

Committee of the Parties  
to the Council of Europe Convention  
on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings



CP(2026)05

**Report submitted by the authorities  
of Italy  
on measures taken to comply with  
Committee of the Parties Recommendation  
CP/Rec(2024)05 on the implementation  
of the Council of Europe Convention  
on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings**

**Third evaluation round**

Received on 23 June 2026

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**Recommendation CP/Rec(2024)05 on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Italy**  
*adopted at the 34th meeting of the Committee of the Parties on 21 June 2024*

The Italian Government is pleased to submit the present report on measures taken to comply with Committee of the Parties Recommendation CP/Rec(2024)05 on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

The Italian Government wishes to express its appreciation for the continuous work carried out by the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), whose contribution represents a key point of reference for strengthening national policies aimed at preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, as well as ensuring the protection of victims.

Italy attaches great importance to the constructive dialogue and cooperation established with GRETA within the framework of the monitoring mechanism of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, recognizing the value of GRETA's recommendations as essential tools for guiding the continuous improvement of the national anti-trafficking system.

In preparing the present reply, the Italian Government has carefully considered the observations and recommendations put forward by GRETA in its latest evaluation report, many of which have already been reflected in legislative, operational and coordination measures adopted or currently being developed at the national level. Particular attention has also been paid following the outcomes of the follow-up round table held on 15 April 2026, which provided a valuable opportunity for constructive exchange between the Italian authorities and GRETA, further strengthening the cooperative and forward-looking approach that characterises the relationship between Italy and the monitoring mechanism of the Convention.

The Italian authorities remain fully committed to pursuing close cooperation with GRETA and to ensuring that its recommendations continue to inform national policies and practices, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of measures aimed at preventing trafficking, protecting victims, prosecuting perpetrators and promoting a human rights-based, victim-centred and multidisciplinary approach.

**Updated framework**

Important progress has been achieved at the legislative level, particularly through the transposition process of Directive (EU) 2024/1712, which has taken the form of a legislative decree. It has allowed Italy to update its national legal framework considering emerging forms of exploitation and the challenges posed by the use of technology in trafficking-related crimes. Among the most relevant elements are the strengthening of victims' rights and protection measures, the introduction of provisions aimed at discouraging demand, and the reinforcement of specialised training for professionals involved in anti-trafficking activities. Specifically, a dedicated provision establishing the right to a recovery and reflection period for presumed victims has been introduced, together with statutory guarantees regarding the right to legal information on available protection pathways, including international protection. Furthermore, the right to compensation will be enhanced. These developments directly respond to several recommendations formulated by GRETA, including those concerning victims' rights, the strengthening of the criminal justice response, specialised training and the reduction of demand linked to exploitation.

Furthermore, the legislative decree transposing Directive (EU) 2024/1712, approved by the Council of Ministers on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 2026, introduces several significant innovations aimed at further strengthening the Italian anti-trafficking framework. In particular, the national legislation has been expanded to explicitly include three new forms of exploitation: trafficking in human beings for the purpose of illegal adoption, forced marriage and the exploitation of surrogacy (art.3), thereby aligning the legal framework with the evolving nature of trafficking in human beings.

Enhanced safeguards have also been introduced for child victims of trafficking (art.4), with a view to ensuring stronger protection measures and greater attention to their specific needs and vulnerabilities.

The decree further reinforces the role of training by extending anti-trafficking capacity-building activities to all stakeholders who may come into contact with victims, with particular attention to members of the judiciary (art.5). In addition, the Department for Equal Opportunities has been formally designated as the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (NAC), thus consolidating its strategic role in coordinating national anti-trafficking policies (art.7).

The legislative framework also provides for the formal adoption of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), which is already operational and includes a dedicated Cross-Border Focal Point aimed at facilitating transnational cooperation and the protection of victims across borders (art.9). Particular emphasis has been placed on strengthening the collection, analysis and monitoring of trafficking-related data (art.9), as well as on improving coordination mechanisms between the anti-trafficking system and the international protection system, in order to ensure more effective identification, referral and assistance pathways for vulnerable persons and victims of trafficking.

It should also be emphasised that the legislative decree, currently awaiting presidential signature and official publication, is the result of extensive interinstitutional coordination led by the Department for Equal Opportunities, involving the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, and the Department for European Policies. This process reflects the Italian Government's commitment to ensuring a coherent, multidisciplinary and whole-of-government approach to combating trafficking in human beings. In line with this purpose of institutional coordination, the Department for Equal Opportunities has likewise contributed to working groups coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior and aimed at the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum adopted by the European Commission.

Furthermore, the Department for Equal Opportunities has finalized in February 2026 the guidelines to foster the implementation of the NRM at local level, including a template for multi-agency protocols, called "*Linee Guida per l'applicazione a livello locale del Meccanismo Nazionale di Referral per l'identificazione, protezione e assistenza delle vittime di tratta e/o grave sfruttamento*"<sup>1</sup>. The template is intended to be utilized across various regional areas to formalize coordination networks among the different entities involved.

Regarding the new National Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings and Severe Exploitation 2026–2028, the adoption process is currently in its final stage. The Plan has been shaped by the priorities identified by the interinstitutional Steering Committee convened by Minister Eugenia Roccella on 29 July 2025, as well as by the outcomes of discussions carried out within the Technical Anti-Trafficking Committee throughout the past year. Its preparation has been informed by an extensive monitoring and consultation process launched in May 2025, involving central administrations, local authorities, civil society organisations and international organisations.

The new Plan will be structured around the four core pillars of prevention, prosecution, protection and assistance, and cooperation, while introducing an annual operational framework characterised by clearly defined responsibilities, precise timelines and the flexibility necessary to respond to the evolving nature of trafficking. Attention will be devoted to strengthening multi-level governance, enhancing investigative capacities, improving victim identification at border contexts, fully implementing the National Referral Mechanism, and promoting integrated and multidisciplinary training activities. Overall, the Plan aims to ensure comprehensive alignment with GRETA's recommendations and international standards, as will be better explained later in the document.

The recent reorganisation of the Department for Equal Opportunities, initiated through Decree-Law No. 25 of 14

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/it/politiche-e-attivita/tratta-degli-esseri-umani-e-grave-sfruttamento/linee-guida-per-l-applicazione-a-livello-locale-del-meccanismo-nazionale-di-referral-per-l-identificazione-protezione-e-assistenza-delle-vittime-di-tratta-eo-grave-sfruttamento/>

March 2025<sup>2</sup>, subsequently converted into Law No. 69 of 9 May 2025<sup>3</sup>, marked a strategic step towards further strengthening Italy's anti-trafficking governance framework. This reform was designed to enhance the Department's coordination, planning and monitoring functions, while simultaneously reinforcing the operational tools available to support victims of trafficking and severe exploitation.

In this context, a new Directorate-General was established within the Department for Equal Opportunities, specifically dedicated to the social prevention of trafficking in human beings, victim assistance, strategic planning and the monitoring of anti-trafficking interventions. Following the Ministerial Decree of 29 December 2025<sup>4</sup> on the reorganisation of the Department, the new Office for Policies against Trafficking and Severe Exploitation of Human Beings became fully operational. The Office includes two specialised units and benefits from additional dedicated staff seconded to the Department, further consolidating the institutional capacity of the national anti-trafficking system.

Through these reforms, the Italian Government has sought to significantly strengthen the national response to trafficking in human beings, recognising its central importance within the broader framework of fundamental rights protection. This commitment is also reflected in the progressive increase of resources allocated to the Anti-Trafficking Fund established under Article 12 of Law No. 228 of 11 August 2003 and managed by the Department for Equal Opportunities.

A first substantial reinforcement of the Fund was introduced through the 2023 Budget Law, which provided an increase of EUR 2 million for 2023 and an additional EUR 7 million annually starting from 2024. This effort was further consolidated by the 2026 Budget Law, which allocated an additional EUR 4 million for 2026 and EUR 9.2 million annually as of 2027. These investments demonstrate the Government's determination to ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of anti-trafficking policies and victim protection measures.

The strengthened financial framework directly supports the 21 anti-trafficking projects funded under the National Single Programme (*Programma Unico*)<sup>5</sup>, implemented by regional authorities and third sector specialized organisations across the country. These projects constitute the operational backbone of the Italian anti-trafficking system, ensuring the nationwide implementation of prevention, protection and social inclusion measures, while guaranteeing specialised assistance and referral pathways for victims.

In 2021, with Regional Council Resolution No. 496 of April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the Veneto Region assumed responsibility for managing the National Anti-Trafficking Helpline, signing a collaboration agreement pursuant to Article 15 of Law No. 241/1990 with the Department for Equal Opportunities, ratified by Regional Council Resolution No. 896 of June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021. With Regional Council Resolution No. 619 of May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the Region renewed its commitment to managing the National Anti-Trafficking Helpline for the 2022-2024 biennium.

This important service integrates with ongoing projects, constituting a strategic strength for the development of actions for contact, emergence, and support of victims of human trafficking. In May 2024, the Department for Equal Opportunities renewed its agreement with the Veneto Region for the management of the service related to the Anti-Trafficking Helpline, which operates 24/7 to assist victims of trafficking. The agreement also includes the development and implementation of a database (SIRIT), enabling Italy to fully comply with the data collection and analysis requirements set out by EU Directive 2011/36. A key activity of the agreement is the collaboration with the University of Padua through the "*Osservatorio Project*," aimed at facilitating an effective analysis of trafficking and the various response interventions in their multiple aspects. Indeed, the Department for Equal Opportunities is also in charge for the SIRIT data collection system (*Sistema Informatizzato per la raccolta di informazioni sulla tratta*), initially managed and updated by the Municipality of Venice in the framework of the Agreement "*Numero Verde*

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto:legge:2025-03-14:25>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:2025-05-09:69>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/media/hkol1rmo/decreto-organizzazione.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/it/news-e-media/news/2025/bando-per-progetti-di-assistenza-a-favore-delle-vittime-della-tratta-bando-72025/>

*Antitrattra*”. The SIRIT is fed by the competent bodies managing the projects for the assistance and social protection of victims of trafficking and exploitation funded by the Department. It takes into consideration the wide range of actions foreseen by the projects, encompassing the contact with victims, the assessment of interventions, the care and social inclusion of assisted individuals, the evaluation of the results achieved through a follow up sheet. Also, for the biennium 2024-2026, the collaboration agreement was renewed for the implementation and management of SIRIT (in collaboration with the Ministries concerned, the Regions and local authorities, as well as with other relevant associations) in order to monitor the treated cases and the protection and prevention measures for victims' rights.

Additionally, within the framework of the National FAMI Program (Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund) 2021–2027, two different projects, managed by the Department for Equal Opportunities together with the Ministry of Interior, are aimed at strengthening anti-trafficking efforts, enhancing the early identification of potential victims, and reinforcing the national reception system through protected facilities.

On 26 September 2025, the FAMI Managing Authority approved the first project, entitled “Continuous Coordination between Institutions and Operators across Reception Systems (COORDI)”, with a total budget of €1,717,691.33 and a duration of 42 months. The project is designed to enhance coordination and build the capacities of actors involved in the identification, reception, support, and integration of foreign nationals who are potential or confirmed victims of trafficking and severe labor exploitation. Specific objectives include improving central-level management, monitoring, and coordination, as well as strengthening early identification capacities at the territorial level.

The project targets several groups of direct beneficiaries: 36 reception facility operators, who will participate in specialized training; 12 central public administration employees, involved in coordination activities; and approximately 100,000 third-country nationals, who will be reached through a dedicated communication campaign. Indirect beneficiaries include roughly 3,360 operators working within public administrations, international organizations, and third-sector entities involved in various capacities in migrant reception, integration, and in interventions for the identification, assistance, and support of trafficking victims or individuals subjected to severe exploitation.

In addition, a second project entitled “ACCOGLI” is currently in the process of being presented. The project aims at setting up a reception system dedicated to vulnerable persons at risk of human trafficking and severe labour exploitation. In a spirit of complementarity with the projects funded by the Department, the 'ACCOGLI' project has the goal of building a nationwide reception system specifically dedicated to presumed victims to enable their early identification and to ensure adequate assistance.

Furthermore, the Department for Equal Opportunities signed in 2025 a national protocol of cooperation with the CNOAS (National Council of the Order of Social Workers) aimed at enhancing the role of social workers in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and severe exploitation. The protocol promotes structured awareness-raising actions, dissemination of information on the national anti-trafficking system, and the strengthening of early identification and referral capacities at territorial level. Through this agreement, social workers are recognized as key frontline actors in intercepting situations of vulnerability and potential trafficking, particularly within social services, reception systems, and community-based settings. The protocol with CNOAS complements the broader awareness and training framework coordinated by the Department for Equal Opportunities, reinforcing a multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach.

In addition, in line with the National Action Plan 2022–2025, the Department for Equal Opportunities also concluded in 2024 a protocol with the ENAC (National Civil Aviation Authority) to address trafficking risks within the aviation sector. The protocol strengthens cooperation among public authorities, airlines, and airport personnel, with a focus on awareness-raising, staff sensitization, and early identification of potential victims in airports and during air travel. This protocol is particularly relevant considering the evolving patterns of arrivals to Italy. Data

from the SIRIT system indicates a growing increase in arrivals by air, alongside the more traditionally monitored routes by sea and land. As air travel becomes an increasingly significant channel of entry, the cooperation framework established with ENAC assumes strategic importance for the timely identification of potential victims of trafficking and severe exploitation. In this context, the training and awareness-raising activities envisaged under the protocol are expected to play a crucial role in strengthening the capacity of aviation personnel to detect risk indicators and support early referral mechanisms.

The past year also represented a particularly significant milestone for Italy's anti-trafficking system, marking twenty-five years since its establishment, coinciding with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Palermo Protocol. Over the course of these twenty-five years, Italy has progressively developed a consolidated and internationally recognised model based on an integrated and multidisciplinary approach, grounded in close cooperation between public institutions, territorial authorities and civil society organisations.

This experience has enabled the creation of a comprehensive network of interventions for victim identification, assistance and social inclusion, centred on the protection of fundamental rights and supported by consolidate tools such as the National Single Programme and the National Anti-Trafficking Helpline. Over time, the system has continuously adapted to the evolving nature of trafficking in human beings, strengthening institutional coordination and progressively consolidating a more structured governance framework. The twenty-fifth anniversary therefore represents not only an important symbolic milestone, but also an opportunity to reaffirm and renew the commitment of Italian institutions to combating trafficking in human beings in all its forms.

Importance is also given to the role of cultural mediators, who constitute a fundamental component of the national anti-trafficking system and represent a recognized good practice in ensuring early access to information, assistance and protection for victims of trafficking in human beings. Information concerning victims' rights, available services and protection mechanisms is provided from the earliest stages of identification, including at disembarkation points, hotspots, reception centres and during first contacts with law enforcement authorities, in a language that victims can understand.

In this context, the strengthened involvement of civil society organizations, made possible also through the increase in funding allocated to anti-trafficking projects, has further enhanced the capacity to provide timely and specialized support. Cultural mediators play a particularly crucial role within multidisciplinary interventions carried out by anti-trafficking projects, labour inspectorates and judicial and investigative authorities, including the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Directorate, facilitating communication, building trust with victims and supporting identification and referral procedures.

A key development in strengthening the national response has been the work carried out through four thematic working groups established and coordinated by the DEO within the Technical Committee framework. These working groups were specifically mandated to deepen analysis and enhance institutional responses to forms of exploitation that are less visible and less frequently intercepted by traditional anti-trafficking mechanisms. They operated through structured exchanges among central administrations, judicial authorities, law enforcement bodies, specialised anti-trafficking actors, and independent experts.

The thematic working groups accompanied the implementation of the 2022–2025 Plan and actively supported the development of the 2026–2028 Plan. Their work addressed key issues including early identification of victims; institutional and judicial cooperation; data collection and data-sharing mechanisms; online exploitation and digital recruitment methods. Their contributions ensured the consolidation of a cross-cutting and multi-agency approach, which will be maintained and further strengthened in the upcoming programming cycle. In particular, the working groups operated consistently with the four pillars of the Plan:

- Prevention: Strengthening early identification mechanisms at points of entry and within labour contexts, enhancing the capacity to detect victims at the earliest stages of vulnerability.

- Prosecution: analysing emerging phenomena such as online sexual exploitation and new recruitment methods via digital platforms, in line with GRETA recommendations and Directive (EU) 2024/1712.
- Protection and Assistance: Developing proposals to harmonize and reinforce multi-agency territorial protocols, ensuring consistent standards of assistance nationwide.
- Cooperation: Addressing data collection and information-sharing systems, in compliance with the requirements of Directive (EU) 2024/1712.

Finally, in June 2024, the Minister for Family, Natality and Equal Opportunities, Eugenia Roccella, together with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Antonio Tajani, appointed, for the first time, a Special Envoy on Human Trafficking Issues. This role, has been established with the objective of facilitating a more structured and coordinated dialogue on trafficking issues within national stakeholders and with international partners and organisations, including the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the United Nations, while also supporting national administrations in aligning their respective actions with international recommendations and standards.

- 1. Make efforts to guarantee effective access to compensation for victims of trafficking, in particular by:*
- informing victims, in a language they can understand, of the right to compensation and the procedures to be followed, building the capacity of legal practitioners to support victims to claim compensation and including victim compensation in the training programmes for law enforcement officials, prosecutors and judges;*
  - making full use of the existing legal provisions and mechanisms of international cooperation to identify and seize perpetrators' assets with a view to securing compensation for victims of human trafficking;*
  - ensuring that victims can obtain a decision on compensation from the offender as part of the criminal proceedings within a reasonable time;*
  - making the state compensation scheme effectively accessible to victims of trafficking and reviewing the maximum amount of 1,500 Euros of compensation paid by the state in order to ensure that it corresponds to the actual harm suffered by victims (paragraph 92)*

Italy has undertaken significant legislative and operational measures aimed at strengthening victims' effective access to compensation, in line with GRETA's recommendations and within the broader framework of the transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/1712 amending Directive 2011/36/EU.

With specific reference to access to compensation for victims of trafficking, the article 6 of the legislative decree introduces significant procedural and structural amendments to Article 12 of Law No. 228/2003, with the specific aim of streamlining and restructuring the process for trafficking victims to claim state compensation. Under these new provisions, the statutory amount of compensation granted through the dedicated Fund has been increased and it is included between a minimum of €1,500 and a maximum of €10,000 per victim. Furthermore, the management of these claims is explicitly assigned to the Department for Equal Opportunities within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. In terms of procedural efficiency, the amendment shortens the deadlines for victims to claim compensation.

Access to the right to compensation is contingent upon the recognition of the victim within the framework of the criminal proceedings. Therefore, reforms of the Criminal Code are extremely linked to this right and its accessibility, as it will be better detailed in the answer to recommendation n. 2.

These legislative developments are complemented by ongoing efforts aimed at strengthening the capacities of judges, prosecutors, law enforcement authorities and specialized anti-trafficking operators through dedicated training initiatives focusing on victims' rights, compensation procedures, financial investigations and asset seizure mechanisms. Within this broader framework, Italy continues to pursue a victim-centred, rights-based and

multidisciplinary approach, with the objective of ensuring that victims of trafficking can access effective protection, remedies and compensation in practice, in addition to law.

Furthermore, in relation to judicial training, the legislative decree implementing Directive (EU) 2024/1712, amending Directive 2011/36/EU, introduces provisions requiring that the annual programme guidelines proposed by the Minister of Justice to the School for the Judiciary include specific training initiatives on the prevention and combating of trafficking in human beings, both at national and supranational level.

Such initiatives aim to enhance professional capacities in detecting trafficking-related offences, protecting human rights, ensuring the implementation non-punishment principle, and addressing criminal conduct facilitated through the internet or other communication technologies.

2. *Step up efforts to improve the criminal justice response to trafficking in human beings, and in particular:*
- *ensure that human trafficking offences are prosecuted as such every time the circumstances of a case allow this, regardless of whether the case involved a criminal organisation, whether the victim consented to the exploitation, or whether there was no transnational element;*
  - *further develop the training of investigators, prosecutors and judges on the offence of trafficking in human beings, in particular on the different constituent elements on the crime, its differences with other related offences, and the specificities of trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation (paragraph 116)*

As anticipated, the draft legislative decree currently under final examination introduces important amendments to the Italian Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure intended to reinforce the protection of victims of trafficking and facilitate their access to justice and compensation mechanisms.

Among the most relevant developments, Article 76 of the Consolidated Act on Legal Costs (*Testo Unico sulle Spese di Giustizia - TUSG*) is being amended through the extension of paragraph 4-ter to include the offence provided for under the newly introduced Article 601.1 of the Criminal Code. As a result, where the offence is committed against a minor, the injured party will be entitled to access legal aid at the expense of the State irrespective of the ordinary income thresholds established under the TUSG.

This amendment further expands a protection framework that already guaranteed such access to victims of the offences referred to in Article 600 of the Criminal Code (“Placing or maintaining a person in slavery or servitude”) and Article 601 (“Trafficking in persons”). The reform therefore strengthens the procedural safeguards available to victims and facilitates their effective participation in criminal proceedings, including for the purpose of seeking compensation and exercising related procedural rights.

The introduction of new Article 601.1 of the Criminal Code, entitled “Exploitation of a victim of slavery or trafficking”, constitutes another particularly relevant innovation of the draft legislative decree. The provision establishes criminal liability for any person who knowingly exploits services provided by victims of the offences under Articles 600 and 601 of the Criminal Code. The offence is punishable by a combined penalty of imprisonment of up to three years and a fine ranging from EUR 500 to EUR 3,000. Through this measure, the Italian legal system seeks to strengthen the response to the broader chain of exploitation connected to trafficking offences, while also contributing to the discouragement of demand linked to exploitative practices.

At the same time, the reform significantly broadens the scope of exploitative conduct covered by trafficking-related offences. The amended provisions expressly include forms of exploitation linked to surrogacy, forced marriage, illegal adoption, and the production of sexually explicit images, videos or similar material involving victims. Furthermore, the dissemination of such material, under the modalities provided for in the newly introduced letter (c-bis) of Article 602-ter of the Criminal Code, constitutes a new aggravating circumstance carrying enhanced penalties. These developments are particularly relevant considering the evolving nature of trafficking and

exploitation, including the growing role played by digital technologies and online environments in facilitating abuse and coercion.

The reform also contributes to strengthening victims' procedural guarantees within judicial proceedings. Under the Italian legal system, legal representation is mandatory for parties involved in both civil and criminal proceedings. Combined with the extension of access to State-funded legal aid, this framework is intended to ensure that victims are adequately supported throughout judicial proceedings and are placed in a position to effectively exercise their rights, including the right to claim compensation.

The contribution provided by the Directorate General of Statistics and Organisational Analysis of the Ministry of Justice covers offences related to slavery, trafficking in human beings, and exploitation. It is based on data extracted from the register of crime reports against known offenders held by prosecuting offices, focusing on primary offences under Articles 600, 601, and 602 of the Criminal Code, as well as related offences aimed at addressing exploitation and trafficking phenomena. These include child prostitution (Article 600-bis of the Criminal Code), unlawful intermediation and labour exploitation (Article 603-bis of the Criminal Code), facilitation of illegal immigration (Articles 12 and 22 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998), and exploitation of prostitution (Articles 3 and 4 of Law No. 75/1958).

The assessment of activities aimed at combating trafficking in human beings indicates that, in 2024, there was a general increase in proceedings during the investigative phase concerning both primary trafficking offences and related crimes. This trend is reflected in the rise in registered proceedings, the number of persons under investigation, and the number of persons stopped, arrested, or placed in pre-trial detention.

The only exceptions concern the offences of exploitation of child prostitution under Article 600-bis of the Criminal Code and facilitation of irregular immigration under Article 12 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998, for which a decrease in registered proceedings was observed. These decreases correspond to differentiated trends with regard to the number of persons under investigation and those subject to precautionary measures.

Data relating to the subsequent phases of criminal proceedings, namely proceedings concluded with the exercise of criminal prosecution and convictions, present a more diversified picture, with the comparison between 2024 and 2023 showing alternating trends across the different offences considered.

However, it should be considered that these data concern proceedings initiated in previous years and may therefore reflect a certain time lag in the overall representation of the phenomenon.

The 2024 data are compared with those for 2023 to assess national developments and trends over time. The results are structured into three main areas: (i) proceedings registered and defined during the investigative phase, including persons under investigation and persons subject to precautionary measures; (ii) proceedings in the trial phase; and (iii) final judgments and convictions.

- **Proceedings registered with the Public Prosecutor's Offices:**

Table 1 presents data on registered proceedings for each offence in 2024 and 2023, including absolute and percentage variations to facilitate comparison. The data show an overall increase in most offences considered. In particular, trafficking in persons under Article 601 of the Criminal Code rises from 34 proceedings in 2023 to 47 in 2024. Similarly, Article 603-bis of the Criminal Code increases from 466 to 623 proceedings, with paragraph 2 more than doubling from 36 to 70 proceedings. Smaller increases are recorded for Articles 600 and 602 of the Criminal Code. Article 22 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 increases from 1,469 to 1,773 proceedings, while offences relating to child prostitution (Article 600-bis) and Article 12 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 show slight decreases.

| Procedimenti iscritti in procura                                                                                                                            | Anno 2024 | Anno 2023 | Var. Assolute | Var. % | Trend |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|--------|-------|
| Riduzione in schiavitù (art. 600 c.p.) (Slavery)                                                                                                            | 64        | 57        | 7             | 12,3%  | ↑     |
| Sfruttamento della prostituzione minorile (art. 600 bis c.p.) (child prostitution)                                                                          | 116       | 128       | -12           | -9,4%  | ↓     |
| Tratta di persone (art.601 c.p.) (trafficking in human beings)                                                                                              | 47        | 34        | 13            | 38,2%  | ↑     |
| Alienazione e acquisto di schiavi (art. 602 c.p.) (sale of slavers)                                                                                         | 8         | 3         | 5             | *      |       |
| Intermediazione illecita e sfruttamento del lavoro (art. 603 bis c.p.)                                                                                      | 623       | 466       | 157           | 33,7%  | ↑     |
| (illegal intermediation and exploitation of labour) di cui: art. 603 bis co.2 c.p.                                                                          | 70        | 36        | 34            | 94,4%  | ↑     |
| Favoreggiamento immigrazione clandestina - Disposizioni contro le immigrazioni clandestine (art.12 Dlgs 286/1998) (aiding and abetting illegal immigration) | 1.177     | 1.198     | -21           | -1,8%  | ↓     |
| Favoreggiamento immigrazione clandestina - Lavoro subordinato a tempo determinato e indeterminato (art.22 Dlgs 286/1998)                                    | 1.773     | 1.469     | 304           | 20,7%  | ↑     |
| Favoreggiamento, sfruttamento e induzione alla prostituzione (artt. 3 e 4 della L. 75/1958) (exploitation of the prostitution)                              | 572       | 506       | 66            | 13,0%  | ↑     |

*The data of the different types of crime considered cannot be added together because the crimes on the list could be present in the same charge or in the same proceedings. It follows that it is not correct to add the data relating to each of the crimes in the list (sum of the rows).*

*\*The percentage change is not reported in the case of absolute values of a few units, as it is not significant.*

#### • Persons under investigation

In relative terms, the number of persons under investigation reflects the overall trend already observed in relation to proceedings registered. Except for the offence concerning the exploitation of child prostitution (Article 600-bis of the Criminal Code), which records a decrease of 22% compared to 2023, all other offences show significant increases.

These increases range from a minimum of +12% for offences under Article 12 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 to a maximum of +83.3% for the offence of unlawful intermediation and labour exploitation under Article 603-bis, paragraph 2, of the Criminal Code.

An increase is also recorded in the number of persons under investigation for enslavement (Article 600 of the Criminal Code) and trafficking in human beings (Article 601 of the Criminal Code), with increases of 25.8% and 21.8% respectively. With regard to the offence of sale and purchase of slaves (Article 602 of the Criminal Code), the number of persons under investigation rises from 4 in 2023 to 11 in 2024.

**Tab. 2 – Persons under investigation. Year 2024,2023. (Absolute values and variations)**

| Persone indagate                                                                                                         | Anno 2024 | Anno 2023 | Var. Assolute | Var. % | Trend |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|--------|-------|
| Riduzione in schiavitù (art. 600 c.p.)                                                                                   | 112       | 89        | 23            | 25,8%  | ↑     |
| Sfruttamento della prostituzione minorile (art. 600 bis c.p.)                                                            | 134       | 172       | -38           | -22,1% | ↓     |
| Tratta di persone (art.601 c.p.)                                                                                         | 95        | 78        | 17            | 21,8%  | ↑     |
| Alienazione e acquisto di schiavi (art. 602 c.p.)                                                                        | 11        | 4         | 7             | *      |       |
| Intermediazione illecita e sfruttamento del lavoro (art. 603 bis c.p.)                                                   | 1.214     | 1.077     | 137           | 12,7%  | ↑     |
| di cui: art. 603 bis co.2 c.p.                                                                                           | 143       | 78        | 65            | 83,3%  | ↑     |
| Favoreggiamento immigrazione clandestina - Disposizioni contro le immigrazioni clandestine (art.12 Dlgs 286/1998)        | 2.781     | 2.483     | 298           | 12,0%  | ↑     |
| Favoreggiamento immigrazione clandestina - Lavoro subordinato a tempo determinato e indeterminato (art.22 Dlgs 286/1998) | 1.945     | 1.658     | 287           | 17,3%  | ↑     |
| Favoreggiamento, sfruttamento e induzione alla prostituzione (artt. 3 e 4 della L. 75/1958)                              | 950       | 820       | 130           | 15,9%  | ↑     |

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*\* The percentage change is not reported in the case of absolute values of a few units, as it is not significant.*

- **Persons subject to precautionary measures**

Positive developments are also observed regarding the number of persons subject to precautionary measures. In particular, in 2024 the number of persons subjected to precautionary measures more than doubled, compared to 2023, for offences relating to the exploitation of child prostitution (Article 600-bis of the Criminal Code), unlawful labour intermediation and labour exploitation (Article 603-bis of the Criminal Code), facilitation of irregular migration under Article 22 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998, and offences relating to aiding, exploiting, and inducing prostitution pursuant to Articles 3 and 4 of Law No. 75/1958. By contrast, the number of persons placed in pre-trial detention for trafficking in human beings under Article 601 of the Criminal Code remained substantially stable between 2023 and 2024.

A decrease was instead recorded with regard to offences under Article 12 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 concerning the facilitation of irregular immigration, where the number of persons subject to precautionary measures fell from 478 in 2023 to 419 in 2024, corresponding to a decrease of 12.3%.

**Table 3 – Persons stopped/arrested and/or placed in pre-trial detention. Year 2024,2023. (Absolute values and variations)**

| Persone fermate/arrestate e/o sottoposte a custodia cautelare                                                            | Anno 2024 | Anno 2023 | Var. Assolute | Var. % | Trend |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|--------|-------|
| Riduzione in schiavitù (art. 600 c.p.)                                                                                   | 15        | 8         | 7             | 87,5%  | ↑     |
| Sfruttamento della prostituzione minorile (art. 600 bis c.p.)                                                            | 25        | 10        | 15            | 150,0% | ↑     |
| Tratta di persone (art.601 c.p.)                                                                                         | 3         | 4         | -1            | *      | ↓     |
| Alienazione e acquisto di schiavi (art. 602 c.p.)                                                                        | 1         | 0         | 1             | *      | ↑     |
| Intermediazione illecita e sfruttamento del lavoro (art. 603 bis c.p.)                                                   | 123       | 60        | 63            | 105,0% | ↑     |
| di cui: art. 603 bis co.2 c.p.                                                                                           | 53        | 19        | 34            | 178,9% | ↑     |
| Favoreggiamento immigrazione clandestina - Disposizioni contro le immigrazioni clandestine (art.12 Dlgs 286/1998)        | 419       | 478       | -59           | -12,3% | ↓     |
| Favoreggiamento immigrazione clandestina - Lavoro subordinato a tempo determinato e indeterminato (art.22 Dlgs 286/1998) | 28        | 10        | 18            | 180,0% | ↑     |
| Favoreggiamento, sfruttamento e induzione alla prostituzione (artt. 3 e 4 della L. 75/1958)                              | 163       | 71        | 92            | 129,6% | ↑     |

*The data of the different types of crime considered cannot be added together because the crimes on the list could be present in the same charge or in the same proceedings. It follows that it is not correct to add the data relating to each of the crimes in the list (sum of the rows).*

*\* The percentage change is not reported in the case of absolute values of a few units, as it is not significant.*

- **Proceedings concluded with the exercise of criminal prosecution**

Table 4 presents data concerning proceedings concluded in 2023 and 2024. It should be noted that the proceedings defined during a given year may relate both to cases registered in the same year and to proceedings initiated in previous years. This may account for certain discrepancies between the trends observed in registered proceedings and those relating to proceedings concluded with prosecution. The data indicate the following developments in 2024 compared to 2023:

- a significant increase of more than 37% in proceedings concluded relating to offences under Article 22 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 concerning the facilitation of irregular migration, whereas proceedings relating to Article 12 of the same Legislative Decree decreased by 2%;
- a marked increase in proceedings concluded concerning the offences of enslavement under Article 600 of the Criminal Code (+25%), trafficking in human beings under Article 601 of the Criminal Code (+17.6%), and exploitation of child prostitution under Article 600-bis of the Criminal Code (+9.9%);
- a decrease in proceedings concluded relating to unlawful labour intermediation and labour exploitation under Article 603-bis of the Criminal Code (-4.8%), as well as offences concerning aiding, exploitation, and inducement to prostitution pursuant to Articles 3 and 4 of Law No. 75/1958 (-4.9%);
- stability in the number of proceedings concluded relating to the offence of sale and purchase of slaves under Article 602 of the Criminal Code.

**Table 4 – Proceedings concluded with the exercise of criminal prosecution. Year 2024,2023. (Absolute values and variations)**

| Procedimenti definiti con esercizio dell'azione penale                                                                   | Anno 2024 | Anno 2023 | Var. Assolute | Var. % | Trend |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|--------|-------|
| Riduzione in schiavitù (art. 600 c.p.)                                                                                   | 20        | 16        | 4             | 25,0%  | ↑     |
| Sfruttamento della prostituzione minorile (art. 600 bis c.p.)                                                            | 78        | 71        | 7             | 9,9%   | ↑     |
| Tratta di persone (art.601 c.p.)                                                                                         | 20        | 17        | 3             | 17,6%  | ↑     |
| Alienazione e acquisto di schiavi (art. 602 c.p.)                                                                        | 2         | 2         | 0             | *      |       |
| Intermediazione illecita e sfruttamento del lavoro (art. 603 bis c.p.)                                                   | 198       | 208       | -10           | -4,8%  | ↓     |
| <i>di cui: art. 603 bis co.2 c.p.</i>                                                                                    | 48        | 49        | -1            | -2,0%  | ↓     |
| Favoreggiamento immigrazione clandestina - Disposizioni contro le immigrazioni clandestine (art.12 Dlgs 286/1998)        | 566       | 579       | -13           | -2,2%  | ↓     |
| Favoreggiamento immigrazione clandestina - Lavoro subordinato a tempo determinato e indeterminato (art.22 Dlgs 286/1998) | 1.040     | 755       | 285           | 37,7%  | ↑     |
| Favoreggiamento, sfruttamento e induzione alla prostituzione (artt. 3 e 4 della L. 75/1958)                              | 273       | 287       | -14           | -4,9%  | ↓     |

*The data of the different types of crime considered cannot be added together because the crimes on the list could be present in the same charge or in the same proceedings. It follows that it is not correct to add the data relating to each of the crimes in the list (sum of the rows).*

*\* The percentage change is not reported in the case of absolute values of a few units, as it is not significant.*

#### • **Final judgments and convictions**

The analysis of data relating to convictions highlights a differentiated trend across the various offences considered.

- **First-instance convictions:** regarding first-instance judgments in 2024 compared to 2023, most offences show either a decrease or substantial stability in the number of convictions. In particular, convictions relating to the offence of enslavement under Article 600 of the Criminal Code decreased by 43%. Conversely, an increase was recorded in convictions relating to the exploitation of child prostitution under Article 600-bis of the Criminal Code (+2%) and, more significantly, in convictions concerning unlawful labour intermediation and labour exploitation under Article 603-bis of the Criminal Code (+24%).
- **Second-instance convictions:** in 2024, the number of second-instance convictions relating to the offences of sale and purchase of slaves under Article 602 of the Criminal Code, unlawful labour intermediation and labour exploitation under Article 603-bis, paragraph 2, of the Criminal Code, and offences under Article 22 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 concerning the facilitation of irregular migration remained substantially stable compared to 2023.

A significant increase was instead recorded in second-instance convictions relating to unlawful labour intermediation and labour exploitation under Article 603-bis, paragraph 2, of the Criminal Code (+79%), as well as in convictions concerning trafficking in human beings under Article 601 of the Criminal Code (+38%). By contrast, convictions relating to the offences of enslavement under Article 600 of the Criminal Code, exploitation of child prostitution under Article 600-bis of the Criminal Code, facilitation of irregular immigration under Article 12 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998, and offences concerning aiding, exploitation, and inducement to prostitution pursuant to Articles 3 and 4 of Law No. 75/1958 recorded decreases ranging from 17% to 22%.

**Table 5 – Convictions. Year 2024,2023. (Absolute values and variations)**

| Sentenze di condanna                                                                                                     | I GRADO   |           |               |        |       | II GRADO  |           |               |        |       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|--------|-------|-----------|-----------|---------------|--------|-------|
|                                                                                                                          | Anno 2024 | Anno 2023 | Var. Assolute | Var. % | Trend | Anno 2024 | Anno 2023 | Var. Assolute | Var. % | Trend |
| Riduzione in schiavitù (art. 600 c.p.)                                                                                   | 13        | 23        | -10           | -43%   | ↓     | 18        | 23        | -5            | -22%   | ↓     |
| Sfruttamento della prostituzione minorile (art. 600 bis c.p.)                                                            | 61        | 60        | 1             | 2%     | ↔     | 40        | 48        | -8            | -17%   | ↓     |
| Tratta di persone (art.601 c.p.)                                                                                         | 14        | 16        | -2            | -13%   | ↓     | 18        | 13        | 5             | 38%    | ↑     |
| Alienazione e acquisto di schiavi (art. 602 c.p.)                                                                        | 0         | 2         | -2            | *      | ↓     | 2         | 2         | 0             | *      | ↔     |
| Intermediazione illecita e sfruttamento del lavoro (art. 603 bis c.p.)                                                   | 104       | 84        | 20            | 24%    | ↑     | 25        | 14        | 11            | 79%    | ↑     |
| di cui: art. 603 bis co.2 c.p.                                                                                           | 20        | 20        | 0             | 0%     | ↔     | 8         | 8         | 0             | *      | ↔     |
| Favoreggiamento immigrazione clandestina - Disposizioni contro le immigrazioni clandestine (art.12 Dlgs 286/1998)        | 315       | 380       | -65           | -17%   | ↓     | 158       | 201       | -43           | -21%   | ↓     |
| Favoreggiamento immigrazione clandestina - Lavoro subordinato a tempo determinato e indeterminato (art.22 Dlgs 286/1998) | 189       | 196       | -7            | -4%    | ↓     | 47        | 47        | 0             | 0%     | ↔     |
| Favoreggiamento, sfruttamento e induzione alla prostituzione (artt. 3 e 4 della L. 75/1958)                              | 226       | 266       | -40           | -15%   | ↓     | 156       | 194       | -38           | -20%   | ↓     |

*The data of the different types of crime considered cannot be added together because the crimes on the list could be present in the same charge or in the same proceedings. It follows that it is not correct to add the data relating to each of the crimes in the list (sum of the rows).*

*\* The percentage change is not reported in the case of absolute values of a few units, as it is not significant.*

- **Final convictions:** with regard to the analysis of final convictions, the data contained in the criminal records system and presented in Table 6 show that, for most offences considered, the number of convicted persons in 2024 decreased compared to 2023. Negative variations range from a maximum decrease of 64.3% in relation to the offence of trafficking in human beings under Article 601 of the Criminal Code, to a decrease of 15.7% for offences under Article 603-bis of the Criminal Code concerning unlawful labour intermediation and labour exploitation.

Conversely, a slight increase of 2% is recorded in the number of final convictions relating to offences under Article 22 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 concerning the facilitation of irregular migration. The average duration of custodial sentences remained substantially stable.

The trend relating to financial penalties between 2024 and 2023 is more differentiated. A significant decrease is recorded in relation to offences under Article 12 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 concerning the facilitation of irregular immigration, with a reduction in economic sanctions amounting to EUR 345,939,300. This decrease corresponds to a 25.6% reduction in the number of final convictions for the same offence. By contrast, the number of financial penalties imposed in 2024 increased in relation to the following offences:

- enslavement under Article 600 of the Criminal Code (+EUR 14,200);
- trafficking in human beings under Article 601 of the Criminal Code (+EUR 13,200);
- aiding, exploitation and inducement to prostitution pursuant to Articles 3 and 4 of Law No. 75/1958 (+EUR 27,455).

Finally, it should be noted that the overall data concerning final convictions may be subject to underestimation due to delays in the transmission of information by judicial offices to the criminal records system.

**Tab. 6 – Final convicts. Year 2024,2023. (Absolute values and variations)**

| Condannati definitivi                                                                                                    | Numero Condannati |           |        |       | Multa ( euro) |             |                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|--------|-------|---------------|-------------|----------------|
|                                                                                                                          | Anno 2024         | Anno 2023 | Var. % | Trend | Anno 2024     | Anno 2023   | Var. assolute  |
| Riduzione in schiavitù (art. 600 c.p.)                                                                                   | 21                | 38        | -44,7% | ↓     | 22.500        | 8.300       | 14.200 ↑       |
| Sfruttamento della prostituzione minorile (art. 600 bis c.p.)                                                            | 51                | 76        | -32,9% | ↓     | 276.999       | 495.249     | -218.250 ↓     |
| Tratta di persone (art.601 c.p.)                                                                                         | 15                | 42        | -64,3% | ↓     | 13.500        | 300         | 13.200 ↑       |
| Alienazione e acquisto di schiavi (art. 602 c.p.)                                                                        | 2                 | -         |        |       | 9.000         | -           |                |
| Intermediazione illecita e sfruttamento del lavoro (art. 603 bis c.p.)                                                   | 97                | 115       | -15,7% | ↓     | 315.117       | 720.794     | -405.677 ↓     |
| di cui: art. 603 bis co.2 c.p.                                                                                           | 4                 | -         |        |       | 1.000         | -           |                |
| Favoreggiamento immigrazione clandestina - Disposizioni contro le immigrazioni clandestine (art.12 Dlgs 286/1998)        | 589               | 792       | -25,6% | ↓     | 299.838.647   | 645.777.946 | -345.939.300 ↓ |
| Favoreggiamento immigrazione clandestina - Lavoro subordinato a tempo determinato e indeterminato (art.22 Dlgs 286/1998) | 308               | 302       | 2,0%   | ↑     | 1.639.509     | 1.872.921   | -233.412 ↓     |
| Favoreggiamento, sfruttamento e induzione alla prostituzione (artt. 3 e 4 della L. 75/1958)                              | 24                | 46        | -47,8% | ↓     | 173.090       | 145.635     | 27.455 ↑       |

*The data of the different types of crime considered cannot be added together because the crimes on the list could be present in the same charge or in the same proceedings. It follows that it is not correct to add the data relating to each of the crimes in the list (sum of the rows).*

Furthermore, the contribution provided by the Department for Technological Innovation of the Ministry of Justice presents objective elements that support a systematisation of trends in criminal prosecutions and judicial outcomes concerning offences typically associated with trafficking in human beings (Articles 600, 601, and 602 of the Criminal Code, Article 600-bis and Article 603-bis of the Criminal Code, Articles 12 and 22 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998, as well as Articles 3 and 4 of Law No. 75/1958), through a comparative analysis between 2023 and 2024. Overall, the findings highlight the following developments:

- **Registrations (Public Prosecutor's Offices):**

A general increase is observed in the number of registered proceedings for most offences considered. Trafficking in persons under Article 601 of the Criminal Code rises to 47 proceedings in 2024, compared to 34 in 2023. Article 603-bis of the Criminal Code records 623 proceedings in 2024, compared to 466 in 2023, with paragraph 2 more than doubling (70 proceedings in 2024 versus 36 in 2023). Article 22 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 also shows a significant increase, rising from 1,469 proceedings in 2023 to 1,773 in 2024, corresponding to a 20.7% increase. More limited increases are also recorded for Articles 600 and 602 of the Criminal Code. Conversely, a slight decrease is observed for Article 600-bis of the Criminal Code (-9.4%) and for Article 12 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 (-1.8%).

- **Persons under investigation:**

The trend broadly mirrors that of registrations, with increases recorded for Article 600 of the Criminal Code (112 versus 89), Article 601 (95 versus 78), Article 603-bis, paragraph 2 (143 versus 78), Article 12 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 (2,781 versus 2,483), and Article 22 of the same Legislative Decree (1,945 versus 1,658).

- **Precautionary measures (arrests, detention, custody):**

An overall increase is observed in 2024, particularly regarding Article 603-bis of the Criminal Code (123 versus 60) and Article 22 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 (28 versus 10). A decrease is instead recorded for Article 12 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 (419 versus 478).

- **Proceedings concluded with prosecution:**

In 2024, an increase is recorded for Article 600 of the Criminal Code (20 versus 16), Article 601 (20 versus 17), and especially Article 22 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 (1,040 versus 755). A slight decrease is observed for Article 603-bis of the Criminal Code (198 versus 208).

- **Convictions (first instance, appeal, and final convictions):**

Trends are differentiated across offences. First-instance convictions under Article 603-bis of the Criminal Code increase (104 versus 84), whereas those under Article 600 decrease (13 versus 23). With regard to final convictions in 2024, a decrease is recorded for Article 601 of the Criminal Code (15 versus 42). However, it should be noted that figures relating to final convictions may be underestimated due to delays in updating the criminal records system.

Speaking of capacity building, training activities addressed to the judiciary by the School for the Judiciary have significantly intensified over the period 2022–2025, through the delivery of centralised courses specifically dedicated to trafficking in human beings, as well as closely related thematic areas such as immigration, asylum, vulnerability, labour exploitation, and victim protection. In addition to their direct impact on participating judges and prosecutors, these training initiatives also generate a ripple effect within their respective judicial offices. Since 2022, dedicated and related courses have directly involved at least 291 members of the judiciary engaged in complex investigations and proceedings in this field.

Training activities specifically focused on trafficking in human beings systematically address key substantive and procedural issues, including the legal classification of the offence and its distinction from related crimes; the irrelevance of victim consent pursuant to Article 601 of the Criminal Code, including relevant case law of the Supreme Court; the principle of non-punishment of victims under Article 26 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and its practical application; and the need for gender-sensitive and child-sensitive procedural safeguards, including child-friendly interviewing techniques.

The course design adopts a strongly practice-oriented and comparative methodology, including case studies, working groups, and exchanges of best practices and case law analysis. It also promotes a multi-agency approach aimed at effectively integrating prosecution and protection functions, including through cooperation with anti-trafficking projects, the National Anti-Trafficking Helpline, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), juvenile justice offices, and judges competent in international protection matters.

The School for the Judiciary (SSM) training programme for the period 2023–2026 includes modules on immigration, asylum, and vulnerability. These include, inter alia, the 2024 course “*Combating trafficking in human beings between international obligations and domestic legislation*” as well as multiple training pathways on asylum and immigration law, administrative detention and expulsion procedures, unaccompanied foreign minors, and special protection mechanisms (2025–2026). These initiatives contribute in a systematic manner to strengthening judicial capacity to identify indicators of trafficking and to ensure effective communication of rights.

Reference should also be made to the joint SSM–EUAA workshop “*Trafficking in human beings and international protection*” (Naples, 28–29 September 2023), which featured international contributions and comparative analyses within the framework of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and the 1951 Geneva Convention. The workshop was addressed to judges working in specialised sections and to judges dealing with international protection cases involving victims of trafficking.

Within the framework of European training and cooperation initiatives, the School for the Judiciary participates in the JUST CHILD Project, launched in 2025, coordinated by the French National School for the Judiciary (*École Nationale de la Magistrature*), together with a consortium of 11 partner institutions from 10 countries. The project aims to train professionals, including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, educators, and investigators, on the identification, support, and protection of unaccompanied minors who are victims of trafficking and organised criminal networks. The project has produced an operational guide and audio-visual tools, including subtitled video materials, designed to standardise good practices and promote the harmonisation of approaches at European level, with particular attention to the digital dimension as a tool for training, education, and awareness-raising.

Also noteworthy is Course P25096 (Scandicci, 15–17 December 2025), entitled “Criminal offences relating to immigration and trafficking in human beings: substantive and procedural aspects.” The course addressed, inter alia, judicial cooperation aspects (including Eurojust), investigative practices concerning trafficking and labour exploitation, the distinction between smuggling and trafficking, procedural challenges involving foreign suspects, the principle of non-punishment of victims under Article 26 of the Warsaw Convention, and the hearing of victims from a supranational and child-sensitive perspective.

The School for the Judiciary has expressed its intention to ensure continuity of training activities in the field of trafficking in human beings and related areas, by promoting ongoing critical analysis of the relevant legal framework and periodic training initiatives, in accordance with its programming guidelines and in full respect of judicial independence and autonomy. Below a recap of the courses organised between 2023 and 2026:

**Year 2026**

- P26007 - Webinar: from the Common European Asylum System to the Migration Pact. Applications for international protection submitted by applicants from third countries designated as safe countries of origin: reflections on the impact of the judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union (Grand Chamber, 1 August 2025, Joined Cases C-758/24 and C-759/24);
- P26011 - Special protection of foreign nationals following the repeal of the non-expulsion ground based on social integration under Decree-Law No. 20/2023 (so-called “Cutro Decree”, converted into Law No. 50/2023);
- P26044 - Self-training workshop for justices of the peace and immigration judges on expulsion and detention;
- P26084 - Unaccompanied foreign minors.

**Year 2025**

- P25019 - Immigration Law: Fast-Track Procedures - Advanced Course;
- P25032 - Validation and extension of administrative detention of foreign nationals - Advanced Course;
- FPFP25025 - Maritime borders and migration flows: State obligations and fundamental rights in the context of international law;
- FPFP25039 - Competences of honorary judges in immigration matters (Part I);
- FPFP25041 - Competences of honorary judges in immigration matters (Part II);
- P25067 - Citizenship and forms of citizenship: issues for consideration;
- P25096 - Criminal offences relating to immigration and trafficking in human beings: substantive and procedural aspects;
- European Project JUST CHILD (8 July 2025): the project, coordinated by the French National School for the Judiciary (ENM), was developed in response to the need to ensure adequate and coordinated protection for unaccompanied minors who are victims of trafficking in human beings. Through inter-institutional workshops, an operational guide was developed to identify best practices and strengthen cooperation between child protection systems and the fight against organised crime.

**Year 2024**

- T24001 - Combating trafficking in human beings between international obligations and domestic legislation;
- T24004 - Challenges faced by judicial offices in the migration context, including organisational, constitutional, and EU law aspects;
- FPFP24004 - Immigration and asylum law in the context of the COVID-19 emergency: comparative practices and case-law developments;
- FPFP22016 - Unaccompanied foreign minors: a European challenge;
- FPFP22026 - Validation, detention and expulsion proceedings before the Justice of the Peace.

**Year 2023**

- P23009 - Current issues in asylum and immigration (since 2022);
- Joint EUAA–SSM Workshop on Trafficking in Human Beings and International Protection (28–29 September 2023, Naples, Castel Capuano).

The Carabinieri Corps provides both basic and advanced training activities aimed at strengthening the prevention and combating of trafficking in human beings. Basic training is delivered through dedicated modules within training institutes, including cooperation with third-sector organisations, with the aim of addressing trafficking in human beings not only from a legal and operational perspective, but also in its social, human, and cultural dimensions.

Advanced and specialised training is provided on a permanent basis through a range of dedicated initiatives, including:

- the interagency course “*Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants*”, organised at the International School of Advanced Studies for the Prevention and Fight against Organised Crime in Caserta, attended by officers serving within the investigative branches of the Carabinieri Corps;
- the course “*Trafficking in Human Beings - Labour Exploitation*”, organised by the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), aimed at enhancing investigative techniques concerning trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation;
- the specialised course on “*Social Legislation*” addressed to personnel assigned to the Carabinieri Command for Labour Protection, including specific modules on “*Trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation: analysis of the phenomenon with particular regard to the employment of migrants and minors in the agricultural sector*” and on “*Protection of migrants and cultural mediators*”;
- the live simulation-based exercise organised since 2016 at the Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU) in Vicenza, within the framework of the dedicated project promoted by the OSCE. The initiative involves all relevant actors in the sector and aims to promote a multi-agency, human rights-based and victim-centred approach to optimise the identification and assistance of victims of trafficking, define international best practices, and strengthen cooperation at all levels, including cooperation in financial investigations (“follow the money”) targeting criminal organisations involved in trafficking activities. To date, eight training sessions have been completed, held in November 2016; May and September 2017; January and December 2018; September 2019; September 2021; and October 2024, with a total of 494 participants trained. In addition, in December 2025, within the framework of activities connected to these exercises, a follow-up seminar entitled “*Symposium on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Mediterranean Region*” was organised.

Furthermore, also Guardia di Finanza personnel are provided with structured education both at basic and advanced levels. Training curricula include International Humanitarian Law within broader extracurricular modules such as Military Culture, International Law of the Sea, and International Humanitarian Law. These programmes address the sources and principles of international humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the Hague and Ottawa Conventions, as well as the role of the International Criminal Court and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Attention is given to the protection of fundamental rights in border management activities, search and rescue operations, and return procedures, ensuring that operational practice is consistently aligned with international legal standards.

3. *Ensure compliance with Article 26 of the Convention on the principle non-punishment of victims of trafficking, in particular by:*
- *adopting a specific legal provision ensuring the non-punishment of victims of trafficking for their involvement in unlawful activities, including administrative offences, to the extent that they were compelled to do so, and regardless of their co-operation with law enforcement authorities;*
  - *providing guidance and training to law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges on the application of the non-punishment provision enshrined in the Convention (paragraph 128)*

Italy does not feature a single dedicated provision within its Criminal Code explicitly structured around the non-punishment of trafficking victims. However, the legal objectives enshrined in Article 26 of the Warsaw Convention are guaranteed through the combined application of existing general criminal law defences and consolidated judicial interpretation. Specifically, the principle of non-punishment is operationalized through Article 54 of the Italian Criminal Code (“state of necessity” - *Stato di necessità*). Under these provisions, criminal liability is excluded when an individual is compelled to commit an unlawful act due to an imminent threat of serious harm. As clarified by the Italian Supreme Court, the non-punishment principle falls within the scope of Article 54 of the Criminal Code.

Indeed, in light of the interpretation given by the Supreme Court, potential trafficking victims should not be inappropriately incarcerated, fined, or otherwise penalized solely for unlawful acts that are a direct consequence of their exploitation. Where victims have been compelled to commit criminal acts, such as drug transportation or other offenses, as a direct result of being trafficked and subjected to coercion, Italian courts recognize the applicability of the non-punishment principle through the legal doctrine of necessity.

Recent jurisprudence and interpretative guidance aim at preventing such outcomes by strengthening victim identification and ensuring that courts consider vulnerability, coercion, and the absence of realistic alternatives when assessing criminal responsibility.

The judgment of the Court of Cassation, Sixth Criminal Section (n. 2319 of 18.01.24) <sup>6</sup>, in its reasoning, examined the issue of justifying circumstances and held that, in line with an interpretation of Article 54 of the Italian Criminal Code that takes into account the supranational provisions set out in Article 2(2) of Directive 2011/36/EU and Recital 11 thereof, the defence of necessity may apply to a vulnerable person who is a victim of trafficking. This includes situations in which the victim, while in a condition of subjugation to criminal organizations involved in drug trafficking, is forced to transport narcotics without having any real possibility of seeking protection from public authorities.

Regarding the implementation of paragraph 128 of the Convention, Italy ensures the effective application of the non-punishment principle through a well-established multi-agency approach coordinated under the National Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings. This integrated strategy focuses on the promotion of both institutional training and operational protocols. These latter are operation tools aiming at promoting structured cooperation among judicial authorities, law enforcement, and specialized NGOs.

*4. Take measures to ensure that women victims of trafficking with children can effectively access justice for the protection of their right to family life, in accordance with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights (Article 8 of the ECHR) (paragraph 161)*

Italy recognises the protection of family life as a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and has established a legal and protection framework aimed at ensuring assistance, protection and access to justice for victims of trafficking in human beings, including women with children.

The National Referral Mechanisms, adopted in December 2023, places particular emphasis on the adoption of gender-sensitive, child-sensitive, multidisciplinary and trauma-informed approaches in all stages of victim identification, protection, assistance and social inclusion. The NRM specifically recognizes the growing number of women victims of trafficking and severe exploitation who are pregnant, mothers, or accompanied by children, as well as women in situations of serious vulnerability who have experienced trafficking-related violence and exploitation.

In this framework, the best interests of the child constitute a guiding principle throughout the assistance pathway. The NRM promotes continuous and integrated cooperation among anti-trafficking projects, social services, healthcare providers, child protection services, educational institutions and judicial authorities, with the aim of ensuring comprehensive and individualised support for mothers and children accessing assistance programmes under the national anti-trafficking system.

Particular attention is devoted to the protection of family unity and to the prevention of secondary victimisation. Assistance measures include access to protected accommodation, healthcare, legal assistance, psychological support, cultural mediation, educational pathways and social inclusion services tailored to the specific needs of

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.cortedicassazione.it/it/penale\\_dettaglio.page?contentId=SZP29859](https://www.cortedicassazione.it/it/penale_dettaglio.page?contentId=SZP29859)

women victims and their children. Over the years anti-trafficking specialized organization have improved their shelter and related services to provide single mothers victims of trafficking and their children with adequate and dedicated reception measures.

Data from the SIRIT information system, processed by the National Anti-Trafficking Helpline, further illustrate the importance of ensuring specialised support for women victims of trafficking with children. In 2024, 290 beneficiaries assisted within the national anti-trafficking system were women with between one and four children; in 2025, the corresponding figure currently stands at 248. These figures underscore the ongoing need for dedicated reception measures and tailored assistance pathways capable of addressing the specific needs of both mothers and children.

The NRM also highlights the importance of ensuring continuity of protection and inclusion measures for children and young adults transitioning out of anti-trafficking shelter systems upon reaching adulthood. In this regard, the NRM emphasises the need to guarantee access to dedicated accommodation solutions, specialised healthcare and psychological support, educational and vocational training programmes, transcultural parenting support services, and individualised autonomy pathways aimed at fostering independent living and long-term social inclusion.

Gender-sensitive services continue to represent a defining feature of the Italian anti-trafficking system. Women and girls trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation have access to dedicated shelters and specialised assistance services, while targeted interventions have also been strengthened for particularly vulnerable groups, including minors, victims of labour exploitation, and persons subjected to forced criminality or forced begging.

Each project funded under the Single Program calls issued by the Department for Equal Opportunities must ensure comprehensive assistance measures for persons formally recognised as victims of trafficking and/or severe exploitation, including safe accommodation, healthcare, legal support, and social reintegration services. Access to protected accommodation is based on the informed consent of the person concerned and is implemented in accordance with individual needs and vulnerability assessments.

The National Action Plan 2022-2025 has further promoted the strengthening of professional capacities through government-funded training initiatives addressed to social workers, healthcare personnel, reception staff, law enforcement authorities and specialised operators. Such training activities focus on trauma-informed approaches, prevention of re-traumatisation, cultural competence, identification of vulnerabilities, and respect for victims' dignity, autonomy and informed consent. In line with these objectives, the National Plan 2026-2028 includes among its operational goals the need to activate specific interventions for victims of trafficking or severe exploitation who present specific vulnerabilities, including mothers with children. The national plan includes specific measures aimed at strengthening coordination among stakeholders in the child protection sector, such as juvenile courts, lawyers, guardians, and social workers. Among these initiatives, specialized training courses will be organized to improve the capacity, particularly of social workers, to identify victims of human trafficking among foreign mothers and to support them using a culturally sensitive approach. The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and the Association of Social Workers will serve as the framework for conducting the training sessions.

5. *Take additional measures to effectively prevent, detect and combat trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, taking into account Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)21 of the Committee of Ministers and GRETA's Guidance Note on combating trafficking for labour exploitation. This should include steps to:*
- *ensure that sufficient resources are made available to labour inspectors to fulfil their mandate and carry out proactive and unannounced inspections, including in remote locations at risk of trafficking, without prior complaints from workers;*
  - *strengthen the monitoring of domestic work, recruitment and temporary work agencies and supply chains, as well as other risk sectors;*

- *establish safe reporting and effective complaint mechanisms for workers, to ensure that victims of abuses or exploitative situations can refer their case without fear of repercussions;*
- *put in place practical co-operation and data sharing agreements between labour inspectors and law enforcement in order to ensure that personal information of workers, whether collected in the course of labour inspections, joint inspections, reporting or complaints mechanisms, is not used for immigration enforcement purposes, but to tackle the perpetrators of trafficking offences;*
- *guarantee that the living and working conditions of migrant workers, including in the agricultural sector, meet all the requirements laid down in the legislation with a view to preventing abuse and exploitation. Immediate action should be taken to close down informal settlements, provide durable living and working conditions for those living there and ensure that they are able to regularise their residence status (paragraph 204)*

The Italian Government has established a comprehensive set of mechanisms to prevent labour exploitation and trafficking in the context of migrant employment, combining prevention, inspection, victim identification, protection measures, and access to remedies.

In response to a changing landscape where trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation and severe labour exploitation have exponentially emerged as a primary form of trafficking, the Department for Equal Opportunities focus its institutional efforts to address the phenomenon. Indeed, recent data clearly underscores this shift, with around 70% of calls to the national anti-trafficking helpline in 2025 related to labour exploitation, and victims of severe labour abuse accounting for approximately 42% of individuals assisted and protected by regional projects. To address these evolving challenges, the Department has prioritized the definition of specific measures that involve strengthening the coordination between the core anti-trafficking framework and labour exploitation assistance programs, run by the Minister of Labour. This is a strategic objective also of the National Antitrafficking Plan 2026-2028. Indeed, with regard to coordination with the system addressing labour exploitation, the National Action Plan 2026-2028 identifies a number of specific lines of intervention.

First, it envisages the strengthening of synergies with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, including through the possible development of harmonised referral procedures for both victims of trafficking in human beings and victims of labour exploitation.

Second, the Plan promotes a reflection on the opportunity to improve the convergence and coordination of reporting and helpline mechanisms. This is considered particularly relevant in light of the forthcoming implementation of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, which requires vulnerability detection and referral mechanisms to become increasingly coordinated, complementary and interconnected.

Third, the Plan encourages the establishment of interinstitutional working groups, including at regional level, which, also in line with the National Referral Mechanism, are expected to define operational procedures involving actors from both systems. The objective is to foster regular exchanges of information, joint training activities and coordinated interventions at the local level, thereby strengthening cooperation between anti-trafficking services and labour exploitation prevention and protection mechanisms.

Within this context, a specific role is played by specialized law enforcements corps, in particular within the Carabinieri Corps that carries out a specialised and highly qualified action to combat trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation through the Carabinieri Command for Labour Protection, which currently comprises more than 710 officers who have obtained certification in social legislation and hold the qualification of Labour Inspectors. The Department conducts inspections throughout the national territory, including in support of other Carabinieri units, with the aim of carrying out workplace inspections, including without prior authorisation from the judicial authority, as provided for under the applicable legal framework.

Through judicial police investigations conducted by the Operational Unit, either *ex officio* or following reports and through inspection activities carried out nationwide by the subordinate Labour Inspectorate Units (N.I.L.) and Group

Operational Units (N.O.), the Carabinieri Command for Labour Protection undertakes monitoring, prevention, and enforcement activities in the principal sectors where labour exploitation and unlawful labour intermediation are statistically most prevalent, particularly agriculture and small-scale manufacturing. Such activities focus especially on offences under Article 603-bis of the Criminal Code involving the exploitation of third-country nationals lacking residence permits.

Within this operational framework, increasing evidence has emerged of criminal conduct linked to the recruitment phase preceding exploitation, including recruitment through social media platforms and dedicated online channels, as well as the subsequent transfer of victims to Italy from non-EU countries.

The inspection-based approach enables the collection of information relevant to the initiation of broader criminal investigations targeting organised criminal groups involved in the recruitment, transportation, and accommodation of exploited workers. Investigative activities are further supported through the use of technical tools, including telephone and telematic interceptions, as well as vehicle monitoring through localisation systems.

As an additional form of prevention and enforcement, particular attention is devoted to monitoring migration flow mechanisms, which several investigations have revealed to be used as channels for concealing trafficking in human beings. In many cases, workers enter the national territory through formally lawful channels, but by means of irregular procedures. The most serious forms of labour exploitation are therefore not isolated phenomena but are often embedded within complex transnational criminal networks.

Since October 2022, the Carabinieri Command for Labour Protection has implemented a dedicated operational strategy aimed at countering the fraudulent use of the “Flows Decree” (*Decreto Flussi*), which has in some cases been exploited by criminal organisations to facilitate the irregular entry and unlawful stay of third-country nationals destined for labour exploitation. This strategy has resulted in several hundred criminal proceedings, a number of which have been coordinated by the District Anti-Mafia Directorates.

With specific reference to operational activities carried out over the last three years in relation to the offences of enslavement (Article 600 of the Criminal Code), trafficking and trade in slaves (Article 601 of the Criminal Code), and unlawful labour intermediation and labour exploitation (Article 603-bis of the Criminal Code), the Carabinieri Corps achieved the following results during the period 2022–2025:

| Offence           | Convicted Persons | Persons released pending investigation | Total       |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------|
| Art. 600 c.p.     | 50                | 100                                    | 150         |
| Art. 601 c.p.     | 33                | 44                                     | 77          |
| Art. 603 bis c.p. | 227               | 1155                                   | 1382        |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>310</b>        | <b>1299</b>                            | <b>1609</b> |

The difficulty associated with detecting trafficking in human beings may constitute a significant limitation to the effectiveness of law enforcement and investigative activities. It is therefore essential to widely adopt operational tools capable of ensuring the early identification of victims by police officers.

To this end, the Carabinieri Corps has developed and disseminated, down to the lowest territorial command levels, including local station commands, a number of operational instruments aimed at strengthening the operational and investigative capacities of all subordinate units. These include:

- a document containing indicators of exploitation in various sectors, including agriculture, domestic work, tourism and hospitality, construction, and the so-called “gig economy”, namely a labour model characterised by temporary and flexible work arrangements often intermediated through digital platforms. With specific regard to this sector, the Carabinieri Command for Labour Protection has developed

significant operational experience, particularly in relation to food-delivery services managed through digital platforms, identifying emerging forms of so-called “digital gang-mastering” (*caporalato digitale*). This phenomenon manifests itself through the transfer or leasing of digital rider accounts, involving unlawful intermediation between the account holder and the actual worker performing the labour activity, in exchange for the retention of a percentage of the worker’s daily earnings. Within this new and atypical labour environment, specific indicators of labour exploitation affecting delivery riders have been identified, including remuneration substantially below the levels established by collective labour agreements, the imposition of instrumental penalties further reducing wages (such as deductions for failure to comply with imposed instructions or suspension of payments for alleged work-related shortcomings), and the unlawful retention of tips paid by customers.

- a document containing indicators of trafficking in human beings, including, inter alia, irregular migration status, lack of knowledge of the language and legal system of the destination country, absence, confiscation or unlawful retention of identity documents, possession of false or forged documents, isolation in communications (including through the confiscation of communication devices), and the total or partial unavailability of earned income due to debts incurred for travel expenses, often advanced by members of criminal organisations, or for the provision of food, accommodation, blankets and other basic necessities;
- the “Guidelines for the Local Implementation of the National Referral Mechanism”, developed by the Department for Equal Opportunities.

Within the framework of these activities, particularly careful, qualified and victim-centred operational approaches are adopted with regard to persons presenting specific vulnerabilities, including minors, mothers with children, and persons with disabilities. In this regard, the Carabinieri Corps has disseminated across all territorial command levels, including local station commands, the Ministry of the Interior’s “*Vademecum for the Identification, Referral and Assistance of Persons in Situations of Vulnerability*”, promoting its systematic application in operational practice. Furthermore, an “Operational Handbook on Gender-Based Violence Offences and Approaches to Particularly Vulnerable Victims” has been developed as a comprehensive and updated tool encompassing the relevant legal and psychological frameworks for combating such phenomena.

The objective is to promote a victim-centred investigative approach through specialised training for judicial police personnel, ensuring trauma-informed practices and immediate access to protection and support mechanisms, including with the contribution of the Criminological Analysis Unit of the Carabinieri Scientific Investigation Department.

In this context, law enforcement personnel are systematically encouraged to make use of the more than 200 “A Room of One’s Own” facilities established in Carabinieri barracks throughout the national territory. These dedicated spaces are designed to provide victims with an environment of dignity, autonomy, empathy and confidentiality, where they may be heard by specially trained personnel in a protected and supportive setting.

Between 2023 and 2025, the Carabinieri Command for Labour Protection, in coordination with the Judicial Authority, proposed the issuance of residence permits for “social protection purposes” and for “foreign nationals who are victims of unlawful labour intermediation and labour exploitation” in favour of 350 migrants.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies has implemented a wide range of initiatives, funded through EU and national resources, covering the entire national territory and operating across all labour sectors. These initiatives are implemented primarily through regional authorities, often within interregional partnerships, and involve a broad multi-agency network including municipalities, regional agencies, labour inspectorates, social partners, civil society organizations (including anti-trafficking entities), employment services, universities, and intercultural mediators. Two nationwide projects are implemented respectively by the National Labour Inspectorate, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and by the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) with its foundation Cittalia. Key measures include:

- **Su.Pr.Eme. 2** – “Individualized Pathways for Exiting Exploitation in the Five Southern Regions” (Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Puglia, and Sicily). The project implements a wide range of actions covering the entire continuum from the identification of exploitation to the protection and socio-economic reintegration of victims and potential victims of labour exploitation. These interventions are complemented by measures aimed at strengthening governance and establishing regional referral systems. Among the most significant initiatives is Anti-Caporalato Help Desk, a multi-channel, multilingual, and specialized service managed by staff with linguistic-cultural mediation and legal expertise. The service provides orientation and information to third-country nationals who are victims or potential victims of labour exploitation and facilitates their referral to the competent support services. In 2025 alone, the Help Desk recorded 8,448 contacts and opened more than 1,231 support requests; 338 confirmed victims of exploitation were identified and assisted, and 227 individuals were referred to formal identification pathways. Across the five partner regions, 44 Integrated Social Hubs were established in strategic areas to intercept workers who are victims or at risk of labour exploitation. These hubs are staffed by multidisciplinary teams composed of social secretariat operators, housing integration officers, social workers, linguistic-cultural mediators, and lawyers. Su.Pr.Eme. 2 also provides a “Integration Budget” for victims of labour exploitation. This measure allocates a defined financial package to each beneficiary, to be used within a set timeframe (from two to nine months), to support the development of an individualized pathway toward socio-economic autonomy. As part of the project, the contest “Beyond the Ghetto. Stories of Freedom”<sup>7</sup> was also organised, now in its fourth edition. It aims to showcase stories of redemption, ethical work, and migrant inclusion, combat illegal hiring, promote sustainable economic practices, share personal experiences of empowerment, and raise awareness about migrant workers’ rights. The fourth edition is divided into 4 sections: ethical businesses, stories of freedom, illustrations and journalism award.
- **Common Ground** – Led by the Region of Piedmont, in partnership with the Regions of Liguria, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, and Emilia-Romagna. The project aimed at piloting regional referral systems for the prevention of exploitation, the fight against labour exploitation, and the protection of victims, in coordination with inspection and oversight authorities. It concluded in September 2025. Overall, it involved 4,300 third-country nationals and led to the establishment of 40 Single Access Points, in addition to strengthening 37 already existing ones. The partner regions developed “*Interregional Guidelines on the Identification, Protection, and Assistance of Victims of Exploitation*”, and significant attention was devoted to training and capacity-building activities for both public and private sector operators. At the end of April 2026, a new phase of the project, entitled ‘Common Ground 2’, was launched. The new project provides, in particular, for: the development and consolidation of the inter-institutional network for the prevention and combating of labour exploitation; the strengthening and improvement of publicly-led regional and inter-regional systems and networks for the identification, protection and assistance of third-country nationals who are victims of labour exploitation across all sectors of employment; capacity-building initiatives for public and private actors involved in the network; integrated and tailored interventions for the identification, protection, assistance, guidance, training and social, employment and housing inclusion of victims and potential victims of labour exploitation; awareness-raising activities..
- **InLav Lombardia** - This project piloted a territorial model for the identification of undeclared work and the inclusion of third-country nationals who are victims or potential victims of labour exploitation, through the creation of 12 Single Access Points (PUA) across 12 territorial districts. Within the PUAs, dedicated interventions are implemented for information provision, outreach, identification, case management, and referral to specialized services available at local level. By December 2025, 938 CPTs (72% of whom were men) had been identified by the PUAs, whilst 446 individuals had

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oltreilghetto.org/en/contest/>

been taken into care. The project's planned activities also include; training initiatives for operators and stakeholders in the sector; communication and awareness-raising initiatives aimed at the wider community; the implementation of an information dashboard to integrate data from the various information sources available at regional level; and the development of regulatory systems aimed at preventing the use of undeclared labour in public procurement.

- **C.A.S.L.I.S. – Combating Labour Exploitation in Sardinia** - This regional project focused on the identification and emergence of labour exploitation and reached 250 third-country nationals overall. It concluded on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025. The project established three permanent service desks and one mobile unit, also accessible remotely through a dedicated telephone number. These services conducted identification interviews and served as spaces for listening, needs assessment, and referral to local services. A regional communication campaign was carried out to raise awareness among the general public, particularly schools, on issues of social inclusion, rights, freedoms, and combating exploitation. The project also strengthened regional governance through the establishment of a Permanent Observatory on Labour Exploitation, composed of representatives of local institutions, universities, territorial labour inspectorates, ISTAT, social partners, and other stakeholders. In May 2026, the C.A.S.L.I.S. Plus project was launched, which involves measures to support the social, health, housing and employment integration of third-country nationals who are victims or potential victims of labour exploitation, as well as infrastructure projects to tackle housing deprivation with a view to preventing and combating undeclared work and the practice of illegal recruitment.
- **Umbria Legale e Sicura** - This project implemented actions aimed at empowering third-country nationals who are victims of labour exploitation and promoting regular and quality employment. It reached 1,870 third-country nationals and led to the activation of 14 Single Access Points. These centres provide, among other services, emergence and skills enhancement workshops, IT laboratories, micro-language training for employment contexts, and self-entrepreneurship support pathways. Four mobile units operate across the territory to identify migrants at risk of labour exploitation and map locations where contact can be established. A regional coordination committee has been set up, involving police headquarters, prefectures, the labour inspectorate, trade unions, local councils, trade associations, training bodies and the Regional Agency for Active Labour Market Policies. 8 community mobilisers have been trained and will be responsible for organising meetings with local communities to inform them about and raise awareness of their rights. An awareness-raising campaign aimed at the general public (“*Umbria Legale e Sicura Tour*”) has been designed and launched.
- **S.O.L.E.I.L. – Employment Guidance and Interregional Empowerment Services** - Led by the Region of Lazio, in partnership with Tuscany, Marche, Abruzzo, and Molise, the project aims to design and manage targeted interventions to promote the social, health, housing, and labour integration of third-country nationals who are victims or potential victims of labour exploitation. It also promotes coordinated action among key stakeholders, including Regions, Municipalities, Police Headquarters, Prefectures, and non-profit organizations. A total of 2,640 third country nationals were involved to 31 March 2026. 63 Service Access Points (PDA) were established and 50 were expanded, both through local service centres and mobile teams, including the involvement of multidisciplinary teams. Furthermore, measures were promoted to facilitate the transition to social housing and co-housing, as well as measures for the social and labour market integration of victims or potential victims of labour exploitation. The project includes capacity-building activities to strengthen the skills of public sector and private social sector practitioners.
- **A.L.T. Caporalato! T.R.E** - Launched in October 2025, builds upon the experience gained through previous initiatives implemented under Su.Pr.Eme. Italia, A.L.T. Caporalato! and A.L.T. Caporalato D.U.E.

The project is implemented through a partnership between the National Labour Inspectorate (INL) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with the objective of strengthening labour inspection activities through multi-agency task forces composed of labour inspectors and IOM cultural mediators. These activities are carried out in close coordination with local authorities, particularly Prefectures and Public Prosecutors' Offices, as well as with other relevant enforcement and protection bodies, including the Carabinieri, State Police, the anti-trafficking network, the National Institute for Social Security (INPS), the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work (INAIL), and Local Health Authority prevention services. Since the launch of the first project initiative in 2020 and up to May 2026, over 51,500 employment positions have been inspected within the framework of these interventions, while 1,171 third-country nationals (out of a total of 1,215, including EU and Italian workers) have been formally identified as victims of labour exploitation.

In parallel, IOM has provided assistance and support to 1,905 third-country nationals identified as potential victims of labour exploitation, of whom 723 have been referred to specialised protection pathways and 517 have obtained a permit of stay for victims of labour exploitation and/or victims of trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation (pursuant to article 18; article 18*ter*; and article 22 paragraph 12-*quater*<sup>8</sup> of the Consolidated Immigration Act)

The project has also promoted extensive awareness-raising and outreach activities across multiple territories, reaching more than 40,000 workers through dedicated field activities implemented by IOM in key gathering spots of the different migrant communities, with the aim of enhancing access to information, strengthening trust in institutions, and facilitating the early identification of situations of vulnerability and exploitation.

In addition, fourteen multilingual help desks have been established over time at selected Territorial Labour Inspectorates. The helpdesks are conceived as local hubs to identify situations of vulnerability at an early stage and to facilitate the detection of exploitation cases through the joint presence of labour inspectors and IOM cultural mediators. The initiative provides for a regular and coordinated presence of both professional figures, with the aim of strengthening the relationship of trust between foreign workers and Italian institutions through an approach based on listening, victim-centred principles, and linguistic mediation.

The helpdesk operates with the involvement of cultural mediators made available by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), ensuring essential linguistic and cultural support to facilitate communication with foreign workers and promote the identification and reporting of irregularities. Training and capacity-building sessions for inspectors and mediators have also been organised through dedicated meetings and webinars.

The ongoing project initiative, "A.L.T. Caporalato T.R.E.", builds on the experience and operational model developed through the previously mentioned initiatives and further promotes the Italian multi-agency approach at European level. In this regard, the Italian model has attracted significant interest from both the European Commission — which co-finances the current edition through AMIF funding — and the European Labour Authority (ELA), due to its comprehensive and integrated approach to combating labour exploitation. The initiative is fully aligned with the broader European objective of establishing an effective framework for the prevention and prosecution of trafficking in human beings and the protection of victims, as envisaged by Directives 2011/36/EU and 2024/1712, as well as by the European Commission Communication of 14 April 2021 on the EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2021–2025. At the same time, the project is consistent with ELA's mandate to promote fair labour mobility and strengthen operational cooperation among labour inspectorates across EU Member States.

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<sup>8</sup> The new Article 18-ter of the Consolidated Immigration Act (TUI), introduced by Decree-Law No. 145/2024 and subsequently converted into law, by Law No. 187/2024, replaced the provisions previously contained in paragraphs 12-*quater*, 12-*quinquies* and 12-*sexies* of Article 22 of the Consolidated Immigration Act.

- **InCaS plus– “Support for local authorities on policies and measures to promote the inclusion of third-country nationals and combat labour exploitation”<sup>9</sup>**- Implemented by the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) in partnership with its foundation Cittalia, the project aims to strengthen the role of local authorities in implementing national policies for social and labour inclusion and combating labour exploitation of third-country nationals, whilst promoting dialogue between regions and municipalities in developing protective measures for victims of exploitation, including through the promotion of communication, networking and mutual training activities.

In addition to operational measures, significant legislative reforms were adopted in 2024–2025: legislative Decree-Law No. 145/2024 introduced Article 18-ter into the Consolidated Immigration Act, establishing a specific residence permit for foreign nationals who are victims of unlawful labour intermediation and labour exploitation. Under Article 18-ter, the granting of the residence permit no longer requires a formal complaint by the victim, but only their “useful contribution” to the criminal proceedings in clarifying the facts and identifying those responsible. Importantly, this framework enables migrants subjected to exploitative treatment to leave abusive employers without risking immediate loss of legal status. Family members of a victim of exploitation may be granted a residence permit on family grounds. The residence permit under Article 18-ter is valid for one year and may be renewed for a further year or for as long as necessary for legal reasons or to facilitate social and labour market integration. The residence permit also grants immediate access to education, work and social support, and may be converted into a permit for work, study or pending employment. Holders of this type of permit are eligible for an anti-poverty measure known as the Inclusion Allowance. Finally, holders of residence permit under Article 18-ter of the Consolidated Law on Immigration and their family members are entitled to access support measures aimed at training and social and labour market integration. The costs of these support measures, estimated at €800,000 per year from 2025 onwards, will be covered by the National Fund for Migration Policies.

To implement these provisions, the Ministry of Labour, in collaboration with ANCI, has launched, from 2026, a pilot initiative involving 10 municipalities participating in the National Reception and Integration System (SAI). As part of this project, entitled ‘Uncovering labour exploitation and supporting victims: the national pilot scheme with municipalities in the SAI network’, the municipalities involved will implement individual assistance and social and occupational reintegration programmes in line with the national guidelines on the identification, protection and assistance of victims of labour exploitation in agriculture, approved by the Unified Conference in October 2021.

Furthermore, the stabilization of the National Operational Table against Caporalato under Decree-Law No. 146/2025 strengthened national coordination on labour exploitation in agriculture, ensuring strategic oversight, programming, and monitoring of anti-exploitation measures. Moreover, the National Labour Inspectorate’s inspection personnel, by virtue of and during the performance of their supervisory activities in the fields of labour law, social legislation, and occupational health and safety, actively participate in initiatives aimed at combating gang-mastering, labour exploitation, and trafficking/forced labour involving migrants, based on the now well-established multiagency model.

It should also be noted that, since October 2024, under the new Article 18ter of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 (Consolidated Immigration Act), introduced by Decree Law No. 145/2024, when reporting situations of violence, abuse, or any form of labour exploitation involving non-EU citizens to the competent judicial authority or to the Chief of Police (*Questore*), the Labour Inspectorate simultaneously issues a relevant opinion regarding the possible issuance of the aforementioned residence permit for foreign workers who are victims of such offences, supporting it with all elements necessary to demonstrate that the conditions for its issuance are met.

Furthermore, the National Labour Inspectorate’s work to combat trafficking and labour exploitation has been carried out nationwide not only through ordinary inspection activities but also through participation in various nationally

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<sup>9</sup> <https://integrazionemigranti.gov.it/it-it/Dettaglio-progetto/id/69/InCaS-plus-Progetto-realizzato-da-ANCI-in-partenariato-con-Cittalia>

and EU funded projects, as mentioned above (Su.Pr.Eme. Italia and A.L.T. Caporalato! launched in 2020 and concluded in 2022; A.L.T. Caporalato D.U.E., launched on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 and concluded on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025; and A.L.T. Caporalato T.R.E., launched on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025, for a duration of 24 months). These projects are characterized by the establishment of dedicated inspection task forces, coordinated with local authorities and other supervisory bodies, and strengthened by close cooperation with qualified cultural mediators from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which helps foster a relationship of trust between workers and State authorities. Inspection procedures and experience show that the categories of workers most at risk of gang-mastering, labour exploitation, and trafficking are those particularly vulnerable due to their socioeconomic conditions, especially non-EU migrant citizens, including asylum seekers.

As a summary of the main results of the inspections carried out exclusively by the project-based task forces in 2024 and 2025, over the two-year period, a total of 2,766 inspections were carried out under the aforementioned projects, and an irregularity rate of approximately 75% emerged among the cases concluded so far. A total of 383 workers were identified as victims of the offences in question, almost all non-EU citizens (except for two EU citizens), including 344 men and 39 women.

Specifically, the number of workers affected by these offences, broken down by economic sector, is as follows:

- 156 workers, including 3 women and 153 men, in agriculture;
- 136 workers, including 32 women and 104 men, in industry and manufacturing;
- 42 workers, all men, in construction;
- 49 workers, including 4 women and 45 men, in the services sector.

A total of 113 individuals were reported to the judicial authority, including 44 Italians, 1 EU citizen, and 68 non-EU citizens.

For a more accurate interpretation of the data, it should be noted that these figures result from targeted intelligence activities that direct inspections toward specific sectors and phenomena considered of greatest interest for supervisory purposes. Therefore, they cannot be regarded as objective indicators for a statistically representative analysis of the characteristics of the labour market as a whole.

In this context, it should be highlighted that, both through the ordinary financial and operational resources available to the Agency and through national and EU funds specifically aimed at supporting the above-mentioned project initiatives, the inspection staff of the National Labour Inspectorate (INL) has ensured an effective territorial presence by carrying out inspections, either ex officio or following reports, across the entire national territory, with particular attention to sectors most at risk of trafficking and exploitation, namely those characterised by a high demand for low-skilled labour and/or seasonal peaks (such as agriculture, tourism and hospitality, construction, manufacturing, transport and warehousing).

Furthermore, with specific regard to inspection activities aimed at protecting domestic workers (including domestic helpers and caregivers), it should be specified that, without prejudice to the constraints imposed by legislation safeguarding the inviolability of the home, inspections in this field are largely initiated on the basis of complaints submitted by the workers themselves or by trade unions to the competent territorial offices, or as a result of initiatives related to combating undeclared work and protecting migrant workers employed in care facilities or private households, often through specific recruitment chains, which are themselves subject to inspections.

It should also be recalled that the INL pays particular attention to the protection of victims of illegal gang-mastering (*caporalato*) and labour exploitation, including during the sensitive phase of reporting their condition to the competent authorities. In this regard, the role played by multilingual helpdesks established across the territory, activated within the framework of the above-mentioned projects, has been essential in ensuring effective protection for migrants involved in situations of severe labour exploitation. These helpdesks aim to foster trust in public institutions, overcome mistrust and fear of retaliation, and provide practical tools for the exercise of rights.

These helpdesks, currently operational in 14 different Territorial Labour Inspectorates (Bari, Brindisi, Caserta, Cuneo, Ferrara, Foggia, L'Aquila, Naples, Perugia, Potenza-Matera, Prato, Reggio Calabria, Rovigo and Verona), reinforce the so-called “duty inspector” service and constitute effective hubs dedicated to listening and multilingual information, supported by cultural mediators who, together with labour inspectors, are also involved in receiving reports, in a protected and confidential manner, of irregularities and labour exploitation.

By providing guidance and assistance to workers who are victims or presumed victims, without linguistic or cultural barriers, these helpdesks therefore represent a further step towards a multi-agency and inclusive approach that places the individual and their dignity at its core. In this context, the INL has also ensured continuous cooperation with law enforcement authorities and other bodies involved in tackling the unlawful phenomena in question, with a view to identifying perpetrators of criminal offences related to illegal gang-mastering, severe labour exploitation and trafficking, as well as ensuring the imposition of sanctions on those responsible, while providing the highest possible level of protection to victims and preventing the risk of secondary victimisation.

In the awareness that enforcement action alone is not sufficient to address the phenomenon under analysis, the above-mentioned projects also include awareness-raising and information activities targeting both employers and migrant workers. With regard to the latter, the projects provide for continuous outreach activities carried out by IOM staff, who ensure that migrant workers receive information and assistance also outside the inspection context (and therefore beyond the “control area” of the gangmaster or employer exploiting them), reaching them in informal settlements or in migrants’ gathering places.

In the most recent projects, provision has been made for the participation of labour inspectors in these outreach activities, thereby not only supporting cultural mediators in their awareness-raising and information activities but also strengthening migrants’ awareness of the structured cooperation between IOM staff and the Labour Inspectorate, further enhancing their trust in inspection activities and in Italian public institutions.

At regional level, IOM has also established several mobile teams providing various types of support to third-country workers in need of assistance.

*6. Take measures to ensure that international co-operation in the area of border measures is used to prevent and detect trafficking, and to suspend the application of the Memorandum of Understanding with Libya (paragraph 218)*

The inherently transnational nature of trafficking in human beings requires an operational approach grounded in strong European and international cooperation. In this context, the Carabinieri Corps participates in several European and international initiatives addressing trafficking in human beings. In particular, it takes part in the “LINX” Network within the framework of the EL PAcCTO programme, aimed at combating trafficking in human beings across Latin American and European countries, as well as in the EMPACT platform, through dedicated Operational Actions under the priority area “Trafficking in Human Beings”.

The effectiveness of the cooperation activities carried out by the Carabinieri units is reflected in a number of specific police operations, both concluded and currently ongoing, conducted in cooperation with national and international partners.

Since February 2025, a joint Italian–French operational working group, known as the URO (Operational Research Unit), has been operating at the Ventimiglia land border crossing. The unit is composed of officers of the Italian State Police and the French Office for the Fight against Illicit Trafficking of Migrants (OLTIM).

The initiative stems from the bilateral agreement signed in October 2024 by the Ministers of the Interior of Italy and France and is aimed at strengthening the fight against criminal networks involved in the facilitation of irregular migration towards Europe. Its operational scope covers the entire Italian–French border area, beyond the sole Ligurian sector. More specifically, the mechanism enables the direct exchange of intelligence and operational information concerning criminal groups active in both countries, with the objective of supporting investigations

targeting not only migrant smugglers (*passeurs*), but also broader transnational criminal networks involved in organised migrant smuggling. Operational coordination of activities is ensured by the Central Operational Service (SCO) of the Italian State Police and the Border Police Office of Ventimiglia. This framework allows the consolidation of intelligence and investigative findings for the activation of criminal proceedings, including through joint investigations conducted by the competent authorities of the participating States via Joint Investigation Teams (JITs).

About countering digital smuggling, the phenomenon has increasingly emerged as a key operational priority within monitoring and investigative activities on migrant facilitation networks.

The phenomenon of “digital smuggling” refers to the systematic use of social media platforms and digital communication tools for the propaganda, recruitment and coordination of irregular migration activities. Criminal networks increasingly exploit platforms such as Facebook and TikTok to advertise irregular journeys towards Italy and, more broadly, towards Europe. Such online activity facilitates the initial contact between migrants and smugglers and often contributes to the perception that migration routes by land or sea are safe, through the dissemination of misleading content portraying successful crossings while concealing the significant risks involved. Digital smuggling affects all major migratory routes under investigative analysis, including both the Central Mediterranean and Balkan routes. It consists of an integrated set of criminal activities conducted online, whereby traffickers use digital platforms to disseminate false or misleading narratives, recruit migrants, and coordinate logistics for irregular journeys.

In operational terms, social media is primarily used as a tool for structured criminal communication. Through targeted propaganda, smugglers construct persuasive narratives presenting migration as safe, simple and guaranteed, deliberately omitting risks, violence, additional costs and legal consequences. Such content is strategically designed to exploit the vulnerability, expectations and socio-economic fragility of potential migrants.

This form of digital propaganda allows criminal organisations to reach a wide transnational audience across multiple countries; reduce their direct exposure; tailor messages according to language, geographic area and user profile; and maintain continuous contact with migrants before, during and after their journey.

As a result, migrant smuggling increasingly operates as a structured, transnational and adaptive criminal phenomenon, in which the digital dimension constitutes an integral component of the operational model rather than a mere auxiliary tool.

Within this framework, the Central Operational Service (SCO) has developed targeted intelligence and investigative activities aimed at identifying social media profiles used for recruitment and propaganda linked to digital smuggling. These activities, carried out also in cooperation with digital platform providers, have led to the identification and removal of more than 1,200 accounts used to promote irregular migration, as well as to the detection of content and profiles linked to organised migrant smuggling networks, highlighting highly exploitative and dangerous practices that place migrants’ safety and lives at serious risk.

In particular, the SCO has established an ongoing cooperation with Meta, within which a structured project has been implemented under the coordination of the District Anti-Mafia Prosecutor’s Office of Palermo. The initiative is aimed at the systematic monitoring and removal of Facebook pages used for the promotion of irregular migration routes. Within this operational framework, the SCO, together with the Mobile Squad and the SISCO of Palermo, carries out continuous monitoring of social media profiles linked to smugglers operating routes from North Africa and Turkey towards Italy. At the conclusion of investigative activities, identified pages are subject to removal.

These operational actions are implemented within the framework of a dedicated operational initiative (Action 2.4 “Central Med”) led by the Central Operational Service under the EMPACT priority on Migrant Smuggling, which also envisages cooperation with Libyan authorities.

Furthermore, Guardia di Finanza carries out continuous and structured activities aimed at preventing and combating the illicit phenomena described above, including at the international level, through an integrated system of maritime,

aerial and territorial surveillance. This operational framework is based on a dual-track approach, combining judicial police investigations with preventive and control activities on the ground.

On the investigative side, the Corps is engaged in identifying the perpetrators of illicit trafficking, as well as in reconstructing the upstream criminal organisations, their financial structures, and the mechanisms through which illicit proceeds are generated and reinvested. Emphasis is placed on the financial dimension of criminal conduct, especially in cases involving complex transnational criminal networks.

On the operational control side, Guardia di Finanza ensures surveillance of land borders and conducts maritime and aerial patrolling activities, contributing, where necessary, also to search and rescue operations at sea. Within the broader framework of economic control of the territory, it carries out targeted actions to prevent and suppress various forms of illegal activity linked to the exploitation of migrants, with specific reference to undeclared or irregular employment and the phenomenon of illegal gang-mastering.

A central feature of this operational model is the systematic application of financial investigative techniques. These are used both to trace financial flows associated with illicit activities and to identify and reconstruct assets accumulated by criminal actors. In this context, the “follow the money” approach represents a guiding principle of action, enabling investigators to follow the financial traces left by criminal conduct and to activate subsequent seizure and confiscation measures against illegally acquired assets.

This methodology is characterised by a high degree of flexibility, as it is applied both within preventive frameworks and in the context of judicial police investigations, including when financial assets are located abroad. Increasing attention is also devoted to the digital dimension of financial crime, with regard to the use of cryptocurrencies and other emerging instruments employed for money laundering purposes.

From an operational perspective, Guardia di Finanza adopts a two-level model: upstream investigative activities focused on financial flows and criminal organisations, and downstream territorial controls aimed at detecting and combating labour exploitation phenomena such as undeclared work and illegal intermediation of labour. This integrated approach ensures continuity between intelligence gathering, investigation, and enforcement activities.

The air and naval component of the Corps also plays a key role in combating migrant smuggling, operating in close cooperation with Frontex and other international partners within coordinated maritime surveillance frameworks.

With regard to transnational cooperation, it should be noted that the National Labour Inspectorate (INL) participates in the activities promoted by the European Labour Authority (ELA) aimed at combating unlawful practices related to labour mobility, including those targeting trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation (i.e EMPACT meetings and action days).

In this context, the INL has promoted a Concerted and Joint Inspection, carried out in cooperation with the competent authorities of another Member State and supported by ELA, concerning a case of unlawful posting of third-country nationals who, although the proceedings are still ongoing, appear to have been victims of the criminal offence of enslavement.

7. *Take measures to improve the identification of victims of trafficking, and in particular:*
  - *introduce into practice the National Referral Mechanism and develop Standard Operating Procedures for the establishment of effective procedures for the identification of victims of human trafficking;*
  - *strengthen efforts to proactively detect and identify victims of trafficking for different forms of exploitation, including among migrants at all borders, in reception facilities and detention centres for migrants, and amongst Italian and EU nationals. This should include the provision of sufficient resources, capacities, guidance and training to all professionals concerned;*
  - *respect the principle of non-refoulement in particular by ensuring that pre-removal risk assessments prior to all forced removals from Italy fully assess risks of trafficking or re-trafficking on return. The Italian authorities*

*should take full account of the UNHCR guidelines on the application of the Convention relating to refugee status to victims of trafficking, and their right to seek asylum, and to GRETA's Guidance Note on the entitlement of victims of human trafficking, and persons at risk of being trafficked, to international protection; - ensure that the rules applying to NGOs undertaking search and rescue operations enable them to detect potential victims of trafficking (paragraph 240).*

Italy has continued to strengthen its system for the identification, referral and assistance of victims of trafficking in human beings through the implementation of a coordinated, multi-agency and victim-centred approach, grounded in the National Action Plan against Trafficking and Severe Exploitation 2022–2025 and the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

The most up-to-date national reference framework is indeed represented by the National Referral Mechanism for the Identification, Protection and Assistance of Victims of Trafficking and Severe Exploitation<sup>10</sup>, officially published in December 2023 by the Department for Equal Opportunities. The NRM includes updated Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), including specific operational guidance concerning vulnerable persons and child victims of trafficking. The Mechanism aims to ensure a coordinated and systematic approach among all relevant actors involved in victim identification, referral, protection and assistance, irrespective of the victim's nationality, migration status or willingness to cooperate with judicial authorities.

In order to facilitate the effective implementation of the NRM at territorial level, in February 2026 the Department for Equal Opportunities adopted the “Guidelines for the Local Application of the National Referral Mechanism for the Identification, Protection and Assistance of Victims of Trafficking and/or Severe Exploitation” (*Linee Guida per l'applicazione a livello locale del Meccanismo Nazionale di Referral*)<sup>11</sup>. The Guidelines include a model multi-agency Memorandum of understanding intended to support the establishment of local coordination networks among Prefectures, law enforcement authorities, anti-trafficking entities, social and health services, judicial authorities and civil society organisations. The objective is to promote a harmonised and proactive approach to the early identification and protection of victims, including minors.

At regional and local level, several multi-agency protocols have been concluded in order to strengthen operational cooperation among institutional actors and specialised anti-trafficking services. Relevant examples include protocols adopted in the regions of Piedmont<sup>12</sup>, Lombardy<sup>13</sup> and Abruzzo<sup>14</sup>, as well as approximately 30 cooperation agreements between anti-trafficking projects and authorities responsible for international protection procedures. Specialised courts dealing with immigration and international protection matters, including those in Florence, Bologna, Rome, Venice, Catanzaro and Trento, have also been involved in such initiatives.

Additionally, the legislative decree implementing the revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive envisages, at article 9, for the adoption of a ministerial decree aimed at formalising the National Referral Mechanism. This measure is intended to further strengthen and streamline coordination among all relevant institutional and non-institutional actors involved in the identification, referral, protection, and assistance of victims of trafficking in human beings.

In particular, the formalisation of the NRM through secondary legislation is designed to enhance the system's overall efficiency, ensuring clearer operational procedures, more consistent application across the national territory, and improved inter-institutional cooperation. It is expected to contribute to a timelier and more structured activation of protection pathways, thereby reinforcing the effectiveness of victim-centred responses and the overall coherence of the national anti-trafficking framework.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/it/politiche-e-attivita/tratta-degli-esseri-umani-e-grave-sfruttamento/meccanismo-nazionale-di-referral/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/it/politiche-e-attivita/tratta-degli-esseri-umani-e-grave-sfruttamento/linee-guida-per-l-applicazione-a-livello-locale-del-meccanismo-nazionale-di-referral-per-l-identificazione-protezione-e-assistenza-delle-vittime-di-tratta-eo-grave-sfruttamento/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.piemonteimmigrazione.it/lp/alfa/attivita/protocollo-multiagenzia>

<sup>13</sup> [https://tribunale-milano.giustizia.it/cmsresources/cms/documents/All\\_B\\_Scambio\\_note\\_OIM\\_\(Protocollo\\_DEF\\_13\\_04\\_2021-I-TRATTA\)\\_1.pdf](https://tribunale-milano.giustizia.it/cmsresources/cms/documents/All_B_Scambio_note_OIM_(Protocollo_DEF_13_04_2021-I-TRATTA)_1.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.ontheroad.coop/cms/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Protocollo-Teramo\\_23-giugno-2017.pdf](https://www.ontheroad.coop/cms/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Protocollo-Teramo_23-giugno-2017.pdf)

Furthermore, the *Guidelines for the Early Identification of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings and/or Severe Exploitation among Third-Country Nationals Arriving at or Transiting through Border Areas and Related Referral Procedures* are the result of the work carried out by the Technical Anti-Trafficking Committee in implementation of the measures envisaged under the National Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings and Severe Exploitation 2022–2025, in particular those included under the “Prevention” pillar. Their primary objective is to facilitate victims’ access to their rights, including the right to receive the assistance and protection measures provided for under the national legal framework, as well as to ensure adequate support for persons at risk of becoming victims of trafficking and severe exploitation.

The Guidelines, presented to the National Anti-Trafficking Steering Committee during its meeting of 29 July 2025, define the measures to be adopted in order to promote the early identification of victims of trafficking among third-country nationals from the earliest stages of their arrival, whether by sea, land or air. Particular attention is devoted to places of disembarkation, border areas and transit zones, where the risk of exploitation may be particularly acute and where timely identification and referral are essential to ensuring effective protection and assistance.

Overall attention has been devoted also to the identification and protection of unaccompanied foreign minors and child victims of trafficking within the reception and asylum systems. In 2025, the Ministry of the Interior updated the “*Operational Vademecum - Care and Reception of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors*”<sup>15</sup>, which provides operational guidance and good practices for all actors involved in the reception and protection of unaccompanied children, taking into account the legislative reforms introduced in recent years concerning the reception system for unaccompanied foreign minors.

In addition, in June 2023 the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of the Interior published the “*Vademecum for the Detection, Referral and Care of Persons with Vulnerabilities Arriving on the National Territory and Included in the Reception and Protection System*”<sup>16</sup>. Within this operational framework, trafficking in human beings is recognised as a particularly serious and complex form of vulnerability requiring specialised intervention, timely referral procedures and enhanced inter-institutional cooperation.

The implementation of the Vademecum is supported by the National Working Group on Vulnerability, which operates as a strategic coordination platform involving, inter alia, the Department for Equal Opportunities and the National Anti-Trafficking Helpline. Between November 2024 and June 2025, the Working Group organised four thematic webinars specifically dedicated to trafficking in human beings, involving more than 200 participants from Prefectures, Regions, Municipalities, anti-trafficking entities, international organisations and third-sector organisations. These activities complemented the training initiatives carried out jointly by the Department for Equal Opportunities and the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), promoting the dissemination of good practices and strengthening operational coordination on victim identification and referral procedures.

Regarding the identification of trafficking victims at the borders, the Department for Equal Opportunities participated in a working group coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior to establish Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) aimed at detecting vulnerabilities during the screening phase introduced by the Pact on Migration and Asylum. In this context, emphasis was placed on the importance of identifying victims from the very first stage of screening and developing efficient and effective referral procedures to enable them to access to dedicated services.

A key component of the Italian system is the establishment, at Prefecture level, of inter-institutional “Vulnerability Tables”, which function as territorial coordination mechanisms among actors responsible for the identification, referral and protection of vulnerable persons. Within several of these mechanisms, dedicated thematic sub-groups on trafficking in human beings have been established to ensure specialised coordination concerning identification

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/stampa-e-comunicazione/pubblicazioni/presa-carico-e-accoglienza-dei-minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati-vademecum-operativo>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/stampa-e-comunicazione/pubblicazioni/vademecum-rilevazione-referral-e-presa-carico-persone-portatrici-vulnerabilita-arrivo-sul-territorio-ed-inserite-nel-sistema-protezione-e-accoglienza>

and assistance pathways for trafficking victims, including minors. Monitoring activities conducted in November 2025 showed that 16 out of 74 responding Prefectures had established a specific sub-table on trafficking in human beings. These structures contribute to strengthening integrated and multidisciplinary responses, although their level of formalisation and operational continuity still varies across territories.

Italy has also continued to strengthen the capacity of frontline professionals involved in the early identification of trafficking victims, including child victims. Law enforcement officers, immigration personnel, social workers, healthcare professionals, labour inspectors and reception staff have received specific training aimed at ensuring the systematic use of victim identification procedures and trafficking indicators. Particular attention has been devoted to vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied minors, asylum seekers and children exposed to risks of exploitation.

In this context, the Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) and the Department for Equal Opportunities, delivered dedicated training activities on trafficking in human beings during 2024 and 2025 for personnel serving in Prefectures and reception facilities. Four specialised training sessions, based on the EUAA training module on trafficking in human beings, involved 111 participants from different regions of Italy. The programme focused on strengthening the operational capacity of frontline personnel to identify potential victims, activate referral procedures and ensure the immediate adoption of protection measures within the reception system for applicants for international protection. The training was initially implemented in Sicily and Calabria and subsequently extended to Lazio and Tuscany, with further expansion envisaged for 2026.

At territorial level, several Prefectures have also promoted operational agreements with specialised anti-trafficking entities aimed at facilitating the identification and referral of victims. In Mantova, a dedicated anti-trafficking protocol operates within a broader multi-agency cooperation framework, while in Turin specific agreements have been developed, including within projects funded under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF/FAMI), to strengthen local referral mechanisms and victim protection pathways.

Italy also operates a specialised National Anti-trafficking Helpline (*Numero Verde Nazionale Antitratta* - 800 290 290)<sup>17</sup>, established by the Department for Equal Opportunities and operating 24 hours a day throughout the national territory. The helpline constitutes an integral part of the National Referral Mechanism and provides multilingual support, information and referral services both to victims and to professionals involved in anti-trafficking activities. The service is available in several languages and facilitates access to specialised anti-trafficking services and territorial assistance pathways. Under the Italian system, victims of trafficking, including child victims, may be referred directly to specialised social services and anti-trafficking entities without the obligation to engage initially with law enforcement authorities. This approach is intended to ensure immediate access to protection and assistance measures, particularly for highly vulnerable persons who may fear contact with judicial or police authorities.

Cultural mediation has increasingly emerged in Italy as an essential tool for ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of assistance and inclusion pathways for victims and vulnerable persons. Beyond its fundamental role in facilitating communication and building trust, cultural mediation significantly contributes to ensuring a full understanding of available support measures and services, thereby enabling beneficiaries to effectively access and benefit from protection mechanisms. In practice, mediators play a crucial role in accompanying individuals through access to social, healthcare and educational services, while also supporting the management of cultural differences that may arise in particularly sensitive contexts, including the acceptance of medical diagnoses or specialised care pathways.

Indeed, Italy also recognises the importance of ensuring high professional standards, specialised training and reliability for mediators operating in this sensitive field. In this regard, attention should also be drawn to the

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/it/politiche-e-attivita/tratta-degli-esseri-umani-e-grave-sfruttamento/numero-verde-antitratta/>

progressive institutionalisation and professionalisation of cultural mediation services at regional level. Several Regions have recently established dedicated regional registers for cultural mediators, aimed at strengthening professional qualification systems, promoting specialised expertise and ensuring greater quality, transparency and accountability in the provision of mediation services within anti-trafficking and victim protection frameworks.

For example, the Regional Register of Cultural Mediators established by the Region of Puglia<sup>18</sup> represents a particularly positive practice. The register currently includes approximately 154 qualified professionals who may be activated upon request, thereby providing an immediately available and operational resource to support anti-trafficking and social protection interventions. Such mechanisms contribute significantly to ensuring continuity, quality and reliability in mediation services, while strengthening the overall capacity of institutions and specialised services to respond effectively to the complex needs of victims and vulnerable individuals.

Additionally, the National Helpline continues to play a central role not only in victim support and referral activities, but also in promoting specialised capacity-building initiatives, including for linguistic and cultural mediators operating within the Italian anti-trafficking system. In this context, the third National Meeting for Linguistic and Cultural Mediators of the Italian Anti-Trafficking System, entitled “*New Challenges for Mediation and Intercultural Communication within the Anti-Trafficking System*”, was held in Abano Terme from 27 to 30 May 2025.

The initiative forms part of a broader pathway of exchange, reflection and professional development launched in previous years, with the aim of deepening the understanding of the evolving dynamics of trafficking and severe exploitation across different geographical contexts. The 2025 edition was organised around three thematic regional areas - Asia, the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa - to encourage the sharing of perspectives and operational experiences among professionals working in diverse contexts and with different victim profiles.

The meeting also provided an opportunity to reflect on the evolving role of mediation within the Anti-Trafficking System, including how this role has changed over time, the competences currently required, the impact of gender dimensions in daily operational work and the ways in which mediators can further support multidisciplinary teams in interpreting and addressing trafficking phenomena. The initiative therefore continues to represent a key space for exchange, professional updating and shared growth, capable of linking theoretical reflection with day-to-day operational practice and of strengthening the national network of mediators within the Anti-Trafficking System.

Following the first three editions held between 2023 and 2025, it was decided to further strengthen this pathway through the establishment, starting in June 2026, of a specialised training school specifically dedicated to linguistic and cultural mediators working within the anti-trafficking field. The initiative aims to enhance mediators’ transversal competences across the different areas related to trafficking in human beings and severe exploitation, recognising the strategic role they play within multidisciplinary interventions. In this regard, the programme is intended to provide mediators with broader technical and operational skills, comparable to those required of social and anti-trafficking professionals, in order to further reinforce the quality and effectiveness of support, identification and referral activities within the national anti-trafficking system.

Alongside these initiatives, the National Helpline also continues to promote the annual training programme dedicated to newly onboarded social operators within the Italian Anti-Trafficking System. In 2026, the fifth edition of the training school was successfully implemented, further consolidating a professional development pathway specifically designed for practitioners with up to three years of experience in anti-trafficking projects.

The initiative was established with the objective of providing participants with an integrated training experience combining academic analysis, operational reflection and practical workshops. The programme is based on the understanding that social operators working within the Anti-Trafficking System must continuously strengthen their knowledge of trafficking in human beings and severe exploitation, including through contributions from academic

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<sup>18</sup> <https://regione.puglia.it/web/politiche-migratorie/mediazione-interculturale>

and research perspectives capable of analysing these phenomena in a systematic and multidisciplinary manner. At the same time, the training aims to enhance practical tools, critical thinking and operational skills through simulations, round tables, group discussions and other participatory activities designed to encourage exchange and shared learning among professionals.

A further cross-cutting objective of the initiative is to strengthen networking capacities among operators, fostering both professional and interpersonal relationships within which participants can exchange operational practices, experiences and strategies developed across different territorial contexts. For this reason, the training school combines formal learning activities with dedicated moments of informal exchange and dialogue involving the Department for Equal Opportunities, senior anti-trafficking professionals and experts from related sectors.

Over the past five editions, the training programme has addressed a wide range of topics related to trafficking and severe exploitation, involving numerous professionals from the Italian and European anti-trafficking systems, as well as experts working in related systems addressing cross-cutting issues and interconnected social phenomena and vulnerabilities.

*8. Take steps to ensure that presumed victims and victims of trafficking have access to health care, including to reproductive rights (safe and legal abortion) (paragraph 254).*

In Italy, the system of assistance and protection for victims of trafficking in human beings is based on a comprehensive and integrated approach, grounded in victim-centred, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed principles. The national anti-trafficking framework provides a network of specialised reception facilities and support services aimed at addressing the complex and multidimensional needs of victims, including safe accommodation, healthcare, psychological assistance, legal counselling, cultural mediation, and social inclusion measures.

Moreover, Article 8 of the new legislative decree further strengthens victims' rights by clarifying that transitional assistance and protection measures apply not only to formally recognised victims of trafficking, but also to presumed victims. This provision is expected to facilitate earlier access to protection and support services, including healthcare, by ensuring that assistance can be provided from the earliest stages of identification and before the formal completion of referral or judicial procedures.

The assistance system is structured to ensure that interventions are tailored to the specific vulnerabilities and individual circumstances of each victim, with due regard for their personal history, experiences of exploitation, and protection needs. Particular attention is devoted to preventing secondary victimisation and re-traumatisation throughout all stages of assistance, identification, referral and social inclusion pathways.

Within this framework, specialised anti-trafficking operators, including psychologists and professionals specifically trained on trafficking-related trauma, support victims in understanding their rights and accessing available protection mechanisms, including international protection procedures and other forms of legal and social assistance. Such support is essential both for facilitating informed participation in protection pathways and for enabling the early identification of trauma-related vulnerabilities.

Gender-sensitive services continue to represent a central component of the Italian anti-trafficking system. Women and girls who are victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation may access specialised shelters, dedicated legal and psychosocial support services, and targeted protection measures designed to address the specific consequences of gender-based violence and exploitation.

At the same time, assistance measures for other particularly vulnerable groups including minors, victims of forced criminality and persons subjected to forced begging, have progressively been strengthened through specialised expertise and targeted interventions.

Professionals involved in victim assistance, including law enforcement officers, social workers, healthcare personnel, reception staff and representatives of civil society organisations, receive specialised training delivered through a multi-agency approach. Such training focuses on the identification of trafficking indicators and trauma-

related vulnerabilities, the adoption of trauma-informed methodologies, the creation of safe and supportive environments for victims, and the prevention of re-traumatisation during assistance and investigative procedures. The Italian system also promotes the active participation of victims in decisions concerning their protection and social inclusion pathways, with particular emphasis on informed consent, respect for dignity and personal autonomy, and empowerment-based approaches. This methodology is considered essential in supporting victims in regaining autonomy, rebuilding trust, and pursuing long-term recovery and social inclusion.

9. *Improve the identification of, and assistance to, child victims of trafficking, including by:*
- *systematically applying the National Referral Mechanism and the SOPs for child victims of trafficking, and ensuring that relevant actors take a proactive approach and increase their outreach work to identify child victims of THB for different forms of exploitation;*
  - *ensuring that child victims of trafficking across the country, regardless of whether they seek asylum or not, benefit from the assistance measures provided for under the Convention, including appropriate accommodation, effective access to free legal assistance and psychological support (paragraph 265)*

In Italy, unaccompanied foreign minors, including children who are victims or potential victims of trafficking, are protected under the general system of child and adolescent welfare, which applies to all minors present in the national territory. Italian legislation prioritizes family-based care: according to Law No. 184/1983, as amended (“The Right of the Child to a Family”), when it is not possible to place a child with a family, they are accommodated in family-style community homes. Traditional institutionalization in orphanages or large residential institutions has been definitively phased out. This framework is reinforced by Law No. 328/2000 and Ministerial Decree 308/2001, which govern the organization of residential services for minors exclusively in family-style community settings, with clearly defined structural and organizational standards at the regional level, while municipalities are responsible for authorization, accreditation, and supervision. Law No. 47/2017 further establishes the principle of equal treatment between Italian minors and unaccompanied foreign minors, ensuring full access to child protection, healthcare, education, and social support.

Within this system, the protection pathway may begin with a temporary first-reception phase, aimed at identification, age verification, if necessary, early detection of vulnerabilities, including trafficking indicators, and immediate activation of protective measures. Even in emergency situations where temporary solutions are required due to limited availability of places, minors are never housed with adults. They are always accommodated in safe, age-appropriate spaces, staffed by qualified personnel, including educators, social workers, and cultural mediators, all trained in child protection and the management of vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, the draft legislative decree implementing the revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive establishes that unaccompanied minors are entitled to enhanced and specific protection measures ensured by local authorities, in close cooperation with the entities responsible for implementing the Single Programme for the assistance of victims of trafficking and severe exploitation. In particular, article 4 of the new legislative decree further strengthens the protection framework for child victims of trafficking by introducing a number of specific safeguards. In particular, child victims are guaranteed access to dedicated protection and assistance programmes tailored to their specific needs and vulnerabilities. The decree also reinforces cooperation between social services responsible for child protection and specialised anti-trafficking projects, with the aim of ensuring integrated and multidisciplinary support pathways. Furthermore, it explicitly provides that child victims of trafficking shall not be accommodated in facilities intended for adults, thereby ensuring reception arrangements that are fully consistent with the best interests of the child and with international and European child protection standards.

The National Referral Mechanism places particular emphasis on the identification, protection and assistance of child victims of trafficking and severe exploitation. The NRM recognises children as holders of enhanced protection

rights and provides for specialised, child-sensitive procedures throughout all stages of identification, referral, assistance and social inclusion. The NRM expressly requires that all interventions concerning child victims, including unaccompanied and separated foreign minors, accompanied minors and Italian or EU national children, be implemented in accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child, through child-friendly, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches.

The NRM further provides that child victims of trafficking must benefit from specific and reinforced protection measures, taking into account vulnerabilities connected to age, gender, migration status and forms of exploitation suffered, including sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced begging, forced criminality and early or forced marriage. Importance is attached to early identification using dedicated trafficking indicators and multidisciplinary assessment procedures.

The NRM also promotes structured cooperation among anti-trafficking entities, social services, juvenile judicial authorities, healthcare services, law enforcement agencies, reception facilities and civil society organisations, with a view to ensuring integrated and timely protection pathways for child victims.

Structured care for unaccompanied minors, including trafficking victims, is primarily provided through the *Sistema di Accoglienza e Integrazione* (SAI), which serves as the cornerstone of second-level reception. The types of facilities, while regulated regionally, are organized into consistent national categories, including family-style communities, socio-educational communities, emergency reception centres, specialized educational and psychological communities, semi-independent housing for young people aged 16–21, child-parent reception services, and experimental structures. Second-level reception may also include facilities specifically dedicated to unaccompanied minors or for young adults transitioning to autonomy.

Support for minors who are victims of trafficking is multidisciplinary and individualized. It includes language and cultural mediation, specialized psychological support to address trauma, legal and administrative assistance, and the development and monitoring of an Individualized Educational Plan (PEI). Schooling and access to training are integral to the integration process, and children are informed and involved in their educational project, even though the ultimate placement decisions are made by the competent authorities in accordance with the child's best interests.

In cases where trafficking or exploitation is suspected, the minor reception system operates in close coordination with the National Anti-Trafficking System. Collaboration between SAI, local social services, and anti-trafficking projects allows the activation of specific social protection pathways, placement in specialized facilities if needed, protection from criminal networks, and the provision of dedicated legal and psychological support, thereby preventing re-trafficking. Placement decisions are based on a clear institutional division of responsibilities: municipal social services oversee the child's care and implement the individualized plan; the Juvenile Court issues judicial measures regarding protection and placement; and the legal guardian appointed under Law No. 47/2017 represents the child and participates in relevant decisions. Volunteer guardians are selected and trained by regional or national child protection authorities, with specific modules covering the vulnerabilities of unaccompanied minors, including trafficking, exploitation, and trauma-related needs.

Family foster care is considered in light of the child's individual needs and is a qualified form of reception within the SAI system. Municipal social services monitor both the child's placement and the progress of the foster arrangement. Each local authority maintains a specialized foster care centre and may rely on third-sector organizations to optimize services. Foster families are rigorously selected, trained, and officially registered.

While unaccompanied minors are, by definition, without parental support in Italy, any consideration of returning a minor to their family is assessed case by case by social services and requires an in-depth verification of safety conditions and a Juvenile Court decision. Return is not authorized if there is a risk or evidence of family involvement in exploitation. Under Article 13 of Law No. 47/2017, the Juvenile Court may extend administrative support until

the child reaches 21 years of age, allowing the young adult to complete their social, educational, and professional integration, and preventing re-entry into exploitative or marginalized situations. Continuous monitoring within the Individualized Educational Plan, coordination among social services, schools, healthcare, judicial authorities, and integration with the national anti-trafficking system ensure the prevention of re-victimization.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the adoption of the above-mentioned *Operational Handbook on the Reception and Care of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (Vademecum Operativo – Presa in Carico e Accoglienza dei Minori Stranieri Non Accompagnati)*, a practical tool designed to provide guidance to all actors involved in the reception and care of unaccompanied foreign children regarding procedures and good practices related to their assistance and reception pathways.

The Handbook was originally developed in 2021 as a result of the longstanding cooperation between the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration and the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA, formerly EASO), with the involvement of key stakeholders, including the Department of Public Security, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Central Service of the Reception and Integration System (SAI), as well as UNHCR, IOM and UNICEF. The document was most recently updated in 2025.

Following its first publication in 2021, it was considered necessary to revise and update the Handbook in order to reflect the legislative developments that had occurred in the meantime, particularly the reforms adopted in 2023 concerning the reception of unaccompanied foreign minors. The updated 2025 edition does not yet include operational references to the provisions contained in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum recently adopted by the European Union, which will become applicable from 2026 onwards.

The Handbook is structured around an introductory section and includes a comprehensive overview of the reception system for unaccompanied foreign minors, describing the main actors involved and their respective responsibilities. It also contains a dedicated section on child protection and care pathways, covering both children identified within the national territory and those arriving through disembarkation procedures.

Furthermore, the Handbook illustrates the measures undertaken by reception facilities and project managers to support the regularisation and social integration of children, as well as the application of the Dublin procedure for determining the Member State responsible for examining applications for international protection.

Specific chapters are devoted to a number of key issues, including the assessment of the best interests of the child, the role of guardians, the transition to adulthood, trafficking in human beings, psychological and psychiatric vulnerabilities, and family-based care arrangements for unaccompanied foreign minors.

*10. Enshrine in law the recovery and reflection period, as provided for in Article 13 of the Convention, and to ensure that it is systematically offered to all possible foreign victims of trafficking irrespective of their cooperation with the authorities or their application for international protection, together with all the measures of protection and assistance envisaged Article 12, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Convention during this period. Guidance and training courses should be provided to professionals (including law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, immigration officers) on the recovery and reflection period (paragraph 272).*

The legislative decree transposing Directive (EU) 2024/1712 introduces substantial amendments aimed at further strengthening the protection framework for victims of trafficking in human beings, in line with the victim-centred approach underpinning the Italian anti-trafficking system.

In particular, the draft decree amends Article 18 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 (Consolidated Immigration Act), which has long represented a key provision within the Italian anti-trafficking framework, notably with regard to the so-called “social protection pathway” and the implementation of the Single Programme of Assistance and Social Integration for victims of trafficking and severe exploitation.

Among the most significant innovations introduced by the reform is the explicit recognition of the victim’s right to a recovery and reflection period, in accordance with Article 13 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The provision establishes a 45-day period intended to ensure effective

protection for presumed victims of trafficking, enabling them to escape situations of exploitation, recover physically and psychologically, and take informed decisions regarding their future, including whether to cooperate with the judicial authorities, while simultaneously benefiting from temporary assistance and protection measures. In line with the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, during this period, presumed victims cannot be expelled and access to initial protection measures must be guaranteed.

The legislative decree further provides that victims may access the labour market at an early stage following the application for the specific residence permit provided for victims of trafficking, namely after 45 days from the submission of the application. This measure is intended to promote social inclusion and autonomy, while facilitating victims' exit from exploitative contexts.

In addition, the reform strengthens the principle of early assistance by expressly providing that protection and support measures must be activated already where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person may be a victim of trafficking, even prior to the formal identification procedure. This provision aims to reinforce early detection and protection mechanisms and to reduce the risk of re-victimisation.

With specific regard to applicants for international protection who are victims or potential victims of trafficking, the decree also introduces amendments to Article 10 of Legislative Decree No. 24/2014, with a view to implementing Article 11a of the amended Directive. These amendments enhance coordination mechanisms between the anti-trafficking system and the asylum system and strengthen safeguards for victims of trafficking from the earliest stages of arrival and reception on the national territory.

Overall, the proposed reform is intended to further consolidate the Italian protection framework by ensuring that recovery and reflection measures, assistance services, and protection mechanisms are effectively accessible irrespective of the victim's willingness to cooperate in criminal proceedings or the status of any application for international protection.