

Call for Expression of Interest

Welcome in Action: Local Networks for Refugee Employment and Inclusion

HCR/ITA/2025/001

1 Timeline

Posted	Jul 3, 2025
Clarification Request Deadline	Jul 10, 2025
Application Deadline	Aug 1, 2025
Notification of Results	Sep 8, 2025
Start Date	Jan 1, 2026
End Date	Dec 31, 2026

2 Locations

- A Italy
 - a Lombardia
 - b Lazio
 - c Puglia
 - d Piemonte
 - e Emilia-Romagna
 - f Lombardia
 - g Campania

3 Sector(s) and area(s) of specialization

- A Durable Solutions
 - a Integration, Reintegration
- B Livelihoods
 - a Self reliance

4 Issuing Agency

UNHCR

5 Project Background

Italy continues to be the country in the Mediterranean receiving the highest number of refugees and migrants arriving by sea - around 35% in 2024, with the same trend continuing in 2025. The country hosts a significant population of individuals under international or temporary protection. As of the end of 2024, Italy hosts around 523,000 forcibly displaced and stateless people - including approximately 150,000 beneficiaries of international protection, 207,000

asylum seekers, 163,000 individuals under temporary protection, and an estimated 3,000 stateless persons. In 2024, around 66,000 people arrived in Italy by sea. Over the past ten years, around 10,700 individuals have arrived through complementary pathways. UNHCR MCO Italy's Strategy for 2023-2026 is aligned with the Global Compact on Refugees and has a strong focus on integration and solidarity. Expanding solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless people and addressing secondary movements is one of the strategic goals. Integration prospects for refugees remain one of the major gaps. The legal framework gives refugees the same socio-economic rights as Italians and same access rights to education and the labour market. However, there are no structured supportive services enabling effective access. Administrative practices particularly hinder the obtaining of documents and accessing social assistance schemes. Whereas refugees can apply for citizenship after five years of residence, delays and documentary requirements make the procedure long and cumbersome. Post-recognition, refugees are essentially left on their own. Pre-integration efforts, including language provision, are to some extent made in reception, but little is done to promote self-reliance and effective integration in the reception system. Many refugees cannot find work or housing and are unable to navigate the bureaucracy. In this context, the UNHCR 2024 socio-economic study on integration of beneficiaries of international and temporary protection shows a stark picture of prevalent levels of poverty among refugees, and a severe social and economic deprivation compared with Italian nationals and other immigrants. A high percentage of refugees live in absolute and relative poverty. Employment remains a significant barrier to economic stability for refugees. Despite being active in the labor market, many refugees remain in precarious employment situations. UNHCR has been working with local authorities to address these challenges. In particular, the network of multifunctional integration hubs - "Spazio Comune" - has been established and strengthened in seven cities, with a planned expansion in the coming years. These hubs adopt a "One-Stop Shop" approach to service delivery, bringing together various actors under one roof, coordinated by local governments. Furthermore, the program Welcome. Working for refugee integration was launched in 2016 with the aim of fostering the employment of beneficiaries of international protection and promoting commitment to social inclusion by the business community, in collaboration with government institutions and civil society. As part of the Welcome project, hundreds of partnerships have been established between companies operating in Italy and civil society organizations aimed at co-designing pathways for labor inclusion of refugees. The collaboration between UNHCR and civil society organizations has been formalized in the creation of the WelcomeNet, currently including more than 120 associations and NGOs supporting the program. In addition, partnerships with employer organizations, trade associations, and associations of managers and human resource managers have been initiated and formalized. The national management model, developed over all these years, is replicated and implemented at the local level through the work of Welcome Liaison Officers (WLOs), specialized staff operating in the Spazio Comune centers, and online through the Welcome-in-one-click platform. Given the above, UNHCR envisages to establish a partnership with a competent NGO actor with expertise in socio-economic integration, self-reliance and stakeholder coordination to:

- Hire, coordinate, and guide WLOs who will be deployed in multiple locations throughout Italy where Spazio Comune program is established
- Provide capacity-building to WLOs in close coordination with UNHCR central and local teams, and with the partner in charge of the Welcome-in-one-click Platform
- Supporting the further development and activities of the Welcome-in-one-click platform, which complements the work of the WLOs by offering digital access to integration services. The activities of the WLOs will also focus on 3 strategic dimensions: a) Governance, supporting local coordination and policy alignment. b) Networking, strengthening collaboration among stakeholders. c) Capacity building, enhancing the skills and tools of local actors involved in refugee integration.

6 **Expected Results**

Impact Area: Solve - Securing Solutions 2. By 2026, refugees and stateless persons in Italy are able to realize their social and economic rights through local integration and other solutions, and are meaningfully engaged in achieving their own protection and solutions Outcome area: Integration 2.2 Refugees and stateless persons are supported to secure durable legal status in Italy, through naturalization, residency documentation, economic inclusion and self-reliance and inclusion in national social protection and education systems and services. Expected results The Partner, through the deployment of Welcome Liaison Officers, will:

- Provide livelihoods services at the Job Inclusion Desks, in the framework of the Spazio Comune program and its partners.
- In collaboration with Municipalities and UNHCR, support the creation of coordination mechanisms or the consolidation of those already in place in the area of job inclusion
- Engage relevant actors (employers' agencies, training agencies, employment agencies, regional employment centers) in structured partnerships aimed at promoting refugee job inclusion pathways.
- Provide case management (identification, profiling, and orientation) of forcibly displaced and stateless persons to foster their access to employment opportunities promoted by the Welcome program and by other local actors active in the area.
- Facilitate the connection between refugees and work demand, as well as the fulfillment of refugees' ambitions and educational needs.
- Map employment opportunities, building and consolidating relationships with key local public,

non-governmental and private actors. • Enhance the impact and the outreach of the WelcomeNet, the network of qualified civil society organizations that support the Welcome program at local level. • Involve new companies in the Welcome program, support corporate partnerships between local companies interested in including beneficiaries and entities that are part of the WelcomeNet. • Promote participation of companies and CSOs in the Welcome award. Support strengthening of the Welcome-in-one-click Platform and promote access of forcibly displaced and stateless people, third sector organizations, training agencies and companies to the platform. • Deliver training and technical support for platform users • Strengthen skills of public managers, employment service operators, CSOs, businesses and training providers involved in social and labor inclusion pathways. To ensure the adequate protection of forcibly displaced and stateless persons, UNHCR requires partners to adhere to applicable sector standards outlined within UNHCR’s areas of specialization.

7 Indicative Budget

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8 Other Information

A minimum of seven Welcome Liaison Officers is expected to be deployed in 2026 in the following locations: Turin, Milan, Brescia, Bologna, Rome, Naples, Bari. Additional Welcome Liaison Officers could be deployed at a later stage in other locations in Italy (to be determined later). Processing of personal data will be required for case management activities conducted by the WLOs. Whether a Data Protection Impact Assessment is required or not will be evaluated at a later stage. Partner Data Protection and Information Security Self-Assessment should be completed by the partner at the country level and submitted with the concept note. Partners are expected to have the capacity to implement data protection standards. As a data controller, the partner is accountable for the implementation of data protection standards. The concept note should describe the measures ensuring adherence to the data protection principles, procedures and mechanisms envisaged for providing information to the data subjects, receiving and processing data subject rights request, complaints and independent redress. Controller-to-Controller (C2C): is a relationship between UNHCR and a partner for processing the data of forcibly displaced and stateless persons where UNHCR and the partner act as data controllers. It includes a transfer of personal data between two data controllers. Both Controllers determine the purposes and essential means of the personal data processing that is required for the project/service, and thus they are separately accountable for the personal data processing they control, including the responsibility for addressing requests by data subjects relating to their data subject rights.

9 Selection Criteria

Name	Description	Weight
Sector expertise and experience	Availability of qualified and experienced professionals to deliver on UNHCR’s project objectives. This includes the presence of specialists with expertise in livelihoods in vulnerable communities, refugee inclusion with a focus on job integration, and a deep understanding of the national and local employment systems. Additionally, experience in private sector engagement, third-sector collaboration, and institutional advocacy is also required. The partner should provide evidence of strong performance, knowledge base, materials, and human resources management. Knowledge of relevant protection, humanitarian principles and the approach to Age, Gender, Diversity (AGDM). Approach to the participation of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the Programme Cycle. Partner’s PSEA capacity self-assessment and data protection and information security self-assessment have been completed and submitted in the dedicated PSEA section of the UNPP. Mainstreaming measures to integrate environmental sustainability within proposed activities. Environmental considerations are aligned to the objectives of UNHCR’s Strategic Framework for Climate Action.	25

Project management	ability to effectively deliver project objectives with robust management systems/processes, and meet the expectations of all stakeholders, as well as provide accountability mechanisms and sound financial management, taking into account the audit results of any previous UNHCR-funded project, past performance and the external audit of partners' financial statements and pending open audit recommendations (accounts receivables and internal control related recommendations) where applicable. Capacity to manage a decentralized, multi-city initiative, which includes planning, supervision, quality assurance and reporting. Clear segregation of duties policy, as well as the integration of risk management; adequate control over procurement, of assets and inventory (if applicable). Organization's legal, technical and operational capacity to process personal data in place.	20
Local experience and presence	ongoing programme in the area of operation; local knowledge; operational presence and established networks in (at least some of) the target cities, with the ability to engage local stakeholders and adapt to local labor market dynamics; ability to mobilize local resources and stakeholders to support Welcome Liaison Officers activities; participation in inter-agency coordination fora, engaging forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the programme cycle; trust from local communities; partner policy on community relations; feedback and complaint mechanisms for affected communities; and other factors that would facilitate access to and better understanding of the affected communities and that would reduce administrative difficulties.	20
Cost effectiveness	Evidence of a methodology for allocation of shared costs to project activities. Evidence of responsible and strategic use of financial resources. Evidence of procedures/systems that ensure maximum resources are directed to project outcomes, while also ensuring that resources are directed to activities that ensure project risks are being appropriately managed as well.	15
Relevance of proposal to achieving expected results	Alignment of proposed approach, methodology and activities with the goals of the UNHCR "Welcome. Working for refugee integration" program. Effective translation of strategic objectives into actionable plans that are likely to produce tangible, measurable and sustainable outcomes. Demonstrate clear understanding of the Welcome Liaison Officer role. Articulate clear and coherent strategy for enabling the Welcome Liaison Officers to fulfil their mandate effectively.	20

10 Attachments

Description	URL
Call for Expression of Interest	Download the document here
Annex A - Sample concept note	Download the document here
Submission instructions	Download the document here
Annex C - Data protection and infosec	Download the document here
Annex B - Budget proposal	Download the document here

11 Concept Note Template

[Download the document here](#)

12 For more information on this partnership opportunity, and to apply, please visit

[UN Partner Portal](#)