in the professional profiles requested and in their working hours, including doctors, nurses and psychologists.

The second chapter, *From the perspective of those managing the reception facilities* is a series of interviews with the people working in the support services for asylum seekers and refugees. The general opinion regarding the new tender is negative. As a consequence of the cuts in funding some NGOs and associations have not been able to participate in the new tender or have decided to interrupt their activities in this sector due to the impossibility of guaranteeing a type of support able to adequately respond to the needs of those hosted. They also report concerns about staff reduction and internal structural changes, a perceived acceleration in the Territorial Commission's evaluation of asylum requests and, among the common solutions adopted, there is the approval of requests for an extension in the duration of reception projects.

The third chapter, *The reception system in Milan: our field observation* looks at the impact of the progressive cuts in the system. Buck passing between the Central Station's Help Centre (CASC), Milan's Police Headquarters (*Questura*) and the Prefecture (*Prefettura*) coupled with the increasingly weak role of the project workers and reception facilities is a reflection of a system which expels and excludes, guaranteeing a place to stay and the right to accommodation to fewer and fewer people (for example the procedures through which people can lose the right to

accommodation in reception projects). The chapter also recalls the imminent opening of the Centre for repatriations (CPR) in Milan.

The fourth chapter, *An exploration of the places inhabited by people without a home* focuses on the different types of informal settlements (abandoned covered structures, open spaces, abandoned buildings and public gardens) in order to outline a profile of the people who find themselves outside of the reception system. The people encountered have different juridical statuses and come from various countries: they range from foreigners in the process of claiming asylum to protection holders, to foreigners with valid resident permits, to Italian citizens. These people all share an apparent condition of housing instability, precarious employment and salary and an almost complete absence of legal safeguards.

The fifth chapter, *Milan Council's political response: evictions*, draws on Naga's *Report on Evictions (Dossier Sgomberi)* published in March 2019 and explores further the legal aspects around evictions from premises, the evolution over the course of the last two years and the consequences on the Milanese territory. This study highlights Milan's housing emergency and describes the experiences of third sector organisations, neighbourhood committees and political organisations, which try to come up with answers to the problem.

The sixth chapter, *The residency problem for asylum seekers* written by Enrico Gargiulo explores the issue of residency registration and domicile, focusing on those people who either don't live in "normal" and "respectable" conditions or who do not have a fixed, long established address in the Council. In line with the report's findings, the author claims that civil registry discriminations promote a sort of *selection* program which punishes those guilty of being poor and destitute, curbing ways of living considered to be inappropriate and intensifying social tensions.

The seventh chapter, *Our press review* reports what has emerged from the analysis of news items from the press and websites selected by a service focusing on the city of Milan and its provinces (however, articles that are not limited to the area of interest have also been examined), between January 2018 and September 2019. The analysis focuses on key topics covered by the report: costs in the migration sector, the politics around the management of migration issues, informal settlements and squatting, immigration facts and figures, evictions, migrant stories and good practices.

The conclusion points to an increasingly difficult scenario in which the erosion of legal rights impacts on three dimensions, which are key to any integration project: accommodation, employment and documents. Over the course of these two years, Naga has witnessed a distortion of these three aspects thus inexorably pushing people into circuits of marginality and exclusion. We ask the institutions responsible for this "never-ending emergency" for a change in direction and to start devising support policies capable of actually guaranteeing the right to adequate housing, and to undertake a structural review of the immigration law thereby transforming an expulsive system into one, which truly welcomes and supports. These aspects are covered in the final part of the report where we put forward our proposals.