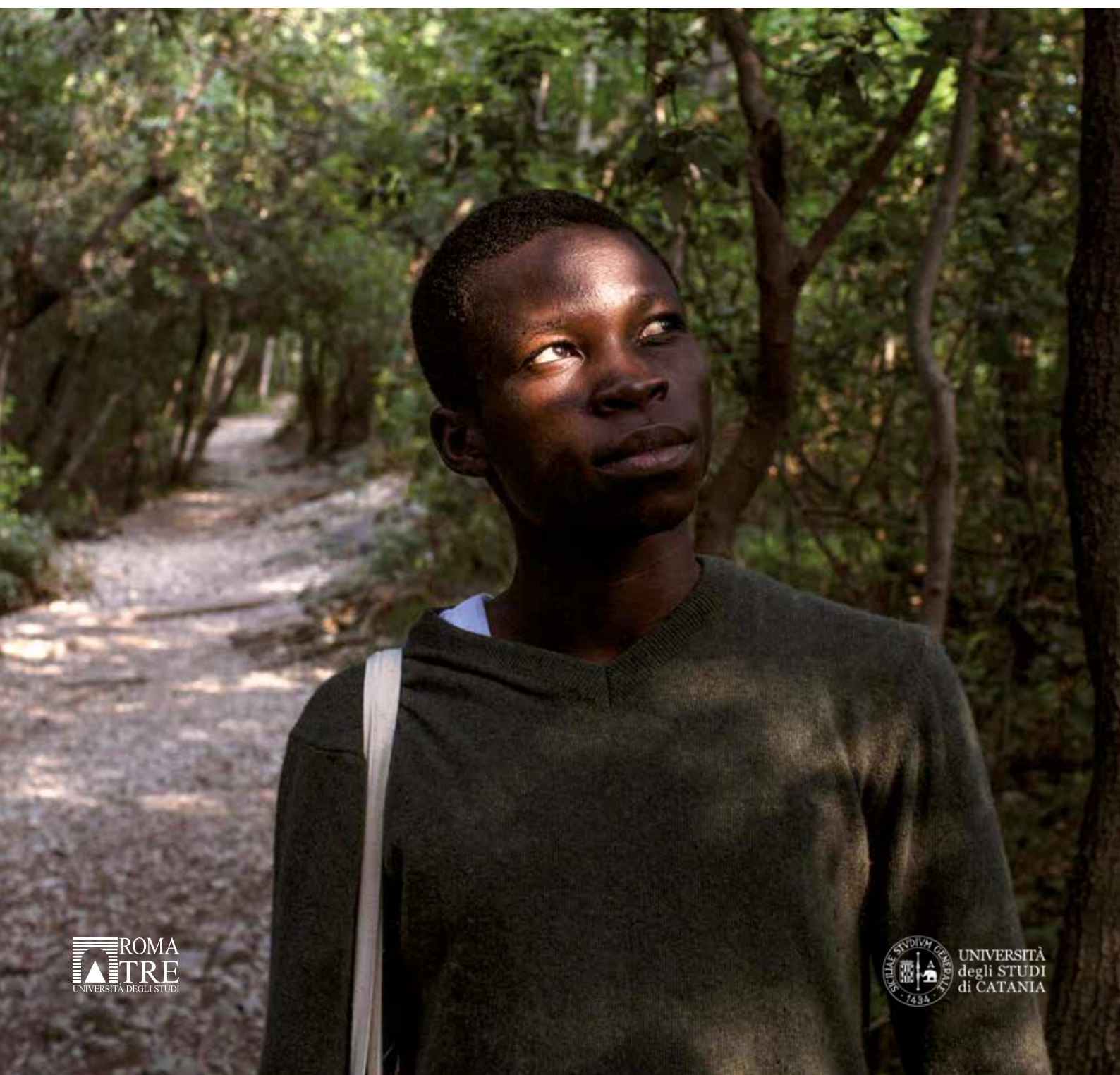# At a crossroads
Unaccompanied and separated children in their transition to adulthood in Italy

November 2019

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Fondazione ISMU

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R., 16 years old, is an unaccompanied and separated child from Afghanistan. He is living in Genova (Liguria, Italy) as he waits to be reunited with his siblings who already live in the UK (May 2019)

Acronyms and abbreviations

AGIA	National Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescents
ALI	Accoglienza Libera e Integrata (Networked grassroot solidarity)
AMIF	European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
ANCI	National Association of Italian Municipalities
CPIA	Adult Learning Centre
CSO	Civil society organization
DID	Declaration of Immediate Availability to Work
D.Lgs	Legislative Decree
EU	European Union
FGDs	Focus group discussions
GBV	Gender-based violence
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISMU	Iniziative e Studi sulla Multietnicità (Initiatives and Studies on Multiethnicity)
L.D.	Law Decree
MDM	Médecins du Monde
MFAEA	Movimento Famiglie Affidatarie e Accoglienti (Host and foster families network)
MoE	Ministry of Education
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policies
MoI	Ministry of the Interior
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PEI	Piano Educativo Individualizzato (Personal Education Plan)
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SIM	Sistema Informativo minori (Information System for UASC)
SIPROIMI	Protection system for holders of international protection and UASC
SPRAR	Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees
UASC	Unaccompanied and separated children
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USMT	Unità di Supporto e Monitoraggio dei Tutori (Guardian Support and Monitoring Unit)

Executive Summary

Between 2014 and 2018, more than 70,000 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) arrived in Italy by sea, 90 per cent of whom were between 15 and 17 years old. The significant presence of UASC (7,272 in June 2019) and the growing number of UASC who have turned 18 (around 60,000 over the last five years) have highlighted the need to better understand the measures and opportunities for the protection and social inclusion of this specific population group in their transition to adulthood.

This research, commissioned by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), provides an overview of trends and possible pathways of transition to adult life of UASC in Italy. The main objective of the research, which has focused on the three regions hosting the highest number of UASC (Sicily, Lombardy and Latium), is to provide evidence on the factors that are facilitating or constraining this transition, both at the individual and structural level. To understand these multiple factors, the research has examined seven areas that are influenced by the legal status and residence permits of UASC and UASC who have turned 18: (i) access to education, vocational and on-the-job training, (ii) access to the job market and the risks related to informal labour and exploitation, (iii) access to adequate housing solutions, (iv) experiences with volunteer guardians; (v) the role of formal and informal relationships; (vi) relationships with families of origin and the possibilities of family reunification; and (vii) the risk of onward movements.

The research is framed around the concept of 'triple transition': the transition from adolescence to adulthood, with its biological-physical, socio-emotional and cognitive changes that are common to all human beings; the transition related to migration that leads to detachment from one's context of origin and the need to build a new life in a different cultural and social environment; and the transition related to overcoming traumas experienced during or after the journey. Adopting this 'triple transition' approach allows to shed some light on the limits of an artificial age-based distinction between 'children' (UASC) and 'adults' (UASC who turned 18, henceforth 'former UASC'), because it does not take due account of the transitional process of becoming adults, the cultural and social differences of this process, and the specific vulnerabilities of this category of migrants and refugees. The process of personal growth and development of these young people is thus affected by the concept of chronological age and its implications in Italian legislation, which in the application of the best interests of the child,[1] focuses on the differences in legal status and especially on the recognition of the rights of children (under 18 years) compared to those of adults (over 18 years).

The research has shown that the formulation of aspirations and expectations plays a crucial role in this triple transition, from a pre-departure phase characterized by personal circumstances and desires (e.g. finding better opportunities, studying, fleeing violence), and by one's own expectations and those of the family of origin to work and contribute to the family economy, to a renegotiation once settled in the country of arrival. Factors that positively or negatively influence the transition to adulthood include the contextual, subjective

and relational variables related to the personal resources, agency and resilience of the adolescents, as well as the networks of formal and informal relationships that they are able to initiate once they arrive in Italy. The presence or absence of such conditions determines the range of perspectives and opportunities that open up for UASC, both when they arrive and start the inclusion process, and once they have become adults.

The innovative aspect of this research also lies in the adoption of a participatory biographical approach, based on the recognition of the right of children and adolescents to express their opinion on and to be heard concerning decisions that affect their lives. This approach has put UASC and former UASC who turned 18 firmly in control as they narrate their life histories, each with their different pathways, profiles, legal status and backgrounds. The aim is to reveal the complex situations that children face, tell their stories, explore the structural bottlenecks and identify the factors that can help them in their transition to adulthood. In line with this approach and to ensure the protection of the best interests of UASC and promote a comfortable peer-to-peer interview setting, a group of former UASC were assigned the role of interviewers.

The methodological framework is based on a mixed-methods approach, which integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches. Together with the literature review, primary and secondary data were collected from national or regional official sources on the socio-demographic characteristics of UASC and former UASC and their presence in the Adult Learning Centres (CPIAs). These data were also based on online polls (U-Report on the Move) on the opinions UASC and former UASC on education and training courses received in Italy. Qualitative data draw from interviews and Focus group discussions (FGDs) with 185 UASC and former UASC, 46 interviews with key social and institutional informants (educators, social workers, teachers, volunteer guardians, and local institutional representatives), nine interviews with representatives of the relevant Ministries and United Nations agencies. In addition, three case studies were used, one for each region: supervised independent living and housing solutions in Lombardy; experiences of formal and informal relationships in Latium; structured support to volunteer guardians in Sicily.

Key Findings

FACTORS THAT **FACILITATE** UASC'S TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

- **Legislation:** with the Law 47/2017, Italy has an advanced legal framework with regard to the recognition of UASC's rights and their protection;
- **Reception:** the possibility of social inclusion, transition and of overcoming past traumas and problems, is closely linked to the reception experience, which when it works plays a positive role although strongly influenced by the local context;
- **Relations:** formal and informal relationships, both with adults and between peers, represent an important support for UASC's and former UASC's pathways. In particular the educator's role in the reception facility and the role of the volunteer guardians is recognized by UASC as crucial;
- **Education:** school and vocational training are recognized by UASC and former UASC as fundamental

milestones of their inclusion pathway;

- **Home:** in the achievement of independent living, the importance of transitory solutions emerges, such as family-related hosting or of supervised semi-independent living.

FACTORS THAT **HINDER** UASC'S TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

- **Legislation:** the slow and complex procedures for obtaining documents (and additional bureaucratic bottlenecks) are real obstacles to the lives of UASC;
- **Time-frame:** the very short time most UASC have because of their age (16–17 years old) at arrival is very limited to equip themselves with the necessary tools for autonomy and inclusion;
- **Access to information:** some limitations emerge with respect to information and guidance provided to UASC on the opportunities and on the potential pathways concering both the normative framework and training and labour insertion;
- **Work:** the difficulty in obtaining a regular work contract is an obstacle that affects every other aspect of the transition (residence permits, access to housing, etc);
- **Discrimination:** forms of discrimination and racism in accessing the job and housing markets represent an additional obstacle in autonomy and social inclusion pathways and affect the personal well-being of UASC and former UASC;
- **Trauma:** traumatic or particularly complex experiences in the country of origin or during the journey are difficult to overcome making social inclusion more difficult;
- **Violence:** the dynamics of violence, including gender-based violence, experienced in particular by girls even when they are not victims of trafficking, has a strong impact on their transition to adulthood.

BOTTLENECKS AND GAPS IN THE SYSTEM

- **Lack of the implementation decrees of Law 47/2017** two years after its approval, which, together with the lack of budgetary allocation, significantly limits its impact;
- **Slowness and complexity of the current family reunification system** pursuant to the Dublin III Regulation, which drives many UASC or former UASC to prefer to transit through Italy and to try and cross the Northern borders, taking great risks;
- **Abolition of humanitarian protection** (l.d.113/2018 then converted into Law 132/2018), a form of protection previously existing in Italian law, which was granted to many UASC seeking asylum in Italy who did not satisfy the criteria for international protection;
- **Fragmentation of the procedures for age assessment;**
- **Fragmentation of the reception system,** both in terms of organization and type of facilities, and the quality of the services provided, where the local context has a significant impact in this regard;

- **Lack of homogeneity and adequacy of training and skills of the reception system** staff linked to the fragmentation of the reception system, particulary in the identification and timely protection and care of children with specific vulnerabilities;
- **Disparities of treatment and uncertainty of being hosted in reception facilities after turning 18,** which depends on the combination of three factors: legal status and having a residence permit; reception in SIPROIMI centres before they turned 18, benefiting or not from continued protection by the social services until the age of 21 pursuant to Article 13 of Law 47/2017 (Prosieguo Amministrativo);
- **Lack of assessment** of literacy and numeracy skills and/or of the recognition of the schooling completed and of professional skills acquired in the country of origin or during the journey.

LACK OF DATA

- Data on **work permits for UASC** issued by the police stations and data on the conversion of these permits when they turn 18;
- Data on **other types of residence permits issued** to UASC (e.g. for special cases or for medical treatment);
- Data on **the number of UASC enrolled in the Adult Learning Centres (CPIAs)**
- Data on **Volunteer Guardians;**
- Data on **UASC benefiting from foster care;**
- Data on **the number of UASC in reception facilities;**
- **Absence of an administrative body responsible for the collection of data on former UASC** – as regards the reception system, their socio-economic inclusion, the continuity of their education pathways when they turn 18 and on those who are granted continued protection by social services until age 21 pursuant to Article 13 of Law 47/2017;
- **Difficulties in comparing available data from different authorities** due to, inter alia, different definitions applied, levels of disaggregation, and frequency in collection and dissemination.

1. Introduction

Large numbers of migrant and refugee children have arrived in Europe in recent years via the Mediterranean route, many of whom were Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC). Since 2014, around 70,000 UASC have arrived in Italy, the majority of whom (93%) are boys. Almost all of them (83.4%) are aged 16 to 17. Driven from their homes by conflict, poverty or disaster or simply in search of opportunities, on their journeys many faced danger and experienced detention, violence, exploitation and abuse.

The increase in UASC arrivals in Italy over the past few years has prompted the implementation of a response by the Italian Government, United Nations agencies, international humanitarian organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) focused on supporting their reception and social inclusion and on the processing of international protection and resident permit requests. Among the encouraging developments and commitments made was the adoption of a new law (Law n.47, 7 April 2017), to date considered one of the most progressive pieces of legislation on migrant and refugee children's rights and their protection.

Yet in transit and at destination, UASC continue to face many challenges and many gaps remain in the realisation of their rights. The significant presence in Italy of UASC (7,272 in June 2019, Ministry of Labour and Social Policies) and the growing number of former UASC who have turned 18 (around 60,000 since 2014) are a growing cause for concern and call for a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for their protection and social inclusion.

The aim of this research, which was commissioned by three United Nations agencies – UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM – is to provide an overview of trends and possible pathways to adult life for UASC in Italy. Specifically, the research aims to provide evidence on the factors that affect the transition to adulthood of UASC, and that either facilitate or constrain a successful transition, both individually and structurally.

The research examines seven areas: (i) access to education, vocational and on-the-job training; (ii) access to the job market and the risks related to informal labour and exploitation; (iii) access to adequate housing solutions; (iv) experiences with volunteer guardians; (v) the role of formal and informal relationships; (vi) relationships with families of origin and the possibilities of family reunification; and (vii) the risk of onward movements. Each of these seven areas is explored taking into consideration the influence of the legal status and residence permits of UASC and UASC who have turned 18.

Recognizing the right of children to express their opinion on decisions that affect them personally,[2] this report presents the findings of the first comprehensive participatory research on children and young people on the move in Italy. It is based on the stories of 185 boys and girls who followed different migration pathways, with different profiles, legal statuses and backgrounds. This approach has enabled the reconstruction of a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the multiplicity of situations, subjective difficulties, structural bottlenecks and support factors that determine and have determined their transition to adulthood. More specifically, the report starts by presenting the methodological approach of the research (Chapter 2) and by providing an overview of the conceptual framework related to the 'triple transition' of UASC to adulthood,

Y., 17 years old, migrated to Italy from Côte d'Ivoire, at the reception centre where he stays in Naro, in Sicily, Italy. Y. was transferred without a choice, to this very small village (December 2018)

demographic trends and normative framework (Chapter 3). The fourth chapter describes the expectations, desires and aspirations related to the migration project; the fifth and sixth chapters highlight the factors that favour or constrain the process of transition to adulthood, starting from the conditions related to the legal status and residence permit of UASC and former UASC. Chapter 7 analyses some good or promising practices related to the role of volunteer guardians, to independent living and to formal and informal relationships with potential for replication and scale-up. The final part of the report summarizes the main results of the research (Chapter 8) and concludes with recommendations.

The present report is part of a broad ongoing inter-agency efforts by UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM to strengthen collaboration around evidence generation on the situation of refugee and migrant children and young people towards more informed policy and decision making to fulfil refugee and migrant children's rights, improve their protection and support their social inclusion into host communities. The findings presented here thus aim to inform and recommend strategic and operational choices for consideration by UN agencies, Italian and European institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs) in order to maximize the chances for UASC and former UASC of a smooth transition to adulthood, reaching autonomy and integrating effectively into their communities.

2. Research methodology and tools

2.1 Research questions

The main objective of the research was to analyse the transition to adulthood of UASC in Italy and to provide empirical evidence of the factors that facilitate or constrain this transition. The key questions are:

- What are the trends in UASC's transition to adulthood?
- How do transition pathways to adulthood meet their expectations and aspirations?
- What are the factors that make UASC more vulnerable, and at risk of exclusion, abuse and exploitation?
- Which good practices or positive experiences can be replicated to facilitate their transition to adulthood in Italy and promote their social inclusion?

2.2 Methodological approach and research tools

The methodological framework is based on a mixed-methods approach, which enables qualitative and quantitative approaches to be combined and integrated (Amaturo and Punziano, 2016) in order to more thoroughly investigate the research topics than each approach can do individually (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). The literature review has enabled the phenomenon of the transition to adulthood of UASC in Italy to be

framed within the conceptual framework of the 'triple transition'. For each thematic focus of the research, the literature review also provided key information on the normative framework and on the consequent current pathways of UASC in Italy to better frame both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The quantitative approach is based on the collection of primary and secondary data from official national or regional sources on specific issues:

- the demographic characteristics of UASC, the condition linked to their legal status and their geographical presence in the three regions where the research was carried out;
- a questionnaire addressed to the 39 Adult Learning Centres (CPIAs) (19 in Lombardy, ten in Latium and ten in Sicily), with questions on the number of UASC students divided by age, gender and nationality;
- the opinions of UASC on their education and training pathways and internship experiences through two U-Report on the Move polls.[3]

The qualitative approach[4] is based on: (i) interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with UASC and former UASC (166 males and 19 females); (ii) 46 interviews with key social and institutional informants at the regional and national levels (educators, social workers, teachers, volunteer guardians, institutional representatives); and (iii) nine interviews with representatives of ministries[5] and of the United Nations agencies that commissioned the research. In order to investigate UASC pathways, the biographical interview was identified as the most suitable among several alternatives in order to record the experiences, perceptions, time scale of the processes and the life experiences of boys and girls, leaving the interviewees ample scope to express themselves freely (Bichi, 2002; O'Leary, 2004). Three specific themes (see below) were then examined through FGDs, which enabled the analysis of the scenarios both from individual and group viewpoints, with a focus on the opportunities and the choices that have been made (Morgan and Kruger, 1998).

In addition to the interviews, a case study was carried out in each of the three regions with the aim of identifying promising practices in the following: (i) supervised independent living and housing solutions in support of UASC in Lombardy; (ii) formal and informal relationships supporting the transition to adulthood of UASC in Latium; and (iii) monitoring and support to volunteer guardians in Sicily. The three case studies identified experiences with a positive impact on the life pathways of UASC and former UASC, i.e. those that facilitate their transition to adult life. The qualitative tools used for the collection of data in the case studies were chosen on the basis of each case study: semi-structured interview with the Coordinator of the UASC Social Service of the Municipality of Milan for the Lombardy case study; semi-structured interviews with stakeholders for the Palermo and Lombardy case studies; FGDs with stakeholders for the Latium case study; and biographical interviews with UASC and former UASC (in all regions).

The research protocol was reviewed externally by Health Media labs and presented to key stakeholders in March 2019 – Ministry of the Interior (MoI), Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (MLSP), Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Protection system for holders of international protection and foreign unaccompanied minors (SIPROIMI) and the National Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescents.

2.3 Description of the sample

The sampling of UASC and former UASC was carried out according to a purposive sampling technique and stratified by gender, age, legal status and absconded status, and using a snowball[6] method. The research collected a total of 185 interviews (78 in Sicily, 55 in Lombardy and 52 in Latium), 147 of which were biographical interviews and 38 contributions from UASC and former UASC who participated in thematic FGDs. The interviewed young people were composed of 85 UASC and 100 former UASC, of which three were 'absconded UASC' and 19 were females (of which nine were UASC), in line with their numbers in Italy.[7] Most interviewees were 17 years old (50 cases), and 18 years old (one out of five, 38 young people), while one-third of interviewees were between 19 and 25 years old. The main nationalities were Gambian (28 cases), Egyptian (24) and Albanian (17). Guinean, Malian and Nigerian followed, with between 12 and 15 interviews each. A quarter of interviewees had a residence permit for UASC, and nine had turned 18 but were still benefiting from continued protection of social services (Prosieguo Amministrativo). There were 17 holders of international protection (ten refugees and seven with subsidiary protection), 28 holders of humanitarian protection, 17 holders of a permit for special cases and 22 had applied for asylum.

UASC interviewees were contacted firstly through the reception facilities that hosted them, and some former UASC were contacted through key informants with whom they were still in touch. In particular, for the organization of FGDs, participants were contacted through the facilities where they were involved in activities (such as Italian classes or training workshops of various kinds) and not from the reception facilities in which they lived, in order to ensure a greater variety in the composition of the group – i.e. to take into consideration different inclusion pathways. Interviews with key informants (46 in total) were divided between those who perform institutional roles (13 cases) and those with social functions (33 cases).[8] Among the institutional representatives there are four representatives of the National Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescence (AGIA) at regional or municipal levels, two presidents of the Juvenile Courts, three representatives of the regions, two social workers of the municipalities and two representatives of the prefectures. Key actors with social roles included educators and social workers (14 cases), volunteer guardians (seven cases), psychologists (three cases) and teachers (two cases). In addition, interviews were carried out (nine in total) with the representatives of the relevant Ministries and of the National Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescence and with the representatives of the United Nations agencies that commissioned the research.

2.4 Data analysis and validation of preliminary findings

Data analysis was carried out through the following procedure (for all types of data): data coding; management, input and organization of primary data; data processing; and analysis of results. For the analysis of biographical interviews with the target group of the research and of semi-structured interviews with key informants, the NVivo software was used, which allows to create a qualitative database, even a large one, as in this specific case, and to share it with other research teams. The interpretative analysis of the FGDs followed a thematic approach comparing the three concerned regions, aimed at highlighting the specificities of the analysed cases and good practices.

In June 2019, research findings were presented and discussed with key institutional stakeholders – Ministry

of the Interior (MoI), Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (MLSP), Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Protection system for holders of international protection and foreign unaccompanied minors (SIPROIMI). Draft recommendations were shared with each line ministry, and bilateral consultations were held for further inputs and validation purposes.

2.5 Selection of research sites

The research areas were identified as being the three Italian regions with the highest number of UASC hosted in recent years and for their geographical diversity: Sicily, Lombardy and Latium. Within these three regions, the criteria for selecting the research sites took into account the distribution of UASC in the regions and the possibility of having access to the reception facilities. The following research sites were identified:

- **Lombardy:** province of Milan (52 interviews) and province of Como (three interviews);
- **Latium:** province of Rome (44 interviews) and province of Latina (eight interviews);
- **Sicily:** province of Catania (22 interviews), Messina (18 interviews), Syracuse (18 interviews) and Palermo (20 interviews).

2.6 The research team: Working with peer researchers

In order to ensure the protection of the best interests of UASC and to promote a comfortable interviewing context through peer-to-peer relationships, especially during the biographical interviews with UASC with particularly sensitive and traumatic stories, the research teams included former UASC among the interviewers. The experience of the research conducted together with the interviewers as active subjects and "go-betweens" was an innovation of great methodological interest. Indeed, the use of the peer research approach minimizes the negative effects and related limitations of research involving children and young people, such as low motivation to participate and the power disparity with the adult researcher (Lushey and Munro, 2014).Excerpts of their reflections are presented in the boxes below.

> **"It was the first time I asked direct questions about another person's private life, I'm not used to it, it was a challenge for me, I learned so many things. Actually it was a very important and enriching experience, I think it made me much more attentive to the details of a person's history and taught me not to judge people by their origin and social status. "**
> **(M.)**

> **"These people also told you about their personal secrets and emotions, so the interview became a private and delicate place to be protected. It helped me to grow more and compare myself with other people who have experienced migration like myself. I have understood other points of view, I have collected many different stories, but all united by two strong feelings: the pain and the desire to start again. "**
> **(I.)**

2.7 Ethical considerations

For the purpose of the research, an ethical protocol was defined for the protection of UASC, consisting in policy documents for the protection of UASC and documentation for collecting informed consent and assent of the research participants. Policy documents adopted by ISMU Foundation include: the Code of Conduct for researchers; the Child Protection Policy; and the ISMU Guidelines for researchers, which comprise the procedures and Code of Conduct at each stage of the research, both with respect to contact with UASC and to the processing of their data on the basis of current legislation. Consent and assent documentation include formal and legal consent forms of interviewed adults and of the guardians of UASC and assent forms of UASC in order to ensure that they freely accepted to be interviewed.

2.8 Limitations

There are a number of limitations related to the research, as summarized below:

- **'Absconded' UASC:** The number of absconded UASC interviewed was lower than what had been planned prior to the definition of the research protocol. This was due to the difficulty in identifying the guardian in order for them to sign the consent form, as well as the legal obligation to refer identified absconded UASC to the authorities, which contradicted the research ethical protocol with regard to confidentiality and anonymity. As a result, research participants for this specific category were limited to former UASC who had absconded prior to turning 18 and who had subsequently re-entered the reception system, thereby limiting to three the number of former UASC who met these criteria and who were interviewed as part of the research.
- **Language skills:** in order to facilitate and ensure the timely collection of data, i.e. to enable the interview to be carried out without the need for a translator, interviewees were selected on the basis of their knowledge of the Italian language. Therefore, with the exception of a few cases, interviewees who did not speak Italian were excluded from the research.
- **Holders of international protection:** Some difficulties were experienced in identifying UASC and former UASC with international protection (asylum or subsidiary protection).

3. Context

3.1 Considerations on, and approaches to, migration and the transition to adulthood

The reflection on UASC and former UASC pathways to adulthood can only start from the concept of the 'triple transition' that these girls and boys undergo: the transition from adolescence to adulthood that characterizes every human being; the transition from countries of origin to countries of arrival; and finally, the transition regarding overcoming trauma experienced prior to, during or after the journey (UNICEF and MDM, 2018).
The transition to adulthood, for all adolescents including UASC, is a complex period from a biological, psychological and social point of view. Moreover, it is widely recognized that the experience and the concept of adolescence may differ between and within cultures, with significant variations in the age at which one is still considered a child or treated as an adolescent rather than a young adult. In addition to these differences, there is the weight of factors related to the socio-economic context and to differences in gender, class and status, and to their cross-cutting nature (Demaria, 2016).

According to many studies, growing up in adversity is associated with an early transition to adult roles and behaviours (PAHO, 2005: 267). Indeed, migration is experienced by these boys and girls as an undertaking that establishes the full entry into adult life and the journey as a rite of passage. In addition, there are the different aspects of the migration project that they must incorporate in the process of building their own identity (Terres des Hommes, 2017; UNICEF and MDM, 2018), such as redeeming the economic and social fate of their family or community. The person who has left his or her country is soon characterized by a 'double absence' (Sayad, 2002) by not belonging to either of the two contexts, the country of origin and the country of destination. This situation is likely to be devastating for the child, because he or she defines his or her identity in the transition to adulthood (Erickson, 1998). Finally, there is the difficult transition from a traumatic experience to the activation of their resilience capacities, traumas that can result from situations that occurred prior to departure, to the violence suffered during the journey (UNICEF and IOM, 2017), or from culture shock upon arrival (UNICEF and MDM, 2018).

On the basis of these considerations, the artificiality of a distinction between 'UASC' and 'adults' is evident, as it does not take due account of the process of becoming an adult, of the cultural and social differences that concern this process, and of the vulnerabilities to which this category of migrants is exposed.
Considering the difficulties inherent in the triple transition that UASC experience, the complexity and sensitivity of the assessment of the best interests of the child emerge, the best interest of the child being the cornerstone of all measures to protect boys and girls. Therefore, addressing them must entail the difficult search for a balance between infantilizing and abandoning them and providing them with the necessary tools for full autonomy in the host society. It then seems more appropriate to consider UASC as 'young people'[9] and to understand, by this term, the process and cultural differences in the various stages of growth. This qualitative leap implies

a concept of enhanced participation, which not only foresees their involvement but real empowerment, as reiterated in the United Nations by its Youth Strategy 2030.[10]

In particular, there are some key areas where this triple transition – and the consequent caretaking, together with listening and understanding what the UASC or former UASC have to say – are particularly crucial: the legal status attributed to the adolescent and the possibility of accessing educational and training opportunities; accessing the job market; achieving housing independence; and of establishing or maintaining formal and informal relationships.

3.2 The normative framework and the reception system for UASC in Italy: Opportunities and protection

The principle of the best interest of the child, established in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,[11] is the basis for the adoption of any decision concerning children, including determining which Member State of the European Union (EU) is responsible for examining applications for international protection or verifying the possibility of family reunification within the Dublin system,[12] which has been strengthened in the Italian legal system by the recent legislation for the protection of UASC (Law 47/2017).
In addition, Law 47/2017 introduced a number of new elements, including:

- a unique procedure for the identification of UASC: this identification, which must be completed within ten days, requires that the qualified staff of the first-level reception facility, with the help of an intercultural mediator, conducts an interview with the child aimed at examining his or her personal and family history, and at drawing out any other element that could be useful for his or her protection;
- an age assessment procedure to be followed when, during identification there is a well-founded doubt concerning the age declared by the UASC or whoever is assumed to be an UASC. If it is not possible to ascertain the identity with personal documents, a multidisciplinary approach will be adopted by conducting socio-medical tests that respect the principle of gradual invasiveness for UASC[13] (this method of ascertaining age aims to prevent the risk that UASC approaching the age of 18 are identified as adults);
- the role of the guardian, whose added value has been recognized by law and whose role has been standardized at the national level,[14] regulating the scheduling and the competent authority for his/her appointment, the scope of his/her legal responsibilities and the number of UASC per guardian;[15]
- the compilation of the cartella sociale (social file), drawn up by the reception facility staff. This is a key tool in assessing the best interests of the child.

UASC in Italy have access to two types of residence permits: a permit for UASC (granted on the grounds of the child being unaccompanied and/or separated) and a permit for family[16] reasons. At the age of 18, a residence permit for UASC may be converted into a residence permit for study, work or job seeking. The application for conversion, depending on the situation in which the person concerned finds himself or herself, is conditional

on obtaining the approval of the Directorate-General for Immigration and Integration Policies of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (MLSP).[17] Also, a child may apply at the same time for both international protection and for a residence permit for UASC or have access to other residence permits governed by the law under the same conditions as other third country nationals.[18] When applying for international protection, UASC are granted certain procedural guarantees, including the right to a priority examination of their application, to be heard and to legal assistance.

Moreover, the legislation provides that the conditions of being a child applying for international protection and holding a permit for UASC or for family reasons may coexist.

Law Decree 113/2018, converted into Law 132/2018 (hereinafter l.d. 113/2018), introduced an important change with the repeal of the residence permit for humanitarian reasons[19] (see Glossary) as this measure was widely used by the Territorial Commissions[20] to protect UASC or former UASC asylum seekers who did not meet the conditions for the recognition of international protection in the form of asylum or subsidiary protection. With the same law, the Territorial Commission now has the possibility of recognizing a new residence permit for special protection of one year – renewable in case of continued eligibility, but not convertible on expiry – for cases in which the foreigner cannot be rejected, expelled or extradited.

With reference to the right to reception, Law 47/2017 (the Zampa Law) has set the principle of non-differentiation among UASC by virtue of their legal status. This legislation requires local authorities to give priority to family foster care over placement in a reception facility (Article 7). In October 2017, the National Integration Plan for holders of international protection also highlighted the measures needed to increase the reception system capacity and improve socio-economic integration through the full application of existing legislative instruments.

To date, the reception system therefore includes:

1. governmental first-level reception facilities for the needs of rescue and immediate protection of all UASC (known as AMIF or FAMI),[21] in which UASC are received for the time strictly necessary (30 days) for identification, age assessment, the provision of information on his or her rights, including that of applying for international protection;
2. SIPROIMI second-level reception facilities, where all UASC regardless of their legal status are entitled to stay. UASC who have applied for international protection can remain until the conclusion of the procedure on status determination, even after turning 18. UASC who benefit from continued protection until the age of 21 can also remain within the SIPROIMI system;[22]
3. other types of reception facilities managed by the municipal authorities or the Prefectures where the child is located, when the former two types are unavailable. Depending on where the research was carried out, these forms of reception have a different name (e.g. educational communities, community housing, CAS), but they all meet the accreditation criteria defined at the regional or municipal levels.

Additionally, for UASC who have been identified as victims of trafficking, the Zampa law establishes that special protection must be guaranteed to them and provides a specific programme of assistance that ensures

adequate reception conditions and psychosocial, health and legal assistance, providing for their continued protection even after they turn 18.[23] On living conditions in Italy and recognized rights, the new law has further consolidated the recognition of the right to health and education to UASC (Article 14).

3.3 UASC in Italy

Between 2014 and 2018, 625,009 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy by sea, of whom 70,547 were UASC. Although the trend of arrivals by sea is declining, in 2018, a total of 3,536 UASC arrived in Italy. In the first half of 2019, the proportion of UASC alone was still significant: 365 out of 2,779 UASC, or 13 per cent, arrived by sea. The data on arrivals by sea must be compared with those of UASC present and registered in the reception system by the MLSP. Table 2 shows the overall reduction between 2017 and 2018, with a stable gender distribution.

Table 1. UASC present and registered in the reception system in Italy, by gender, December 2013–2018

Year	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (absolute values)
31/12/2013	93.8	6.2	6 319
31/12/2014	94.5	5.5	10 536
31/12/2015	95.4	4.6	11 921
31/12/2016	93.3	6.7	17 373
31/12/2017	93.2	6.8	18 303
31/12/2018	92.7	7.3	10 787

Source: ISMU calculations based on data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.

Since 2015 most children arriving are 17 (54% and 60.2% of the total), followed by 16-year-olds (between 23.4% and 28.7% of the total). Most UASC who came between 2013 and 2015 were Egyptians, yet in recent years their number has decreased, while simultaneously there has been an increased trend (20%) of children arriving from West African countries reaching 41% of the total presence of UASC in 2018. Albania, the Gambia and Eritrea present steady trends, with a maximum fluctuation of Albanian children of 5 percentage points in these years (1,677 at the end of 2017; 1,550 at the end of 2018), while UASC from the Gambia and Eritrea since 2014 register numbers varying between 7% and 13%.

As of June 2019, 4,700 children were registered as absconded[24] since they have left formal reception facilities or care arrangements; it is not possible to know if they are still present in Italy. The trend of absconded UASC shows an overall decrease that is due to, at least in part, to them turning 18 and thus ceasing to be registered as UASC in the reception system.

The aforementioned drop in arrivals from the central Mediterranean route and the consequent reduction of UASC with African origins further highlights the consistent and substantially stable presence of Albanian UASC, who have been among the first nationalities in percentage terms in recent years (22% in June 2019). Overall (figure 1), there is confirmation of the main countries of origin of UASC compared with the trend of previous years (Egypt, the Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea), with the exception of Eritrean UASC, for whom the numbers have halved and – concerning age – a slight increase in the number of children aged 17. Females represent 6.8%, with 31.8% coming from Nigeria, followed by Albania (13.4%) and Eritrea (11.6%). To a lesser extent than their male counterparts, females are also mostly 17 (44.7%) and 16 (22.7%) years old.

Figure 1. UASC registered in the reception system as at 30 June 2019 by main nationality, gender and age

First 5 UASC nationalities

Guinea	5,2%
Gambia	6,5%
Côte d'Ivoire	6,7%
Egypt	8,7%
Albania	22,9%
Other origin	50%

Gender
Females 7%
Males 93%

Age
0-6 years old 1%
7-14 years old 6%
15 years old 7%
16 years old 23%
17 years old 63%
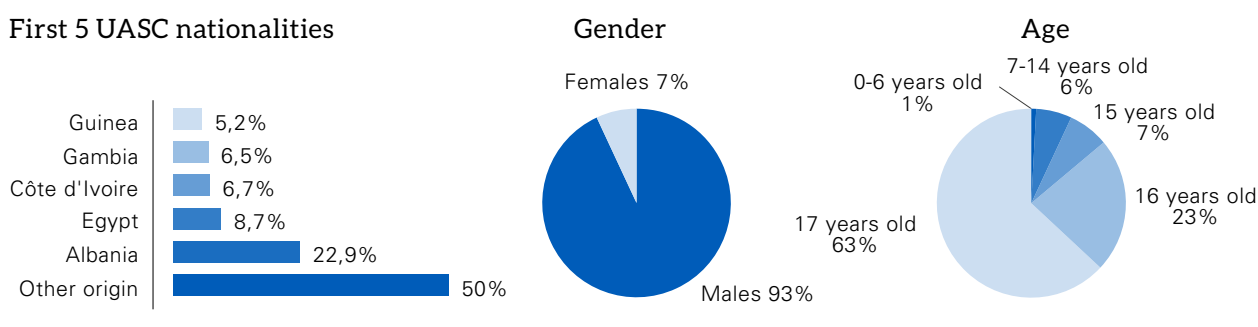
Source: MLSP data (UASC Monthly Report in Italy, updated on 30 June 2019).

Despite the aim of the Italian authorities to achieve a more equitable geographical distribution of reception facilities for UASC across the country, to date, Sicily continues to host the largest number of UASC. At the end of 2018, it hosted 38 per cent of the total number of UASC registered, mostly from the Gambia and Eritrea, which decreased to 28.4 per cent in June 2019 as a result of the decline in arrivals. Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna and Lazio follow with Egyptian and Albanian nationalities (the number of young Egyptians is particularly significant in Lazio, equal to 39 per cent at the end of 2018).

Between 2013 and 2017,[25] there was a steady increase in the issuance of residence permits for UASC, followed by a slight drop in 2017, at 30 per cent of those present that year. In addition to the residence permits for UASC, there are also permits for foster care, family reasons and the integration of UASC, which have not been, however, consistently recorded over the years and therefore do not allow to determine the trends. After the progressive increase in asylum applications from 2014, with a peak in 2017 of 9,782 applications, there was a sudden decline in 2018. With the decrease in applications, there was also a 62.4 per cent decrease in 2017 in absolute terms of UASC asylum seekers, (from more than 9,700 in 2017 to 3,676 in 2018). The 377 UASC who applied for asylum in January and June 2019 make up only 2 per cent of the total number of applicants. During 2018, 8,554 UASC asylum applications were examined, of which 5.8 per cent obtained refugee status; 2.6 per

cent, subsidiary protection; and 61 per cent, humanitarian protection, a reduction of 10 per cent compared to 2017 (Ministry of the Interior, 2018), but three times higher than the 20.9 per cent of foreign adults to whom it was granted (Table 2). In 2018, more than a third of the examined paperwork concerned young Gambians and Nigerians, with the recognition of refugee status for 2 per cent and 17 per cent of applications, respectively, and humanitarian protection for 67 per cent and 52 per cent (Ministry of the Interior, National Commission for Asylum).

Table 2. UASC asylum seekers: First instance decision, by gender and age group, and total no. of adults, 2018.

Gender/age group	Refugee status	Subsidiary	Humanitari-an protection	Not granted	Absconded	Another outcome	Total no. examined**
protection	280	209	5.088	2 184	198	94	8 053
Female	215	10	162	73	22	19	501
Total	**495**	**219**	**5 250**	**2 257**	**220**	**113**	**8 554**
0–13 years old	6	1	5	4	1	5	22
14–17 years old	145	63	986	417	56	67	1 734
18+ years old (*)	344	155	4 259	1 836	163	41	6 798
Total	**495**	**219**	**5 250**	**2 257**	**220**	**113**	**8 554**
Total % UASC	**5.8**	**2.6**	**61.4**	**26.4**	**2.6**	**1 .3**	**100.0**
% total adults	7.4	4.5	20.9	58.6	8.1	0.4	100.0

Not recognized = e.g. negative reply, absent/not-eligible, etc

(*) at the time of the decision.

(**) examined during the year irrespective of the date of application for asylum.

Fonte: ISMU calculations based on data from the Ministry of the Interior, National Commission for Asylum.

4. Expectations, aspirations and the future

The desires and aspirations of UASC often concern the sphere of opportunities that are denied or impeded by the economic and social context in the country of origin due, amongst other factors, to conflict or economic deprivation. While individual expectations relate to the possibility of realizing one's own desires in a relatively short time, family expectations relate to the capacity to respond to external expectations, which are often complex, such as being able to send economic remittances in a short time.[26] Desires and expectations, therefore, become indicators of adolescents' ability to influence the present and to project themselves into the future (Bell, 1966). Their choices, like their desires and their potential for building their lives, vary in relation to their age and their ability to imagine themselves in the future, and in relation to their gender and the social and cultural expectations attributed to them.

4.1 UASC aspirations and family expectations

A plurality of desires and aspirations have emerged from the biographical interviews with UASC. Individual desires before departure can be thus identified, albeit mixed with their complex life experiences:

- **to find opportunities for a better life:** *"I would like to have a beautiful life, a better future, for me, also for my future generation"* (Congolese[27], male, 17 years old);
- **to pursue education:** *"For me, dreaming of going to school led to taking the boat from Egypt [...] I had the chance, now I cannot give up"* (Egyptian, male, 17 years old). This desire often clashes with the need for self-sufficiency at the time of leaving the reception system: *"I wanted more: to go to school, finish my studies, but it will be a bit difficult to study with nothing in hand, without money, because I want to go to university"* (Congolese, male, 17 years old);
- **to make Italy only a leg of my journey:** *"I knew nothing, not even the language ... because I have never studied Italian and therefore I wanted to go to England"* (Eritrean, male 17 years old);
- **to escape from violence,** an aspiration that concerns those who flee from situations of conflict, persecution and violence in their country of origin: *"It was also very hard for me to come; my family is in Africa. You understand [...] my country is also at war"* (Somalian, male, 19 years old);
- **to flee from family abuse and the risk of early marriage,** in particular for girls: *"When you are there you are 17 years old, they find you a husband and you go"* (Albanian, 16 years old, female);
- **to reunite with one's family** – the dream is often to reach Northern European countries: *"When the documents arrive I'll go to Holland, because my father is there"* (Eritrean, female, 17 years old). This desire also emerged for the UASC 'in transit', who stay for some time in Rome or in border areas, as confirmed by the educators of some civil society organizations (CSOs):
- **to have a family of their own in the future:** *"first of all, my dreams, [...] have my own family, get married, and have children"* (Ivorian, male, 16 years old), mentioned by both males and females: *"to work, have a house and do something good, later a husband and a child who goes to school"*

M., 17 years old, originally from the Gambia, sits by a pond in a park in Pozzallo, Sicily, Italy (May 2016)

(Somalian, female, 17 years old). They often prefer Italy for this project: *"I would like to continue to stay here and have a job, then I bring them and we live here in Italy together"* (Gambian, male, 17 years old);

- **not having precise desires:** *"when I left my country I had no direction"* (Gambian, male, 18 years old)

Both girls and boys highlighted the need to maintain a relationship with relatives of the country of origin and the desire to build a family in the future, often preferring Italy for this project. Studying, working, being self-supporting and seeking stability underlie the emerging desire to bring a family member to Italy, the younger brother, the sister or the mother: *"[...] to be a nurse, bring my mother here, I would like to study and then work, have a house, a husband, buy food"* (Somalian, female, 17 years old).

The research also highlighted the need to pay particular attention to the influence of the family of origin on the formulation of expectations. Once in Italy, many children want to work for themselves and to send money home, often coming with previous work experience. Once they arrive, however, they discover that they have to wait to obtain a residence permit, to learn Italian, attend school and be trained through an internship, and that they actually have to wait until they turn 18 in order to work. Goals are thus adapted, and an awareness soon emerges of the need to complete an education and training pathway, and to undertake multiple activities to build one's own path: *"They told me that it's early; there are no jobs; you still have to learn the language; at the beginning I went crazy, because I have always earned money since I was a child"* (Tunisian, male, 24 years old). Finally, departure is not always voluntary or planned, especially for some girls and young women who arrived following a decision taken by their adult husband or family, while others were deceived by family members or trusted friends. In these cases, the migration project emerges later, once they have entered the reception and protection system.

4.2 Desires and expectations in the transition to adulthood

For those who have just turned 18, the prospect of a better quality of life, which takes the form of a satisfactory work activity, is a common objective. Their stories are striking for their acquired capacity to nurture their dreams and their capacity to have aspirations and to project themselves into the future (Appadurai, 2011), albeit with a certain flexibility in the choices of a desirable future (Masini, 2000), susceptible to changes and adaptations in relation to the place where they will live.

The desire that most frequently emerges is to build a future in Italy and specifically where they have experienced the most significant stages of their process of growth towards adulthood. Expectations and desires become a springboard for a pathway that starts in Catania, Palermo, Syracuse, Rome, Latina and Milan, and that will make them citizens of these cities: *"Certainly, I live in Italy because I'm comfortable here[...], my family has educated me, but here I have been taught to grow"* (Egyptian, male, 19 years old). In this change of mentality experienced by girls and boys, some positive role models of adults they met during their journey in Italy were crucial.

In most of the interviews with UASC, the expectations regarding work are focused, at this stage, on specific jobs: blacksmith, hairdresser, cook, mechanic, waiter, plumber and electrician. The girls dream of being a policewoman, an engineer, a doctor, a lawyer, but they adapt their expectations to any job opportunity, often oriented towards occupations having traditionally higher numbers of female workers (hairdresser, waitress, beautician), thus reproducing traditional roles that persist both in the culture of origin and in the culture of arrival: *"What kind of work? Cleaning, working in a restaurant, caring for the elderly, whatever there is"* (Nigerian, female, 20 years old).

Everyone's future is built step by step, from one experience to another, finding a way to satisfy, as close as possible, one's aspirations and aware that these can change. Among UASC who turned 18, at times there is the desire to return to their country of origin, to put into practice the professional experience acquired or to start a business, at times because they feel a sense of responsibility towards their own country: *"I am Congolese and I must return to my country to invest, build [...] if I have the ability to do so, I will do so "* (Congolese, male, 17 years old).

The desire for a satisfactory housing solution is key, especially for former UASC, which often means having a room in an apartment on their own, where they can live together with other friends and/or fellow compatriots 'chosen as roommates'. Similarly, to the desires expressed by UASC, those who turned 18, especially some girls and young women who already have a child to take care of, expressed the dream of building a family of their own, marrying and having children: *"I want to work a lot to help my family. He is here, he is small (referring to the child)"* (Gambian, female, 18 years old). This represents an important step towards the transition to adult life and the affirmation of one's own achievement, proving to oneself and also to others in the country of origin and in Italy that one has 'made it'.

Life history of M. – Albanian, 20 years old: Benefiting from continued care and protection until age 21

M. has been in Italy for four and a half years and, from the very beginning, has followed a positive path of social inclusion in Italy. He arrived in Italy at the age of 15, pushed by his parents, although he did not agree with his family's decision. Upon his arrival in Milan, he was immediately placed in a reception facility where the stay is structured in several steps that gradually guides them to autonomy. M. has followed all the steps within the reception facility and is now in an apartment under supervised independent living arrangements. After the first Italian courses and the middle school exam, he was able to enrol in an evening school (chartered accountant and surveyor specialization course), having expressed a clear desire to continue studying, even if he says he had to 'fight' to be able to continue doing so. Attending evening classes, he had the opportunity to obtain a five-month work grant in a design studio, which he says was a very good experience, where he was appreciated. When he turned 18, the social services granted him continued protection until age 21. In addition, because of this internship, M. was ready to move into supervised independent living. He then obtained a scholarship that allows him to continue attending an evening school for surveyors, without having to work, because the scholarship is conditional on school results. M. is in his final year of schooling and until then will enjoy the continued protection by social services, at the end of which he feels ready to enter the job market. M. has been able to achieve what he wanted and is following a pathway in which he is guided towards gradual independence, which will allow him to have freedom and responsibility without feeling abandoned.

5. The transition to adulthood: pathways and factors for success

5.1 Characteristics and factors that facilitate or constrain UASC's transition pathways

5.1.1 UASC's rights

Figure 2. UASC's rights

UASC rights

Non refoulment	Non expulsability	Right to have a guardian	Unconditional accommodation (priority to family-foster care, when possible)	Social rights recognized for all children (education, health, etc.)	Procedural guarantees for asylum applications

The principle of the best interests of the child and the importance of the inclusion of the child in a long-term project are at the core of the biographies collected. As shown in Figure 2, the rights granted to UASC protect their stay in Italy, their legal status and their social life. However, there is a gap between the rights and guarantees provided for by law and their actual implementation in accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child. Good practices of multidisciplinary, best interest assessment consistent with international standards are still limited due to inadequate and heterogenous regulations.

The legal status influences UASC pathways because it impacts on the choices available to them. This is even more significant following the abolition of the residence permit for humanitarian protection. Hence, looking at the precariousness linked to the legal status, prospects differ based on whether the UASC:

a. have a form of international protection (refugee status or subsidiary protection, which is the most stable legal status enabling to develop a social inclusion pathway);

b. hold a residence permit for special cases, which can be converted into another residence permit[28] and which can extend after the age of 18. This includes UASC who have been granted humanitarian protection under the previous legal framework;[29]

B., 18 yeasr old, a refugee from war-affected South Sudan in class at the United World College, near Trieste, where he has won a full scholarship to complete the international baccalaureate, October 2017.

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c. have a residence permit for UASC, which lasts until they turn 18 and can be converted into a residence permit for job seeking, or study or work purposes;

d. are waiting for the outcome of their asylum application and live in the greatest precariousness, especially given that there is a risk that they will receive a negative decision when they turn 18.

In all cases, the legal status affects the process of social inclusion and labour insertion, consequently leading to frustration due to the feeling of not progressing and of precariousness. The legal status, therefore, is the first factor that positively or negatively affects the pathway of transition to adulthood.

5.1.2 The first step: The pathways in the reception system

Across all regions, common trends have been observed with regard to reception procedures and pathways, with positive and negative cases being equally distributed. There are many factors that affect reception pathways, that are both structural, such as local opportunities, and interpersonal, such as the people with whom UASC interact.

The role of the educator

The educator[30] plays a crucial role in the reception pathway and in guiding UASC's choices. In particular, for girls, in particular, the need to build positive relationships with adult women is observed: *"She asks me what I think is right for me [...] Yes, I get on well. She told me that when I want to talk, when I have a problem, 'call me, I can help you'. She is a good person"* (Albanian, female, 16 years old). From the biographies, an ambivalence emerges regarding the role of the educator as someone who both builds a privileged relationship with the UASC but who is also the guarantor of the organizational rules of the reception facilities in which they operate.

The educational importance of the rules

The interviewees stated that the rules of the reception facility have to be respected and cannot not be waived, even if, in reality, some of them reluctantly tolerate a systematic limitation in the freedom they have to manage the time they spend in the facility, their free time, and their belongings. The quality of the services and the opportunities offered by the reception facility are crucial in the acceptance of this reduced freedom, whilst at the same time facilitating adaptation to the new context.

Three UASC profiles emerge that outline three types of actions and relationships based on the rules of the reception facility:

1. **Adaptive** – recognizes the value of the rules for personal and common well-being: *"When something is not right, okay I understand that I shouldn't do it, and if I want to do again [laughs], they tell me you cannot do this; sometimes I get angry, afterwards I understand that it was right and I say okay"* (Albanian, female, 16 years old).

2. **Rebel** – misinterprets the rules and does not acknowledge their usefulness: *"If the carabinieri are*

called in, I tell you, they won't not let me out, I swear [...] in Tunisia it never happened that I wasn't allowed out for months. Never, and I come to this community and they do this to me" (Tunisian, male, 13 years old).

3. **Resigned** – although not acknowledging the rules, opts for living peacefully: *"[...] so as to avoid problems because I know how I am, so to avoid them I prefer to be on that side"* (Ivorian, male, 16 years old).

UASC, therefore, often struggle to understand the educational value of the rules of the reception facilities in which they live, and at times, particular attention is not given by reception facility staff to their understanding of this value, but rather, the focus is on the need for them to adapt. In addition, there are specific situations, such as reception facilities for victims of trafficking, where the rules are even stricter for the protection of the girls hosted there; but even here, it is neither simple nor clear for them to understand and accept these rules, including from a psychological point of view, especially those regarding control and freedom of movement.

UASC also mentioned a particularly positive aspect regarding the services offered by the reception facilities, i.e. sports and recreational activities. In general, the boys and girls mentioned that there were opportunities to become involved in exciting and fun activities.

5.1.3 UASC's education and training pathways

The public education and training system is uniform throughout the country and is compulsory for ten years for all children from the age of six to 16. The differences in the three observed regions are therefore attributable to the school and training courses available at the local level and to the choices of the actors involved in the development of the child's personal education plan (PEI).[31]

With the increase in the number of UASC, the provision of Italian courses has expanded and is now divided into Italian language workshops within the reception facilities, courses offered by the CPIAs,[32] and Italian language schools run by CSOs and/or universities. In particular, the CPIAs are the main hub for UASC – and for migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in general – for Italian courses and the attainment of the compulsory middle school certificate, as shown by the census carried out in the CPIAs of the three regions involved in the research. The data collected by the CPIAs shows that 84 per cent of students are citizens of a third country, of whom 10 per cent are UASC.[33]

With regards to vocational training, there are two different types of training courses for UASC: short courses (from three to six months) provided by the accredited bodies of the Vocational Education and Training (VET)[34] regional system, and longer courses (from two years to five years) carried out by training institutions accredited by the regions or by the professional institutes and the CPIAs as part of their regular courses for the adult population.

The integration of UASC into the educational system is significantly difficult in the early stages, especially in early literacy, due to their disorientation upon arrival in Italy and in the early stages of their integration into the reception system (Augelli, Lombi and Triani 2018). Moreover, it is not uncommon for UASC to have low levels

of schooling[35] upon arrival, even if they often have the advantage of knowing several languages and of being aware of the importance of learning Italian as a fundamental step in their path to inclusion (D'Agostino: 2018). One of the main problems relates to access to the education system for UASC who are 15 years old and who can be admitted either exceptionally to the CPIA or to regular secondary schools.[36]

Alongside language difficulties, UASC are often faced with the challenge of building trust and developing relationships with peers, teachers and other adults at school. The Personal Education Plan (PEI), therefore, becomes fundamental in the UASC's transition towards their social inclusion, which can only be achieved together with the contribution of all the individuals involved in supporting them: educators, social workers and volunteer guardians.[37]

Many interviewed UASC want to go to school because they believe that their future depends on the acquisition of educational and professional skills. Responses to the U-Report on the Move poll also confirm this trend, with 77 per cent of respondents reporting that they were very satisfied with their school experience.[38] School and vocational training courses are experienced as strongly geared towards job insertion or as an opportunity for emancipation and growth: *"The school inspires ideas. If you don't go to school, you can't know everything that's going on in the world"* (Nigerian, female, 21 years old).

From the analysis of the information gathered, three enabling factors have been identified in facilitating their school-training pathways:

a. **the quality of the support** offered by the reception facility, in particular, the educators and the other staff who spend the day with the UASC. This support plays a central role in the choice of the educational path that best responds to the greatest interests of the child, assessed in a multidisciplinary way. In the specific cases of young women with children, the support of childcare organizations and services becomes crucial to enable them to continue their studies: *"In the morning I go to Civico Zero, and she goes to the kindergarten at nine"* (Eritrean, female, 17 years old);

b. opportunities that are built in the school-training context through **the network of relationships** that are established;

c. the type of **guidance and orientation in the choices** that UASC make to either continue training or access employment. Some interviewed educators and social workers confirm that most UASC are oriented towards professional pathways or quickly enrolled in job internships to support them in their job placement. In both cases, the importance of guiding the adolescent to understand his or her aspirations, abilities and possibilities has a decisive effect on the success of his or her pathway.

The positive trend of school experiences is confirmed by the U-Report on the Move poll, with 89 per cent of respondents stating that what they are learning is very useful. In addition, both boys and girls seem to be clear about what could be changed in their education paths in order to improve them, i.e. 30 per cent of U-Reporters stated they would like a more practical method to learn Italian, which was also confirmed by UASC and former UASC who participated in the FGDs.

At a crossroads. Unaccompanied and separated children in their transition to adulthood in Italy

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Life history of K. – Ivorian, 17 years old: Residence permit for UASC

K. says that he applied for international protection but that he then withdrew his application because the "Commission in Italy became difficult". He arrived in Milan with the initial intention of going to France to join a friend, but he gave up this plan when he was placed in a facility in the Milan area. He has negative memories of this place, because "there were no rules; you don't study and you don't do anything." After spending around five months there, he was transferred to a facility for UASC in Milan, where he has been living for a year. He attended and obtained the middle school certificate during his stay at the reception facility. Although he expressed the desire to continue studying, his educators suggested that he set out on a path ensuring access to employment, so as to become autonomous, since he was approaching the age of 18. K. says he is willing to take any job. At the time of the interview, however, K. mentioned problems with his documents for reasons he cannot understand. This situation – the impossibility of studying and working, the uncertainty about the future, like the traumas he experienced during the journey (he mentions the painful loss of a friend in the desert) – has thrown him into a state of distress, so he is assisted by a psychologist, whom he sees once a week and with whom he talks about "his dream" that "is now ruined forever".

5.1.4 The role of the guardian in the transition to adulthood

The system of guardianship for UASC takes three forms: public-institutional, voluntary and pro tempore. Law 47/2017 values in particular volunteer guardians (see box 3 in Annex), who appear as a key reference person in the UASC's transition to adult life, as joint actors in the choices that the child makes. The importance of the volunteer guardian and his/her task to support in the UASC's process of transition to adult life is also internationally recognized (see FRA and AGIA, 2018[39]). The guardian ensures the child's overall well-being, safeguards the child's best interests, exercises legal representation and complements the child's limited legal capacity.[40] He or she facilitates the personal growth of UASC in the host society, supervises the protection of their rights, and supports them in understanding their duties.

As revealed by the interviews, volunteer guardians define their role in practice rather than on the basis of legal provisions, and in a significantly different way from the past and from institutional guardians. The mainstreaming of the new role of the volunteer guardian within the protection and reception system has also varied between locations and in its duration. Sicily represents a good practice, although there are differences across the different provinces involved in the research; Palermo and Syracuse offer positive experiences and successful cases due to the very active presence of support networks[41] and associations.

In general, the role of the volunteer guardian is positive and effective when he or she succeeds in forging and guiding the particular relationship that is established between the UASC and the surrounding social context. Much depends on the skills and personal talent of the guardian, and his or her availability in terms of time and presence in the daily life of the UASC to identify, in a timely manner, signs of discomfort or calls for help in crucial moments of UASC's pathways towards maturity nand relational and economic autonomy. A serious shortcoming of the current system, which is also not regulated by Law 47/2017, is the lack of permanent support mechanisms for volunteer guardians, in addition to training.[42] As the interviewees testify, the role they play is highly relational and involves the social and emotional dimension of protection: *"The guardian for me here in Italy is like a parent, a big brother. I tell him, 'This is my problem, can you help me?' I also have his WhatsApp number"* (Albanian, male, 16 years old). Within this relationship, the expectations of the guardian as well as that of the child towards him or her also play an important role, which, if not mediated or if unrealistic, are at risk of leading to frustration.

5.1.5 Becoming adults by building meaningful relationships

In the transition to adulthood, UASC build formal and informal relationships to support their social inclusion in Italy. These relationships can be categorised as follows:

- **formal relationships,** which are mediated by the processes of institutionalization and inclusion;
- **informal relationships,** which are the spontaneous relationships that arise and develop through links with the communities from home countries and friendships between peers groups;
- **relationships that are built in the formal sphere** (the school or the reception facility) but that go beyond their formal function.

The first relationships of trust are established with the educators of the reception facilities, who contribute towards the definition of a positive model of support and guidance to adulthood. Building positive bonds with adults helps to build openness to society, attributing to adults a positive image, whereas previously these same adults may have been a source of exploitation, violence or deception: *"I was deceived by my cousin who told me that I had to go with him to Lagos, and by chance, I found myself in Libya"* (Nigerian, female, 17 years old). Some interviewed UASC maintain significant relationships with the family of origin, or part of it. Some have even expressed the desire to be able to bring their relatives to Italy, often younger brothers or sisters: *"I still do not know if I will live here in Italy or England, but I would like to take my family with me"* (Eritrean, male, 17 years old), or join a part of their family in other European countries. This legitimate aspiration often becomes difficult to realize due to procedural difficulties and lack of harmonization among EU countries, particularly with regard to age assessment and family links: *"Yes, when my documents arrive I will go to the Netherlands, because my father is there. I'm going there"* (Eritrean, female, 17 years old).

Within the informal relations built by UASC, relations with peers are of particular importance. In the context of reception facilities, UASC are in close contact with other UASC on similar paths and in similar situations; although this helps mutual understanding, it may limit them to ghettoized relationships.

5.2 Transition to adulthood: What changes when UASC become adults

5.2.1 The rights of former UASC

Figure 3. Changes in entitlements of former UASC upon turning 18

Changes to entitlements upon turning 18

Loss of the right of non refoulement	Loss of the right of non explusability	Loss of the right to unconditional accomodation	Loss of rights and guarantees linked to being a child (guardianship, procedural guarantees in asylum applications, etc.)

Becoming an adult is a fundamental turning point for those who arrived in Italy alone and as UASC. The borderline is clearly defined from a legal and reception point of view. For children approaching the age of 18, different scenarios are envisaged according to their legal status: for those who hold international protection status, although they lose rights and safeguards granted to them as children, the moment of transition to adulthood has a relatively minor impact since the international protection status provides a broad protection of rights and reception facilities; those with a residence permit for UASC will be in a critical situation regarding

M. (left), 15 years old, from Côte d'Ivoire, M. L. B (centre, their volunteer guardianship) and K., 16 years old, from Guinea-Bissau, pose for a photo in Palermo, Sicily, Italy (December 2018)

both their residence permit and right to reception: they may apply for a permit for job seeking, study purposes or work purposes[43] but in all cases, they have to leave the reception facility in which they are living and become self-supporting unless they are granted continued protection by social services until age 21, which enables them to continue to benefit from reception services.[44]

UASC who have obtained recognition of humanitarian protection before the entry into force of l.d. 113/2018 are in a transitional situation in which, for a limited period of time of two years, they can still enjoy a form of protection. After this period, their case is re-assessed by the competent Territorial Commission, with the possibility of being granted special protection or, in certain cases, international protection. If the necessary requirements are not met, they may not be granted any form of protection. As an alternative, they can proceed with the conversion to a residence permit for job seeking, or study or work purposes but accommodation in SIPROIMI facilities is not guaranteed. The prospects for those who are granted special protection (as defined by l.d.113/2018 and therefore not convertible into work permits)[45] is even more uncertain. Those who, at the age of 18, are asylum-seekers remain in a legal limbo where the guarantees of protection are still valid until the outcome of the Territorial Commission; however, it is more difficult for them to begin and build a pathway of transition to adulthood, because their condition could radically change with a negative outcome that would put them in an irregular situation in the event that even the appeal would end in a negative ruling.

5.2.2 Access to employment pathways

Job placement is a crucial phase of UASC and former UASC pathways. Achieving full economic independence is indeed their greatest challenge. There are many factors that affect former UASC's entry into the job market: their legal status, as illustrated above; the availability of adequate professional training; the opportunities offered by the local job market; and finally, the possibility of having a social network supporting them with job opportunities and language skills.

While taking into account some regional differences in labour policies and forms of job seeking support, the analysis of interviews with former UASC and key informants shows that the pathways and phases in accessing the job market are similar in the three regions,[46] they are based on the capacity of the reception facility and the local network in which it operates to offer integrated services, and on the offer of the local job market.

The urgent need to enter the job market is a recurring theme in the stories of former UASC, who often find it difficult to fully understand the reasons for waiting and the importance of following the educational and training steps indicated by educators and/or guardians. Moreover, UASC and former UASC can rarely choose jobs according to their abilities and aspirations.[47] The path is often random and/or guided by need, which has been further exacerbated by the restrictions of Law 132/2018.

The research also revealed that many of the interviewees have already had work experience in their countries of origin (even at a very young age), or during the long journeys to reach Europe, as farmers, welders, carpenters, shop assistants or bricklayers: *"In my country I didn't go to school [...] I had to work and help my family, when I was six, seven years old [...] because we arrive a little... let's say we're poor [...]. I did a little bit of everything"* (Egyptian, male, 16 years old), and a girl said: *"I worked as a hairdresser for three years, since I was 14 until I arrived here"* (Egyptian, female, 17 years old).

Among the types of employment pathways most frequently accessed by those who have just turned 18 is

the work grant, which combines economic support with temporary employment in 'protected' circumstances. Similar evidence also emerges from statements by trainees participating in the Percorsi I and II projects funded by the MLSP and implemented by Anpal services.[48] Both Percorsi projects have implemented internship courses with a work grant for the recipient and a contribution to the employer for the tutoring and coaching activities.[49] Even outside this type of pathway, it is possible to find cases of UASC who have recently turned 18 who have successfully integrated into the job market as a result of the assistance and support of reception facilities and CSOs. The characteristics of a successful job insertion pathway are similar to the above-mentioned structural factors, but the availability of a social network is also crucial, as well as the ability of the former UASC to "draw from it and nurture it", as well as a certain amount of proactivity and desire to learn: *"It was great because there were many of us working together, all the girls [...] and they also helped me a lot [...], and before I did not understand Italian"* (Milan, Gambian, 19 years).

Life history of N. – Senegalese, 18 years old: Job-seeking permit

N. arrived in Italy at the age of 16, in 2016. An application for a residence permit for UASC was submitted and not an application for asylum. Immediately after landing in Sicily, he was transferred to a reception centre for UASC in the Marche region, where he stayed for three months. N. found the rules of this centre too strict, for example, regarding the use of a mobile phone, which was restricted to a few hours a day, and going out. He did not want to wait for a transfer to another facility, so he left. With the vague idea of moving to another country, he arrived in Milan, where the police stopped him and identified him. N. was placed in a reception facility near Milan, where he remained for a year attending Italian courses, starting the third grade of middle school (without being able to finish it because he left the reception facility when he turned 18 years old), practising sports such as boxing, and taking part in artistic activities such as theatre and training (e.g. vegetable gardening and general gardening) organized by the reception facility. As his 18th birthday was approaching, the reception facility could not ask for his continued protection by social services until the age of 21, since the municipality that had jurisdiction over him tended not to grant them at that particular point in time. An application for conversion of the residence permit for UASC into a job seeking permit was then sent on his behalf to the MLPS, which granted it. However, the application process was rendered more complicated by the fact that N. had to apply for the issue of his passport at the Senegalese consulate. Upon turning 18 years old, N. had to leave the reception facility, and the only solution he found was a dormitory for the homeless and for people without fixed abode. Since then, N. has obtained a one-year job-seeking residence permit. Although holding a job-seeking permit has given him psychological peace of mind by "being okay with his papers" for at least some time, he is constantly looking for job opportunities. He has already completed two work grant internships in two metalworking companies (a sector in which he would like to work). Previously, he had a small job as a gardener and obtained a licence to operate a forklift. In the meantime, he continues to attend an evening Italian course to improve his skills. At the moment, his main concern is finding stable

> **work and possibly, obtaining a work permit. N. is well aware of the real risk of falling into an illegal situation should he not get a work permit, which he might have obtained more easily if he had had a little more time available.**

5.2.3 Housing independence

UASC who have turned 18 and have concluded or are about to conclude their stay in a reception facility struggle to find physical and relational spaces that meet their need for freedom and independent living. Underlying this is an ambivalence relating to the balance between independence and abandonment at the time of leaving the facility.

The renting of a house creates anxiety and concern among the young people interviewed, since they are aware that it is necessary to have an employment contract in order to be able to rent a house. The theme of the connection between employment and independent living emerges in many interviews: *"The first thing they say is whether you work. If you work, yes, they tell you, here is a friend who has a room or a bed [...] if you do not work, it is too difficult to find a house"* (Senegalese, male, 21 years old).

For some, especially girls, although they are aware that renting a house with others can be an advantage for cost sharing reasons, they want to rent an independent accommodation to build an independent life or live with their partner: *"a house of my own, a job I can do, that I'm happy with my boyfriend, I think that in the future I'm closer to him"* (Gambian, female, 19 years old).

It is often difficult to rent a place to live due to owners' lack of trust, in which case, mediation by social networks can assist. The search for a home is a team effort involving many actors, voluntary organizations, religious associations, informal networks or planned projects with the social services of the municipalities. Another aspect that also emerged from the interviews with social and institutional key informants is the presence of networks of fellow compatriots who, at the moment of leaving the reception system, represent a form of support and the possibility of finding a shared housing solution with others, even if often with irregular rental contracts. In addition to these forms, there is also supervised independent accommodation, such as boarding houses or forms of 'protected' apartments managed by CSOs and assisted by the occasional presence of an educator.[50] Among the positive experiences family foster care remains a form of alternative care,[51] which goes far beyond the housing solution and can continue after former UASC turn 18, although its use is still limited in Italy: *"I have been living with my foster family for about five years; luckily, everything is fine and we have grown fond of each other and we immediately understood each other [...] they simply thought of helping this boy and welcoming him into their home, so I can say that I'm really lucky"* (Egyptian, male, 19 years old). The boys' and girls' satisfaction with regards to their successful pathways is common to all the positive experiences of housing independence; some study and work in the evening or during the weekend, and proudly emphasize being able to pay the rent and live with dignity, without being a burden on anyone.

5.2.4 Friendly and supportive relations

Formal and informal relationships play a key role in supporting social inclusion of former UASC in Italy. In this phase, those who have already turned 18 become more aware of the role that relationships can play and begin to make choices with regard to both the improvement of formal relationships and the selection of informal ones. The first points of reference are the formal relationships of trust (with the educators of the reception facilities, the guardians, with the foster families and, in some cases, with the teachers) established when they were still UASC. Those relationships have been 'put to the test' for a certain period and can represent the baggage that children who turn 18 can carry with them in their path as young adults: *"I have become very fond of them, maybe even they [the educators] have, I have been to their home. We go out, we also went on vacation together"* (Albanian, male, 20 years old). The interviews make repeated mention of the network created in support to the young migrant's or refugee's growth pathway and of which, at a certain point, he or she becomes a conscious and active actor in the construction of his or her own social capital.

With regard to informal relations, in particular those developed with peers, the acquisition of greater autonomy is directly connected to increased capacity and opportunities of making choices which are in turn influenced by personal opportunities. The selection of friendships can go either in the direction of keeping away or coming closer to situations deemed unsuitable, *"Some people smoke hashish, a mess [...]. I've seen so many bad things; I do not want them for me"* (Somalian, male, 19 years old).

Both boys and girls talk about wanting to marry and build a family in the future when they will have achieved the goals they are pursuing today. In some cases, ongoing love relationships are highlighted as central. In other cases, affective and loving relationships are postponed to focus on more urgent matters. A decisive relationship that affects some girls and young women is the one with children, which modifies in many ways their relationships, including how they are perceived by other girls: *"I am everyone's mother"* (Gambian, female, 18 years old).

M., 17 years old, from the Gambia, bumps fists with a local Italian man he had been chatting with during an outing in Pozzallo, Sicily (May 2016)

Life history of H. – Afghan, 24 years old: A refugee

H. has been in Italy since 2012 after a long and difficult journey. H. left Afghanistan at the age of 13, without his family, together with other fellow compatriots on their way to Pakistan. He worked there for a year in a carpet factory, but the money he earned was too little, just enough to eat and sleep and buy clothing. He decided to continue his journey and moved to the mountains to work in a mine. He worked there for a fairly long time, but the work was very difficult, so he decided to leave again and move to the Islamic Republic of Iran. This crossing was also more difficult than expected; he tried to cross the border three times but was sent back to Afghanistan. H. did not give up; he decided to continue his journey, return to Pakistan and try to enter the Islamic Republic of Iran again. He then worked in a slaughterhouse for the time needed to earn the money to pay the traffickers. This way he could enter Europe from the Greek border when he was still an UASC and then arrive in Italy. But his journey was not over. His dream was to go to Germany, where he arrived shortly after, but he was sent back to Italy where he had already undergone the identification and registration process.

In Italy, H. was recognized as a UASC and so granted a place in a reception facility. However, the first facility where he was assigned to was very crowded, with few opportunities for training. But H. wanted to study and asked his guardian to be moved to a smaller town. It is only here that he could finally start school and learn Italian. And it is in this facility that he was helped to find a job. After a few months of searching, he found a job in a restaurant, where he has been working for several years on a permanent employment contract. Now H. is living in a house with a friend. He applied for Italian citizenship. In the future he would like to join his brothers in Denmark and work together to help their family in Afghanistan and the other brothers and sisters who are still living with their parents.

6. Obstacles, risks and vulnerabilities in the transition to independence

6.1 Obstacles and vulnerabilities

The biographies trace the obstacles that might hinder UASC's and former UASC's pathways to social inclusion in the host society to three sets of interlinked factors. First, the complexity of the system for issuing residence permits makes the process for obtaining documents complex and tortuous. Second, the age of UASC upon their arrival in Italy (mostly 16–17 years old) affects the time available to complete a successful pathway to social inclusion and a full transition to independence. To this end, effective support through the different available pathways becomes crucial. Third, the effects of traumas and difficult experiences that UASC have brought from the country of origin or have lived through during the journey affects their ability to pursue a successful social inclusion pathway. A factor that influences, in a cross-cutting manner, all of the above-mentioned elements is the clear distinction in the legal framework between UASC under 18 and UASC over 18, resulting in little attention paid to specific vulnerabilities of this latter age group. As underlined with respect to the framing of the rights of UASC over 18, the category of "youth" often excludes them from humanitarian programmes as a social group recognized as having specific needs based on age, and their capacities are often ignored.[52]

6.1.1 Timing and obstacles related to the legal status of UASC and former UASC

The first and most important obstacle in the transition to adulthood relates to the difficulties in obtaining the necessary documents to be able to remain legally in Italy, and specifically, the very long waiting times and the numerous steps required to obtain a residence permit. This was common in the three regions and across different types of residence permits.

The difficulties are partially mitigated for UASC, because for both those who hold a residence permit for UASC and for those who apply for international protection, the start of the application procedure guarantees them access to a formal pathway to social inclusion, unless bureaucratic complications arise (e.g. in cases in which the child does not have a passport and it is therefore necessary to obtain it) or the system malfunctions (e.g. in the case of poorly managed facilities that force UASC to wait even six months before starting a pathway to social inclusion).

For those who apply for international protection, difficulties arise when they are not recognized international protection status and, as children, they have little time to apply for a residence permit for UASC. This is because, in practice, the two legal processes do not start simultaneously.[53] This risk has been exacerbated, as already pointed out, by the entry into force of l.d.113/2018, which abolished the residence permit for 'humanitarian protection'.

More generally, age assessment procedures are an obstacle that affects many UASC, regardless of the type of permit they are issued. The stories pointed out that, at times, these procedures are long and complex, and

not always compliant with existing legislation. In some cases, reception in facilities remains 'suspended', causing a "loss of precious time" in the process of social inclusion into the Italian context and in the transition to autonomy. In general, the delay or, worse, an error in the prompt, appropriate and accurate identification of a child can lead to serious violations of their rights and expose them to irreversible damages.

The various factors that extend the administrative time required to obtain the necessary documentation are also a major obstacle. First, the 'limbo' condition in which UASC remain constitutes a significant and harmful loss of opportunities since they cannot work or access employment programmes such as internships or work grants: *"I started working on my internship, but when I had just finished my internship, the permit expired [sighs], and in order to renew it, they asked me for my passport before renewing my residence permit. So that's what I'm waiting for before I start the work grant"* (Ivorian, male, 18 years old). One girl stated, *"I had many opportunities to work with a contract, but I could not work because I had no documents"* (Nigerian, female, 18 years).

As the interviews show, the impossibility of seeking and accessing employment due to slow and complex bureaucratic procedures generates anxiety, fear and frustration. The frustration caused by this 'stalemate' condition, as also pointed out by the interviewed educators, is a result of a difficult and tortuous administrative process and procedures, which UASC struggle to understand.

The research has also shown that there are social services that tend not to regularly apply for continued protection until age 21 due to a restrictive internal 'policy' or to lack of funds (the responsibility falls on the social services of the municipality that has jurisdiction over the child); this is the case of some municipalities in the Milan metropolitan area. For those who do not make this type of request, long waiting times have been recorded for converting of the residence permit into a permit for job seeking, or study or work purposes.

At the time of the transition to adulthood, the question of legal status is a problem that can be caused by the loss of rights when turning 18, and that can be exacerbated by long waiting times for the conversion of the permit into a permit for job seeking, or study or work purposes. These long periods are not so much caused by how quickly the MLSP processes applications, but rather, by the difficulty of acquiring UASC documents (such as passports) issued by their countries of origin and by the slow transmission of applications for conversion by the social services of the competent municipalities. Small Sicilian municipalities, in particular, complain about a low number of social workers compared to the high number of UASC, which puts them under particular pressure and often extends the length of time needed to convert the residence permits.

There are even greater difficulties among former UASC who hold other permits, in particular among those who hold or held a residence permit for humanitarian reasons. Since this is no longer renewable but only convertible into a residence permit for work purposes (whether self-employed or employees), the risks linked to becoming irregular on the Italian territory are even greater. It is therefore not surprising that papers appear to be at the top of the concerns of many of those interviewed.

6.1.2 Support when leaving the reception facilities

A broader issue, which is linked to the problem of obtaining residence permits, is that of leaving the reception facilities. The research shows a lack of a fully structured support process for this sensitive exit phase. The efforts of the reception facilities focus on learning Italian and on obtaining a middle school diploma as necessary first steps in the social inclusion process. However, the reception facilities and UASC must also deal with what services are available at a local level. For example, in Sicily, especially outside the main cities, "literacy courses are not continuously running, but only once or twice a year" (Catania, social key informant).[54] The basic need for education, therefore, risks paradoxically of becoming an obstacle that slows the transition to autonomy, if delayed or if it requires too much time. Literacy and numeracy skills assessment methods for the recognition of completed studies, at least for UASC who have completed higher education in their countries of origin, could accelerate the completion of compulsory schooling, thus facilitating job placement, but are not foreseen.

Obstacles also exist with regards to guidance and job orientation. With the exception of young people who have links with local networks of fellow nationals (such as those from North Africa or Eastern Europe) who can offer employment in their small businesses, many of them seem to depend completely on the reception facilities when looking for and choosing a job. In these cases, therefore, both UASC and former UASC do not have the means to orient themselves autonomously in the job market. Constraining factors include the lack of an information system for reception facility staff and guardians as well as for UASC and former UASC, the lack of guidance on available opportunities, the complex bureaucratic process (request for Declaration of Immediate Availability to Work, or DID) and the difficulty in meeting the requirements (e.g. A2 level Italian and middle school diploma). The lack of structured support becomes particularly evident in the case of children who leave the reception facility with a job seeking residence permit. Although the permit provides them with peace of mind to legally reside in the country, it does not protect them from a situation of imminent precariousness, given its short duration.

Among the most problematic aspects in the transition to adulthood is the abrupt transfer to reception facilities for adults with the related interruption of the support that was provided in reception facilities for UASC, as well as at times, the uprooting that occurs in the case of transfers to another location or region and the problems related independent living. It is difficult for the young people who leave the reception facility to enter the housing market, due to insufficient economic resources and the risk of being discriminated against by property owners, who are highly reluctant to rent their homes to foreigners. For former UASC, the support offered by informal reception facilities such as parishes or voluntary associations can play a fundamental role in the transition between leaving the reception facility and stabilizing their work and housing situations, as pointed out by key informants interviewed in Rome and a male former UASC interviewed in one of these informal centres in Como.

In this light, it is clear that the most protective legal form for former UASC who are not entitled to international protection is that of continued protection by social services (prosieguo amministrativo), so as to be able to

remain within a facility until the age of 21 and be able to equip themselves, in the meantime, with all the means they need for a successful transition to independence.

The level of organization, efficiency and specialization of the reception facility that hosts UASC plays a fundamental role in accompanying them towards autonomy. This is evident in two extreme cases: when the internal organization appears too restrictive or when it appears too lax. On the one hand, an organizational structure that is too rigid and, above all, does not pay much attention to the specific needs of each UASC could result in loss of opportunities that capitalize on the skills and abilities of the UASC. On the other hand, in facilities with poor organization or few proposed activities, there is the risk that the UASC stay idle, or fail to manage their time, expectations and skills. At times, some former UASC decided to leave and re-enter reception facilities elsewhere in Italy, where they thought they would access better services or have more opportunities, as had been recommended by various acquaintances.

6.1.3 Trauma and psychological distress

A particularly critical aspect liable to compromise the full transition to autonomy is linked to the traumatic experiences that UASC have often undergone.[55]

The biographies reveal potential vulnerabilities linked to individual distressful events that range from experiences of torture, sexual violence and exploitation in Libya, to the dangerous journey along the Mediterranean route, to anger and disappointment at having been pushed by parents to migrate or deceived by known individuals, as often occurs to girls and young women who are victims of trafficking. In the case of UASC who have been pushed by parents to leave, the interviews reveal a true feeling of abandonment, even where there is still a relationship with the parents (this is the case of several Albanian interviewees). The violence suffered before leaving, during the journey and also in Italy, in some cases leaves serious consequences on the mental and physical health of young people, particularly adolescents.

The reception facilities, in some cases, can provide psychological support that helps young people process the experienced trauma, but educators point out that they sometimes refuse the service because they do not understand the type of help they can receive. In addition, the interviews revealed general inadequacy of service providers, due to insufficient material and human resources to address this type of need, with the result that only those children who show more worrisome and apparent forms of psychological distress are entrusted to the care of specialized staff, whereas other less obvious forms of psychological distress are likely to remain concealed.

In general, the lack of psychological support can pose a further constraint to the smooth transition to autonomy, since unaddressed traumas risk preventing UASC and former UASC from building and imagining their future. As suggested by a key informant interviewed in Palermo, the entire pathway seems to rely too much on the resilience and capabilities of these young people.

6.2 Sexual and gender-based violence: Between vulnerability and resilience

In recent years, a number of studies conducted on the conditions experienced by migrants along the central Mediterranean route have uncovered the level of widespread violence suffered by all those who undertake the journey to Europe and especially by those crossing through Libya (United Nations, 2018; UNHCR, 2018; Oxfam, 2017; UNICEF, 2017; IOM, 2017).

The biographies collected from female respondents show that the theme of GBV perpetrated by families or husbands in the country of origin is often one of the reasons for leaving. Some girls escaped from child marriages or abuse experienced therein: *"My husband [...] sometimes beat me on the belly and made me take the medication [...] I went to the doctor [...] who told me that if I gave birth to him, he will be born sick because I had already taken the medication"* (Tunisian, female, 17 years old).

In the case of victims of trafficking, the journey itself is a core component of the violence, which often begins with a total loss of trust in a known person: *"With this woman, we also go to church to pray and all that, so I trusted her, or I would not have left my country"* (Nigerian, female, 21 years old). Sexual and physical violence persists throughout the journey: *"I too was raped before arriving in Libya"* (Nigerian, female, 20 years old), before reaching its peak in Libya. Even when the young migrants have not been trafficked for sexual exploitation, as is the situation for most of the interviewees, they suffered similar forms of violence: *"Once I was beaten because he wanted [to have sex]. When I said no, he beat me"* (Gambian, female, 18 years old). The biographies highlight that the girls who want to leave are often deceived, especially if they are forced to rely necessarily on someone else in order to face the long journey. Although the arrival in Italy seems to guarantee a minimum of security, the psychological consequences of violence persist. In this scenario, the investment in specialized services becomes even more crucial, and the reception facilities can offer either support or recovery, or represent an additional risk factor.

A common theme that emerged from the different biographies was young women's desire to overcome violence and improve their condition or that of their family. This theme emerges both in cases in which young women were forced to escape from a family situation, and when the family relationship is strong and positive and their desire is to make their family proud: *"[...] a good person in the future, I wanted to go to school but without money it is difficult. I think I'll work hard to make my mother proud"* (Nigerian, female, 17 years old). The biographies reveal young women's determination to make it; they want to study, *"My point is that I want to go to school [...] it's the only thing I want to do now. I want to learn the language quickly"* (Albanian, female, 17 years old), and They want to work and be independent, even though, for many, it is the first time they can choose what to do: *"Either as a waitress or an assistant cook. These two things inspire me right now. I don't know why in my country [...] when you finish middle school ... you only stay at home, so you could not think that job to do, your parents do not allow you [...]"* (Albanian, female, 17 years old).

The research confirms that the coercion and the violence that girls and women have experienced, although presenting significant challenges, do not hinder their resilience and agency[56] (Abbatecola, 2018). Recognizing

the full agency of girls in vulnerable conditions means starting a process of de-victimization that obviously does not diminish the gravity and the need for institutional and social condemnation of violence, but supports them in the pathway towards recognition of their abilities and potential: *"I lost two years. […] but I like what I study, when they practice it's easier, I'm the best there"* (Albanian, female, 16 years old).

Moreover, as revealed from interviews with social key informants, the risk of representing the narratives of violence experienced by migrant and refugee women as 'barbaric episodes' belonging to other cultures (Bimbi, 2011) places them in a subordinate position, as sometimes occurs to victims of trafficking. This risk hindering their pathway towards transition to adult life.

Life history of E. – Nigerian, 21 years old: A refugee victim of trafficking

E. arrived in Italy in 2015. After facing a long and difficult journey, particularly in Libya, where she was beaten, tortured and raped, she arrived in Italy and was included in a protection programme for 'victims of trafficking'. When she arrived in Catania, while still a child, she was initially entrusted to an Italian family (although she continued to be assisted by the relevant services). Through these services, she had the opportunity to gain language skills, learn the Italian culture and how to interact with people in different contexts.

The programme in which E. was included had very strict rules, in particular, she was forbidden to be in touch with relatives. It was only after about a year that she was able to contact her family of origin. Once she had completed this programme and with support from her guardian, she was granted international protection. She was thus able to build the foundations for her future.

Before embarking on her schooling, she began a formal literacy course to learn Italian. She is presently attending a hotel management school and loves cooking and Italian cuisine, especially Sicilian cuisine. Now she has become fully autonomous and lives in a rented house together with other Italian girls, with whom, despite normal misunderstandings, she has established a good friendship. E. is an intern with the Italian civil service, which enabled her to be sufficiently economically independent and acquire housing independence. Today, she works as a cultural mediator for the CSO that welcomed and helped her. She is very proud and happy about the person she has become and the people she has met, but she still has a dream: to continue her studies, work as a coast guard or become a chef.

S., from Nigeria, studying Italian at Figlie del Divino Zelo Giardini Naxos (The Daughters of Divine Zeal) in Messina, Sicily, Italy, April 2018.

6.3 The risks of exploitation and exclusion, and the importance of local reception networks

Existing research has shown that young migrants and refugees travelling along the central Mediterranean route are more likely to experience exploitation and abuse in transit countries, including labour and sexual exploitation, than migrants over 25 years of age (UNICEF and IOM, 2017; IOM, 2017; Women's Refugee Commission, 2019). These incidents, in addition to the urgent need to earn money for themselves and send remittances home to the family may have long-term psychological, emotional and social impacts on those arriving in Italy by sea, and can sometimes play a role in the way in which young migrants perceive and react to the risks of labour and/or sexual exploitation to which they may be exposed in Italy. This exposes young people to the risk of illegal work, or even of being pushed into illegal activities. The research reveals that young people may experience three different scenarios while in Italy: small jobs in legal activities that are also 'off the books'; actual labour exploitation; and exploitation by criminal networks leading to illegal activities.

With regard to the first scenario, many of the young people interviewed stated that they had worked in some small jobs 'off the books', casual jobs as waiters, dishwashers, gardeners or as assistants of people they know in transport companies, and so on. Their experience reveals their ability to exercise agency through which they show that they know how to leverage networks of acquaintances and to transform opportunities that arise even by chance into small, positive opportunities, turning them into a small source of income and for learning the basics of a trade. Nevertheless, the young people are often aware of the consequences they may face working without a regular employment contract: *"As soon as I knew they didn't give me a contract and didn't regularize me, I would run away from the restaurant or the place"* (Egyptian, male, 18 years old).

With regard to the second scenario, the research reveals several incidents of widespread exploitation, especially in agriculture, construction and catering industries. In the Sicilian context, for example, the desire to earn some money can push young people to work in agriculture, which is often the first job they are offered, and where they are exploited: "I went to collect peaches, as well as apples and tomatoes from 5 a.m. in the morning until 2.30 p.m. in the afternoon [...] little, but if there is no money [...] I did not have a contract" (Gambian, male, 18 years old). For girls, these experiences are often linked to caretaking, which can turn into exploitation: *"I was in a house where the elderly were staying, [...] we were promised a salary, but at the end of the month, we were not paid"* (Nigerian, female, 20 years old).

This can also lead to the third scenario, exploitation by criminal networks, with the risk of committing offences. Educators interviewed confirm the risk that many young people, even if they are still hosted in reception facilities, begin to engage with drug-dealing networks: *"I worked in a restaurant and pizzeria, and then stopped [...] after stealing and selling hash"* (Egyptian, male, 18 years old). Although they do not always speak openly about it, most interviewed UASC show that they are aware of the existence of criminal networks and the possibility that they may be recruited (see also UNICEF and CNR, 2017). As previously mentioned, former UASC face the greatest danger of finding themselves excluded and without appropriate support to successfully become self-sufficient and may therefore adopt illegal survival strategies, such as the example of North African boys in Rome who are pushed into prostitution in some areas of the city after they leave reception facilities. Girls and young women also face this risk, in particular for those who are less aware of it and who have not experienced sexual exploitation and violence in the past.

In all three regions for this research, informal voluntary-based reception facilities, supported by private social actors and charitable organizations (such as parishes or associations to defend the rights of migrants) that do not receive public funding, help former UASC by offering them shelter. This is the case, for example, of a young male interviewed in Como, who cannot renew his residence permit because he does not have a passport, and when he turned 18, was almost 'handed over' by the reception facilities where he was living to a parish that welcomes young people in similar conditions in a completely informal way and at no cost. Similarly, the Association 'Baobab' in Rome and other private or religious entities in Rome and Sicily offer informal shelter to many former UASC.

6.4 Risks associated with onward movements

Onward movements refer to when migrants, refugees and asylum seeker move from the territory and/or the country of first arrival, often irregularly, to go elsewhere in search of better opportunities or to reunite with acquaintances or relatives.[57] In the case of the UASC and former UASC in this research, two types of secondary movements can be distinguished: the movement from southern regions to reach the Centre-North of Italy, with the hope of finding more job opportunities; and the movement to another European country, especially Germany, often to reunite with family members or to join acquaintances. The first of the two cases is common to most of the respondents who are now in Milan and Latium, coming from North Africa or sub-Saharan Africa, and who have reached the southern regions after travelling the Central Mediterranean route. It is important to note that the conditions of the reception facilities, in particular of the first line reception facilities, can drive onward movement. In the specific case of females, overcrowding and lack of separation between males and females are also contributing factors.

The second case was recorded during interviews with young absconders, or those who have left the protection system, who have tried to move abroad and, failing to do so, have been made to return or are re-entering the reception system. Due to the intrinsic difficulties in identifying these types of respondents, only three absconded former UASC were interviewed. In two cases, the former UASC left the reception system before obtaining the outcome of an asylum application due to reception facility conditions. The long waiting times and the lack of homogeneity in the reception conditions on the Italian territory and between different types of reception facilities affect the social inclusion of these young people. Long waiting times are also major obstacles for applicants awaiting family reunification, an option that would guarantee a safe and non-risky movement to other countries. However, they may give up and decide to leave for the desired destination, exposing themselves to the risks of an illegal journey. As reported by the stakeholders interviewed in Rome, the illegal networks for moving to other countries are very attractive for young people because they offer the possibility of travelling immediately and quickly.

Life history of I. – Guinean, 19 years old: Humanitarian protection

I. arrived in Italy crossing the Mediterranean in 2016. After landing in Lampedusa, he was placed in a reception facility for UASC in Calabria and started the asylum application procedure. I. denounced the poor conditions in this reception facility: In his and his peers' opinion, the managers of the centre do not organize enough activities for the UASC, such as Italian courses or sports activities, but above all, they do not adequately support or take care of the children (e.g. "When you say that you are sick, they just give you paracetamol. You have a headache, you have a stomach ache … only paracetamol"). I. remained in the facility for eight months and then decided to leave it with other peers, even though he had not yet known the outcome of his asylum application from the Territorial Commission, thus absconding. I. and his friends wanted to go to Germany, crossing the border with Switzerland from Como. However, while his friends managed to cross the border, I. was stopped by the police, who sent him to the Red Cross Centre. During his stay in this centre, he was granted humanitarian protection from the Commission where he had applied in Calabria. Following the closure of this centre, I., now an adult over 18 years old, found hospitality in a parish-run informal centre.

Despite this critically precarious situation, I. showed a great desire and ability to attend training courses as a waiter and welder (and obtaining the relevant certifications). He also obtained a licence to operate a forklift using his previous skills gained in Algeria before coming to Italy. He is currently working as an assistant cook, a position he obtained by presenting his curriculum vitae and passing an interview without assistance, and by attending Italian courses, but he continues to be a guest of the parish-run informal centre.

6.5 Experiences of discrimination affecting the lives of UASC

Discrimination has been well-documented against children coming from sub-Saharan Africa along the migration routes towards and within Libya. These children continue to face discrimination, exclusion and racism even once in Italy. Well-rooted and recurring episodes risk undermining any efforts made by the UASC and by the social and institutional stakeholders who work to promote and achieve social inclusion in Italy.

Social inclusion takes place at the local level and involves different dimensions (cultural, social, economic, etc.) and therefore different places, including schools. Respondents pointed out that, despite widespread positive attitudes of peers, there is also evidence of discriminatory or racist behaviour: *"Sometimes they tell me this [...] they say that I have not understood anything"* (Malian, female, 18 years old). Migrants, for example, tend to be associated with certain types of work and therefore also with low-level training: *"They have never seen a black man studying as a computer engineer here, in Catania, it can't be true; there are none"* (Ivorian, male, 20 years old).

There are many incidents characterized by this type of discriminatory or racist attitude: *"…colleagues who have problems because they don't want you there; if you go to the boss, the boss doesn't want to hear anything. I haven't felt well. They haven't treated me well until now"* (Liberian, male, 22 years old). For some, the work is made harder because of the hostility against them, but discrimination and racism also characterize the housing market, from which migrants seem to be increasingly excluded (CIRDI, 2014). Economic aspects are the main concerns of property owners because they are convinced that the former UASC will not pay the rent, followed by cultural dimensions (different cuisine and lifestyles) and finally, the issue of security (i.e. migrants are seen as people who do not respect the rules and who are dangerous.

In addition to stereotypes, there is a tendency to generalize the behaviour and quality of a single person to a whole group. As can be seen from some of the biographies, such behaviours have a strong negative impact on the lives of these young people: acts of racism and discrimination undermine their trust in their surrounding context and compromise the possibility of their developing formal and informal supportive relationships, thus hindering, more generally, the process of social inclusion within Italian society. *"People outside refuse to rent me a house because I am black"* (FGDs, male, former UASC).

These experiences are exacerbated in the case of institutional discrimination, i.e. when discrimination is carried out by representatives of bodies that should play a protective role. Most of the interviewees expressed their positive relationship with the institutions, also as a result of the support offered by the adults of reference (educators, cultural mediators, guardians). However, incidents of discrimination do occur and need to be properly monitored: *"When they took me to the police station, ... they put me on a chair and they all slapped me [...], then a nice girl came by and told them to stop"* (Tunisian, male, 24 years old).

F., 17 years old, sets a table in the café where she works in Palermo, Sicily, Italy. The café is run by migrants and refugees and is very popular, frequented by local Italians and foreigners alike (December 2018)

7. Promising practices

A case study was carried out in each of the three regions object of the research to identify and analyse promising practices related to three crucial processes in UASC's transition to adult life and their potential for replication and scale-up: supervised independent living and housing solutions (Lombardy);formal and informal relationships (Latium); and structured support to volunteer guardians (Sicily).

7.1 Lombardy: supervised independent living and housing solutions for UASC and former UASC

The case study in Milan addressed the issue of access to supervised independent living, which is crucial, not only for UASC.[58] In order to offer effective solutions, it is necessary that all those dealing with migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking children, including local authorities, take into account their specific characteristics and problems (Segatto, Di Masi and Surian, 2018).

The case study focused on three experiences for UASC and former UASC in supervised independent living arrangements which is characterized by a limited presence of educators and by an increased responsibility of the young guests compared to accommodation in reception facilities: the Social Cooperative 'La Cordata', the Social Cooperative 'Comunità Progetto' and 'Pio Albergo Trivulzio'. In these cases, accommodation is offered in apartments located in various areas of Milan where continued protection is granted to UASC, together with a gradual acquisition of autonomy and responsibility. The examined experiences present the following promising practices that can be considered for replication in other contexts:

    a. **Size and location of the houses:** The choice of small apartments that accommodate a limited number of young people and that are placed in blocks of flats of different neighbourhoods not only in suburban/ disadvantaged areas, but also distributed throughout the municipality gives the possibility for young adults to learn to manage their autonomy by interacting with flatmates and other residents of the same building, avoiding ghettos that prevent social inclusion and favour conflict (Cesareo and Bichi, 2010).

    b. **Limited presence of an adult:** The role of a reference person for the apartment is crucial even if limited in terms of hours of presence, tasks and responsibility towards the young guests. He or she creates a positive environment in the group and in the apartment by acting as a mediator if necessary, and by helping to manage conflicts among and between guests and neighbours.

    c. **Flexibility of pathways:** Non-rigid rules for leaving the apartment and the possibility of using local support networks to increase the supply of both work and housing solutions. These help young people feel that they can pursue their own goals without facing additional obstacles, even if they decide to continue their education.

d. **Economic independence:** The young guests pay rent, although at a special rate, and hence need to manage their economic revenues independently.

Case study on supervised independent living and housing solutions (Lombardy)

The practices covered by this study are:

1. Since 1989, the social cooperative 'La Cordata' has been working with vulnerable people, providing them with support and social inclusion services. Since 2008, it has run the 'Case Saltatempo' project, which is based on a reception model organized in several apartments located in different districts of Milan, each of which accommodate four to six young people.
2. The social cooperative 'Comunità Progetto' has 13 apartments for the temporary reception of people in need. Active since 1999, it has hosted dozens of people in various projects of social housing and support to housing independence.
3. As part of the experience of Pio Albergo Trivulzio e Museo Martinitt e Stelline, the Protected Housing Service has been active since 2000 for young people aged 17 to 21 who are under the responsibility of Social Services. Since 2003, it has been transformed into a male hostel for men and then into social housing for 18–26-year olds. Several apartments are managed in different areas of Milan.

The experiences differ mainly in terms of organization of the service: number of hours of presence of professional staff, internal rules, and the relationship with the surrounding context. Yet, they do have some aspects in common: they all consider that support staff must be present, particularly from a psychological point of view, to provide guidance in the pathway towards autonomy. One factor deserves special attention in terms of effective scalability of these practices: that of working in the local context, in particular, the involvement of the neighbourhood and/or the local community is essential for implementing effective practices and facilitating their transfer to other territories.

7.2 Latium: Experiences of formal and informal relations in support of UASC and former UASC

The case study carried out in Rome focused on formal and informal relationships with the aim of understanding how they support UASC in their transition to adulthood. The entire network of relations is fundamental in the migratory journey, in particular for children who experience it alone, because it constitutes their social capital.[59] The research analysed the dynamics of formal relationships in two youth centres, Civico Zero and Matemù, frequented by UASC who live in reception facilities, in independent homes or on the streets. In these youth centres, an informal first meeting introduces UASC to the legal support services, job orientation, language courses, theatre activities, and music and photography workshops. In particular, they are introduced to the

possibility of engaging in social activities with peers coming from different parts of the world. These spaces play an important role in building the network of relationships for UASC and former UASC, because they help them in the production of social capital that can support their process of social inclusion. Some of the most promising practices that emerge include:

a. **Youth centres situated half way between the children and young people and the reception system:** This position allows social workers to identify the critical areas for which support is needed, so as to direct UASC and former UASC towards professional support. In addition, negotiation and mediation for the resolution of conflicts with the institutional sphere and in bureaucratic processes generates trust in social workers, and ensures personalized attention focused on each individual path.

b. **Activation of outreach units in 'hot' spots of the city:** These units are an effective, first point of contact with UASC and former UASC arriving from other areas of Italy, in particular from Sicily and Calabria. In this first contact, the social workers assess the needs of the adolescents and are able to direct them to institutional structures or to informal shelters in the case of former UASC in transit.

c. **The variety of activities offered by these centres:** These allow young people to experiment with artistic activities (music, theatre, photography, etc.) and to share experiences that strengthen friendships and networks with other peers. In particular, workshops of the Theatre of the Oppressed[60] organized by Civico Zero allow UASC and former UASC to express their fears and traumas, coming to terms with their own experiences in a collective and group process, an effective tool to build relationships of trust, especially between peers with similar experiences.

d. **Volunteering, civil service and civic engagement activities** proposed to UASC and former UASC: They are **a means for integrating** into a wider network of contacts to support the construction of social networks, especially for young people who find it difficult to build them on their own.

With regard to informal relationships, the case study delved into two types of CSOs: Accoglienza Libera e Integrata (ALI) and Movimento Famiglie Affidatarie e Accoglienti (MFAEA). The main objective of both CSOs is to support social inclusion for UASC by identifying personal needs, including school and professional guidance and support, and assistance in bureaucratic procedures and medical examinations. But even more important are the family environment, the friendly relationships created (between young people, children, parents, foreigners and Italians) and the emotional support that UASC and former UASC can receive. These experiences foster family relationships, providing the opportunity to build emotional ties, which can offer emotional support in addition to concrete support. Moreover, the possibility of building relationships with other family members (often the children who are of the same age as the young people hosted) favours relationships with same-age natives.

The development of the networks of individuals and organizations that the CSOs set up in a structured manner provides UASC with full access to local public services and with a wider network of resources to draw on. Informal, grassroots experiences such as those described can emerge as a reaction to the lack of (or perceived lack of) effectiveness of institutional interventions. For this reason, the eventual scaling up of such interventions is possible when pre-existing forms of active citizenship are present, from where groups/networks/families with adequate relations and social capital can engage in activities such as those described above for the benefit of UASC and former UASC.

Case study on the experiences of formal and informal relationships in support of UASC and former UASC (Latium)

The four experiences described in this case study are:

1. Civico Zero, a daytime meeting centre that welcomes UASC in order to offer support services to basic needs (laundry, shower, food), legal assistance, psychosocial support, orientation and temporary protection for those who find themselves in situations of social marginalization, contributing to building positive pathways.
2. Matemù, a Youth Centre and School of Art run by the non-profit organization CIES. The youth centre mainly serves as a place for youth to meet. Matemù's activities are aimed at a mixed target where it is possible for young Italians and foreigners to meet, thus fostering relationships between peers in an intercultural setting.
3. Accoglienza Libera e Integrata (ALI), an association founded in 2017 by families and singles who decided to concretely provide emotional and relational support to former UASC, as well as support in seeking a job, when completing and/or in obtaining their degree/diploma, looking for a house, etc. The aim of the association is not to replace the institutions responsible for the reception of former UASC, but rather, to offer support by building informal and friendly relationships, for solidarity and exchange.
4. Movimento Famiglie Affidatarie e Accoglienti – Casa Salesiana Borgo Ragazzi Don Bosco (MFAEA) deals with foster care families, a network of families who have expressed the desire to initiate a path of fostering or reception. The general objective is to create a welfare community that combines public services with family support.

7.3 Sicily: A structured support to volunteer guardians

This case study focused on the Palermo Model, designed and implemented before the entry into force of Law 47/2017 through the collaboration between the Office of the Ombudsman for Children and Adolescents of the Palermo municipality and the UNICEF-sponsored Unità di Supporto e di Monitoraggio dei Tutori (USMT), Volunteer Guardians Support and Monitoring Unit) with a view to promoting, supporting and developing this system of volunteer guardianship for UASC across Sicily. As pointed out by the coordinator of the UMT, each individual UASC's project of social inclusion and integration is treated as a specific case. Some strategic features of the Palermo Model can be summarized as follows:

a. **A tailor-made solution to be found for each boy/girl** as opposed to providing more general assistance".
b. **A participatory process** designed for the main institutional stakeholders involved in the reception and care of the UASC to find these appropriate and tailor-made solutions.
c. **Monitoring** recognized as the instrument to drive the mechanism, which arises from the fundamental need to collect information in order to highlight positive and critical elements to be brought to the attention of the responsible institutional bodies.
d. **Access to ethno-psychological services** that meet the needs of survivors of traumatic experiences.

All the interviewees acknowledged the importance of the monitoring and support of the unit in enabling the system to function combined with the creation of the network of all stakeholders involved in the process of inclusion of the UASC. The USMT is the reference point for finding a solution to problems, receiving information and building networks.

The volunteer guardian can then count on a network, which supports him or her in referring critical issues to the competent bodies maintaining the objectivity of a super partes (an impartial) entity. The development of the Palermo model is based on triggering a virtuous path, enabled by the time and dedication of numerous persons. Nevertheless, the model has several features that constitute important elements of replicability, given some basic conditions:

- the possibility for a volunteer guardian to refer to **a competent network for resolving emerging problems,** which is crucial to creating a virtuous mechanism; the network begins and ends with the needs and desires of the child;
- **mediation and problem-solving abilities,** which suggest that external support can be crucial to finding solutions and solving conflicts. The proposed monitoring approach is a comprehensive approach in this regard;
- **institutional commitment** that provides viability, accountability and credibility to the model;
- **inter-institutional coordination** over time;
- the successful coexistence of actors with diverse areas of action/competencies and, within each institution, the strong **multidisciplinary skills** of the people involved

At a crossroads. Unaccompanied and separated children in their transition to adulthood in Italy

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The Palermo model has been effectively replicated in other Sicilian contexts, in particular in Messina and Catania, although its implementation has been slowed down by the different levels of institutional coordination of all stakeholders.

Case study on structured support to volunteer guardians (Sicily)

The responsibilities, actions and methods of intervention of each institutional entity have been identified through an institutional working group, which initiated a process that lasted almost a year and a half.[61] The group defined the role of the volunteer guardian, and drafted and signed a protocol on the care and reception of UASC. The protocol outlines the process, its basic elements, tools and objectives, such as: (i) implementation of tailor-made projects; (ii) establishment of a list of volunteer guardians; and (iii) identification of critical issues and their solutions.

To support these objectives, a technical group was set up, composed of one member from each institution involved, which is responsible for: (i) verifying the implementation of the protocol; (ii) planning actions to achieve the objectives; (iii) evaluating the initiatives to be taken in the development phase; and (iv) verifying and analysing the achieved results. The technical group prepared and shared a profile of the volunteer guardian, drafted the tender for interested citizens, agreed on the selection procedures, and prepared the contents of the training.

The selection was aimed at identifying the "right people, who are capable of assuming the role", as stated by the municipal Ombudsman during his interview, noting both the great responsibility that this role will have and the risk of quitting during the mandate. He believed that this risk would be reduced during the selection process, which was not provided for by Law No. 47/2017, but was delegated to the guidelines of the national Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescents.

The Guardian support and monitoring unit was subsequently created at the office of the Municipal Ombudsman to mainstream the process, highlight the critical issues and propose appropriate solutions for UASC based on the acquisition of skills, autonomy and respect of their rights.

Young refugees and local youth take part in a "FutbolNet" event to mark World Refugee Day in Catania, Sicily, Italy (June 2018)

8. Conclusions

The research has shed some light on the importance of understanding UASC's transition to adulthood as a triple transition process that goes beyond age-based definitions: from the complex interweaving of biological, cognitive and socio-emotional changes that characterize adolescence, to the recognition of the evolving identity and choices that characterize a young person who migrates, and the management of the traumas caused during the journey or prior to the departure. Thus, the research has highlighted that it can be difficult and thus inappropriate to always maintain a straight line in terms of an age-based distinction between the rights and entitlements of UASC and UASC who have turned 18. From the study, a category of persons emerged who do not identify themselves either as children or as adults, but who have specific needs, requirements and profiles that must be considered through listening and direct involvement in the decisions that affect their lives (Art. 12 and 13 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child), a fundamental corollary of the principle of the best interests of the child (Art. 3 of the Convention).

Desires and expectations play a decisive role in this triple transition both before departure, when one's own expectations (finding better life opportunities, studying, escaping from violence) are often influenced by those of the family of origin, and upon arrival in Italy, when it is necessary to redefine them in order to adjust to the new situation (waiting for a residence permit and for the possible recognition of international protection, learning Italian, the fulfilment of the obligations to education and training). Girls and young women are more often pushed to leave the place of origin by circumstances beyond their control through deception and/or the choices of others, such as husbands and families.

From the analysis of the factors that facilitate the transition paths, what emerges is the prevalence of contextual, subjective and relational variables related to personal resources, agency and resilience of the UASC, and to formal and informal networks that are triggered – above all the ones that they are capable of triggering – once they arrive in Italy. The presence or absence of such conditions determines the range of opportunities available for them, in terms of social inclusion processes and once they have become adults.

8.1 Factors that favour a good transition

Law 47/2017 equips Italy with an advanced normative framework for the recognition of the rights and protection of UASC. This law reaffirms the absolute principle of non-refoulement of UASC, introduces new provisions on identification measures, provides for the creation of a social file for each UASC, and introduces the new role of the volunteer guardian as well as provisions to facilitate the realization of the right to education and health. Article 13 is particularly important for the purposes of this research because it introduced the possibility for Juvenile Courts to place former UASC under continued protection by the social services until the age of 21, in order to allow them to complete the inclusion pathways already begun.

A successful transition to adulthood, social inclusion and recovery from past traumas are closely connected with the reception experience, whose benefits can be positively accrued. In the case of girls and young women, the inclusion in specific protection pathways and the strict rules attached to them may open up

or hinder many opportunities for social inclusion. Formal and informal relationships – both with adults and between peers – play a fundamental role in UASCs' and former UASC's transition to adulthood. Since the beginning of the inclusion process, educators in the reception facilities (or teachers in the Italian language schools or CPIAs) are key. Also, volunteer guardians have a positive role, since they can help UASC liaise with the social context in which they are defining their transition pathway and continue to act as a reference person, also when the UASC turns 18. The Rome case study shows that the more adolescents create their own peer and family networks and contacts, the more possibilities they have to achieve positive pathways to a successful social inclusion.

UASC consider school and vocational training as a key step in their process of social inclusion. They demonstrate strong awareness and willingness to complete the educational and training courses, and the personal education plan (PEI) is a fundamental tool to build such pathways. Similarly, work grants are viewed positively as a bridge to access employment, which is crucial for both UASC and former UASC. With regard to the transition to independent living arrangements, the Milan case study highlights the importance of solutions linked to family contexts or to supervised or supported independence.

8.2 Obstacles to a good transition

The slow and complex procedures for obtaining documents are first crucial obstacle to a smooth transition for UASC asylum seekers. The long waiting time for a hearing by the Territorial Commission for the recognition of the international protection and to receive the outcome increase distrust as well as the risks associated with a possible drop-out from the reception system.

There is a very limited window of time for most UASC due to their age (16–17 years old) upon arrival in Italy to equip themselves with the necessary tools (literacy, obtaining a middle school certificate, technical and professional training) to become independent. The problem of non-recognition of professional skills acquired in the country of origin clearly emerges.

There are also limits to information and guidance on potential training and labour opportunities that would fulfil the rights of UASC and respect the best interests of the child. Young people are aware of the difficulties often related to the lack of a regular employment contract or to forms of discrimination in access to both labour and housing markets. Their confidence is also undermined, especially when they have experienced violence, exploitation, discrimination and racism. Regardless of the quality of the services provided by the reception facilities and the opportunities offered at the local level, these interlinked factors generate fears and frustrations, and even thwart all efforts and progress. There is the greatest risk of labour exploitation, irregular and/or illegal work when UASC leave the reception centres. When girls and boys drop out of the official system, they are at risk of becoming 'invisible' and hence more exposed to violence and abuse. In these cases, the research highlighted the importance of the informal support networks. The results show that the experiences of girls and young women are characterized by a strong dynamic related to GBV, even when not victims of trafficking. Yet, most of them show great resilience, fuelled by their desire and ability to overcome any difficulties. This can be facilitated by effective support networks and services, but may be limited when they are absent or inadequate. In general, the research calls for a deeper analysis of gender issues in order to formulate a comprehensive view

of the experience and needs of female UASC and former UASC. Moreover, it would be important to delve deeper into aspects that have only been marginally addressed by the research, such as knowledge of one's own body and of hygiene principles, and the ability to manage relational and sexual dimensions in order to facilitate a more complete understanding of the needs and experiences of these girls and boys.

8.3 Constraints and gaps of the system

The following constraints and shortcomings have been found with regard to the legislation, governance and reception system concerning UASC's path to social inclusion.

8.3.1 Normative framework and its application

Law 47/2017, two years after its approval, still lacks its implementing decrees as well as funding, which severely limits its impact. Some provisions remain to be defined, for example, on the UASC interview process, on the definition of residence permits and on age assessment procedures, and there are differences in application between and within regions. UASC and guardians are often not aware that UASC can access continued protection by social services until the age of 21, as per Art. 13 of the same law. With regard to this possibility, there might be issues related to a conflict of interest since it is the municipality that has to cover the costs of the continued protection, which can also include forms of reception. This limitation in its application is significant because it is the only measure foreseen by the Italian legislation to accompany UASC's transition to adulthood.

Many UASC and former UASC leave their reception facilities to reach family members in other EU countries. Due to the slow and cumbersome system of family reunification under the Dublin III Regulation, in addition to the lack of clear information on the issue, some UASC prefer to transit through Italy and attempt to cross the northern borders, thus exposing themselves to risks related to irregular migration and relying, in some cases, on criminal networks. With the abolition of the residence permit for humanitarian protection (l.d.113/2018), UASC asylum seekers in Italy have been additionally negatively impacted since they lost one of the protections measures formerly provided by the Territorial Commissions. Finally, fragmented age assessment procedures also affect the proper protection of UASC.

8.3.2 Governance and reception

Due to the fragmented and territorially diverse system of governance and functioning of the reception system, UASC are kept in a state of uncertainty and experience difficulty in identifying and realizing their own pathways of transition to adulthood. The research highlights the fragmented nature of the reception system in terms of organization and type of facilities, as well as of the quality of the services provided. Difficulties also emerge in scaling up well-established positive experiences such as that of the AMIF first-level reception facilities for UASC. The impact of the local context on UASC's transition to adulthood is significant, both in terms of the quality of the services offered by the reception facility and of what is offered at the local level once the transition to semi- or complete autonomy has taken place (e.g. in terms of work, housing and socio-

economic opportunities). The lack of a central system for the distribution of UASC throughout the country that takes into account their needs and geographical disparities in the quality of the provided assistance is one of the factors that can lead to their dropping out from reception facilities in the most isolated areas in the southern regions of Italy and move to the large cities of central and northern Italy.

8.3.3 Social inclusion

With regard to educational and training courses, a major issue relates to the time available to reach a number of milestones, such as the attainment of level A2 in Italian, or a middle school degree before turning 18. It emerges that the fundamental need for education may paradoxically become an obstacle that slows down the transition to autonomy if delayed. In addition, due to significant geographical differences, the school system is not always able to guarantee the rights to equal access and attendance to education provided for by relevant national regulations and guidelines. The lack of assessment of literacy and numeracy skills as well as the lack of recognition of the studies completed and of the professional skills attained in the country of origin clearly also emerge; together with the unequal geographical distribution in professional paths and of orientation services available negatively affects the interests and needs of UASC across Italy.

Upon turning 18, becoming legal becomes an essential requirement not only for job placement, but also for housing independence. The limits in accessing the housing market related to the phenomenon of prejudice or discrimination or to lack of a regular work contract, creates a state of uncertainty that generates anxiety among UASC who have just turned 18 and even forces them to opt for housing solutions that are not completely legal or are not conducive to social inclusion.

8.3.4 Data availability

The research revealed a number of gaps in the availability and management of data on UASC and former UASC, which prevents a comprehensive overview of the paths of this category of young people as they arrive in Italy. Although there is a systematic and centralized data collection on UASC through the Central Information System for UASC (SIM), important gaps remain regarding, inter alia:

- **residence permits for UASC** issued by local police stations and their conversion into other forms of permits when they turn 18;
- **applications and outcomes of asylum applications** made by UASC, the granting of other types of residence permits (such as for special cases or medical treatment);
- **the presence of UASC in the catch-up schools (CPIA);**
- the new **system of volunteer guardians** that can complement the information already collected within the SIM;
- **UASC benefiting from foster care;**
- and the **presence of UASC in reception facilities.**

Moreover, there is currently no authority responsible for collecting data on former UASC.

9. Recommendations

For the Italian authorities

GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION

- Ensure that greater **attention is focused on the specific needs** of young people who arrived in Italy as UASC, and **especially former UASC who turned 18 after 2016,** by adopting relevant policies that reflect the multiplicity and complexity of the processes of triple transition to adulthood beyond the age definitions (see EU Youth Strategy 2030);
- Ensure effective **coordination at the national and local levels between institutions** that are responsible for issues regarding UASC and young people, inter alia, youth policies, training and education, social policies, employment, health, equal opportunities and justice, allowing for harmonious planning and proper implementation of legislation and standards;
- Develop an **inter-sectoral strategy** with the involvement of CSOs, which includes multi-year planning, and human, technical and financial resources required to increase the opportunities for social inclusion of former UASC, and ensures attention to the bearers of specific needs, and strengthen resources and capabilities.

NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK AND ITS APPLICATION

- Ensure the **effective and full enactment of Law 47/2017 and the adoption of its implementation decrees,** in line with European and international standards, and involving United Nations agencies and civil society actors in the process;
- Adopt explicit exemptions for UASC related to the security measures introduced by Law 132/2018, with a view to facilitating their transition to adulthood;
- Ensure full respect for the **best interests of the child** through the adoption of procedures that respect international standards and that are uniform throughout the country, taking into consideration gender differences;
- Fully implementing Article 9 of Law 47/2017, for the systematic and effective **adoption the cartella sociale** (social file);[62]
- Ensure a smooth transition to adulthood starting from a prompt and correct identification of UASC, through the use of, if necessary, a multi-disciplinary and **holistic procedure for age assessment** that meets international standards and the principles set out in Law 47/2017 and DPCM 324/2016, including gender considerations. In addition, resume the process of consultation with CSOs and United Nations agencies regarding the relevant standard protocol;

- Ensure the full implementation of Article 17 of Law 47/2017 through the definition of a specific **assistance programme for UASC victims of trafficking** that ensures adequate conditions of reception and psychosocial, health and legal assistance, providing long-term solutions, even after they reach adulthood;
- Ensure every UASC has a **volunteer guardian** and that the guardian is adequately trained and able to respond to his/her specific needs, even during the phase of transition to adulthood. Replicate the Palermo Model as a good practice of support and monitoring for volunteer guardians;
- Ensure the prompt issuance of the **residence permit for UASC** in order to allow immediate access to the rights and services recognized by law.

RECEPTION AND SERVICES

- Ensure that the current phase of **transition to the new SIPROIMI reception system** is carried out so as to guarantee uniformity throughout the national territory, respect for international standards, and care of young migrants and refugees in the transition phase. This will be achieved both by ensuring the reception of former UASC placed under the continued protection by social services in accordance with Article 13 of Law 47/2017 and by assessing the situations of persons with specific needs;
- Guarantee a similar level of **standards in the reception facilities** that are not part of the SIPROIMI system, both for UASC and former UASC, in order to avoid unequal treatment and to offer similar opportunities, by, inter alia, creating the conditions for mitigating any risks, including gender-related risks that may arise from leaving the reception facility;
- Ensure consistent and adequate **training of professionals involved in the reception system,** including cultural mediators, to effectively respond to the needs of UASC and those turning 18, deepening their knowledge in areas of specific expertise, such as the right to participation, and intercultural skills, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and reproductive health;
- Guarantee a **monitoring system of international and Italian standards** in order to ensure their compliance within the entire reception system, irrespective of the type of accommodation;
- Consolidate and disseminate the **good practices** recorded and achieved during the course of the AMIF first-line reception design;
- Ensure that UASC, their guardians and the social services are **aware** of the possibility of requesting from the Judicial Authority **continued protection by the social services up to the age of 21** in accordance with Article 13 of Law 47/2017. In addition, ensure that these services are provided with adequate human, technical and financial resources to protect the former UASC;
- Ensure that all UASC and former UASC at risk of – or vulnerable because they have experienced – situations of violence, including sexual violence, torture or other traumas related to travel or the reasons behind departure, victims of trafficking and people with mental distress can benefit from **psychosocial intervention measures of prevention or response,** appropriate to their age, gender and cultural specifity. It is recommended that these measures – whether within special reception facilities or at specialized external services – be aimed at the social inclusion of young people and be maintained for the period necessary for a full recovery to avoid the risk of re-exploitation or re-victimization. It is therefore

recommended that these measures not be interrupted for any reason when they turn 18;

- Promote safe and appropriate **family or community-based alternative care** arrangements, as well as supervised independent housing solutions, as highlighted by the case study in Lombardy. Municipalities must be provided with adequate human, technical and financial resources to raise awareness and promote and implement these initiatives;

- Ensure that, in choosing to continue benefiting from reception after the age of 18, adequate consideration is given to the need to guarantee **geographical proximity** in order to maintain existing social and community links UASC may have already established where they have lived until age 18;

- Ensure young people's **access to all relevant information** relating to, inter alia, their rights and obligations, including all available legal channels, opportunities for social inclusion, and ways of accessing services. This information should take into account specific age, gender, maturity and developmental needs as well as cultural references.

SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT INCLUSION

- Standardize and expand procedures for the **assessment of** professional **skills,** literacy and numeracy skills and 'soft skills' acquired in the countries of origin, including introducing and adopting of user-friendly tools that enable regular updating of these skills by young migrants and refugees themselves.

- Accelerate the procedures for the **recognition of qualifications obtained abroad** through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Embassies for the subsequent assessment of qualifications;

- Ensure **access to training and vocational courses and opportunities** such as work grants, internships and apprenticeships for former UASC, and to local opportunities, including through the provision of effective information;

- Facilitate the **access** of UASC and young migrants and refugees who turned 18 **to the job market** by strengthening the **cooperation** between the reception system and employment offices;

- Take into due consideration the specific needs for gender-related support and assistance in employment and education; for example, parenting responsibility that girls and young women often have to assume. This includes access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services;

- Combine training and professional **opportunities with life skills-building courses,** improvement of Italian language skills and continuous job market guidance;

- Promote opportunities to **work related learning** and **first-level apprenticeship** pathways as envisaged by the law in view of the challenges posed by the obligation to complete schooling;

- Clarify that a child holding a residence permit for UASC is **authorized to work** within the limits set out by the law;

- Promote preventive interventions, including adequate **information** provision, for former UASC **regarding labour legislation** in Italy and the risks associated with inclusion in informal and illegal circuits, including trafficking and sexual exploitation;

- Re-introduce the participation of former UASC in the **civic service** pathways and enhance or expand other volunteering opportunities;

- Ensure participation in social and recreational activities, which are fundamental for personal development and interaction within the local context, such as **sports and artistic and entertainment activities;**
- Increase the opportunities for **meetings and exchanges between young migrants and refugees and their peers,** through strengthening of support to youth centres. Promote peer support in access to rights, basic services and knowledge of the area where they live;
- Develop a new **National Action Plan against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination,** strengthening the networks of anti-discrimination centres, paying specific attention to gender dynamics, promoting interreligious dialogue at the community level and including these issues in civic education teaching in schools.

DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT

- **Improve the data collection system,** harmonizing existing databases and ensuring that all information is collected and manageable, as recently noted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its Concluding Comments to Italy in 2019. This will be achieved by, inter alia, disaggregating data by age, gender, disability, geographical location, ethnic and national origin, legal status, protection and socio-economic status in order to facilitate the analysis of the situation of all UASC and thus improve the protection system;
- **Link the social files and the data collection system (SIM)** so as to optimize resources and information in order to better protect the child;
- Create a mechanism for **collecting data on former UASC** that complements the information already collected within UASC data collection systems and that involves:
  - the MOI, ANCI and SIPROIMI, which are responsible for the reception system, for both UASC and adults;
  - the MLSP, which is responsible for the census and monitoring of the presence of UASC and for policies the pertaining to the socio-economic inclusion of UASC and former UASC;
  - the Juvenile Courts, particularly with regard to the implementation of Article 13 of Law 47/2017;
  - the Department of Equal Opportunities at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, particularly with regard to the anti-trafficking plan;
  - the National Ombudsman for Childhood and Adolescence;
  - the MOE on the continuity of schooling upon reaching adulthood.

For the European Union

- Ensure **rapid and effective procedures for family reunification** starting from a systematic, timely and correct implementation of the Dublin Regulation, through the adoption of uniform and appropriate procedures, particularly with regard to age assessment and family reunification;
- Ensure effective cooperation between Member States securing **full and effective respect of the principle of the best interests of the child** by, inter alia, adopting harmonized and appropriate

procedures in line with the General Comment of the Committee of the Rights of the Child, No. 14;

- Set up a harmonized and exhaustive **data collection system** that **strengthens protection mechanisms for UASC,** for example, by facilitating their tracing within the EU, and enables continuity in protection interventions across European states, maintaining all procedural safeguards, including the informed consent of the child. This may help to mitigate the risks of prolonged exposure to violence and abuse inherent in onward movements;

- Ensure that Member States **safeguard the rights and opportunities of young refugees** in transition to adulthood through improvement of their legal framework and promotion of comprehensive interdisciplinary co-operation between institutions in areas such as child protection, youth, health, education, social protection or welfare, migration, justice and gender equality, taking into consideration, drawing from and providing effective implementation to the Recommendation CM/Rec (2019)4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 24 April 2019, at the 1344th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.[63]

For civil society

- Continue to foster and increase the **opportunities for meeting and interaction between UASC and former UASC, the resident population and their peers** in order to nurture formal and informal relationships in the transition to adulthood and to combat discrimination, racism and xenophobia;

- Continue to experiment – by documenting, monitoring and evaluating – **innovative and alternative interventions** for young migrants and refugees (former UASC) such as supervised independent living, family or community housing solutions. Also promote and expand activities promoting UASC and former UASC participation, such as those carried out in various kinds of youth centres;

- Continue to provide **support to UASC and former UASC,** with a focus on those with special needs, including survivors of SGBV, through the management of specialized services and in collaboration with the public authorities;

- Promote the **participation of young migrants and refugees,** by, inter alia, encouraging the active inclusion of girls in associations in order to contribute actively to society, defend their rights, and make their voices and opinions heard by influencing decisions on policies that affect them.

O. (left), 17 years old, from Senegal, jokes around with one of his housemates at a piazza
in the small village of Naro, in Sicily, Italy. He has been in Italy for about two years (December 2018)

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Glossary

Absconded – the MLSP defines the term 'absconded' as an UASC who was registered as such upon arrival and insertion in the reception system of a given country, but who subsequently left the reception facility in which he or she are hosted. UASC are reported as absconded, competent authorities inform Directorate General for Immigration and Integration Policies of the MLSP. They remain absconded until they are found in Italy or reach the age of 18.

Adolescent – According to the United Nations, an adolescent is defined as any individual between the ages of 10 and 19.[64]

Best interests of the child – The best interests of the child is one of the fundamental values of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Article 3(1) of the CRC, states "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration".[65]

Child/children – The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) defines a child as every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier (Article 1).[66]

Former UASC – For the purposes of this study, former UASC are individuals who, at the time of the interview, had already reached the age of 18, but who came to Italy as children and were registered as UASC upon their arrival in Italy. This definition was developed for the specific purposes of the research.

Gender-based violence – Term that includes any harmful act perpetrated against the will of the person and based on socially ascribed differences between men and women (such as gender). It includes acts inflicted physically, sexually, mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other forms of deprivation of liberty. These acts may occur in public or private. The term 'GBV' is most commonly used to emphasize how the systemic disparity between males and females, which exists in every society in the world, acts as a unifying and fundamental feature of many forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls.[67]

Sexual and gender-based violence refers to any act perpetrated against the will of the person and based on gender norms and an asymmetrical relationship of power. It includes threats of violence and coercion. It may be physical, emotional, psychological or sexual in nature and may take the form of a denial of resources or access to services. It is inflicted on women, girls, boys and men.[68]

Humanitarian protection – This form of protection was governed by the previous Article 5(6) of Legislative Decree no. 286/1998 to respond to protection needs based on serious reasons "particularly of a humanitarian nature or arising from constitutional or international obligations of Italy as a State" (www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/deleghe/98286dl.htm) and subsequently repealed by l.d. 113/2018.

Participation – The right to participate and to be heard is one of the fundamental principles affirmed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12, which states that the State Parties "shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to freely express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial or administrative proceedings affecting the direct, either directly or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law".[69]

Prosieguo Amministrativo – Term commonly used to refer to the possibility governed by Article 13 of Law 47/2017 under which when UASC, at the age of majority, despite having undertaken a pathway of social inclusion, needs continued protection until age 21. The Juvenile Court may order, even at the request of social services, with a motivated decree, that he/she is to be placed in the custody of the social services, however not later than the age of 21 (www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/04/21/17G00062/sg).

Refugee status – The term 'refugee' applies to any person who, as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside his country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of such protection; or who, having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such

events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (Article 1A of the Geneva Refugee Convention https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10)

Residence permit for family reasons – Governed by Article 10 (1), letter b) of Law 47/2017 under which the Questore (Chief of Police) issues a residence permit for family reasons for a child of 14 years of age who is entrusted, also pursuant to Article 9(4) of Law 184/1983 and subsequent amendments, or who is subject to the protection of an Italian citizen living with him/her, or for a child over 14 years of age who is entrusted, also pursuant to the same Article 9(4), of Law 184/1983 and subsequent amendments, or subject to the protection of a foreigner residing legally in the national territory or of an Italian citizen living with him/her.

Residence permit for UASC – Governed by Article 10(1), letter a) of Law 47/2017 under which the Questore issues a residence permit for minor age in the case of UASC, found in the national territory and reported to the competent authorities. The residence permit for UASC is issued, at the request of the minor himself/herself, directly or through those who exercise parental responsibility, even before the appointment of a guardian pursuant to Article 346 of the Civil Code, and is valid until the age of majority.[70]

Secondary movements – The phenomenon of migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, who for various reasons move from their first country of arrival to seek protection or permanent resettlement elsewhere. This movement takes place without the prior consent of the national authorities, without an entry visa, without or with insufficient travel documents among those normally required, or with false documents.[71]

Special cases – Residence permits governed by the Testo Unico sull' Immigrazione (Legislative Decree 286/1998) to meet the temporary needs for the protection of foreigners in humanitarian need. Some residence permits for special cases – residence permits for medical treatment (Article 19, para.2, letter d-bis TUI), for disasters (Article 20) and for acts of particular civic value (Article 42) – were introduced by l.d.113/2018, while the other permits were already provided for by the previous regime, and the new legislation has only changed the name and/or completed the discipline.[72]

Special protection – The residence permit was introduced by Article 1(2) of l.d.113/2018 to protect foreigners who cannot be rejected, expelled or extradited to a State if there are reasonable grounds for considering that that person risks being subjected to torture, also taking into account the existence in that State of systematic and serious violations of human rights under Article 19(1.1) of Legislative Decree 286/1998.

Subsidiary protection – One of the forms of international protection from which non-EU foreigners, including UASC, may benefit, who has applied for international protection, governed by EU law (Directive 2011/95/EC – Qualification Directive – Recast). Persons eligible for subsidiary protection are all third-country nationals or stateless persons who do not qualify as a refugee but in respect of whom there are substantive reasons to believe that the person concerned, if returned to his or her country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person, to his or her country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm. For this purpose, 'serious harm' consists of: (i) the death penalty or execution; or (ii) torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of an applicant in the country of origin; or (iii) serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict.

Territorial Commission – These are Commissions for the recognition of international protection, administrative authorities tasked with examining applications for international protection submitted by foreigners. The composition, tasks and procedures of the Territorial Commissions are regulated by Legislative Decree 25/2008.

Trafficking – Article 3(a) of the United Nations Additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000) defines trafficking as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud of deception of the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation." Trafficking in persons may take place within the borders of a State or may be transnational.

Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) – According to Article 2 of Law 47/2017, an UASC is a minor who does not have Italian nationality or the nationality of a European Union Member State, who is for any reason present on the territory of the state or otherwise under Italian jurisdiction, who is without care and representation by his or her parents or other adults legally responsible for him or her according to Italian legislation.[73]

Young people/youth – According to the United Nations, "young people" are individuals between the ages of ten and 24, while "youth" are those between the ages of 15 and 24 (see A/36/215 and resolution 36/28, 1981). Depending on the context of reference, broader age ranges up to 30 years are taken into account. For example, to produce comparative statistics for all Member States, the European Commission uses an age range between 15 and 29 years (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/youth). For the purpose of the report the term young people was used.

Annexes

Box 1 – Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) first-level reception facilities

Established by the Ministry of the Interior by Ministerial Decree 1.09.2016 and financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) 2014–2020, the highly specialized governmental facilities – the FAMI centres in Italian – for the needs of immediate protection and assistance, provide adequate child-friendly reception services to UASC through socio-educational activities and participation activities, information, protection and legal and socio-psychological advice. FAMI's design follows the reform of the reception system, which began in 2014 and was regulated and formalized by Legislative Decree 142/2015 and subsequent amendments, to respond to the constant increase in arrivals of UASC, and to better and more holistically respond to their needs, with a first piloting phase of the system.

FAMI's design is innovative in several respects: it includes important criteria, such as a multidisciplinary approach and coordinated and complementary support provided by specialized agents, and has introduced and experimented good practices, testing and consolidating innovations introduced by Law No. 47/2017, such as, for example, the social file. The first phase of the reception process, scheduled for a maximum of 30 days (as provided by the Legislative Decree 142/2015, amended by Law 47/2017), is carried out by multidisciplinary teams with the support of partner agencies (IOM, UNHCR, Save the Children, INMP, ANCI – Central Service), in the first-line reception of the UASC, ensuring the respect of his/her fundamental rights, with particular reference to the principle of the best interests of the child and through a holistic approach of ad hoc protection and coordination with local institutions and entities. Initially tasked to provide reception in 27 reception projects for a total of 1,350 locations across the country, to date there are eight operational projects located in Sicily and Molise for a total of 200 places. Despite this recent reorganization following the decrease in arrivals, over the years the system has been able to guarantee protection and support of children in their choice of the most suitable legal status or inclusion process. This includes the application for international protection, family reunification or family fostering aimed at his/her protection and at achieving autonomy and self-awareness in line with his/her higher interest, needs and wishes. Actions include the involvement of the guardian, the application for a residence permit and support for age assessment, the referral of particularly vulnerable cases to specific institutions and local authorities and the multidisciplinary use of the social file. Several operational tools were developed and tested during project implementation, such as the Guidelines for first-line reception facilities containing Standard Operating Procedures for the assessment of the best interests of the child and the Standard Operating Procedures concerning information and legal support for the application for international protection of UASC hosted in first reception facilities. Particular attention was paid to the participatory activities for UASC, with for example, the participatory development of information tools for UASC, and to the sustainability of project actions through the creation of training for trainers within the system.

Box 2 – Legal framework on education and training

The right to education, enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and reaffirmed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 (Articles 18, 28 and 29), is harmonized in Article 38 of Legislative Decree 286/1998 (Testo unico sull'immigrazione), which states that "foreign children in the territory are subject to compulsory schooling; they are subject to all the provisions in force on the right to education, access to educational services, participation in the life of the school community". In addition, the right to the completion of studies is reiterated for those who have reached 18 years of age by the following legislation: namely, Law 47/2017, the resulting Guidelines for the Right to Study of Pupils Outside their Home Families (MIUR-AGIA December 2017)[74] and the Memorandum of Understanding between the National Ombudsperson (AGIA) and the Ministry of Education, University and Research to promote and guarantee the rights of pupils (October 2018).[75] In addition, Law 183/1984 establishes the right to education for children in foster care or who have been adopted.

Compulsory education of all children lasts ten years, from the age of six to 16. It also covers the first two years of upper secondary education. In this period of time, UASC must be admitted to the class that corresponds to their age, unless the teachers decide otherwise (Article 45 of the Regulation Implementing the Consolidated Text – Presidential Decree 394/1999). Nevertheless, the "Guidelines for the reception and integration of foreign students" (MIUR 2014) state that, in these cases, the child can be enrolled in the class that is immediately above or below, in order to limit as much as possible the age difference between pupils in the same class.
From 16 to 18 years of age, all children have the right and duty to education and training, which is fulfilled by obtaining a secondary school certificate or a professional qualification, or through apprenticeship. Children over the age of 16 who have not taken the middle school exam can prepare for it and take it by registering with the CPIA.

Box 3 – Volunteer guardians (Law No. 47/2017)

The guardian is the person who has the willingness and is able to legally represent a UASC. The guardian is a volunteer (Article 379 cc). Each volunteer guardian may be called upon to assist up to three unaccompanied UASC, unless there are special reasons (e.g. a group of siblings greater than three). As defined by the National Ombudsperson for Childhood and Adolescence, the guardian's tasks are to:

- ensure that the individual under the age of 18 is guaranteed access to rights without any discrimination;
- promote the psychophysical well-being of individual under the age of 18;
- follow the education and integration pathways, verifying that his/her abilities, natural inclinations and aspirations are taken into account;
- monitor reception conditions, security and protection;
- administer any assets of the person under the age of 18.

Pursuant to Article 11 of Law 47/2017, lists of volunteer guardians have been established. The procedure for the selection of guardians is defined within the guidelines issued by the National Authority for Childhood and Adolescence. The individual interested in assuming the role of volunteer guardian can participate in the call for applications issued by the Local Authority for Children and Adolescents.
After verifying that the applicants meet all the requirements of the law, the competent office contacts them for an interview aimed at selecting the candidates who participate in the compulsory training course. During the training course, topics related to child development and immigration law are discussed in depth. The course addresses how to recognize the needs of a child and the behaviours to be adopted. At the end of the course, the selected and trained candidate is enrolled in the list of volunteer guardians at the Juvenile Court.

Box 4 – Possibility of family reunification for UASC

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in accordance with the DPCM 535/99, is proactive and carries out search activities in for the identification of family members of UASC present on the Italian territory. To this end, the Ministry has entered into an agreement with IOM for tracing family members in the countries of origin or in third countries where they reside. With specific reference to UASC asylum seekers who intend to reunite with a family member residing in a country of the European Union (EU), procedures can be activated under the Dublin Regulation III, as implemented by Legislative Decree 142/2015. To ensure that family reunification is line with the best interest of the child, the child is listened to, taking into account his or her age, degree of maturity and personal development, in order to verify the possibility of family reunification. All actions aimed at tracing family members wherever they reside are carried out in the best interests of the child and with the obligation of absolute confidentiality, so as to protect the safety of the UASC and his/her family members. IOM works closely with the social services of the municipalities where the UASC reside, the CSOs and organizations that manage the reception centres, and with the judges of the juvenile courts. This collaboration between separate bodies is further strengthened by partnerships established with institutions and other actors involved in the countries of origin or residence of the families of the UASC. 111 family surveys were completed and transmitted by IOM to the MLPS in 2018, and a further 45 in the first half of 2019. In total, 21 of these were carried out in EU countries and one in the United States. The main UASC nationalities for which they were conducted are Albania, Tunisia, Nigeria, Morocco, Pakistan the Gambia and Kosovo.*

* References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Box 5 – Access to work opportunities

With regard to employment, the same rules apply to foreign UASC as to Italian minors. According to the Law on the Protection of Children from Labour [Law 977/67], combined with the School Reform Law [L. 52/2003 as amended by Law 296/2006], children may be allowed to work only after the age of 16 and upon completion of ten years compulsory schooling. Compulsory training, in contrast, is envisaged until the age of 16, and can be fulfilled in the school system, in the vocational training system or through apprenticeship. Therefore, a child may only enter into a contract other than an apprenticeship if this is compatible with school attendance or vocational training. According to the Reform of Article V of the Constitution [Constitutional Law 3/2001], labour law and policies are determined by the Regions following guidelines established at the national level. This gives rise to a complex and diversified framework at the local level. In most regions, in the absence of local legislation, national legislation determines which residence permits are valid for employment and access to the relevant services. Hence, all the residence permits for UASC allow them to work [Article 33, Testo unico sull'immigrazione d.lgs. 286/1999.], including permits for international protection (after 60 days from the request) [Article 22, d.lgs. 142/2015], except the residence permit for UASC [Article 10, L. 47/2017], with regards to which there is a normative gap on the issue. This gives rise to heterogeneous practices in different regional contexts.
Notwithstanding the definition of a regulatory framework at national level, rules regarding labour insertion, such as extracurricular internships, are also different between regions.

Box 6 – Gender-based Violence

As widely documented, women, girls, men and boys face numerous risks related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in their country of origin, along migration routes and in Italy (United Nations, 2018; UNHCR, 2018; Oxfam, 2017; UNICEF, 2017b; IOM, 2017; Women's Refugee Commission, 2019). Studies and reports show that almost all women and female adolescents who travel along the central Mediterranean route have experienced sexual violence. Other forms of GBV also affect women and girls, such as forced marriage, domestic violence and female genital mutilation, as well as human trafficking. Moreover, a recent report by the Women's Refugee Commission (2019) points out that men and boys are also subjected to sexual violence during their journey to Italy, particularly in Libya as the main transit country to Italy. Refugees and migrants experience sexual violence at borders and checkpoints, during random arrests by armed groups and when kidnapped and imprisoned. Sexual violence, including sexual torture, against refugees and female and male migrants appears widespread in Libya. Moreover, fewer arrivals on the Italian coast mean longer periods spent in Libya and therefore an increase in the risks and consequences of violence. It is also clear that the risks do not end when migrants and refugees arrive in Italy. In particular, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation continue to be a problem. Although little information is available on domestic violence, it will inevitably continue to be a problem for women and children in Italy, due to, among other reasons, to the fact that asylum applications are submitted by the family, which may unwillingly cause women to remain in situations of violence.

The short- and long-term psychosocial and health impacts of SGBV are wide-ranging. They include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and genital and rectum trauma. Despite all this, with appropriate support and assistance, the survivors can recover and overcome them. Recently, the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) found that there was a surprising difference between survivors living in good quality shelters, who therefore had access to care and support, and those outside the formal care system or who had more limited access to care. Survivors show a remarkable resilience and "had the ability to look ahead, while young unsupported men struggled and some of them had adopted negative coping mechanisms, including drug and alcohol abuse and petty crime" (WRC, 2019).

While a number of organizations and institutions provide comprehensive, people-centred services for male and female survivors, the need is far from being met. The Italian and anti-violence reception systems are characterized by limited decentralization and coordination; hence, survivors could fall through the cracks of the system. Despite the efforts of the Italian Government, the institutions and civil society, there are many shortcomings: an unaccountable and highly fragmented system, lacking any monitoring system, characterized by geographical disparities in the availability of assistance. While the protection system in Italy is promising, dealing with highly vulnerable UASC also entails addressing issues related to their specific conditions and challenging the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of those who care for them.

Endnotes

1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.

2 Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.

3 Available in Annex 2 of the full report in Italian.

4 Ibid

5 Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Ministry of Education, University and Research, Ministry of Justice, Central Service of SIPROIMI (Protection System for Beneficiaries of International Protection and for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors), AGIA (National Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescents).

6 Snowball sampling (also known as chain-referral sampling) is a non-probability (non-random) sampling method, used when sample characteristics are rare and difficult to find. This sampling method involves primary data sources nominating another potential primary data source to use in the research. In other words, the snowball sampling method is based on referrals from initial subjects in order to generate additional subjects. Therefore, when applying this sampling method, members of the sample group are recruited via chain referral.

7 This is approximately 10 per cent of the sample against around 7 per cent of the total number of UASC hosted in reception facilities.

8 For details see Annex 4 in the full report in Italian.

9 See Glossary.

10 See the website of the United Nations Secretary-General's Office of the Envoy: www.un.org/youthenvoy/wpcontent/uploads/2018/09/18-00080_UN-Youth-Strategy_Web.pdf

11 Italy ratified and implemented the Convention with Law 176/1991.

12 The Dublin system, currently governed by Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013, establishes the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection submitted in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (the Dublin III Regulation). With regard to family reunification within the Dublin system, see also Article 18(1) of Legislative Decree 142/2015.

13 According to Article 10 of Law 47/2017, the child must be informed of the procedure, which the Juvenile Court must authorize; this procedure ends with the adoption of an age determination measure, which is conveyed to the child and to the guardian. However, the interaction between this procedure and the procedure governed by Prime Ministerial Decree 234/2016 used for victims of trafficking in human beings (UASC) has not been clarified to date.

14 The model outlined both at the normative level and in practice can be classified as 'mixed', with both volunteer and institutional guardians.

15 Each guardian may assume the protection of up to three UASC (unless there are specific needs that require an increase of this number). For further information on the role and functions of the guardian, see the corresponding Information box in the Annex.

16 See Article 10 of Law 47/2017.

17 See Article 32(1a) of Legislative Decree 286/1998.

18 For example, residence permits for special cases introduced or modified by l.d.113/2018.

19 L.d.113/2018 provides for a transitional regime both for holders of residence permits for humanitarian reasons, who are deprived of the possibility of renewing such permits after the expiration date, but without prejudice to the power to convert them into residence permits for job seeking, or study or work purposes , and for those who have submitted an application for international protection before its entry into force, who may still be granted a two years residence permit for special cases under the transitional regime which is convertible into a residence permit for employment or self-employment after its expiration.

20 The Territorial Commission (Commissione Territoriale) is the entity responsible for the assessment of and recognition of international protection following an audition with the asylum seeker. It consists of: a president, who is a deputy Prefect; Ministry of Interior caseworkers; and a representative of UNHCR who sits in the decision-making panel.

21 AMIF reception facility: first-level reception facility funded by the EU Asylum Migration Integration Fund (AMIF)

22 Irrespective of legal status, at the age of 18, each child may be entrusted to the continued care and protection of social services until the age of 21 at the latest, including when the Juvenile Court considers that the person, despite having embarked on a process of social inclusion, needs this continued care and protection to ensure the full success of the pathway towards autonomy.

23 See Article 17 of Law 47/2017, which amended Article 13 of Law 228/2003.

24 The MLSP defines the term 'absconded' as minors who leave the reception facilities in which they are hosted. Minors are defined as absconded until they are found in Italy or reach the age of 18.

25 At the time of completing the report, the 2018 data were not yet available.

26 Aspirations are defined as the individual's desire to achieve certain goals, whereas expectations relate to the

individual's considerations about the possibility or probability of achieving them (Hansen and McIntire, 1989).

[27] All the Congolese's UASC interviewed come from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

[28] The regulation governing the various residence permits for special cases differs in terms of the possibility of conversion into another residence permit for work and/or study purposes. Hence, there is a distinction between forms of protection that allow, in principle, a longer-term integration (former residence permit for social protection pursuant to Article 18 of Legislative Decree no. 286/1998) and those that, on the contrary, meet a need for contingent protection and do not allow a stabilization of the regular presence on the territory (former residence permit for medical care pursuant to Article 19 of Legislative Decree no. 286/1998).

[29] For further details, see section 3.2

[30] The profile of the professional educator is defined in the Ministerial Decree of 8 October 1998, n. 520: "Regulation laying down rules for the identification of the role and the relative professional profile of the professional educator, pursuant to Article 6(3), of the legislative decree of 30 December 1992, no. 502." With some regional differences, in order to work with minors, a professional educator with a university degree is often required, while generally, to work with adult migrants, a professional social worker is required. For this reason, these terms have been used in this report.

[31] Personal Education Plan which defines the social inclusion pathway for UASC, and is prepared together with reception facility staff and the Social Worker municipal social services.

[32] CPIA: Adult Learning centres or catch up schools. Over the last few years, with the influx of migrants and refugees, and especially of UASC, CPIAs provide Italian language courses and courses for the attainment of middle school compulsory schooling. Upper secondary level schooling is also offered.

[33] The total number of UASC counted in the CPIAs was 3,347 (30 out of 39 CPIAs provided data for the purpose of the research). However, it should be noted that, at the time of the UASC course enrolment, their status of 'unaccompanied' or not was not recorded; the registration forms require the signature of a parent or legal representative, and this information is then reconstructed by the CPIAs on the basis of their direct knowledge of the children enrolled in their schools. For details, see Annex 1 in the full report in Italian.

[34] See Cedefop, 2014.

[35] In this regard, the UNICEF and REACH report (2017) provides timely data on the illiteracy rates of UASC in Sicily, where 48 per cent stated that they had completed lower secondary school; more than half that they could read (58 per cent) and write (54 per cent), and the remaining that they could read a little (29 per cent) and write a little (32 per cent) or were illiterate (13 per cent and 14 per cent).

[36] According to the D.M. MIUR 139/2007, Article 3 (3), UASC can be enrolled in the CPIAs from the age of 16, but some local protocols and agreements allow for the enrolment of 15-year-olds provided that certain conditions are met (MIUR, Autorità Garante dell'Infanzia e l'Adolescenza, Guidelines for the right to study of students outside their families of origin, 2017).

[37] See Intersos and UNICEF, Vademecum per l'inserimento lavorativo. Tutor e operatore. Version 2.0, Intersos, Unicef http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/Attualita/Notizie/Documents/intersos_vademecum_tutor.pdf

[38] For details on the target group and survey respondents, see Annex 2 of the full report.

[39] FRA and AGIA (2018). Guardianship for Unaccompanied Children in Italy, April, available at:
https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2018/innovative-italian-legislation-updates-approach-guardianship

[40] FRA (2015).

[41] In this regard, reference should be made to the Palermo Model, which was studied in depth in the case study in Sicily.

[42] An important reference in this respect is the recommendations issued by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child as part of its observations on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

[43] After requesting the MLPS to decide on the conversion of the permit for minor age, for cases where it is possible.

[44] The Circular of the Ministry of the Interior – Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration, of 3 January 2019 , stresses that UASC who, as a result of the provisions introduced by Law no. 47/ 2017, are granted the opportunity to continue their pathway of reception and integration until the age of 21, remain within the SIPROIMI system.

[45] The special protection is short, and the renewal is conditional on the persistence of legal claims to be established by the Commission. It can never be converted.

[46] See Intersos and UNICEF, Vademecum per l'inserimento lavorativo. Tutor e operatore. Version 2.0, Intersos, Unicef http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/Attualita/Notizie/Documents/intersos_vademecum_tutor.pdf. See also the Pathways for the social and job integration of UASC and young migrants on the website of the MLSP and the related integration policies in the related link (http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/Progetti-e-azioni/Pagine/Percorsi-di-integrazione-socio-lavorativa-per-minorinon-accompagnati-e-giovani-migranti-.aspx) as an example of possible pathways supported at the institutional level.

[47] This is also the case for 9.8 per cent of the 2017 Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) projects (see the 2017 SPRAR Annual Report).

[48] Specifically, Percorso I funded 960 social and work integration pathways for UASC's transition to adulthood (from

the age of 16) and young migrants (up to 22 years of age). Subsequently, Percorso II funded 850 work integration pathways followed by a third phase, which, with a new notice, provides for the financing of a further 170 pathways. These pathways are supported by the Protezione Unità a Obiettivo Integrazione (PUOI, Protection Unit for Integration) project for 4,500 additional beneficiaries, currently in the start-up phase. See https://www.anpalservizi.it/home

[49] With respect to the traineeships carried out under Percorso I, "the entire pathway and, in particular, the traineeship experience is generally considered positive by the recipients, since they allow an improvement in living conditions, not only in economic terms; they increase the technical-professional knowledge and skills" (Report of Evaluation of the Percorso Action I by MLSP-Anpal services, 2017, p. 29 et seq.).

[50] For further information on these forms of semi-independence, see the Lombardy case study in chapter 7.

[51] Family foster care is one of the forms of alternative care provided for by the United Nations Guidelines on Alternative Care for Children, but it is not limited to this. The Guidelines aim to improve the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the protection and welfare of children without parental care, or at risk of losing it, defining the desirable guidelines for policy.

[52] For further details, see: Youth, ExCom 66th meeting, 31 May 2016, www.refworld.org/pdfid/5800cdea4.pdf

[53] The data that emerged from the research were not clear as to whether these procedures are mainly determined by the lack of requests to initiate these procedures at the same time, or rather, as a legal procedure of the individual police stations.

[54] The difficulties faced in Sicily in particular have also been evidenced by recent studies (Save the Children, 2017–2019), where it emerged that reception facilities sometimes struggle to cope with a lack of resources to ensure logistics in transporting UASC to schools or CPIAs. Another problem arises with the transfer from one facility to another (from the first to the second level of reception, upon turning 18) in which school enrolment is not always guaranteed or the attended hours recognized.

[55] For an overview of the phenomenon, see WRC (2019).

[56] 'Agency' refers to the ability of an agent (natural person or other subject) to act independently in the world and to make free choices (Giddens, 1992).

[57] See the definition in the Glossary.

[58] For further information on the issue of social housing, see: Ferri et al. 2017.

[59] Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) define social capital as "the sum of the resources, both real and virtual, that come from an individual or a group through a solid network of relationships, partly institutionalized, of mutual acquaintance and identification". For further information on the concepts of formal and informal relations in the field of migration, see Ambrosini (2014: 171–174; idem 2011).

[60] The central idea of this theatre methodology, conceived over 50 years ago in Brazil by the pedagogue Paulo Freire, is to use the language of drama to understand and transform the daily oppressive, realities, small and large, towards liberation. This theatre method has also been adopted by Matemù and other meeting centres in Rome, such as Laboratorio 53 and Asinitas.

[61] The institutional working group was composed of: the Civil Court of Palermo, the Guardianship Judge, the Prosecutor's Office at the Juvenile Court of Palermo, the Police Headquarters of Palermo, the University of Palermo, the Provincial Health Authority of Palermo, and the Regional Education Authority for Sicily.

[62] The cartella sociale, or social file, records information related to the reception and social inclusion path of UASC in Italy. It is included in the national database of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.

[63] Council of Europe, Ministers' Deputies, CM/Rec(2019)4, Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood.

[64] https://data.unicef.org/topic/adolescents/overview/0/

[65] https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/UN-Convention-Rights-Child-text.pdf

[66] Ibid

[67] https://gbvguidelines.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2015-IASC-Gender-based-Violence-Guidelines_lo-res.pdf

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