#InclusionMatters

NEWS AND UPDATES
FROM THE FRONTLINE OF CHANGE
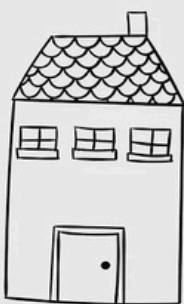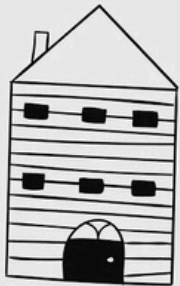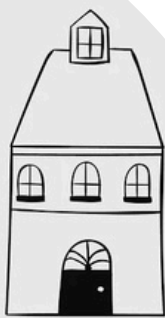
A PLACE TO CALL HOME

- **HOUSING CHALLENGES IN VERONA.** Interview to Attilio Orecchio

- **HOUSING AND MIGRANTS.** Facts and Figures across Europe

- **H:OUSE**, a living project

NEWS and EVENTS

Dear Reader,

this month, our newsletter tackles one of the most pressing challenges of our time: housing, with a special focus on migrants. Universally recognized as a cornerstone of integration, housing remains out of reach for many migrants and newcomers.

The inspiration comes from the AMIF-funded H:OUSE project, which addresses the urgent need to create sustainable housing solutions for migrants and newcomers. One of the key partners in this project is Glocal Factory, based in Verona.

This connection led us to focus on the housing challenges in this city of approximately 280,000 residents, located in one of the EU's wealthiest regions. In this edition, we present an in-depth interview that sheds light on the local context and the innovative efforts being made to address these issues.

To broaden the perspective, we also examine EU-wide housing data, drawing from the latest OECD and EWSI reports. These reveal persistent disparities in living conditions between foreign-born and native-born populations, emphasizing the need for coordinated, systemic action.

We invite you to explore this issue, reflect on the challenges and successes we highlight, moving closer to ensuring that everyone has the chance to call a place home.

The Glocal Factory Team

HOUSING CHALLENGES IN VERONA
Exploring solutions in a wealthy EU Region

Verona is one of the cities where the H:OUSE project is being implemented. How does the housing issue manifest in this city of approximately 280,000 inhabitants, situated in one of the wealthiest regions of the European Union?

We asked Attilio Orecchio, member of Glocal Factory and secretary of the local Community Observatory for Social Rights.

What is the housing situation in Verona?

The situation mirrors that of many other European cities, grappling with a severe housing crisis. The rental market is almost inaccessible for migrant workers and lower-income segments of the local population. This persists despite the presence in the municipality of 21,000 unused apartments—15% of the city's residential properties. Over-tourism, exacerbated since the pandemic, has led to thousands of homes being converted into B&Bs. Meanwhile, the abolition of the national "Fondo per la morosità incolpevole" (Fund for Blameless Arrearage) has left more families at risk of a growing eviction each year. Homelessness is another pressing issue, with around 500 people currently unhoused. Municipal or charity-run shelters can accommodate only half of them, while the rest are forced to sleep in unsafe conditions—on the streets, in abandoned houses or factories. Many of these people are employed migrants earning an income but unable to find affordable housing.

What role does social housing play?

In the Verona province, social housing agencies have a waiting list of 4,000 applicants. However, their limited funds prevent them from renovating even the hundreds of unused properties in their portfolio. Since the 1980s, Italy has systematically dismantled its public housing system, prioritizing homeownership instead. While this has led to 80% of Italians owning their homes, it has created a dire situation for those unable to secure a mortgage, such as young couples or workers in precarious or low-paying jobs.

Are there initiatives to tackle these challenges?

Yes, some promising efforts are underway, particularly focused on community sponsorships. Earlier this year 2024, February saw the formation of "Coordinamento Abitare Verona", a coalition of 18 associations and social cooperatives. These groups are dedicated to migrants' reception and homeless and economically disadvantaged populations' supporting.

Eighteen associations is quite significant...

Verona has a long tradition of an active non-profit sector. What makes this coalition unique in 2024 is that these organizations - despite their varying cultural, political, and religious orientations - have chosen to collaborate and pool their resources.

What has the "Coordinamento" achieved so far?

They've taken two notable actions: one political and one more practical. At political level, the coalition has petitioned the municipality to co-programming housing policies, to jointly identify short, medium and long term measures. These include increasing shelter capacity for the homeless, initiating 'social hotel' programs and supporting social cooperatives to mediate between landlords and tenants, ensuring landlords are protected against non-payment or property damage. They have also suggested creating a guarantee fund to incentivize private landlords to reintroduce vacant apartments into the market.

What was the Municipality's response?

So far, it has been rather disappointing. Local politicians seem to lack a genuine culture of co-planning. Non-profit organizations are welcomed and valued by administrators when they step in to solve emergencies. However, when these same organizations seek to

participate in shaping policies or advocate for bold and innovative measures rather than mere welfare, local leaders often avoid engaging in meaningful dialogue. Despite this, the Coordination remains persistent, and I am confident that their efforts will eventually yield positive results.

What about the most "practical" initiative?

In this instance, the Municipality demonstrated commendable courage and innovation. It instructed the local Social Housing Agency to amend its regulations, enabling unused flats to be made available to civil society organizations. This change allowed the Coordinamento to launch an ambitious project, now in its initial stages. The plan involves raising approximately €1.5 million through crowdfunding and institutional sponsorships. These funds will be used to rent 50 flats from the Housing Agency, refurbish them, and provide accommodation for 150–200 people. Some will stay for relatively short periods, while

others may need longer-term housing—focusing on those whose needs cannot be met through the traditional housing market.

Are there unused public buildings in Verona?

Yes, and in significant numbers. Verona, once a border town until the end of World War I, has numerous abandoned barracks and military forts. Additionally, many factories and private warehouses have been left vacant due to delocalisation and the 2008 financial crisis.

Could these spaces be repurposed for social use?

Certainly, but such efforts require political will and collaboration with civil society. For example, some associations have proposed transforming the Villa di Quinzano, a large, green-surrounded complex unused since 2004. This space could partially house dozens of homeless individuals while also serving as a venue for cultural, sports, and community activities. The "hosts" themselves could manage cleaning, security, and maintenance, creating a sustainable solution. While the municipality lacks the funds for renovations, why not launching a partnerships between public institutions and non-profits could make this vision a reality?

Houses without people, people without homes: can we imagine a different future?

I certainly hope so. The housing crisis of this decade starkly reflects growing social inequality, rising poverty, and inadequate policymaking, slow and bureaucratically entangled. The solution lies in mobilizing synergies between institutions and civil society, through expanded community sponsorships and courageous policies supported by governments at all levels, local, regional, and national.

Housing Challenges for Immigrants and Newcomers
Facts and Figures across Europe

Housing is a cornerstone of successful immigrant integration, yet it remains one of the most significant challenges across the EU and OECD countries.

The 2023 OECD report and the EWSI analysis highlight persistent disparities between foreign-born and native-born populations, while showcasing good practices to address these challenges.

Newcomers - in particular third-country nationals (TCNs) and beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs) with short-term residence permits - are **disproportionately** affected by affordability, availability, discrimination, and systemic fragmentation compared to other immigrant groups. Limited public housing stock, substandard living conditions, and overcrowding exacerbate these challenges.

Ownership is a major barrier. Across the EU, native-born individuals are nearly twice as likely to own their homes as immigrants. Even among settled migrants with over a decade of residence, ownership rates remain significantly lower, with exceptions like Estonia, Latvia, and Hungary. This disparity is driven by financial limitations, a lack of generational wealth, and difficulties navigating the housing market. In Southern Europe, where housing markets are particularly strained, the gap is even wider for newcomers.

For those unable to purchase homes, **renting** is often the only option, but affordability remains an issue, as housing costs consume a disproportionate share of many migrants' income: one in five immigrants

European Website On Integration (EWSI), *Migrants' Access to Medium- and Long-Term Housing in the Eu: Barriers, Governance and Good Practices*
https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/special-feature/migrants-access-medium-and-long-term-housing-eu-barriers-governance-and-good_en

OECD/European Commission (2023), *Living conditions of immigrants,* **in** *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In*
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1787/d303c268-en
https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/indicators-of-immigrant-integration-2023_1d5020a6-en

in the EU spends over 40% of their income on rent, compared to one in eight native-born citizens. Although housing subsidies narrow this gap in countries like Germany, France, and the Netherlands, they are not universally effective.

Discrimination is another crucial issue. Migrants frequently encounter landlords unwilling to rent to those with foreign names, large families, or non-EU backgrounds. Administrative hurdles in countries like Lithuania and Cyprus discourage landlords from renting to migrants, as navigating subsidy systems or signing declarations involves burdensome bureaucracy.

In terms of **housing conditions**, immigrants are more likely to live in overcrowded and substandard accommodations. Overcrowding affects one in six foreign-born households in the EU, a rate 70% higher than among native-born populations. Substandard housing, characterized by issues such as leaks, poor insulation, or inadequate facilities, impacts 26% of immigrants compared to 20% of native-born residents. For newcomers, who are more likely to rely on temporary accommodations, these conditions can be even worse.

Immigrants, especially newcomers, are more likely to reside in densely populated urban areas, which can provide more opportunities but suffer from issue like noise, air pollution, and litter.

While many European countries employ multilevel governance to address housing needs, poor coordination among local, regional, and national authorities creates gaps, leaving many migrants without consistent support. Integration efforts in housing markets are uneven, disadvantaging newcomers lacking local knowledge and resources. Despite challenges, housing cost burdens for immigrants have decreased in the past decade, and local initiatives are addressing systemic barriers. However, significant disparities persist, highlighting the need for targeted policies, such as affordable housing expansion, anti-discrimination measures, and improved governance coordination.

H:OUSE, a living project

H:OUSE (Housing: to Overcome Unstable Situations in Europe), which we introduced in our issue No. 3, aims to systematize and expand the most effective practices for housing integration.

The project is currently focused on developing the multidimensional research coordinated by Glocal Factory and scheduled for publication by the end of December. This research delves into the Community Sponsorship model, adopting an integrated approach that weaves together institutional perspectives, local experiences, and the strategic role of diaspora communities. Its aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges of integration, with a particular focus on housing.

THE PARTNERS

Cooperativa Sociale Il Sestante Onlus | Glocal Factory | Refugees Welcome Italia | Comune di Ravenna | Second Tree | Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa | Znanstvenoraziskovalni Center | Artemisszio Alapitvan | Doras Luimni Limited by Guarantee | Department Of Children, Equality, Disability

The study addresses several key themes. It examines housing conditions in the implementation areas to identify the main challenges faced by newcomers. At the same time, it explores the European context, assessing how institutional guidelines are applied across different countries. Another focus is on successful experiences at the European and international levels, aiming to identify replicable models and practices. Additionally, the research investigates the potential of grassroots initiatives—often led by local networks and civil society—and highlights the role of diaspora communities as cultural and social mediators. The methodology combines traditional tools, such as document analysis and case studies, with participatory approaches.

The final output will be a scientific report offering a comprehensive overview of housing and community sponsorship dynamics, consolidating both existing knowledge and new findings. and serving as a valuable resource to foster dialogue among institutions, academics, and civil society actors. Stay tuned to know more https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559634816528

H:OUSE project on the Conference on Private Hosting Initiatives and Community Sponsorship: Exploring Synergies
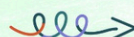
H:OUSE was showcased at the **Conference on Private Hosting Initiatives and Community Sponsorship: Exploring Synergies**, held on November 20, 2024, in Brussels.

The project contributions were highlighted in the opening panel, "Bridging Silos: Partnerships Between Civil Society Organizations Working on Integration and Housing" where the progress have been shared and ideas were exchanged with leading experts and practitioners in the field.

This meaningful event was hosted by the SHARE QSN Network, and H:OUSE is honored to have participated in such an enriching and inspiring conversation.

NEWS and EVENTS

The IN LOCO Learning Week across Italy

The IN LOCO project, has started its journey with a Learning Week in Italy, from the 27th to the 31st of October. A week-long exploration through Bologna, Ravenna, Prato, and Verona to know more about local policies and good practices fostering migrants' social integration.

YOUTUBE.COM
Al via il progetto In LOCO: garantire un sistema europeo univoco per l'integrazione dei migranti

Funded by the AMIF Program of the European Union and spanning three years, IN LOCO aims to develop a unified system of territorial policies – both in urban and rural contexts - to facilitate migrants' effective social integration. The project also supports practitioners in enhancing reception practices and overcoming barriers to inclusion.

Bringing together 18 partners—including local authorities, humanitarian associations, and universities —from 11 EU countries, IN LOCO is led by Second Tree.

Want to know more? Check out our video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmHi7-BtOWo

Service Learning at the University of Verona

On November 7th, the University of Verona hosted the Partners' Meeting of the ApS(M) project on Service Learning (SL), aimed at supporting migrant and refugee communities. The event brought together representatives from the University of Santiago the Compostela and Accem (Spain), the University of Verona and Glocal Factory (Italy) to share insights on the SL projects implemented in the participating countries, discuss successful strategies and plan future initiatives. The day concluded with a presentation on the UNICORE project, which focuses on humanitarian corridors to promote migrant inclusion within the university setting.

@University of Santiago de Compostela, @ACCEM, @University of Verona, @Glocal Factory, @ University of Galway

Learn more about the project website

Co-working con RES MOVE

RES MOVE is dedicated to transforming coworking spaces into models of inclusion for skilled migrants, creating opportunities, and building a transnational network of collaborative, inclusive spaces.

The partnership is starting interviews with coworking staff and migrants to explore what makes coworking spaces truly inclusive. These conversations will help identify the key factors that make a coworking space truly inclusive, exploring existing needs and best practices.

@academyofentrepreneurship, @Glocal Factory, @refugeeswelcomeitalia, @Synthesis, @Fundación MUSOL, @nwpfoundation, @europeancoworkingassembly, @malmoideella, @smi.zrc.sazu.


UPWELL: #wellbeing in Athens

UPWELL partners from Italy, Spain, Cyprus, and Greece met in Athens on October 25-26 to design the COMPETENCE-BASED JOINT CURRICULUM aimed at equipping teachers to foster well-being in multicultural classrooms. The course will be delivered in Verona next February.

@ Cestim Verona, @ Glocal Factory, @ Academy of Entrepreneurship, @ T-hap, @ Osnovna škola Lovre pl. Matačića, @ University of Jaen

Learn more about at: https://teacherswellbeing.eu
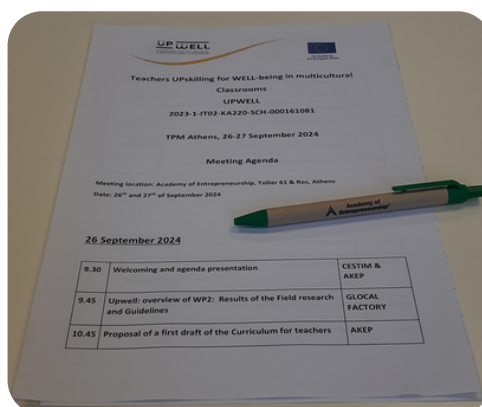
GET IN TOUCH

OFFICE | vicoletto Valle, 2 - 37122 Verona VR

EMAIL | info@glocalfactory.eu

CONTACT FORM | 🌐   www.glocalfactory.eu

f   https://www.facebook.com/glocalfactory

in   https://it.linkedin.com/company/glocal-factory