



About Milan and Migration

Milan: internationalisation and integration

Milan is a city with a strong international vocation. For its history and geography, Milan has always represented a bridge between Italy, the rest of Europe and the world. Today, around 19% of Milan's total population of 1,380,873 people have a migration background: this share (which is twice the Italian national average) is an indicator of richness and attractiveness – the more magnetic the metropolis, the higher the number of immigrants.

- 30,604 nationals from other EU countries and 236,238 citizens of countries outside the EU;
- 107,155 from Asia (40% of the city's total migration population), 59,358 from Africa (22%) and 46,154 from Central and South America (18%);
- 92% of Milan's migrant population come from developing countries, 5% from developed countries, and the remaining approximate 3% is represented by refugees and asylum-seekers;
- 52,911 migrant minors (24.8% of the city's total migration population), among whom 815 unaccompanied migrant minors.

Another feature of Milan's international dimension regards foreign students, who increasingly choose the city for their tertiary education programs. They make up 6.72% of Milan's university students and mainly come from China, Albania and Iran.

Not only are these figures important to understand today's migration situation, but they also help us imagine the future of Milan. A clear tendency towards further internationalisation is taking shape: the number of third-country nationals is expected to rise by 30% by 2036, when the migrant population will represent 21.2% of Milan's total population. In light of this, the Municipality is committed to making Milan more attractive, by balancing increasing internationalisation with integration processes and by promoting the new citizens' positive contribution to the urban social fabric.

The refugee crisis: from emergency to long-term solutions

Since 2013, Italy at large and Milan in particular have been facing the great flows of migrants reaching Europe by sea, most notably due to the Syrian war. The City of Milan signed a Protocol with the Italian Ministry of the Interior for the provision of support to asylum-seekers, on the basis of which the City launched a new first reception system: 129,000 people have been hosted by the centres managed by the Municipality of Milan since October 2013.

Until 2017 the activities focused on the management of emergency situations, based on first aid and the supply of material support, because migrants were mainly transiting towards other European countries. However, since 2017 migrants started to apply for asylum in Italy too, and specific actions have been developed by the City of Milan to overcome the emergency approach and to promote longer-term solutions, by reinforcing the City's leading role in the area of rights and social inclusion, in close cooperation with civil society and other institutions.

Thus, the Municipality of Milan decided to reform the system of first reception centres (which Milan is the only city in Italy to manage directly) by implementing specific services dedicated to the integration of asylum-seekers (language courses, professional training and integration, volunteering activities, etc.).

Moreover, Milan decided to ask the Italian Government for an increase in the number of places available for adult refugees in SPRAR (System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees) structures from the present 422 to up to 1,000 by 2019. The national SPRAR Project aims indeed at the permanent promotion of socio-economic inclusion and integration. Through SPRAR, Milan offers refugees housing solutions in small accommodation centres, apartments and Milanese families, material assistance, access to health care (including mental health) services, access to education, professional orientation, language courses, counselling and cultural activities.

Drivers and perspectives for migration to Milan

Employment and education opportunities are among the main drivers for migration to Milan. The city especially attracts migrant workers with middle-low levels of education, who need specific support and assistance in the social inclusion and integration processes. Extra-EU nationals are mostly employed in manual and unqualified jobs (52.7%, a much higher percentage than the national average, which is 39.8%), while only 9.2% of foreign nationals are employed in management, high-skilled or technical roles. Family reunification has been another significant and constant migration channel over the years, with around 7,000 applications per year presented in Milan Metropolitan Area (representing 40% of the entrances), among which over 3,500 in the city of Milan.

Therefore, newcomers' ambition today is not limited to finding employment and boost savings, but it embraces a longer-term settlement perspective, oriented towards investments in the upbringing and education of children and professional fulfilment in Italy.

Generally speaking, Milan's migrant population is not ethnically segregated in certain neighbourhoods and cohabitation with the Milanese population is generally positive. This implies a great opportunity for Milan: we have the chance to build a new concept of citizenship. As public administration we are committed to working on inclusion and, as local government, to grasping the challenge of access to services. We strive to meet migrants' rights upon their arrival in the city and offer them access to the services that can help them become and feel Milanese in every respect and at all levels, including social assistance services offered by the City, with a view to preventing that their needs turn into severe social hardship. In this way we aim at boosting the impact of our interventions and improving benefits on migrants themselves, by inspiring in them a sense of belonging and identification as "Milanese citizens", rather than rejection and confinement to the urban margins.

In this regard, a close cooperation between public institutions and migrant communities having resided in Milan for a long time is essential to help newcomers recognize the institutions as first and key allies for a successful inclusion in the city and to develop a full citizenship. To this end, Milan has been promoting initiatives together with migrants' associations and diasporas in order to develop policies and services for and with people of migrant background. Among these, in 2011 Milan created the World City Culture Forum, through a participated process with the aim of improving the active participation of migrants' associations in the public sphere and the city life.

Moreover, in 2017 the "Together Without Walls" initiative was organized under the auspices of the Municipality of Milan for the promotion of solidarity values and positive narratives in the public debate around migration – including, for example, the organization of a march in Milan on 20 May 2017 joined by 100,000 people who sent a clear message of support for refugees and migrants' reception and inclusion.

In 2018 the “Together Without Walls” initiative organized with the support of the Municipality of Milan an entire month (23 May – 23 June) of public meetings, conferences, cultural events all focused on the subject of migration and integration positive effects in the society, the economy, the cultural debate. The final event was a lunch attended by 8,000 people in Sempione Park. The participation of foreign communities, representing nowadays an essential part of the Milanese society, was impressive.

Priority projects of the City of Milan

The Immigration and Inclusion Policies Unit within the Social Emergencies, Rights and Inclusion Area –Social Policies Department of the Municipality of Milan is mandated to develop and coordinate migrants’ integration policies, and it is currently working with other Departments of the Municipality on the following priority projects and initiatives:

- A renewed family reunification service, in cooperation with the Education Division and Bloomberg Associates, based on an Operational Protocol with the Prefecture of Milan, to support family members who received authorisation for family reunification, as well as newly reunited families in Milan. This system of public-private services includes pre-departure assistance, psychological support, a Welcome Kit explaining how to have access to services in Milan, and a school integration mentoring programme for newly arrived children and adolescents.
- A centralized service to coordinate all the Italian language courses and training opportunities (key for active integration into the city life) offered by different public and private organisations in Milan.
- A Service Centre for Unaccompanied Migrant Minors – an innovative, multifunctional centre entirely dedicated to unaccompanied migrant minors’ needs. It aims at providing the unaccompanied migrant minors hosted in the city territory with first reception, as well as access to all the procedures and services envisaged by the relevant national and international legislation.
- The starting of the SPRAR project specifically addressing unaccompanied minors (150 places since October 2018).
- An increase in the number of places available for adult refugees in SPRAR structures from the present 422 to up to 1,000 by 2019.
- A collaboration with the health care system to address the rise in asylum-seekers and refugees’ mental distress and vulnerabilities, through dedicated mental health and ethno-psychiatry services.
- An international Human Mobility Centre to support the development of an information network for migrants who are interested in Voluntary Assisted Returns, in cooperation with IOM, UNHCR and CSOs.