Evaluation of the Welcome. Working for Refugee Integration Programme

EVALUATION REPORT
FEBRUARY 2025

Conducted by: Opcit Research

UNHCR Evaluation Office

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Evaluation information at a glance	
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CFM   Cognitive Fuzzy Mapping

CSO   Civil Society Organisation

CSR   Corporate Social Responsibility

DEI   Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

ERG   Evaluation Reference Group

GBV   Gender-Based Violence

HQ   Headquarters

MCO   Multi-Country Office

MSC   Most Significant Change

NGO   Non-Governmental Organisation

OM   Outcome Mapping

PSP   Private Sector Partnerships

RLO   Refugee-Led Organisation

ToR   Terms of Reference

UN   United Nations

UNHCR   United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

WLO   Welcome Liaison Officer

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Executive summary

Context of the Evaluation

Welcome. Working for Refugee Integration ('Welcome') is UNHCR's main labor inclusion initiative in Italy. Welcome seeks to increase refugees' (including refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, asylum seekers, those with temporary protection and stateless people) inclusion in the labour market through a partnership between civil society organisations (CSOs) and the private sector. A central component of the Welcome programme is the development and delivery of a network of over 100 CSOs, called WelcomeNet. Welcome includes the annual 'Welcome' and 'WeWelcome' awards and accompanying logo, given to companies that promoted job inclusion pathways and CSOs that supported these initiatives. The UNHCR Multi-Country Office (MCO) Italy coordinates and oversees the Welcome programme. It engages employers, institutions, civil society and government at the national and local levels to foster sustainable employment opportunities for refugees. The MCO provides technical support, visibility, and recognition to participating organizations. It does not provide direct employment support or services to refugees and asylum seekers.[1]

Evaluation Purpose

The intention of this evaluation was to allow the MCO to understand if and how the Welcome programme has produced changes within and for key stakeholders involved. It aimed to provide crucial data on the benefits and areas for improvement for different stakeholder groups, including Italian employers and the economy, refugees and asylum seekers and their families, and 'host communities', as well as those implementing the programme. Its findings and recommendations are intended to help shape the process of change to improve the Welcome model and its implementation. The findings of the evaluation will inform the MCO's 2026-2029 strategic planning process.

Objectives of the Evaluation

The overall aim of the evaluation was to examine the relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, and lessons learned from the Welcome programme. The specific objectives of the evaluation were to:

a. Assess the strategic relevance, effectiveness of programme performance, and sustainability of achievements under the three main objectives of Welcome over the period 2020-2024, and as informed by actions taken previously since the programme was established in 2016.

b. Determine the extent to which the structure, partnerships, capacity of UNHCR and ways of working are aligned and fit-for-purpose to carry out the Welcome programme strategy.

c. Document good practices, lessons learnt and recommendations to improve the Welcome programme.

Methodology

The evaluation employed a **mixed-methods design** to capture the complexity of the Welcome programme's objectives, stakeholders, and outcomes. Data collection was conducted across five regions in Italy and involved refugees, asylum seekers, employers, civil society organisations (CSOs), government actors, and UNHCR staff. Methods included **Outcome Mapping** to assess progress

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[1]See: https://welcome.unhcr.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024_WELCOME_ENG_DEF.pdf?utm

toward intended outcomes and relationships, and **Most Significant Change (MSC)** to capture qualitative stories of deep impact from the perspective of diverse participants.

A distinctive feature of the methodology was the use of **Cognitive Fuzzy Mapping (CFM)**, a participatory systems-mapping technique. This approach enabled the evaluation to model the broader ecosystem influencing refugee labour market inclusion and to identify the relative weight and interaction of key factors such as language skills, mental health, motivation, and bureaucratic barriers. CFM also allowed for **quasi-modelling scenarios** to simulate the potential impact of scaling Welcome's contributions within this system — providing evidence not only of current outcomes but of future potential at scale.

The approach was designed to be inclusive, participatory, and grounded in local experience, while also supporting systemic insight. Triangulation across multiple data sources and respondent groups strengthened the validity of findings.

Key findings

The programme has achieved multiple benefits across different stakeholder groups. These are provided in summary below, grouped in terms of benefits for refugees, businesses, and other partners involved, as well as those related to cost effectiveness and sustainability.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS:

The evaluation finds that Welcome produced significant benefits for refugees and asylum seekers in terms of their access to and experience of the labour market. Specifically it has facilitated:

- **Improved employment rates.** Monitoring data and narrative reports show that refugees participating in the Welcome programme have greater levels of employment compared to the refugee population as a whole in Italy. Welcome connects refugees' skills and experience to companies' labour needs, facilitated by the Welcome-In-One-Click online platform, functioning as a vital link between supply and demand. Where refugee skills may need improvement or alignment with Italian standards, Welcome provides different pathways to assist them towards employment, depending on the employer. This may involve Italian language training (provided by external partners but facilitated by Welcome), on the job training or internships.

- **Better work.** Welcome helps refugees work in the formal labor market adherent to structured and protected job opportunities. Links to the formal economy help refugees move away from undeclared or irregular work that often characterises their labour. Employers that are part of the Welcome platform provide decent work standards and contractual frameworks, which protects refugees against exploitation and improves the quality of their work experience.

- **Work appropriate to qualifications.** Welcome helps refugees find work that aligns with their skills, educational qualifications and expectations, so that work is 'useful' and not just the 'first job found'. This is due also to Welcome's role in increasing refugees' capacity to present their skills and experience, and employers' expanded understanding of their qualifications. Welcome encourages use of a 'skills passport', a tool that helps reframe relevant experience into terms understood by employers. This, in turn, contributes to refugees finding a sense of hope and optimism for their future career.

- **Upskilling and preparation for the hiring process.** Welcome is shown to improve refugees' ability to seek and find work by helping update existing skill sets for the Italian market. In

addition, Welcome helps potential workers navigate the job search process, including support for interview preparation, negotiating contracts, and navigating the steps to obtain a job.

- **Job retention and stability.** Through better skill-to-job matching, contractual stabilisation, information sharing and advice on refugee rights, experiences and needs, provided to both refugees and employers, Welcome helps both sides with increased retention and stability. Refugees are more prepared to meet requirements of the job, and companies have improved capacity to create environments of inclusion.

- **Wider social and emotional benefits.** Refugees who have positive experiences of the labour market also experience better social integration, including building connections with colleagues. Other benefits include better outcomes with finding housing or other social support, improved feelings of hope and optimism, feelings of attachment to a community both within the workplace and beyond.

BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYERS:

This evaluation finds that Welcome produced several benefits to businesses and employers. Specifically Welcome was found to help employers:

- **Address labour and corporate social responsibility goals.** Businesses specifically want to employ refugees in order to meet both their labour market needs and reach their corporate social responsibility goals. Welcome clearly responds to such wishes by providing employers with information and advice about the legality of employing refugees, translating refugees' transferable skills, providing businesses with toolkits and information to support refugee integration in the workplace and coordinating essential services for refugee job candidates, including language training, to support their transition into the workplace.

- **Promote greater tolerance and diversity within the business culture.** Whilst CSR policy goals may have been an initial motivation for engagement with Welcome, involvement brought about other tangible benefits. Business see Welcome as helping to build internal culture and mindset, promote tolerance and respect, and foster a better understanding of diversity and its benefits.

- **Broker relationships between candidates and employers.** A significant part of this function is performed through the Welcome-in-One-Click online platform. The platform, together with offline outreach and consultation with businesses, allows refugees and employers to communicate directly with tools that help bridge understanding. This allows employers to 'read' refugees' CVs, encouraging them to see potential and value where it may, otherwise, have been overlooked. Businesses are then better able to view refugees as valued assets to their workforce.

- **Foster understanding with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).** Welcome helped build a bridge between employers and third-sector organisations. This enhanced collaboration is valuable for businesses seeking expertise in the inclusion process and improving the quality of their CSR work. This connection was facilitated particularly through the Welcome-in-One-Click platform as well as offline outreach and network building done by Welcome Liaison Officers and UNHCR programme leads. The connection enabled CSOs to share information, tailor services where needed, and improve understanding between the two sectors.

- **Create a 'community of experience' with other employers.** This was particularly felt through the annual Welcome Logo awards process, through which businesses can share their experiences of employing refugees and feel supported and encouraged by seeing others doing the same.

- **Connect with UNHCR.** This was seen to help businesses' public image, particularly as recipients of the Welcome award. Collaboration with UNHCR fostered greater confidence and commitment to act on employing refugees.

UNHCR, CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT:

This evaluation finds that Welcome produced several benefits for UNHCR, CSOs and Government stakeholders. Most notably, it has:

- **Helped consolidate networks and advocacy avenues.** Welcome strengthened relationships, particularly between UNHCR and government stakeholders at the Ministry of Labor and municipal level. The evaluation evidenced the esteem with which UNHCR is held, galvanising the agency's role as a voice and liaison point. Welcome also helped build connections among government, CSOs, and businesses. This network structure allows UNHCR, which does not directly support individuals in job placement, to strengthen its reach and resources across Italy.

- **Changed narratives about refugees and their value in the labour market.** Sharing information and examples of successful placements in technical and managerial roles helped promote the idea that refugees can work in high-skilled positions. Improving narratives and raising awareness of the challenges and solutions has compound effects, allowing Welcome's aims in securing quality employment for refugees to become easier as perceptions change over time.

- **Developed a more structured approach to Integration.** UNHCR developed Welcome from an initial award process into a more structured programme focused on labor inclusion. This has led to a suite of tools, narratives and examples about 'what works' in supporting refugees, allowing interested agencies to build on these experiences in the future.

- **Increased the capacity, effectiveness, and profile of CSOs.** By providing a structured intervention model, shared language and a range of tools, Welcome has increased the capacity and effectiveness of CSOs' interventions in accompanying refugee employment inclusion. It has also facilitated a recognition of CSO expertise and value in improving labour integration. In addition, the network structure of Welcome fostered collaboration, shared language and common approaches towards labour integration.

- **Enhanced municipal service delivery.** Municipalities were able to make use of UNHCR and WelcomeNet expertise and experience, leading to a coherence and convergence of objectives between municipalities, CSOs and UNHCR.

Weaknesses, inefficiencies and remaining challenges

While the Welcome programme has achieved strong outcomes, key systemic challenges remain. Results from the Cognitive Fuzzy Mapping (CFM) highlight the critical role of Italian language skills and mental and physical health in enabling successful labour market integration. These factors, whilst outside Welcome's direct mandate, are foundational to refugee inclusion.

The recent defunding of public language support in Italy presents a significant risk to the programme's long-term impact. Similarly, unaddressed mental health needs can reduce refugees' ability to benefit from employment opportunities. Welcome should, therefore, strengthen partnerships with language and health providers, and advocate for sustained investment in these areas. Without addressing these structural dependencies, the programme's successes may be difficult to maintain or scale.

Sustainability

For refugees, benefits of the Welcome programme may be sustained beyond the period of direct support. Refugee workers retain language skills, ability to network with sources of support, job search skills and knowledge of Italian workplace practices and laws, particularly if and when stable employment contracts are attained. Further, for refugees benefitting from better employment outcomes, there are higher levels of hope and optimism, greater social inclusion and community attachment – all of which echo beyond the direct inputs of the programme.

The positive changes identified for businesses go beyond meeting labour needs. They are connected with changes in business cultures and shifts in awareness and perspective. This is particularly signalled in a new understanding of the benefits of hiring refugees and the positive contribution they can bring to a business. More concretely, companies have developed their own internal policies and practices for the inclusion of refugees, which are likely to continue even without the involvement of Welcome. Similarly, businesses participating in Welcome have access to a pool of CSOs as well as the Welcome team itself, which formalises the support they can receive, compared to the inconsistent support available prior to the programme. These benefits have now been embedded and can continue without sustained inputs from Welcome.

However, there are several threats to sustainability. Outcomes which are 'softer' in nature (such as those relating to attitude, knowledge and understanding) and which rely on the activism of particular leaders, may weaken with natural staff turnover without continuing targeted input to support such shifts. The socio-economic context also provides several threats to Welcome's outcomes in the medium to longer terms. For example, language training has been removed from first line reception provision and, overall, state support for refugees' access to Italian language has been diminished. In this landscape of retrenchment, Welcome's partners may need to work harder to deliver the same results, plugging the ever increasing deficit in language and other support that it attempts to leverage into its offer.

Cost effectiveness

This evaluation finds that Welcome is likely to be cost effective. Through employment, Welcome enables refugees to be net contributors to the economy, contrasted with the net cost to the economy of unemployment.[2] Thus, the bar for achieving cost effectiveness is encouragingly low. This aspect, together with a low cost of implementation and evidence of Welcome's efficacy, strongly supports the business case for Welcome. Specifically, from the perspective of UNHCR, the programme demonstrates good value for money – with the cost of facilitating inclusion pathways for UNHCR (estimated at 34 Euro per pathway in 2024) remaining modest versus the employment and integration benefits achieved through the programme.

Learning Points

What can we learn from Welcome about developing a model of an inclusive society, combating xenophobia and racism against asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international and temporary protection?

This evaluation finds that Welcome has helped to foster a more inclusive society, effectively combating xenophobia and racism against refugees. This is demonstrated most directly in how it has

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[2] The authors note that while economic contributions are often used to justify refugee inclusion policies, there is growing consensus amongst researchers that **refugee lives hold intrinsic social, cultural, and civic value** beyond labour market metrics. A narrow focus on economic utility can obscure refugees' rights, resilience, and potential to enrich communities in non-economic ways (Easton-Calabria & Omata, 2018; Krause & Schmidt, 2020).

challenged and improved cultures and mindset towards refugees within the private sector environment, touching hundreds of companies and thousands of employees as a result. This evaluation finds potential, positive, spillover effects into wider society. Through the Welcome Award mechanism, refugee labour inclusion is re-framed as an economic benefit. It positions refugees as people with valuable skills and expertise, not only as victims who need support. This message is played out in a public forum encouraging the wider public to also adjust mindsets towards refugees.

Welcome demonstrates flexibility in its approach to the different needs of different refugee populations (country of origin, trauma experiences, skill and qualification level), through tailored 'inclusion pathways' and proactive outreach to both businesses and CSOs supporting refugees, among other measures, to adapt to the needs of changing refugee populations. The need for this is signalled in the more recent emergence of Ukrainian and Afghan refugees, as well as refugees and asylum seekers with relatively high skill levels.

What can we learn from Welcome about ways to share responsibility in building a society that is more equitable and responsive to the needs of those who have been forced to leave their countries due to violence, conflict and persecution?

This evaluation finds several ways in which Welcome encourages responsibility sharing towards refugees across society. First, involving multiple stakeholders – Government, CSOs, UNHCR and businesses - encourages different actors to play their part and ensures that refugees' needs are met from different angles, combining the resources and expertise of various groups. Recognising the value of each actor harnesses the unique contribution made. Also, shifting the focus from charity to partnership means refugees are empowered as drivers of change. Finally, Welcome demonstrates the importance of having the correct legal framework in place, including both legal norms and fiscal encouragement, to make employing refugees easier.

What can we learn from Welcome about how to strengthen integration opportunities for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international and temporary protection, encouraging other companies to employ refugees by demonstrating commitment and serving as an example?

First and foremost the Welcome Logo award has provided a system to recognise and celebrate companies that demonstrate good practice. This has been a powerful motivator and raised the profile of good practice and success stories where inclusive hiring practices have been adopted. As the programme involves companies from different sectors and of different sizes, it provides a network of advocates who can encourage other businesses to follow suit. Finally, the programme frames refugee inclusion as a business win rather than a charitable act. It has done so by highlighting the benefits that refugees bring both in meeting labour needs and providing diverse perspectives and skills.

Conclusions

This evaluation finds that the Welcome – Working for Refugee Integration programme is a relevant, effective, and sustainable response to the challenges of refugee labour market integration in Italy. It has made demonstrable progress across its core objectives: supporting meaningful partnerships between employers and civil society organisations (CSOs), facilitating decent employment opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers, and promoting inclusive, respectful workplace practices.

The programme is highly relevant to the current socio-political context, addressing systemic barriers to refugee inclusion while aligning with both UNHCR strategic priorities and national integration goals. Its design — anchored in co-created job inclusion pathways and supported by digital platforms — responds flexibly to evolving needs on both the supply and demand sides of the labour market.

Evidence indicates that Welcome has delivered meaningful impact: increasing employment outcomes, strengthening employer practices, improving collaboration across sectors, and enhancing public narratives around refugee inclusion. It has built a credible platform for shared responsibility among government, business, and civil society. Nonetheless, persistent challenges remain. Structural issues — such as slow and inconsistent bureaucracy, particularly regarding residence permits — continue to delay or derail refugee employment. Meso-level inefficiencies in job-matching systems and inconsistent stakeholder communication also hinder progress. At the micro level, language barriers, mobility constraints, and limited job permanence remain common.

Despite these constraints, Welcome demonstrates strong potential for long-term sustainability. Many participating companies have institutionalised inclusive practices that are likely to continue beyond the programme's direct involvement. CSOs have gained capacity, visibility, and collaborative networks. Refugees report gains in skills, confidence, and social inclusion that echo beyond employment outcomes. However, risks remain, particularly regarding the retention of "soft" outcomes (e.g., mindset shifts, inter-organisational trust) and the scalability of highly tailored programme models.

To maintain and build on current achievements, future efforts should focus on embedding Welcome's good practices into national and regional policy frameworks, bolstering structural supports (e.g., language access, housing advice), and strengthening micro-level monitoring and feedback loops.

Recommendations

The findings and conclusions point to a number of recommendations for UNHCR. In addition to the three formal recommendations directed to UNHCR, this evaluation also includes a set of suggestions aimed at key stakeholder groups. These suggestions are intended to inform and support broader reflection and collaboration but are not subject to formal tracking by UNHCR. As these stakeholder groups consist of multiple, often independent entities, a formal management response will not be required for these items.

These suggestions are offered in the spirit of constructive engagement and are based on the evaluation's findings and observations. They aim to contribute to ongoing dialogue and improvement across the wider ecosystem of actors involved in the Welcome Programme.

Recommended actions	Responsible	Anticipated timeframe
Recommendation 1: Build on and strengthen collaboration with local communities, municipalities, businesses and CSOs to ensure that programming is responsive to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers.	UNHCR Italy MCO lead	6-12 months
Recommendation 2: Create stronger links to services on key issues directly related to labour market integration, with emphasis on refugee health and mental health, housing, and social protection benefits.	UNHCR Italy MCO lead	6-12 months
Recommendation 3: Engage in advocacy to endorse and encourage good practice exemplified in the Welcome experience across other institutions that are responsible for refugee integration. This will involve making the case that labour market integration is deeply affected by the wider integration challenge.	UNHCR Italy MCO lead	6-12 months

Suggestions for CSOs and the Addecco Foundation

1. Codify and share good practice between organisations to foster collaboration and innovation.
2. Advocate for policy change. Build on gains made in increased visibility and lobbying power with the government, using UNHCR as a useful conduit, to engage in advocacy to influence policy regarding refugee integration, ensuring that the voices of refugees are included in policy discussions.

Suggestions for Local and National Governments:

1. Strengthen public communication to endorse how refugee integration policy provides an economic win and build the business case for investment in refugee labour inclusion, particularly in terms of language support.
2. Learn from findings of this evaluation concerning employers' needs and their interest in refugee inclusion. This involves continued consultation with employers through a formalized working group or committee to advise on what types of support could help businesses to meet their recruitment needs through refugee integration.

Suggestions for Employers and employer organizations:

1. Build on gains made through involvement in Welcome by formalising integration policy and practice. These should be monitored regularly for effectiveness.
2. Improve the medium to long-term monitoring of employment outcomes for refugees within the business. This could be done through annual surveys and would allow organisations to improve future hiring practices and support job security and permanence for refugees.
3. Regularly conduct anonymous and non-judgemental listening exercises to learn from both refugee and non-refugee employees, to understand potential tensions or areas for improved communication. These exercises may also inform on the sustainability of a company's inclusion policy.

1. Introduction and background

1.1 Regional and national context[3]

1. Over recent decades, Italy—traditionally a country of emigration—became a destination for immigrants (1990s to the early 2000s). The flow of economic migrants to Italy began to increase significantly from the early 2000s, which coincided with a politicisation of migration and increasingly restrictive policies (Colini, 2022). This serves as a backdrop to what has been regularly termed the 'refugee crisis' in Italy and across the wider European Union (see Ortensi and Ambrosetti, 2022; Fasani et al, 2021). The refugee crisis refers to a time between 2014 and 2019, when a large increase in the number of asylum seekers arriving in Europe was observed, particularly via dangerous sea crossings. Refugee arrivals to the EU doubled between 2014 and 2015 (Eurostat, 2016). By the end of 2016, nearly 5.2 million refugees and migrants reached EU territory (UNHCR, 2022). In the last 2 years, there has been a similar increase in refugee numbers. In 2023, the EU, Switzerland and Norway received 1.1 million asylum applications, representing an increase of 18% compared to the previous year (EU Agency for Asylum, 2024). Yet, according to the International Rescue Committee, Italy is at the centre of the most recent European refugee crisis.[4]

2. Within Italy, Sicily experienced the highest number of disembarkation of refugees in 2022, followed by Calabria, Apulia, Sardinia, Tuscany, Lazio and Liguria. During the same period, there were over 20,000 arrivals by land and an estimated 15,000 by air in the country. The increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers over the last two years has been linked to the Ukraine war and increasing numbers of refugees from West Africa, particularly Burkina Faso.[5] There has been a corresponding increase in asylum applications in Italy, reaching 135,818 in 2023 - a 42% increase between March 2023 and 2024.[6] As of mid 2023, there were 308,663 refugees, 102,028 asylum seekers and 3,002 stateless people in Italy.[7] By far the largest number of refugees originate from Ukraine, followed by Nigeria and Afghanistan. The largest number of asylum seekers were from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Egypt.[8] Beyond numerical changes, these recent trends have also been associated with changes in the profile of the refugee population, with an increase in the overall proportion of female refugees as a result of the arrival of Ukrainians, and an increase in overall education levels among refugees linked to the increased number of refugees from Afghanistan, Ukraine and Venezuela. Refugee Status Determination applications show that between 2020 and 2024, women consistently make up about 20% of asylum claims.[9]

3. The large increase in refugees and asylum seekers over the last decade has created tense political debate within host communities, as policy makers sought suitable responses to manage reception and integration. While there are pockets of good practice, overall, integration pathways for refugees and asylum seekers are characterised as fragmented, with little policy coordination between actors, or between laws and rights. Legislation that would be supportive of refugee integration and protection has been poorly or slowly implemented. The reception system contains deep holes in services available for refugee populations. These have, to a large extent, been

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[3] See Annex 5.1 for full literature review.

[4] See IRC Italy Monitoring Report 2024- Profiles and needs of people arriving to Trieste from the Balkan Route, March, 2025: *https://www.rescue.org/eu/report/irc-italy-monitoring-report-2024-profiles-and-needs-people-arriving-trieste-balkan-route.*

[5] UNHCR arrivals dashboard, 2023, based on 2022 data.

[6] UNHCR Italy weekly snapshot, February, 2024.

[7] UNHCR Italy, Multi-Year Strategic Plan, 2024.

[8] UNHCR Italy, Multi-Year Strategic Plan, 2024.

[9] See Data from EuroStat 2020-2024: available here: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/migration-asylum/asylum/database

plugged by civil society actors who have mobilised to support refugee communities in both social protection and integration (Collini, 2022; Fasani, 2021).

4. Restrictions on refugee protection take place within a context of demographic imbalance and a tightening labour market: the Italian economy needs new workers. Entire economic sectors are dependent on foreign workers, including the social care sector (Chiaromonte and Federico, 2021). The Italian labour force (active individuals in the age bracket 20-74) is projected to decrease by 8.3% over the period 2022-2070[10], whilst the foreign population—including refugees—is considerably younger, leading to a net contribution to the available potential workforce (Chiaromonte and Federico, 2021). These trends suggest a mismatch between economic and social needs (workforce and demographic ageing) on one hand, and public policy relating to migration on the other. Labour market integration (insertion or activation) and social protection are two of the 'main domains' that determine refugee integration (Dimitriadis and Ambrosini, 2022). Yet the two strands often do not work in harmony, due largely to increasingly restrictive refugee protection policy. Demand and supply factors, spanning structural, contextual and individual domains, result in a poor quality of experience for refugees and asylum seekers (and migrants in general) in the Italian labour market.

Overview of the UNHCR operation in the country

5. UNHCR established a country office in Italy in 1954. In 2020, the Multi-Country Office was created, covering Italy, the Holy See and San Marino. In late 2020, UNHCR undertook a strategic review of its operations in Italy. The resulting multi-year strategy, "MCO Italy Strategic Directions 2021-2024: A Solutions-Centred Approach to Mixed Movement",[11] is aligned with the Global Compact on Refugees[12] and has a strong focus on refugee integration and solidarity. MCO Italy works with the Italian government, partners and stakeholders towards achieving the following strategic goals:

- Expanding solutions for persons UNHCR serves and addressing secondary movements;
- Safeguarding best practices in protection;
- Enhancing Italy's role as a UNHCR global partner.

6. These strategic goals correspond to the needs identified in annual participatory assessments, notably: (i) challenges related to integration including access to housing, job opportunities, documentation, social networks; (ii) access to reliable information to facilitate integration, prompt identification and referral of persons with specific needs from arrival to reception, in particular for women and children at risk; (iii) access to territorial services, due to limited outreach and community participation, as well as exploitation and marginalization in rural and urban areas and informal settlements; (iv) obstacles to access protection procedures and (v) protection from racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

7. Based on the needs assessment, the above strategic goals and cross-cutting operational priorities of child protection, prevention and response to GBV, refugee and community engagement and improving public perception of refugees and migrants, MCO Italy's interventions in 2023-2025 aim to have an impact in three main areas: i) improve the protection environment and government protection policies and services, in line with international protection standards and AGD principles; (ii) meaningfully engage people UNHCR serves and host communities in protection and solutions,

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[10] See: Italian Economic Policy Committee - Ageing Working Group, 2024: *https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/document/download/82b762d7-21ce-4992-aa97-888fd2c66205_en?filename=2024-ageing-report-country-fiche-Italy.pdf*

[11] "MCO Italy Strategic Directions 2021-2024: A Solutions-Centred Approach to Mixed Movement" (internal document)

[12] See UNHCR, *Global Compact on Refugees*, UN Doc. A/73/12 (Part II), adopted 17 December 2018. Available at: *https://globalcompactrefugees.org/about-digital-platform/global-compact-refugees*

and ensure they have access to national systems and an established system for identifying and referring persons with specific needs; and (iii) strengthen prospects for complementary pathways and local integration for refugees and stateless persons in Italy.

8. Given the MCO's focus on solutions and integration, the Welcome. Working for Refugee Integration programme (henceforth 'Welcome') forms an important component in the wider system of the MCOs' strategy. This configuration allows Welcome to leverage different components to deliver its core activities of skills and job matching and awareness raising with employers. A main connection for Welcome are the 'Spazio Comune' Integration Hubs. The Hubs are a collaboration between Italian Municipalities and UNHCR, with private sector support in some cases. As of this writing, there are Integration Hubs in Bari, Milan, Naples, Rome and Turin, with others opening in 2025. The Hubs act as 'one stop shops' providing an array of services or signposting to refugees and asylum seekers. Welcome Liaison Officers are based within these Hubs, providing a vital link between Welcome's labour activation work and the wider constellation of support that refugees may need, including language training, legal advice, signposting to health or other services. Figure 1 below illustrates how Welcome aligns with other elements on refugee integration.

Figure 1: Welcome as part of the wider UNHCR integration programming
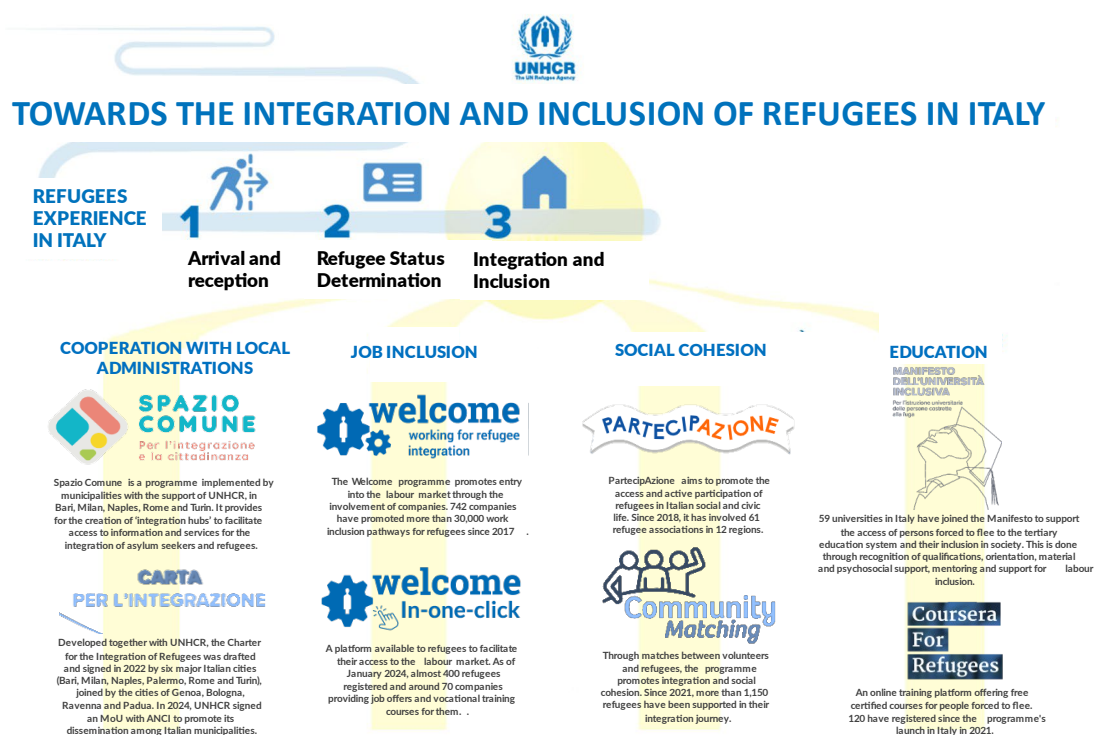
9. In absolute monetary terms, Welcome had an annual budget of USD 547,922 in 2024 – including programmatic and staff costs- compared to the budget for UNHCR Italy of USD 4,549,847.63.

1.2 Overview of Welcome

10. Welcome was established in 2016, becoming fully operational in 2017.[5] Welcome is implemented by the MCO, in close partnership with UNHCR's Private Sector Partnerships (PSP) office in Rome. As highlighted in the initial literature review, whilst refugees do play an active and positive role in the workplace and contribute economically and socially, in practice, there are numerous structural and individual barriers to their labour market integration. These barriers are multi-faceted and

interconnected, requiring a coordinated approach that simultaneously prepares employers to engage refugees, enables refugees to gain or demonstrate required skills and experience, and facilitates a supporting social architecture linked to civil society and government policies and services.   Welcome thus seeks to increase refugees' (including refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, asylum seekers, those with temporary protection and stateless people) inclusion in the labour market through a partnership between the private sector, CSOs, and government at the local and national level.

11. The objectives of Welcome are:

- Demonstrate adherence to a model of an inclusive society, combatting xenophobia and racism against asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international and temporary protection;
- Share responsibility in building a society that is more equitable and responsive to the needs of those who have been forced to leave their countries due to violence, conflict and persecution;
- Strengthen integration opportunities for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international and temporary protection, encouraging other companies to employ refugees by demonstrating commitment and serving as an example.

12. Based on a whole-of-society approach, the Welcome programme improves the lives of refugees by helping them find decent work in line with their skills and expectations, by raising awareness among private companies on international protection and the value of diversity in the work environment, and by promoting corporate partnerships between companies and local NGOs aimed at co-designing job inclusion pathways for refugees.   In the context of the Welcome programme, UNHCR and partners created a network (WelcomeNet) of around 100 CSOs supporting the project at the local level, with skills and educational profiling, mentorships and other services to both companies and refugees.

13. Prior to 2024, Welcome did not have a specific focus on gender, and did not target or differentiate services for women. In 2020, UNHCR modified the award candidate application process to be able to track the number of women refugees served, resulting in the following percentages: 2020-2021[13] - 10% 2022 - 18%, 2023 – 20% and 2024 – 19%.[14] The gender distribution of workers participating in Welcome mirrors the general trend in Italy for asylum claims.[15] Starting in 2024, UNHCR began a collaboration with partner organization Differenza Donna, building on a programme implemented through the MCO's Community-Based Protection Unit. The new initiative creates specific labour inclusion pathways for refugee women served through Differenza Donna's programmes on victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

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[13] 2020-2021 monitoring data covers 2 years due to modified services during the COVID -19 pandemic.
[14] Welcome Programme Monitoring data, 2025.
[15] As noted earlier, the number of female asylum applications registered in Italy from 2020-2024 is 20%- see Eurostat dashboard for further details: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/migration-asylum/asylum/database

Figure 2: Welcome programme design

14. **Welcome and We Welcome Logos**: The Welcome logo is awarded to companies that hired, provided internships or training to refugees. Starting in 2017 with 67 companies, the programme has grown to 253 companies awarded in 2024. The We Welcome logo, started in 2019, is awarded to service providers including organizations, associations, local authorities, employment services and others that supported Welcome companies in ways such as training, identifying and profiling workers, and mentoring services to refugees. In total, 132 groups have received the We Welcome award since 2019. Many We Welcome award recipients are part of the WelcomeNet. Overall, a total of 670 companies have been awarded over the six editions of the award, many over multiple years, and 91% of the companies awarded in 2024 received support from a CSO.[16]

15. Welcome and We Welcome logos are awarded each year in a well-publicized ceremony in June, on or near World Refugee Day (20 June.) UNHCR launches a call for applications due by around December. Companies and service providers apply, undergo a series of assessments and due diligence checks, and receive notification of the outcome in May of the following year. Successful applicants then receive the award as part of the World Refugee Day event.

16. **WelcomeNet:** The WelcomeNet is a network of over 120 civil society organizations (CSOs) and municipal job services that provide information, training and/or coaching to both refugees and companies, forming corporate partnerships. The corporate partnerships facilitate co-design of 'job inclusion pathways.' Job inclusion pathways are tailor-made packages of support, which may include vocational training, language support and mentoring as needed to fulfil the labour needs of the company given the skills and experience of the prospective workers. They address challenges and maximise opportunities to encourage labour market participation in specific locations, businesses or both. WelcomeNet organizations also help with outreach, helping to

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[16] Welcome Programme Monitoring Data, 2025.

promote the Welcome award, particularly to SMEs that may not have prior experience hiring refugees.

17. **Welcome Liaison Officers (WLOs):** Under the coordination of UNHCR partner the Adecco Foundation, WLOs provide localized support to the Welcome ecosystem. WLOs work at the municipal level to expand the number of participating businesses, reach out to service providers, oversee inclusion pathways, detect additional needs, and train, coach and mentor refugees, businesses, and CSOs as needed. WLOs are located in Bari, Milan, Naples, Rome and Turin[17], and ensure connection and coherence with services provided through the Spazio Comune integration hubs (see Figure 1).

18. **Welcome-In-One-Click Platform:** The Welcome-In-One-Click platform digitally connects refugees to jobs or inclusion pathways. Starting in 2024, refugees can register their interest in work, profile their skills, and search for training and employment opportunities. They can also link to WelcomeNet organizations to receive direct support. The refugee applicant profile then shows a link to the WelcomeNet member, enabling the recruiting company to contact the organization about the potential applicant. This helps companies in two ways: 1) as a guarantee that the applicant is prepared and potentially appropriate for the job and 2) to facilitate legal support in the hiring process (particularly for companies that lack experience hiring refugees.) Likewise, companies offer jobs and training, and can receive applications directly from candidates. WelcomeNet members can also register on the platform, see job offers, and notify their refugee cohort about opportunities. UNHCR and Adecco Foundation monitor all activity of the platform. It should be noted that while the Welcome-In-One-Click platform has the capacity to track recruitment activities, potential applicants often seek companies directly and may be hired outside of the tracking mechanism.

19. **Support tools:** The Welcome team, together with local partners, created a guide for labour inclusion of refugees directed to companies. The guide provides foundational information on legal status, the reception system, and the recruitment and hiring procedure. UNHCR also provides Italian translations of key international documents such as the OECD policy paper on engaging employers in hiring refugee workers and the joint UNCTAD/IOM/UNHCR policy guide on entrepreneurship for migrants and refugees. The Welcome team also created tools for service providers, notably, the Employability Tool. This instrument enables the WelcomeNet member to assess the educational background, skills, experience, and needs in terms of reskilling or upskilling. It also includes an assessment of Italian language skills.

20. **Training and capacity building:** Between 2017 and 2021, Welcome staff, primarily Adecco Foundation, delivered a series of webinars to companies and NGOs. For companies, trainings initially focused on the legal aspects of refugee legislation. Subsequent modules included information about hiring practices, reception, and including refugees in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion goals. For service providers, trainings focused on job orientation, tutoring and mentoring, preparing refugees for the selection process, and creating an inclusive work environment. WelcomeNet members also receive training on use of the Employability Tool. In 2024, the Welcome team held a series of webinars and in-person trainings on use of the Welcome-In-One-Click platform.

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[17] WLOs will also be in Brescia and Bologna as of 2025

UNHCR's Role in Delivering the Welcome Programme

21. As described, UNHCR provided the original design and funding for Welcome. It began as an attempt to help refugees find decent employment. In 2016, refugees requested UNHCR to focus integration efforts on job inclusion. Findings from the MCO's first participatory assessment showed access to decent work as the main concern raised across all refugee focus groups.[18] Based on this need, MCO and PSP staff developed the Welcome award and began outreach to companies, acquiring awareness and understanding of corporate hiring needs and practices along the way. In 2017, UNHCR formalized the partnership with the Adecco Foundation, providing business/human resources expertise and further outreach to the private sector. Over the years, based on lessons learned and trial and error, UNHCR and the Adecco Foundation have adapted Welcome to the model shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Welcome Operational Structure

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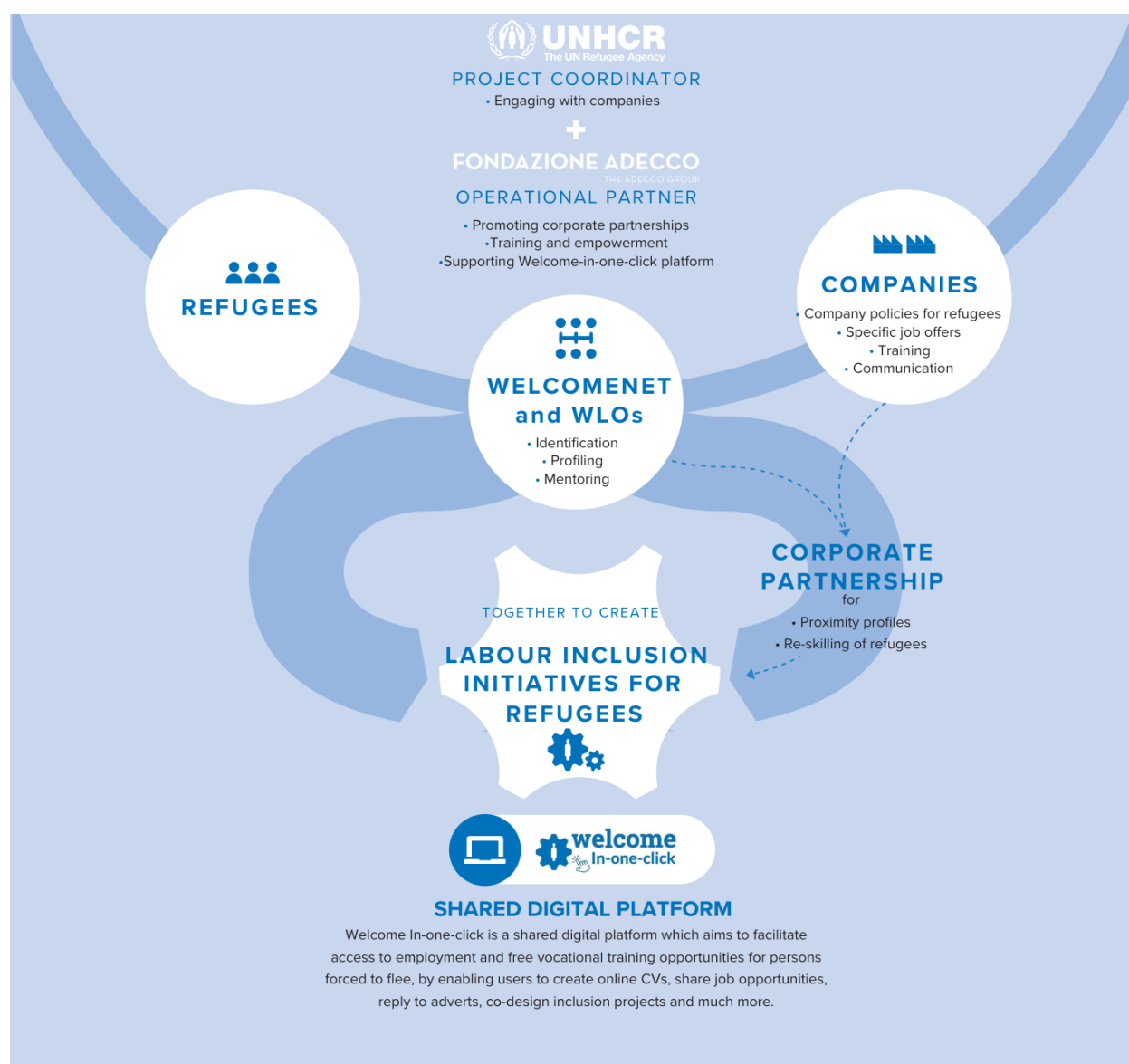
[18] UNHCR, Annual Participatory Assessment Report, 2016.

2. Purpose, scope and method of the evaluation

2.1 Purpose

22. The evaluation seeks to provide evidence to assess the performance of Welcome, analysis of lessons learned, and recommendations to further strengthen the programme and as input for the Multi-Country Office's (MCO) 2025-2029 strategic planning process, as outlined in the terms of reference (ToR, see Annex 1). Broadly, the evaluation aimed to examine – in line with the ToR – the relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and lessons learned from the Welcome programme. Specifically, the objectives of the evaluation were to:

    a. Assess the strategic relevance, effectiveness of programme performance, and sustainability of achievements under the three main objectives of Welcome over the period 2020-2024.
    b. Determine the extent to which the structure, partnerships, capacity of UNHCR and ways of working are aligned and fit-for-purpose to carry out the Welcome programme strategy.
    c. Document good practices, lessons learnt and recommendations to improve the Welcome programme.

2.2 Scope

23. The scope of the evaluation covers a three and a half-year period, from 2020 to mid 2024, with additional consideration of actions taken since the programme was established in 2016. Geographically, the evaluation covers the whole of Italy where Welcome is operational. In terms of programmatic scope and boundaries, Welcome is directed to all refugees and asylum seekers of working age seeking employment.

24. The main audience for the evaluation is the UNHCR MCO Italy Country Representative, Deputy Representative, Solutions Team and Private Sector Partnerships Team. The secondary audience will be in-country partners and stakeholders as relevant, as well as UNHCR staff from the Bureau for Europe, and UNHCR Durable Solutions and Livelihoods and Socio-Economic Inclusion staff from HQ, Regional Bureaux and other operations. The study does not explicitly address effects or challenges relating to climate change.

2.3 Evaluation approach

25. The evaluation covers three years of the programme (from 2020 to mid 2024), which, as the programme is ongoing, provides an opportunity for the evaluation to be both summative and formative. It was important that the evaluation approach reflect the complexity and fluidity of the Welcome programme, operating as it does across multiple domains and within changing contexts. The evaluation, therefore, treats desired changes and aligned theories of change as nested, non-linear and multi-faceted. In this framework, change is understood in the broader context of the Italian economy, politics and social norms, and how the Welcome programme responded to these.

2.4 Method

26. The evaluation took a grounded-theory (data-led) approach, to prioritise and analyse the factors most important to those participating in or affected by the Welcome Programme. The evaluation team employed mixed methods, integrating qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, and gathered insights and perspectives from key stakeholder groups including refugees and their employers, UNHCR staff, representatives of CSOs, and relevant government bodies involved. This approach ensured triangulation at both the methodological and respondent group level. Qualitative data collection was carried out with respondents from a diverse range of geographical locations in Italy, ensuring broad coverage of the areas where Welcome works. Additionally, the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) provided guidance on priority geographical areas.

Figure 4: Sequenced Evaluation Methods Deployed
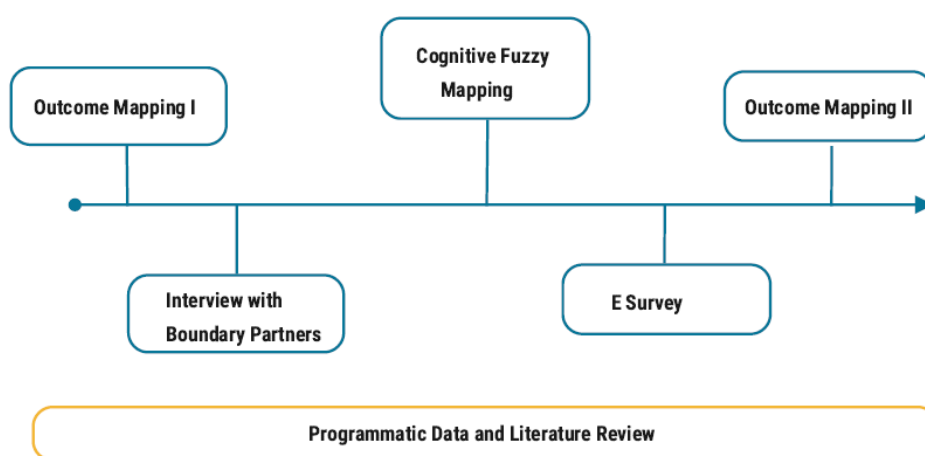
27. A range of methodological tools supported the grounded-theory based approach, including cognitive fuzzy mapping, outcome mapping and most significant change approaches. These are described as follows:

Outcome mapping

28. A Formal Theory of Change was not built during the course of the design of the Welcome Programme. Instead of reconstructing post facto a retrofitted theory of change, we elected to construct a logical framework around Outcome Mapping, which defines and measures progress iteratively. This method is useful for complex, evolving programmes like Welcome, ensuring the evaluation is grounded in stakeholder values. It does this by first setting out the metrics that will be used to benchmark outcomes of the programme through a consultative workshop with key programme stakeholders – the Outcome Mapping workshop (see annex 3.1 for details). Following the workshop, a comprehensive draft Outcome Map which charts the programme's mission, goals, boundary partners, progress markers, any existing evidence relating to progress markers, potential confounders and context, and unexpected potential outcomes flowing from the programme. The Outcome Map formed the starting point for all subsequent data collection, the purpose of which was to 'validate' and augment the map to address the evaluation questions (as set out in the evaluation matrix, see Annex 4).

29. Cognitive Fuzzy Mapping (CFM) is a semi-quantitative way of charting different experts' mental models. It plots the relationships between different elements of any system, in this case to explore the system-wide challenges and potential solutions faced by refugees in the Italian labour market. A total of eight workshops were held in Milan (n=2), Rome (n=3), Turin (n=1), Naples (n=1), and Bari (n=1). Participants in each group shared similar characteristics related to their involvement with the Welcome programme: refugees and asylum seekers; CSOs as implementing partners; UNHCR staff and colleagues; and business leaders/HR or hiring managers. Workshop participants were purposively selected, following identification of boundary partners following the Outcome Mapping workshop.

Table 1: Cognitive Fuzzy Mapping workshop composition and location

Location	Boundary Partner group	Number of Persons attending
Milan	Refugees and Asylum Seekers	7
Milan	Civil Society Organisations	6
Rome	Refugees and Asylum Seekers	5
Rome	Business Leaders and HR managers	3
Rome	UNHCR and Implementing Partners	4
Bari	Implementing Partners	7
Turin	UNHCR and Implementing Partners	11
Napoli	UNHCR and Implementing Partners	5

Interviews with boundary partners

30. Primary qualitative data was gathered through a programme of one-to-one and matched pair interviews across boundary partners groups (those directly affected by, or contributing to, Welcome) as identified in the Outcome Mapping workshops. These groups comprised of: refugees who have been involved with the Welcome programme;[19] refugees who considered but did not, in the end, participate in the programme;[20] businesses and employers involved in the Welcome programme; representatives of NGOs and CSOs implementing the programme (members of 'WelcomeNet'); UNHCR staff involved at the senior operational level in programme implementation; and government representatives with an interest and involvement in the programme at both national and local levels. Stratified purposive sampling was used to select

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[19] It is important to note that many beneficiaries and, indeed, programme partners may not be directly aware of the full formulation of the Welcome programme or that the elements they have interacted with in fact are organised under the 'Welcome' aegis. We acknowledge this possibility and have reflected it in our methodology, which focuses on phenomenological data and first-hand experience, which the research team will later track back to inputs of the programme.

[20] These individuals may be those who did not express interest in being supported in an inclusion pathway at all, and those who were not, ultimately selected for a pathway (post, training, apprenticeship etc).

respondents, which involved weighting intended samples for interviews according to both the research questions and the composition of boundary partner groups. Anticipated sample ranges and final sample sizes are identified in Table 2.

Table 2:Interview sample: anticipated and actual

Boundary Partner group	Sample size range	Final sample size
Refugees/asylum seekers	20-30 individuals	17
NGO/CSO implementing partners	8-10 individuals	6
National government administration	3-5 individuals	0
Local or regional government with responsibility for reception	3-5 individuals	3
UNHCR management	3-5 individuals	9
Businesses and employers involved in the Welcome programme	15-25 individuals	7

31. The core purpose of the interviews with refugees was to capture respondents' lived experience and priorities for labour market integration. The interviews sought to understand, longitudinally, how challenges had changed over time and if the Welcome Programme responded to such changes. Interviews with participating companies, NGOs/CSOs, government departments and UNHCR sought to understand, longitudinally, how challenges for refugees and host communities in terms of labour market integration have changed over time and if the Welcome Programme responded to such changes.

Most significant change exercise

32. Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology is a way of harnessing people's intuitive understanding of what is 'important in their view', using the colloquial and simple metric of 'significance'. MSC was incorporated into both interview scripts and the e-survey.

Electronic semi-structured survey with key boundary partners

33. An electronic survey instrument (e-survey) was developed for distribution to key boundary partner groups. While the original intent was to share the survey with all groups identified through the Outcome Mapping process, this strategy was revised after recurring themes emerged and sufficient insights had been gathered from refugees, asylum seekers, NGO, and UNHCR respondents. In other words, the evaluation team determined that data saturation had been effectively reached within these groups. Consequently, the e-survey was distributed instead to a purposive and opportunistic sample of business and Human Resources managers, who were considered under-represented among interview and workshop participants. A total of 126 individuals—each representing a different company awarded the Welcome Logo in the previous two award rounds—were selected to receive the survey. This selection ensured that companies with active engagement in the Welcome initiative were prioritized, while also avoiding

overextension of outreach to a broader cohort with only peripheral involvement. Participation was anonymous and voluntary. A 7.9% response rate was achieved with the surveys.

Review of programme data and other secondary literature

34. Secondary data sources were identified and analysed alongside programmatic data such as data on employment, numbers of trainings received and budget data. These are further explained in the evaluation matrix in annex 4.

Outcome Mapping Finalisation

35. Following data collection and initial analysis, a follow up Outcome Mapping workshop was conducted with the same participants in the first workshop. At the workshop, initial primary data analysis was presented to 'validate the validation' of the Outcome Map – that is, to discuss whether or not progress as intended or needed has been made. Following the workshop, the final outcome map was drawn up (see Annex 2).

Data analysis and report writing

36. Data from the qualitative fieldwork was coded and thematically analysed according to the evaluation questions aligned with relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the programme. Analysis was deductive as well as inductive so that unforeseen as well as anticipated themes were addressed. Data analysis was first carried out according to Outcome Mapping validation. Data analysis assessed the quality of evidence, for example, how widespread reports of these changes were, how many change stories were recorded that relate to these outcomes, and the mechanisms of change. It was also crucial was to assess to whom the changes occurred, what exactly changed (situation pre- and post-programme) and why.

37. All data was triangulated at various levels, for example: existing evidence and insight from the literature review was triangulated with primary qualitative data; comparisons were made of data across respondent groups to identify the change experienced on the ground as well as strength of evidence and difference between these.

Ethical considerations

38. The research team committed to sign the UNHCR Code of Conduct and adhere to UNHCR's confidentiality requirements. The ethical framework employed in this evaluation complies with the ethical principles of the United Nations system of impartiality, credibility and usefulness, and as such pays particular attention to protecting sources and data, gaining required informed consent; respect for dignity and diversity, minimising risks, harms and constraints for those who were involved in this evaluation. In general, as with all Opcit Research projects, we applied our own robust research ethics and data protection policies which comply with GDPR, UNHCR data protection policy and the UN's Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis. The evaluation also pledged to adhere to the wider UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluations, adopting appropriate practices relating to integrity, accountability, respect and beneficence (see Annex 5.3 for further details on ethical considerations and data management). Ethical considerations were reviewed within the team at regular intervals throughout the evaluation.

2.5 Evaluation limitations

39. A number of limitations are noted for the evaluation. These concern both methodological limitations and practical ones.

- Methodologically, the study is based within a critical realist framework, and does not provide quasi experimental findings of change. Whilst the latter was not a requirement of the ToR, the lack of 'counterfactual' or 'control' means that the findings may be exposed to claims that the 'null' hypothesis is not proven. Key respondents were identified through an opportunistic approach which is also purposive. This means that key informants may not represent a perfectly weighted sample of the whole sampling frame. However, these risks are again mitigated methodologically, most importantly through triangulation of the main 'stakeholder' groups and data collection methods, and by using data saturation in relation to sample sizes.

- The Welcome programme takes place in a complex context, in which many different factors will affect refugee and asylum seekers' outcomes. The programme itself operates across various domains, involving different actors. This complexity makes attribution of observed changes difficult. However, the selected methodology is deliberately attuned to address complexity. It involves many ways in which observed changes are 'traced back' to specific mechanisms. In this way, the programme logic can be described and a 'plausible explanation'[21] provided of the programmes' outcomes.

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[21] Pawson, R., & Tilley, N. (1997). An introduction to scientific realist evaluation. In E. Chelimsky & W. R. Shadish (Eds.), *Evaluation for the 21st century: A handbook* (pp. 405–418). Sage Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483348896.n29

3. Key findings

40. The findings are set out thematically, in line with the evaluation matrix (see Annex 4), and according to the broad DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness and sustainability, that is: how far the design of the Welcome programme was appropriate for meeting the challenges it set out to address, to what extent it was successful in achieving those goals, and how sustainable the changes that have come about as a result of the programme are. The section concludes with reflections on learning in all three objective areas.

3.1 Relevance

41. This line of enquiry addresses the extent to which the Welcome programme was the correct design to meet the challenges it set out to address. This is approached through the following questions, with answers summarised:

Evaluation Question	Summary Answer
Was the methodology relevant to promoting refugee integration within the Italian Labour Market? (Area of Inquiry 1, evaluation matrix)	Yes, the evidence strongly suggest that the Welcome programme addressed key components needed to promote integration in the labour market, namely: improved information about job opportunities; increased recognition of transferable skills and expertise; facilitating access to direct on the job and external training, including language support.
Was it relevant for encouraging employers to meet their corporate social responsibility (CSR), diversity and inclusion goals? (Area of Inquiry 1, evaluation matrix)	The Welcome built on employers' existing motivation to deliver on CSR and Diversity and Inclusion goals. This was done primarily through good practice and information sharing, direct support and advice on how to appropriately include refugees in the workplace.
What other challenges did the boundary partners feel were pressing and why, and was Welcome set up to address these from the outset?	Refugee mental and physical health was regularly signalled as playing an important role in refugees' ability to integrate into the labour market. Whilst this is outside of Welcome's purview, Welcome has linkages with relevant other programming in this domain.

Relevance of Welcome Programme Design and Method

42. **Finding 1: The design and approach Welcome adopts is relevant to the specific challenges refugees faced in gaining access to employment, and appropriately matches the three key factors required for refugee integration into the labour market in Italy: information about job opportunities, recognition of transferable skills and expertise, and access to direct on the job and external training. This is bolstered by providing tailored support to individual refugees.**

43. The evaluation observes that data collected from refugees, partners and businesses, and in line with international research on this subject, supports the rationale for the Welcome design in the following ways:

Providing Tailored Support to Refugees

44. Welcome provides targeted support to refugees and asylum seekers with job search activities including CV writing and interview rehearsal. Our analysis from the qualtative data suggest that job search support is a useful mechanism for encouraging refugees' engagement with the labour market. We observe that recognition of skills, qualities and formal qualifications is essential for both refugees' hopes and ambitions, ability to find work and confidence levels. Data collected from business leaders during the course of the evaluation strongly supports the objectives of offering tailored advice and guidance on skills identification as well as co-designing training offers and upskilling to meet the needs of businesses.

Providing Accurate Job Information through accessible platforms

45. Regarding information about employment, Welcome supports refugees in a number of ways. The Welcome-in-One-Click platform enables online access to information about job opportunities and free vocational training. The platform also allows refugees to create their own candidate profiles and search for job offers matching their skills. Additionally, Welcome provides an architecture for refugees to access support locally, including writing CVs and preparing for job interviews. This is primarily facilitated through the Welcome-in-One-Click platform, which signposts to local support. It is also done via Welcome Liaison Officers, based within Spazio Comune integration hubs, who may support refugees with several job-search activities including CV writing, interview preparation and signposting.

Supporting Qualfication and Skills recognition

46. Welcome programme materials frequently highlight the importance of supporting refugees to have their existing skills and qualifications, including degrees, recognised in Italy. This is done in several ways. First, through the Welcome-in-One-Click online platform where refugees are able to create profiles outlining their skills and experience and apply for positions accordingly. While not an official recognition, the process helps refugees communicate their background in a clear and orderly way appreciated by employers. Second, Welcome engages 'WelcomeNet' members with expertise in recognising skills and talent and who may understand qualifications gained outside of Italy. These partners can signal potential job candidates to companies with skills gaps. Third, Welcome engages in awareness raising activities, meetings, discussions, and sharing guidance with employers to highlight refugees' skills, competencies and talents that may be transferable. The annual Welcome Award also highlights refugees' contributions to businesses, and helps counter negative preconceptions by publicising how refugees have been able to contribute directly to productivity.

Supporting access to Training and Skill development

47. The Welcome programme connects refugees to training, enabling them to improve skills and knowledge for the workplace. Welcome does not directly fund training, rather, it provides the links between training programmes, employers, and interested refugees. Training packages can then be adapted to a specific workplace or skills set. Trainings included re-skilling and upskilling for a specific labour market. This support encourages refugees to gain qualifications, or to re-qualify and specialise, and may build on existing skill sets. Support also helps to align refugees' expectations to the labour market. Regarding language, the Welcome-in-One-Click platform allows refugees to search for free language courses to improve their employability. Likewise, Welcome Liaison Officers connect refugees to language courses as needed.

48. **Finding 2: The methodology of Welcome is aligned both with UNHCR and Italian Government objectives. For UNHCR, the methodology follows the overall strategic objective of Promoting Self-Reliance and Economic Inclusion and is consistent with the goals of the Global Compact on Refugees.** These actions facilitate local integration of refugees, one of the MCO's Strategic Priorities. The Welcome Programme also fits with the MCO's recognition that refugees can help fill gaps in the Italian labour market by offering specific professional skills and providing targeted professional training to match refugees with

opportunities in key sectors. Futhermore, the training and capacity building activities within Welcome align with UNHCR's wider programme in Italy of providing increased opportunity to refugee workers through private sector engagement,[22] building on UNHCR's cooperation with the private sector. Regarding alignment with the Italian governments objectives, the Welcome Programme dovetails with the Italian Government's goals within the National Integration Plan[23] to facilitate labour inclusion.

Relevance for CSR and Diversity and Inclusion goals

49. **Finding 3: Employers that engage with Welcome are already motivated to integrate refugees in their workplace, often as part of their CSR agendas. Working with a UNHCR linked programme was reported to be a useful way of advancing these goals.** As we see in Figure 5 below and supported by interviews and respondent inputs at the workshops, employers already saw the value in engaging in either CSR or Diversity and Inclusion based practices. Welcome was able to capitalise on this by supporting employers' CSR and D&I goals in the following ways:

    (a) Providing opportunities to exchange information and good practices on how to and the benefits of employing refugees. This is done primarily through the online platform.
    (b) Providing targeted training on international protection and diversity to businesses within the network, facilitated by Welcome Liaison Officers. Welcome also contributed via specific training, guidelines and advice upon request to improve employers' understanding of legal issues related to international protection and promote inclusive work environments.
    (c) Creating the key link between businesses and civil society organisations able to offer localised support to refugees beyond employment support (e.g. mental health, gaining access to social service provision.) This occurred especially through the Welcome Liaison Officers, and helped foster the stability required for refugees to engage more successfully in the workplace.

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[22] "MCO Italy Strategic Directions 2021-2024: A Solutions-Centred Approach to Mixed Movement" (internal document)

[23] See: Government of Italy, Ministry of the Interior, *National Integration Plan for Personss Entitled to International Protection,* October, 2017. Available at:
https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/piano_nazionale_integrazione_eng.pdf.

What motivated you to participate in Welcome?
(Total scores on scale of 1 [not important] to 5 [very important])
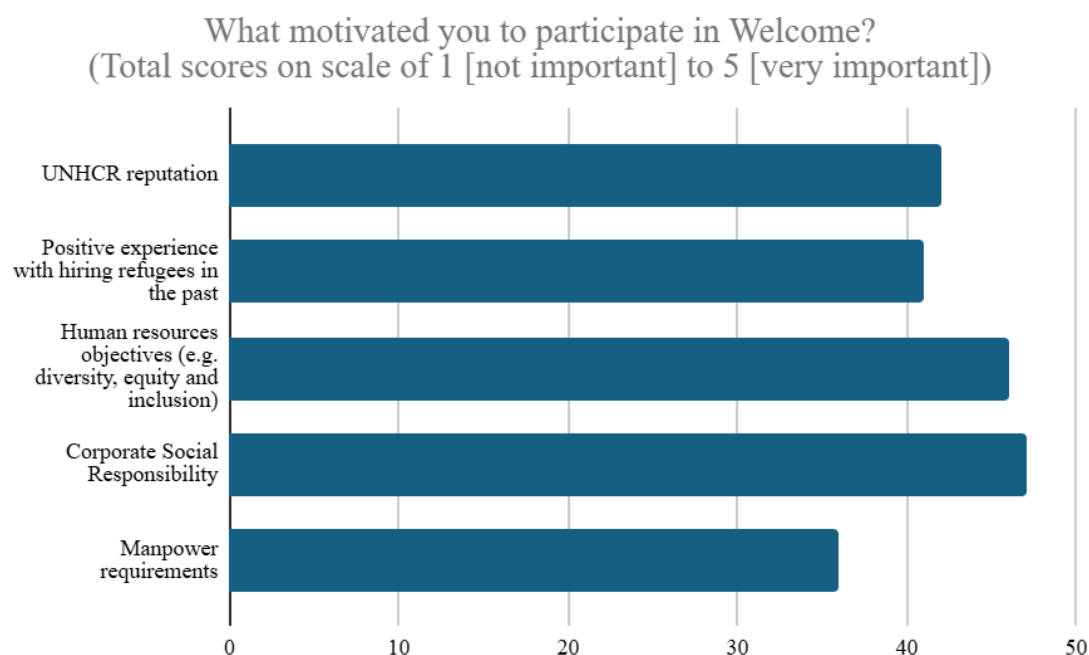
(Source: e-survey responses)

Relevance of Welcome against Main Challenges

50. **Finding 4: Welcome performs an important function within the complex area of refugee labour market integration. The specific objectives of Welcome are focused on 'labour activation' – support for matching jobs to candidates, improving how refugees are able to market themselves in the workplace, and encouraging employers to be open both culturally and operationally to refugee employees. This objective is met by the design and function of Welcome.**

51. There is consensus across all respondent groups in interviews and workshops that the challenges for refugee integration into the labour market are complex and multi-faceted, with dynamic and overlapping causes and consequences. It is therefore important to see Welcome as part of a wider system of support as indicated in Figure 1. The evaluation team analysed participants data from the workshops to see how the wider systemic challenges for refugee labour market integration functions, and how this might impact Welcome's objectives. Table 3 below provides 'centrality scores' for different factors that affect refugees' access to the labour market - the higher the score, the more important or 'central' the factor is. The data show that, across all respondent groups, refugees' sense of hope, motivation and ambition is the most 'central'. This variable is most closely linked with skill and qualification recognition, as well as links to employment opportunities. This demonstrates that by engaging in labour market inclusion focusing on the fundametal tennants of likely successful employment - skills and qualificaiton recognition and access to employment opportunities - there are clear broader benefits to refugees sense of well being.

52. The importance of refugee mental and physical health to labour market integration, as surfaced during evaluation data collection, should be noted. Whilst these areas are not within the direct purview of Welcome, it does have linkages to programmes that focus on social inclusion,

particularly PartecipAzione and Community Matching. Social inclusion, in turn, is linked to improved mental health.[24]

Table 3: Top five most important variables according to centrality scores (overall, and by key boundary partner groups) as reported during Cognitive Fuzzy Workshops.

All groups	Centrality score	Refugees	Centrality score	Business leaders/HR managers	Centrality score
Refugee hope, motivation, ambition	5.36	Refugee mental and physical health	3.95	Italian language skills	2.9
Good Mental and Physical Health	4.04	Having recognised qualifications	2.42	Refugees having recognised qualifications	2.53
Societal bias and discrimination against migrant/refugees	4	Italian language skills	1.96	On job training, internships or employment	2.38
Italian language skills	2.99	Job seeking skills	1.96	Refugees' job seeking skills	2.03
Bureaucracy and Documentation	2.96	Refugee ambitions and hopes	1.5	Refugees' ambition and hopefulness	1.46

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[24] For further detail see discussion in the literature revew in Annex 3.

3.2 Effectiveness and efficiency

53. This line of enquiry addresses the extent to which the Welcome programme was effective and efficient at meeting the challenges of refugee labour market integration. This section sets out such evidence against the following evaluation questions (see evaluation Matrix in Annex 4)

Evaluation Question	Summary Answer
How effective is the Welcome programme in increasing refugees' access to the labour market?	Refugees experienced several positive outcomes related to accessing the labour market as a result of the Welcome programme. This included improved skills, greater access to training and support, enhanced understanding of employer practices, and positive changes in their employment situations, together with increased hope and ambition. Secure work and workplace integration reaches beyond work itself, and can have a profound impact on a refugee's self perception and wellbeing.
How effective has the programme been at assisting employers to reach their recruitment and CSR goals?	The Welcome programme has led to several significant outcomes, changes, and improvements for businesses involved, as highlighted by various respondents across different sectors. These can be broadly grouped under three areas: supporting changes in company processes and culture for integrating refugees into the workforce, improving cooperation and synergies with the public and private sectors, and improving employer and businesses' performance and profile on equality, inclusion and diversity.
How effective is the programme in improving the capabilities of Civil Society Organisations in supporting refugees' job inclusion?	The Welcome programme has led to several significant outcomes for CSOs, and UNHCR MCO, specifically on increased engagement with government and private sector partners, the development of a shared language in addressing labour market integration for refugees, a greater sense of hope for refugees and asylum seekers, and enhanced partnerships and coordination.

Refugee labour market access effectiveness

54. **Finding 5: Overall, the Welcome Programme is effective in increasing access to the labour marker for refugees. Refugees report improved skills, greater access to training and support, enhanced understanding of employer practices, and positive changes in their employment situations, together with increased hope and ambition.** We describe these below under the following categories: *inclusion pathways, improved sense of hope and ambition and Employment stability*

Inclusion Pathways

55. **Finding 6: A significant innovation of the Welcome programme in terms of opening up formal job opportunities to refugees and asylum seekers is the creation of 'job inclusion pathways', this has effectively enhanced the employment prospect of refugees participating in Welcome**. According to UNHCR internal monitoring data, refugees and asylum seekers have been able to access 34,000 'work inclusion pathways' through Welcome across 6 rounds of the programme, which, according to the 2023 Welcome annual report, is either an

employment or internship position.[25] The 2023 Annual Welcome report suggests that 98% of refugees supported have been placed with a formal employment contract, whilst 2% have an internship. Of these inclusion pathways, 91.2% have a fixed term contract and 6.6% have a permanent contract. Welcome programme data also show that 80% of those with an inclusion pathway are male and 87% under the age of 40, which is broadly in line with characteristics of refugees in Italy overall. Labour Force Survey statistics for 2014 showed that 61% of refugees in Italy were in employment. [26] Overall, then, the data suggest that involvement with Welcome produces greater levels of employment, compared to the refugee population as a whole in Italy.

56. Many refugee respondents noted how valuable networking was for gaining a better understanding of how the job market in Italy operates, for example "*Always try and network…Communicating with other people, because someone is always there to support you*", and "*in Italy the connection network is very very helpful*" (refugee respondents). Overall, data suggest that the programme encouraged refugees to spend time on career building, pursuing courses, and networking.

57. **Finding 7: Relatedly, access to relevant training was highlighted across respondent groups as a crucial element of successful employment inclusion**. There is evidence that job-linked training through internships can be an effective pathway to employment in a permanent position, for example: "*After a six month Ikea internship contract, they contracted me directly for six months again*", and "*they gave me the training and eventually I did [get work]*" (refugee respondent). In other cases, internships have enabled progression from low-skilled to high-skilled roles, sometimes with managerial responsibility:

> "*I'm in touch with another beneficiary who started with an internship as a pizza helper. He was very good, he stood out, the owner of the bakery realised that he also had a lot of communication skills, so he put him on a bartending course, put him out at the bar, now he handles the bar and the catering*" (CSO respondent).

58. However, respondents raised concerns about a widespread practice of offering what one refugee saw as lengthy and unnecessary internships, explaining that being offered these felt "*more like a way to exploit*" (refugee respondent). Moreover, getting a formal contract after an internship was not guaranteed: "*I did an internship as a graphic designer. Six months. And after that, I'm hired in the same office, but they didn't give me a contract. I worked seven, eight months without a contract*" (refugee respondent). It should be noted that short term contracts are commonplace in Italy and this practice is outside of Welcome's direct influence. Yet, the limitations of placements in terms of leading to permanent employment solutions for refugees is recognised within the programme itself, with one UNHCR respondent noting:

> "*Of course, we say the job market is what it is. There is a point to be made that so many of these placements that we have proposed have been with fixed-term contracts so there are few solutions that we could say are permanent, and so this back and forth creates frustration in the refugees*" (UNHCR respondent).

59. From a programme perspective, given that skills and qualifications acquired in the country of origin are frequently not recognised in Italy, measures such as internships and shadowing were seen as a crucial practical means of bridging "*the gap between the formal recognition of [refugee] qualifications and inclusion*" (UNHCR respondent), and for refugees to gain a better understanding of the workplace.

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[25] See: UNHCR Italy MCO, *Welcome,* 2023. Available at: *https://welcome.unhcr.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024_WELCOME_ENG_DEF.pdf*
[26] See: European Commission Migration and Home Affairs, 2016. Available at*: https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2016-09/KE-01-16-824-EN-N.pdf*

Improved sense of hope and ambition

60. **Finding 9: A core programme outcome, prioritised among refugees in the CFM workshops (see Table 2), relates to positive changes in mindset and attitude. There is some evidence to suggest that participation in the Welcome programme has instilled a sense of hope for future career prospects in some refugees**, driven by unexpected successes: *"I was really able to do work that I never thought"* (refugee respondent). In some cases, the positive impact of being able to support others through their work also improved self-perception and self-esteem. For example, one refugee spoke of "*feeling great*" because of being able to "*do something for the women in my country*" thanks to the money earned (refugee respondent), and another noted how she was able to send money to her daughter for a computer so she could study in another EU country. When asked about the most significant change to have occurred in relation to their work, refugees most frequently referred to its deeper personal significance. For example, the self-esteem associated with being in a stable enough position to bring family to Italy, the sense of dignity of going from a position of isolation and dependence to one of social connection and self-respect: ("*I was the one inviting friends to my house for dinner*"), support in fulfilling one's duty to work as an elemental part of life, and the sense of stability and security that comes from a permanent contract. In sum, the most significant changes went beyond work itself, to demonstrate the profound impact that secure work and integration can have on a refugee's self perception and wellbeing. Data also show secondary impacts on generalised trust and confidence. Specifically, some respondents note that experiencing programme success on an individual level in an area as important as work has led to increased confidence among refugees in the country's systems as a whole, and a heightened sense of solidarity and trust towards "*the very system that welcomes them*" (UNHCR respondent).

Employment stability as a critical factor

61. **Finding 10: Refugees involved in the Welcome programme experienced improved job inclusion and retention. Many refugees experienced a change in their employment status, moving from unemployment to internships or employment contracts, or from more precarious work situations to more stable positions:** "*they have much higher levels of recruitment, and a higher level of post-inclusion stabilisation. So already this is an important indicator*" (CSO respondent). The programme also appears to have driven improvements in matching between refugees' educational qualifications and their employment: "*through the Welcome programme there is a better fit between the work that the refugee begins and the educational qualification they have*" (CSO respondent). In some cases, this has allowed high-level placements, including work in highly technical IT positions, at management level, and as lawyers (UNHCR respondent).

62. **Finding 11: Welcome is also reported to have contributed to reductions in irregular work practices, giving refugees a degree of protection in terms of basic working standards, and also encouraging ethical hiring practices among employers as companies in the network adhere to stricter ethical standards**. It was reported that in Bari, for example, the labour market has traditionally been highly flexible with a high reliance on short term contracts or informal labour. The expansion of the Welcome network in the region, with its focus on improved working conditional and contractual arrangements, has not only opened up new pathways for decent work for refugees but also contributed to these existing norms being gradually broken down (CSO respondent).

63. However, some refugees also reported that they continued to face challenges in securing long-term, stable employment, and that they faced challenges because of their background: "*finding work in Italy is really very difficult even [for] low salaries*" (refugee respondent) and "*I am sure I*

do my job very well, even now that this social media manager, for me is a new thing, also Italian maybe difficult to write and speak, but also for me it was a surprise that I learned very fast. I do very well, but there is no possibility to continue" (refugee respondent).

Challenges and responses for refugees with different protection-related characteristics: women, older persons and people with disabilities.

64. **Finding 12: The ability to tailor inclusion pathways contributes to assisting individuals with specific protection-related characteristics as well as addressing individual profiles and needs. However, some respondents observe that further support is required to fully account for intersecting vulnerabilities and MHPSS needs.** Various respondents acknowledged that the Welcome programme design should consider the unique challenges faced by particular sub groups within the refugee population.

65. Some UNHCR respondents mentioned that women have specific needs and face unique challenges in the integration process. These may be related to a history as victims of trafficking or gender based violence. Whilst no concrete examples of specific interventions or training content was mentioned on these issues, UNHCR respondents indicated that each inclusion pathway is tailored to whatever need is presented, and this includes pathways 'specifically for [women who are victims] if they need attention' (UNHCR respondent). In addition to women who may have experienced victimisation, UNHCR respondents indicated that specific content is aimed at raising awareness of the benefits and good practice of promoting women's inclusion in the workplace. Business respondents also indicated that cultural differences may encumber the way that women are accepted as leaders within the workplace, particularly amongst some refugee communities that may not have a tradition of women in leadership roles. However, this was not triangulated with responses from other respondent groups.

66. Similarly, for refugees with disabilities, UNHCR respondents described how the programme provided specific inclusion pathways and awareness raising content, including training and skill reinforcement. However, beyond support for specific groups, one CSO respondent noted that there was a need for a more intersectional approach in employment inclusion legislation, to target "the intersection of vulnerability and disadvantage" (CSO respondent).

67. Several respondents noted that refugees may have experienced trauma or other complex psychological journeys, which require a specific programming response (UNHCR respondent). Business respondents also noted that some refugees may require additional emotional or psychological support due to past traumatic experiences. In this case, the programme seeks to raise "awareness with the private sector about who the refugees are, what their story is and also what their needs are" (UNHCR respondent).

Employer recruitment and CSR goal effectiveness

68. **Finding 13: The Welcome programme has led to several significant outcomes, changes, and improvements for businesses involved. These include changes in company processes and culture for integrating refugees into the workforce, improving cooperation and synergies with the public and third sectors, and improving employer performance and profile on equality, inclusion and diversity.**

Modelling positive work cultures, improving policy and practice on inclusion

69. **Finding 14: First and foremost, the Welcome Logo award itself is a significant driver of action. Companies value the recognition that the UNHCR award provides and the positive publicity. They also note that it can lead to deeper understanding and committment to CSR activities that feature refugee inclusion.** Indeed, companies surveyed reported UNHCR's

reputation as being a key motivation for their participation and for boosting their reputation as an employer and as organisations with high 'moral requirements.' These create a favourable reputation with 'banks and customers' (Business leader respondent). The Welcome Logo award is also recognized for the fact of private sector involvement, marking Welcome as more than a public or third sector endeavour: "… *What we have noticed is that companies trust if other companies say that the experience went well*" (UNHCR respondent). In this way, businesses themselves act as ambassadors of the Welcome process.

70. MSC responses among companies reveal a strong focus away from instrumental outcomes, towards attitudinal, moral and cultural shifts relating to the inclusionary practices implemented as a result of the programme. For some it served as public recognition and affirmation of existing inclusion efforts by their company, for example:

      "like my company.. [we] have been doing [inclusion] for many years without necessarily receiving an award" (company survey respondent)

      "*someone for the first time was telling you what you have been doing until now is right and it is and it is as it should be and it is … a better world. And we come for the first time to say yes, you are doing well"* (company interview respondent)

      "the award allowed us to enhance our experience and certify our commitment" (company survey respondent).

71. For others, the most significant outcome of the programme was that it led to new appreciation and understanding of workforce diversity in general and the context of refugees in particular, for example:

      "Greater knowledge of the issues of the world of refugees -awareness of contributing to the integration of refugees into society and not only at a work level" (company survey respondent)

      "*New awareness within the company population regarding the inclusion of disadvantaged individuals in the workplace"* (company survey respondent)

      "*We are much more open to different cultures, before there was no opportunity"* (company survey respondent).

72. Such impacts were deeply personal for some, with most significant changes including: "*heart, stories that particularly touched me,*" or "*a different personal approach [to people in distress]*, and simply "*love*" (company respondents).

73. Several respondents indicated how, as a result of participation in Welcome, international standards in protection and solidarity with refugees were elevated within the companies' CSR agendas. This helped shape discourse within the private sector, which, hitherto, had been setting its own CSR priorities. This is especially the case for companies' responses to refugee employees or would-be employees: "*Now let's say it is normal for companies to consider [refugees] in their policies. Seven years ago, it was not at all obvious*" (UNHCR respondent). In one example a business leader respondent detailed how refugee inclusion policy was integrated into an existing labour activation strategy (originally designed for young people), aligning its resources and effort to specifically focus on refugees. Survey responses suggest, however, that companies more commonly *increase preexisting* recruitment of refugees through Welcome, rather than design new ones (see Figure 6).

74. Overall, data show that participating companies recognised and prioritised significant changes in personal values towards, emotional connection with, moral validation, and a renewed commitment to inclusion.

Which of the following statements best describes your
company/organization's position regarding refugee recruitment?
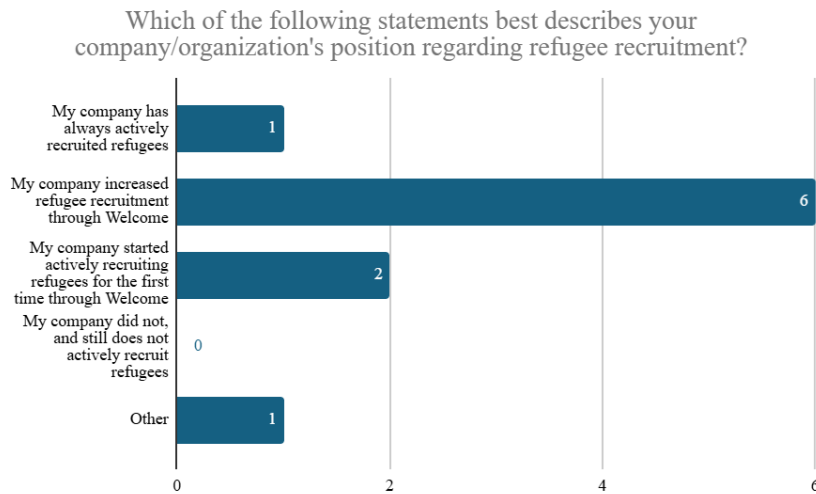
(Source: e-survey responses)

Proactive recruitment practices

75. **Finding 15: There is evidence that participating companies demonstrated increased sensitivity and maturity in their recruitment approaches more generally, encouraging whole-organisation cultural shifts towards humanistic approaches**. At the company level, survey data reveal a notable increase in management involvement in refugee recruitment, which was a key progress marker within the Outcome Map (see Annex 2). Respondent groups frequently mentioned that Welcome encouraged companies to adopt more bibliographic, narrative approaches to assessing job candidates, for example, through interview techniques that capture a fuller picture of a candidates' skills and potential, as opposed to focusing on qualifications alone. Part of this also involved shaping the interview format itself, acknowledging that refugee candidates may be less confident or more anxious, given previous traumatic experiences.

76. In terms of matching refugee capacity to business needs, Welcome's Inclusion Pathways sometimes involved an important departure from simple supply and demand relations. In this sense, CSO respondents involved in coordinating refugees with businesses describe how job profiles may be co-designed with businesses - creating so called 'proximity profiles' - so that they are more accessible to refugees. Proximity profiles are different from traditional job or applicant profiles. They include the support and working structure that may be more supportive of a refugees' particular situation, including their needs for skills and language support, flexible working hours or other needs, whilst also meeting the employers' needs.

77. Work inclusion pathways involve many different examples mentioned by respondents to support refugee job candidates. These include providing awareness raising team sessions, flexible work hours to allow refugees to attend language training, and a mentoring scheme through which refugees are supported by a colleague-mentor during induction into the company. Four of the 10 companies surveyed also reported offering paid internships or other onboarding programmes for refugees - a key progress marker in the Outcome Map.

Figure 7: Refugee recruitment measures (key progress markers) implemented by surveyed companies

Has your company introduced any of the measures listed below in relation to refugee recruitment since working with the Welcome programme? (Number of positive responses)
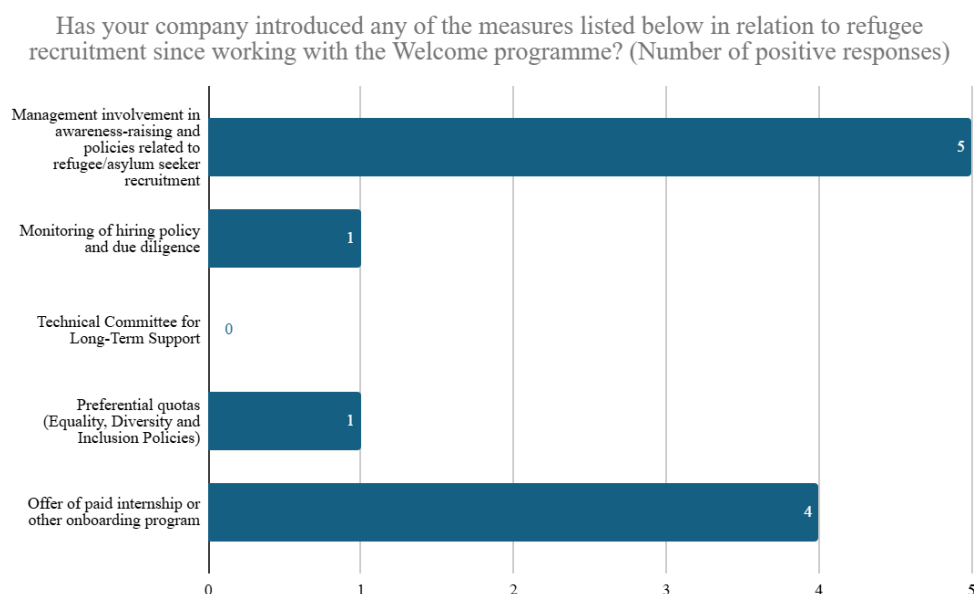
(Source: e-survey responses)

Partnerships and cross sectoral coordination

78. **Finding 16: Businesses involved in the Welcome programme were networked into various organisations, including CSOs, UNHCR, local and national government, and crucially with other businesses, increasing their confidence and encouraging best practices.** Businesses reported the value of working with third sector organisations to co-create inclusion pathways. They appreciated the guidance and reassurance that they were following the best methods for inclusion - a feeling of '*not being alone*' in the inclusion process (UNHCR respondent). Businesses reported how they had relied on local third sector organisations, as well as the Welcome team, to make connections with potential refugee employees. In some cases, companies became aware of the Welcome programme via their pre-existing relationship with local CSOs. In other cases, businesses were introduced to locally operating civil society organisations via Welcome. Overall, the term 'bridge building' was frequently used to describe the role of Welcome in linking businesses with the connections they needed to facilitate refugee employment locally.

79. Welcome supported links between UNHCR and businesses, encouraging best practice and codifying and improving strategies for integrating refugees into employment in person or through written means. Assistance from the Adecco Foundation was crucial to this connection. In some cases, Welcome was already known to the participating businesses because the latter had already supported Welcome or UNHCR in fundraising. In other cases, Welcome was an opportunity for UNHCR to reach out to businesses to explain the programme, including the Welcome Logo award, and to encourage involvement.

80. In terms of government agencies, Welcome provided several opportunities for interactions between government agencies and businesses. This includes involvement of the Ministry of Labour in the Welcome Award ceremony and the inclusion of MCO integration staff in the National Integration Plan working group. At the local level, municipal government bodies were involved in supporting protocols for refugee inclusion in businesses (as reported by UNHCR, CSO

respondents). Overall, whilst there is little evidence that Welcome encouraged direct interaction between business and governmental institutions - not that this was an intention - Welcome placed these partners within the same policy space, amplifying businesses' visibility in terms of their inclusion work, reassuring them that their strategies were aligned with good practice.

Awareness of refugee skills, qualifications and legal rights to work

81. **Finding 17: Participating employers were able to access support to identify refugee qualifications, indicated as a significant historic challenge for employers in both the CFM workshops and in interviews with businesses. By providing tools, information, and opportunities to engage directly with refugees, businesses appear to have become more aware of the contributions refugees can make to the workforce both in terms of their formal qualifications and those which are not formally recognised.** Both UNHCR and Adecco Foundation respondents indicated that at the start of their involvement with Welcome, companies often express a number of concerns about refugees' suitability, transferable skills, ability to fit in with Italian work culture and legal rights to work. In these cases, the role of Welcome was initially to '*reassure and address their concerns*' (UNHCR respondent) and to put processes in place to overcome any such hurdles. In one sense, the role of Welcome was as a *'cultural mediator'* (UNHCR respondent) to explain the meaning of refugees' skills and experience in terms that Italian companies can understand.

82. More concretely, Welcome introduced a 'skills passport' for companies. The passport is a tool for profiling refugee applicants that goes beyond a basic CV. In addition, Welcome provided companies with numerous sources of information and guidance to help them understand the legal and practical aspects of hiring refugees. Businesses described several examples of where this support was needed. For example, one employer working in a seasonal sector described the need to significantly increase their headcount in peak season. For this, the inclusion of refugees would meet their needs. However, such seasonal recruitment needed to happen within a quick turnaround rendered difficult due to bureaucratic hurdles. The business now works with a local civil society partner, coordinated through Welcome, to quicken the bureaucracy. Whilst this has not removed the challenge completely, the company valued the support provided.

Civil society capability effectiveness

83. **Finding 18: There is strong evidence that Welcome led to significant outcomes on increased engagement between CSOs, UNHCR, government and the private sector. Welcome contributed to development of a shared language on labour market integration for refugees, a greater sense of hope for the future among refugees, and enhanced partnerships and coordination**.

Increasing visibility, trust and networks between civil society, UNHCR and others

84. CSOs experienced greater visibility and connection with partner organisations as well as with the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and businesses, as a result of their Welcome involvement. On one level, through the Welcome Logo Award process, CSO endeavours became known to government organisations, resulting in their work through Welcome being used as examples of best practice and including Welcome standards in the National Inclusion Strategy. Further, several respondents from both CSOs and government organisations reported that Welcome created opportunities for sharing ideas with the Government about integration. Similarly, municipalities have developed closer relationships with CSOs through the programme, as Welcome provides a structure - a bridge - between different actors in this space. A clear

example of this is in CSOs having a stronger relationship with local employment centres run by the municipality, opening channels for recruiting refugees (UNHCR respondent).

85. Business respondents also reported the benefits of working with Welcome-involved CSOs. They noted that, by virtue of involvement with UNHCR and a national programme, they had increased trust in the partnerships: "*the partnership with UNHCR was crucial because in some cases obviously we were getting in touch with very small associations or at least associations that didn't have a lot of territorial strength*" (Business respondent). Along similar lines, UNHCR and business respondents flagged a lack of trust in municipal employment centers to match supply with demand in the right way, with businesses preferring not to seek employment centre help in meeting their recruitment goals. The Welcome structure appears to fill this gap.

Developing shared language and purpose between third and private sector and government partners

86. Development of what respondents frequently called a 'shared language' common to CSOs, UNHCR, the private sector and government underpins connections. The shared language concerns how job opportunities are described (for example through Proximity Profiles), how refugee needs and challenges are understood, disarming fears about Italian language, qualifications or other support needs, through the introduction of solutions. This is achieved through various means, including training, inter-organisation meetings, and, as already described, co-creation of Inclusion Pathways. This shared language is also apparent in the way companies now talk about job opportunities, focusing more on "the social project' of inclusion, rather than only job vacancies. These activities have resulted in "much wider partnership networks than they had done in the past" (CSO respondent).

87. Business respondents also highlighted the significant role of the Welcome programme in fostering a shared language with other actors involved. This was reported to be crucial for improving collaboration and streamlining efforts to support refugees and asylum seekers within the workplace. For example, one business leader respondent described how the endorsement of UNHCR as a respected agency increased "*visibility even to our internal engagement on Inclusion and encouraged buy-in and support internally*" (Business respondent).

88. Welcome provided multiple training sessions for partners working across the programme. These included initial awareness raising and information sessions to explain the purpose of Welcome. These sessions also cover the specific challenges and backgrounds of refugees. As one UNHCR respondent explained, "*at the first context, it starts with the presentation of the programme, but also the specificities of job inclusion for refugees. So what's their background and what are the challenges that they face*?" (UNHCR respondent). Awareness raising on refugee and asylum seeker needs focuses strongly on the 'soft skills' and qualities of refugees which may have been "*acquired in very different contexts [to Italy]*" (UNHCR respondent). Companies are also provided awareness raising sessions on intercultural communication and inclusion of diversity, aiming to strengthen companies' understanding and commitment to diverse whole-organisational culture as opposed to simple plurality.

89. Participating CSOs are provided training on job orientation, mentoring, and accompanying job inclusion, involving specific training on preparing refugees for both interviews and placements in companies. Civil society is also supported through training on how to effectively communicate and collaborate with the private sector. This includes building skills to "*approach a company's HR department, talking to a company, and imagining building a path to job inclusion with a company*" (CSO respondent) . The Adecco Foundation is a key provider of these kinds of support, which, it was reported, has "*very qualified expertise on labour issues and corporate social responsibility*". Such consciousness raising, capacity building and training across partners was reported to

increase a shared sense of purpose and priority, including building common terminology and understanding of refugee needs, challenges, and solutions.

90. The Welcome programme has used training to promote a shared communication style and understanding among different groups. One respondent stated that the many training sessions provided *"have also responded precisely to the need to find a shared language among all stakeholders"*. Another CSO respondent noted that as Welcome works with more than 300 third sector organisations, the program was able to spread a shared understanding widely and diversely. A practical result of the shared language is that companies and third sector organisations are able to collaborate on defining skills needed for employees, in co-producing Inclusion Pathways and Proximity Profiles.

Weaknesses, inefficiencies and remaining challenges

91. **Finding 19: While the Welcome programme has achieved meaningful outcomes across multiple domains, several systemic challenges remain that could constrain its long-term effectiveness. The evaluation highlights that labour market integration for refugees is shaped by a web of interdependent factors, many of which lie outside the programme's direct remit**. The Cognitive Fuzzy Mapping (CFM) exercise reinforces this by demonstrating the centrality of language skills and mental and physical health in influencing employment outcomes. These factors not only impact refugees' readiness to enter the workforce, but also mediate the sustainability and quality of their inclusion. A critical concern is the erosion of public support for Italian language provision. Although Welcome does not directly deliver language training, it plays a vital coordination role by signposting and linking refugees to available courses. However, the programme is increasingly operating in an environment where municipal and national support for language instruction is being withdrawn. The CFM quasi-modelling exercise revealed that Italian language skills are among the most powerful enablers in the entire system—when maximised, they generate cascading improvements across employment, health, hope, and job retention. Without proactive intervention, weakening access to language training risks undermining the foundation on which many of Welcome's successes are built.

92. **Finding 20: Similarly, the issue of mental and physical health emerged strongly from the CFM as a core node in the system, closely connected to hope, motivation, and job participation.** Refugees navigating trauma, poor health, or unstable living conditions face reduced ability to benefit from employment opportunities. While health is not formally part of the Welcome model, the programme cannot afford to treat it as peripheral. The impact of unaddressed mental health challenges can ripple through every other element of inclusion— making gains less stable, participation more fragile, and employer confidence harder to sustain.

93. Given that neither language instruction nor healthcare support fall within Welcome's operational mandate, the programme faces a strategic choice. To preserve its impact, it must evolve to account for and respond to these structural dependencies. This does not require transforming Welcome into a direct provider of services, but it does suggest the need for stronger formal linkages with language and health service providers, as well as strategic advocacy to restore and sustain these foundations. Integrating language and health considerations more explicitly into the design of job inclusion pathways, and tracking access to these services as a risk factor, would help futureproof the programme.

94. Ultimately, the sustainability of Welcome hinges on its ability to remain embedded within the broader ecosystem of refugee integration. Its model must reflect not only employment needs but the wider context that enables or constrains economic participation. Recognising—and actively managing—the risk posed by the erosion of core enablers such as language and health support is therefore essential to protecting the gains already achieved and unlocking further potential at scale.

3.3 Sustainability

95. This line of enquiry addresses the extent to which the Welcome programme achieved benefits that can be sustained beyond the direct involvement of its inputs. This section sets out such evidence against the following evaluation questions (see evaluation Matrix in Annex 4):

Evaluation Question	Summary Answer
How sustainable are the benefits achieved to refugee workers?	The main reported benefits relate to changes in knowledge, skills and affect. As such these changes may continue beyond the life of the programme.
In what ways are changes to employers' outreach, recruitment and training practices, in cooperation with CSOs, likely to continue or not?	The key changes for employers relate to refined practices, cultures and awareness, as such these may be sustained beyond the life of the programme.
How cost-effective is the Welcome programme, and	Cost benefits within the domains of increased employment and meeting skills shortages are likely to be direct and significant, based on existing research. Thus, there is a strong business case for Welcome's continuation.
How scalable, replicable and sustainable is the programme?	As many of the benefits of Welcome derive from its innovative and adaptable model, these may be less easy to scale up or replicate. However, building on learning from the programme to date, the model may be reproduced under the close guidance of experienced programme managers.

Sustainable benefits for refugees in the labour market

96. **Finding 21: The evaluation team finds that the main reported benefits relate to changes in knowledge, skills and levels of confidence and sense of well-being. As such, many of these changes are likely to continue to produce positive results in terms of labour market integration and social inclusion well beyond their direct engagement with Welcome.**

97. For refugee respondents, benefits of the Welcome programme may be sustained beyond initial inputs in terms of their increased language skills, ability to network with sources of support, knowledge of Italian workplace practices and laws, and, particularly if and when stable employment contracts are found. As previously noted, the Welcome programme connected refugees to opportunities for learning Italian, sometimes funded by the city council or other organisations, not directly provided from Welcome funding (UNHCR respondent).

98. Respondents also noted other ways of acquiring language support through Welcome in more ad hoc ways. For example, one refugee respondent describes how Welcome provided a connection with an Italian 'buddy'[27] to help them learn the language and understand Italian culture. This involved regular meetings and outings that provided opportunities for language practice and cultural immersion.

99. Language proficiency is repeatedly identified by refugees as crucial for integration into the job market. As one refugee respondent notes, "*First, you have to learn the language.. and later [it is important to be] able to sell yourself in a job market*". Learning Italian provides a gateway into other sustainable benefits: for example: "*if you know the language you also know the law*" (Refugee respondent) and again "*to have the basic language proficiency and then the culture...*

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[27] As part of the Community Matching programme

you can defend and also take away the prejudices". The Italian language is essential to empowering refugees both within the labour market and more generally. Being able to speak Italian provides opportunity for meaningful interaction with others in the workplace allowing refugees to feel "*more comfortable*" (Refugee respondent) at work. Closely related to language integration, the ability to network and build social connections play a vital role in achieving sustainable benefits. This was reported as particularly important in Italy, according to one refugee respondent: "*In Italy the connection network is very very helpful. Connections without networks cannot do anything*". Another refugee noted that in Rome *"[finding employment] works only word of mouth, friendship. If you have a lot of friends, a lot of somewhat important people... it's easy to find something*". These networks can provide access to opportunities, recommendations, and support that go beyond formal programmes such as Welcome

100. Also critical for achieving sustainable benefits, as reported by refugees, is to transition from internships to stable employment contracts. As one refugee respondent notes, "having a permanent contract...changes your life substantially". Long term, stable employment can improve refugees' standard of living and make a lasting difference in their lives. However, refugee respondents frequently emphasised the importance of their own agency, determination and personal power in transforming even small opportunities into longer term benefits. One refugee respondent noted that refugees should be given "opportunities, opportunities, [interviews]" because once provided an opening, they can 'learn very fast', "even [if] this job… is not my work". Opportunities and support are mutually reinforcing, for example, being provided a work placement can be "*very, very helpful*" for learning the Italian language, which then improves their chances within the labour market. However, despite the overarching picture - described in programme monitoring data - of significant numbers of refugees achieving a formal work placement, '*permanence [in] the workplace remains a large challenge'* (UNHCR respondent), albeit one that is part of the structural challenge in the Italian labour market, increasingly present since recent legislative reforms that lifted constraints on temporary contracts.[28] These factors suggest that although there are substantial positive gains in terms of employment outcomes, further efforts are needed to sustain the inclusion of refugees in the longer term.

Sustainable benefits for businesses, civil society, UNHCR and government actors

101. **Finding 22: The Welcome programme has led to positive changes in business cultures and employers' practices that are likely to be sustained beyond the program's direct involvement.** Likewise, for civil society, the Welcome programme improves skills in supporting refugees' employment inclusion. These skills can be transferred to other programmes and initiatives and, as long as these new skills and experience continue to be practiced and have institutional grounding, their benefits can be sustained.

102. Benefits of the programme relate mostly to shifts in awareness and perspective, rather than specific changes in policy or formal approach. This is particularly marked in a new understanding of the benefits of hiring refugees and the positive contribution they can bring to a business. A CSO respondent noted that these changes suggest that companies are learning to value diversity in a way that goes beyond tokenism. More concretely, several sources suggested that companies have developed their own internal policies and practices for the inclusion of refugees, which may be likely to continue even without the program's involvement. As one business respondent commented, '*[Welcome] has encouraged ways of seeing things differently and ways of thinking differently is an added value for a company'.* These developments are solidified in the creation of

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[28] Minardi S. (2020) Firm-level agreements, employment strategies and temporary workers: Firm-level evidence from Italy. Employee Relations.

peer to peer reference groups and networks that are committed to the inclusion of refugees. One UNHCR respondent describes the business networks as: "*having a pool of companies that can be an example for other companie*s". Similarly, businesses participating in Welcome have access to a pool of CSOs as well as support from the Welcome team itself, which formalises the support they can receive, compared to the prior situation in which the local civil society support may be incoherent or differ according to location.

103. However, given the 'soft' nature (those relating to attitude, knowledge and understanding) of the business benefits, natural staff turnover may weaken institutional commitment to refugee inclusion.

104. **Finding 23: CSO and government respondents all noted that the Welcome programme created opportunities for networking and collaboration. This enabled much wider partnership networks than existed in the past, which may be sustained beyond direct programme inputs. Such benefits, which have already been noted in the effectiveness section, are sustainable if these networks and partnerships continue to be reinforced through practice and ongoing engagement between key stakeholders. Given that Welcome responds to the highly contextual and very localised needs of refugees and businesses, there is a risk that current practice and designs are unable to be codified or easily replicated and scaled. There is also a risk that if a network or partnership collapses- significant resources would need to be invested to re-establish them.** UNHCR and CSO respondents frequently referred to the increased recognition and value placed on the third sector and its role in labour integration, including through improved interactions between these and the private sector. However, again, these benefits may be sustained only as long as individuals and organisations involved continue to reflect on and practice beneficial ways of working.

105. The inventiveness of the Welcome programme, exemplified in how it co-designs Inclusion Pathways in different locations and businesses, contains within it a sustainability risk: programmes that are not codified or clearly defined may face implementation challenges if applied to new areas. Prior to the Welcome programme, CSO and UNHCR sources indicated that efforts to include refugees in the labour market were "*completely unstructured, not synergistic with each other, [and] did not communicate in any way*" (UNHCR respondent). Whilst Welcome has gone some way to address this challenge by creating an "ecosystem" that bridges the players involved in labour market integration, its processes for doing so are fluid, responding to the needs of particular localities.

106. UNHCR respondents noted that the fluidity and context-specific nature of Welcome may present difficulties for scaling up the programme, noting the need for standardisation of approaches across geographical location and across institutions. Further, the level of investment needed to replicate achievements may be prohibitive, if the Welcome model were to be replicated directly in scope and location. To address this challenge, good practices as observed in Welcome's activities will need to be embedded across institutions and included in national legislation and policy frameworks. These would include laws that promote the inclusion of refugees and provide tax or other incentives for companies to hire them, building the support and cooperation of municipal authorities and social services to follow Welcome's practices.

107. Replication might also be supported, according to one UNHCR respondent, through building on the work of the WelcomeNet platform to share good practice, information, support and advice. It is worth noting that WelcomeNet is still in its early days of use and its full potential for realising sustainable benefits may not yet be understood. It was established in 2022 at the national level and initially consisted of 50 organisations. Most recent indications suggest the platform has more than 100 members (as of 2023). It was initially established to strengthen the relationship between third sector organisations involved in refugee support and integration, and has expanded in purpose to play a key role in linking civil society with businesses and employers. Several

respondents expressed concern over confusion about the purpose of the WelcomeNet Platform, particularly over its integration with the Welcome-in-one-click platform. Careful planning and coordination between these different tools may be needed to ensure that both platforms' potential is realised, ensuring that user experience, purpose and design are solidified.

Cost effectiveness

108. Cost-effectiveness was assessed through a synthesis of qualitative and documentary data. A formal cost-benefit analysis using economic modelling or unit-based calculations was not attempted, as the complexity of the Welcome programme—its multi-stakeholder, systems-oriented design—makes a standard cost-per-beneficiary or cost-per-outcome approach inappropriate. Instead, the evaluation reviewed all available data to consider whether the programme is generating value for money. Evidence suggests that there are several ways in which the programme is likely to yield cost benefits.

Potential reductions in public expenditure and fiscal benefits:

109. **Finding 24: Multiple sources suggested that Welcome contributes to enabling refugees to become net contributors to the economy. This includes both direct benefits for employers—who gain access to under-utilised talent—and indirect public savings**. As one CSO respondent put it: *"We have on the ground people who are productive, who pay taxes, who work, who pay rents—that is, who are no longer on the shoulders of the state."* In line with this reasoning, existing estimates suggest that an unemployed refugee may cost the taxpayer between €6,000 to €15,000 per year (EU average).[29] Employment thus represents a potential cost saving—if the input costs of support are below this range and if employment is sustained. Broader research also shows that refugee employment contributes to net economic gains: for example, the World Economic Forum estimates that over five years, refugee employment can return up to double the investment (1:2 ratio) in GDP terms. It is important to note, however, that most placements facilitated through Welcome are initially temporary, as is customary in the Italian labour market. While this limits direct cost-saving comparisons, evidence suggests that such roles often function as 'stepping stones' toward permanent contracts. Indeed, according to data collected through the Welcome award application process in 2024, 6.6% of refugees employed were hired under a permanent contract.[30]

Leverage and multiplier effects:

110. **Finding 25: The programme appears to generate efficiency through its ability to broker multi-actor support and draw in existing resources.** Rather than duplicating services, Welcome creates linkages between employers, CSOs, and public actors—allowing different forms of support to reinforce one another. This coordination increases the likelihood that available services are used effectively and targeted to where they are most needed.

111. **Finding 26 : In terms of cost efficiency from the perspective of UNHCR- the Welcome programme delivers a complex programme with increasing numbers of refugees consistently engaged via an inclusion pathways over time, for a relatively modest investment by UNHCR.** While there are no formal cost comparisons – we can observe the following:

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[29] See for example: European Council on Foreign Relations. (2016). *Paying the Price: The Cost of Europe's Refugee Crisis*. and Ruist, J. (2018). *The fiscal lifetime cost of receiving refugees*. CReAM Discussion Paper Series
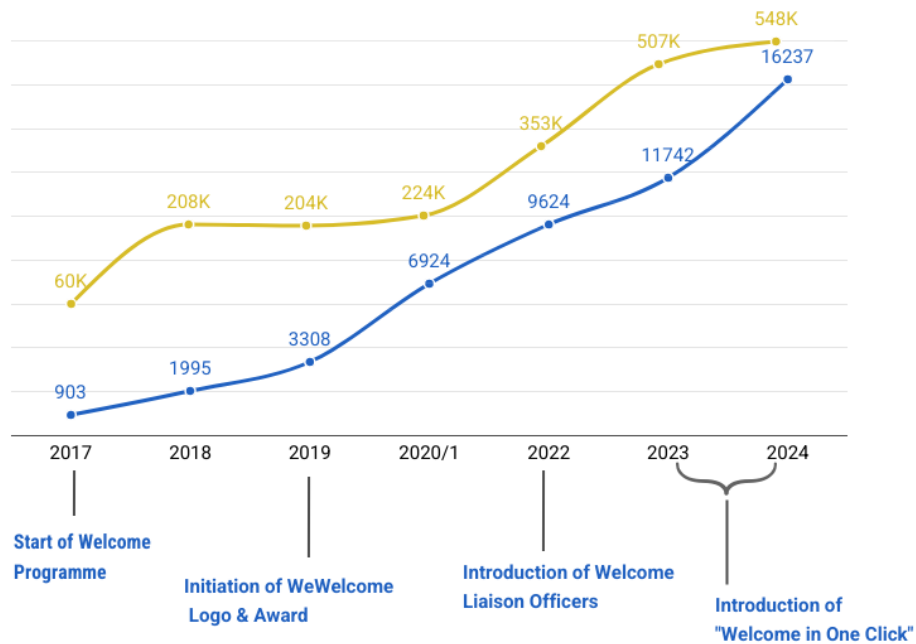
[30] Welcome Programme Data 2024.

a) The design of Welcome limits the costs for UNHCR – given that UNHCR provides facilitation, training for employers and supports the Welcome online platform, directly and through funded partner Adecco Foundation. In effect, much of the cost of investing in opportunities in refugees is shared by a network of other stakeholders – from businesses to civil society organisations, varying on the specific individual needs reflected in the inclusion pathway that is developed. As discussed above, the potential value of the programme to refugees in terms of employment opportunities, wellbeing and stability is difficult to financially value but these outcomes are unlocked for a reasonably small facilitation cost on behalf of UNHCR (see Figure 8) per pathway. With reference to the number of inclusion pathways indicated in Figure 8, it is difficult to estimate the exact cost of UNHCR's facilitation cost per individual as an individual pathway may occur over a period longer than a year (i.e. a inclusion pathway by its nature could be recorded as ongoing in 2023 and 2024). That said the cost of facilitating a pathway per year since 2022 presents strong value for money (**see table 4)** given the positive outcomes demonstrated for refugees and employers demonstrated earlier.

Table 4: Cost per Inclusion Pathway 2022-2024

Year	Estimated average cost to facilitate a pathway per year in Euros
2022	37
2023	43
2024	34

b) The cost of delivering Welcome remained largely similar across years for UNHCR (costs in Figure 8 cover both staff and activities required to deliver the Welcome programme) but have increased since 2022 due to the investments required to set up the Welcome-in-One-Click platform and the role of the Welcome Liaison Officers. Given the growing number of refugees reached per year and projected increase in the use of Welcome-in-One-Click, the cost per inclusion pathway per year could reduce as the Welcome programme gains momentum.

Figure 8: Welcome Evaluation Cost and Numbers of Inclusion Pathways underway per year. Note: Data for 2020/2021 is aggregated due to limitations resulting from the COVID 19 pandemic. Budget data for the 2020/2021 period is an average of both years.

Source: UNHCR Welcome Programme and Budget data 2017-2024

Perceived low cost of participation for employers:

112. **Finding 26: Respondents across sectors, including from the private sector, reported that the costs of engaging with the Welcome programme were minimal, particularly when compared to the benefits gained.** These include access to prepared candidates, support with administrative processes, reputational value, and alignment with DEI and CSR goals.

3.4 Learning and Adaptation

113. This line of enquiry explores what can be learned from the Welcome programme to improve outcomes aligned with its objectives. The evaluation addressed this question by synthesising findings from interviews and e-surveys, as well as through the use of Cognitive Fuzzy Mapping (CFM). The CFM approach enabled quasi-modelling, allowing the evaluation team to test the relationship between specific inputs and outcomes across a complex integration system. Findings from this analysis are presented below and aligned with the following evaluation questions (see Evaluation Matrix in Annex 4):

Evaluation Question	Summary Answer
What lessons can be learned from the Welcome programme under the three main objectives? - Demonstrate adherence to a model of an inclusive society, combating xenophobia and racism against asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international and temporary protection; - Share responsibility in building a society that is more equitable and responsive to the needs of those who have been forced to flee due to violence, conflict, and persecution; - Strengthen integration opportunities for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international and temporary protection, encouraging other companies to hire refugees through demonstration and example. (Evaluation Terms of Reference)?	Responses suggest that Welcome: - Created an actionable model of an inclusive society by facilitating cross-sector collaboration, challenging stereotypes (though not uniformly), and promoting inclusion as a broader social goal. - Increased shared responsibility through multi-stakeholder engagement, recognition of each stakeholder's contribution, developing an empowering partnership model, and highlighting the continuing need for improved policy frameworks. - Built integration opportunities and replication through the Welcome Logo Award incentive, the network of practice, action of practical and individualized support, and positioning inclusion as a business opportunity.

Promoting a More Inclusive Society

114. **Finding 27: The evidence suggests that several components of the Welcome programme have contributed to fostering a more inclusive society and addressing xenophobia and racism toward refugees and asylum seekers. While primarily targeted at workplace inclusion, these efforts appear to have had broader social spillover effects.**

- **Cross-sector collaboration:** The Welcome programme played a critical role in building and strengthening partnerships between CSOs, employers, and UNHCR, acting as a bridge that elevated refugee voices. These collaborations deepened understanding of refugees' stories, desires, and needs, enabling them to be seen not as passive recipients of aid, but as skilled individuals with potential to contribute. The resulting networks also improved understanding of bureaucratic processes and legal responsibilities related to refugee employment, which in turn helped to reduce hesitation and fear around hiring refugees.
- **Challenging stereotypes:** A core feature of the programme's day-to-day interactions was its active role in challenging dominant stereotypes. By showcasing the capabilities, aspirations, and positive contributions of refugees, Welcome helped to shift perceptions—countering the idea that refugees are inherently vulnerable or problematic. As one UNHCR respondent noted, the programme aimed to "normalise" people seeking protection in the public and employer

imagination. However, the data also suggest that this shift was not uniform across all refugee groups—participants with higher skill levels or formal qualifications were more readily accepted into the labour market than others, as reported by refugees, CSOs, and UNHCR staff.

- **Focusing on inclusion beyond employment:** The programme promoted inclusion as a broader social goal, not just as job placement. Respondents emphasised that successful integration required creating welcoming, respectful environments that support refugees throughout the employment process. Both refugee and employer respondents described how this approach encouraged a sense of belonging and strengthened community ties.
- **Adapting to different refugee profiles:** The programme demonstrated flexibility in adapting to emerging refugee needs and profiles. Tailored "Inclusion Pathways" helped accommodate the differing contexts of newly arrived groups—such as Afghan and Ukrainian refugees—as well as individuals with higher education or professional backgrounds. This personalised approach reinforced the understanding that refugees are not a monolithic group, but a diverse population with unique capabilities and life experiences.

Sharing Responsibility for a More Equitable Society

115. **Finding 28:The Welcome programme supported the principle of shared responsibility among different sectors and actors. Several mechanisms contributed to this including collobarative multi-stakeholder approaches that shifted narratives from charity to partnership.**

- **Multi-stakeholder engagement:** Welcome's design involved collaboration between CSOs, private sector actors, and government institutions. This structure helped distribute responsibility across sectors, ensuring that support for refugees addressed multiple dimensions—legal, economic, and social.
- **Recognising each stakeholder's contribution:** The programme adopted a non-judgemental and pragmatic approach, helping engage employers and CSOs who were new to refugee inclusion work. This helped build confidence and ensure each partner could contribute based on their own strengths and knowledge.
- **Moving from charity to partnership:** Welcome advanced the idea that refugee employment is not an act of charity, but a two-way partnership. It empowered refugees to participate in their own integration process. As one business respondent put it, "the moment the refugee has a job, they begin a path to employment and often to autonomy."
- **Highlighting the importance of policy frameworks:** Many respondents, including CSOs and employers, emphasised the need for supportive legal and fiscal frameworks to make refugee inclusion viable. One CSO noted the importance of having "the right legal environment" to help companies feel confident in hiring refugees. While Welcome filled some structural gaps, respondents also called for stronger public investment in housing, training, and administrative processes.

Strengthening Integration Opportunities and Inspiring Others

116. **Finding 29: The evaluation also surfaced insights on how Welcome strengthened integration opportunities and encouraged replication by other companies- lessons that**

could be utilised in other contexts where UNHCR is engaging with the private sector on labour inclusion.

- **Recognition through the Welcome Logo Award:** The award served as a strong incentive for employers and a platform to showcase best practices. Its growing popularity (253 applicants in the most recent round, up from 67 in 2017) suggests that it successfully elevated the visibility of inclusive hiring and helped normalise refugee employment across sectors.
- **Building a network of practice:** By working with a range of companies—across industries and organisational sizes—Welcome created a de facto peer network of employers engaged in refugee inclusion. These businesses often served as informal ambassadors, sharing success stories and inspiring others to follow suit.
- **Offering practical support to employers:** Employers consistently reported that Welcome's advisory role—helping them navigate legal questions, identify candidates, and build inclusive processes—was essential in enabling them to take the first step. This reduced the perceived risk of hiring refugees and addressed key operational concerns.
- **Framing refugee inclusion as a business opportunity:** A significant factor in Welcome's effectiveness was its ability to position refugee hiring as aligned with business goals. Rather than focusing solely on moral or humanitarian arguments, the programme demonstrated the value of diversity, loyalty, and skill that refugees bring to the workplace.

4. Building on the Welcome Programme- Understanding the potential effects of hypothetical future inputs and adaptations using Quasi Modelling

117. This section provides analysis of data from the Cognitive Fuzzy Mapping (CFM) exercises to explore the complex system influencing refugee labour market integration in Italy and how the Welcome programme interacts with that system. It begins by establishing a baseline or 'steady state' of the Italian labour market for refugees and asylum seekers, as described by respondents.

Figure 9: Cognitive fuzzy map representing Refugee and Asylum Seeker Integration in the Italian Labour Market
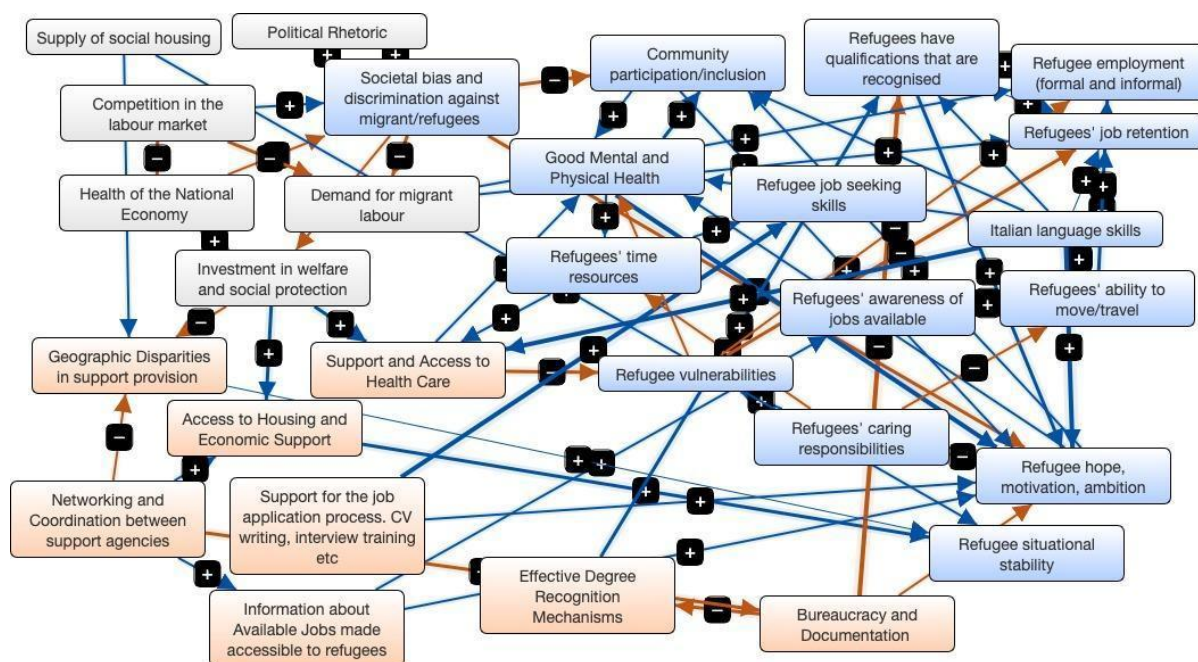
(Source: CFM workshops, all respondent groups)

How to read Figure 9

Figure 9 above illustrates the full range of factors identified, with arrows indicating the direction and strength of perceived causal relationships. Thicker arrows represent stronger causal links as reported by participants, while thinner arrows reflect more tentative or uncertain relationships. Importantly, the system visualised in Figure 9 was developed from discussions explicitly about refugee labour market integration more broadly—not just elements within Welcome's direct control. This approach was chosen to map the wider context and complexity of the ecosystem in which Welcome operates.

The resulting map highlights the dynamic and volatile nature of the system. Most interactions occur within the same level (micro, meso, or macro), with the greatest interplay observed between meso- and micro-level factors. Macro-level variables tend to act primarily as external drivers—exerting influence but being less influenced in return. Notable clusters of influence emerge around 'good mental and physical health' and 'refugee hope, motivation and ambition,' both of which appear central to the wider integration process.

118. Using this baseline model (Figure 9), further analysis simulated the impact of specific inputs attributed, by respondents, to Welcome's contributions. These included factors that stakeholders identified as having improved due to the programme and were:

+ Improved access to information about job opportunities
+ More effective recognition of foreign qualifications
+ Support for the job application process (e.g. CVs, interviews)
+ Enhanced coordination among support agencies
+ Increased refugee job-seeking skills
+ Better Italian language proficiency
+ Greater awareness among refugees of available employment

119. Figure 10 illustrates how these reported inputs affect the wider system of refugee labour market integration.

Figure 10: Impact on different factors of (reported) inputs by the Welcome programme
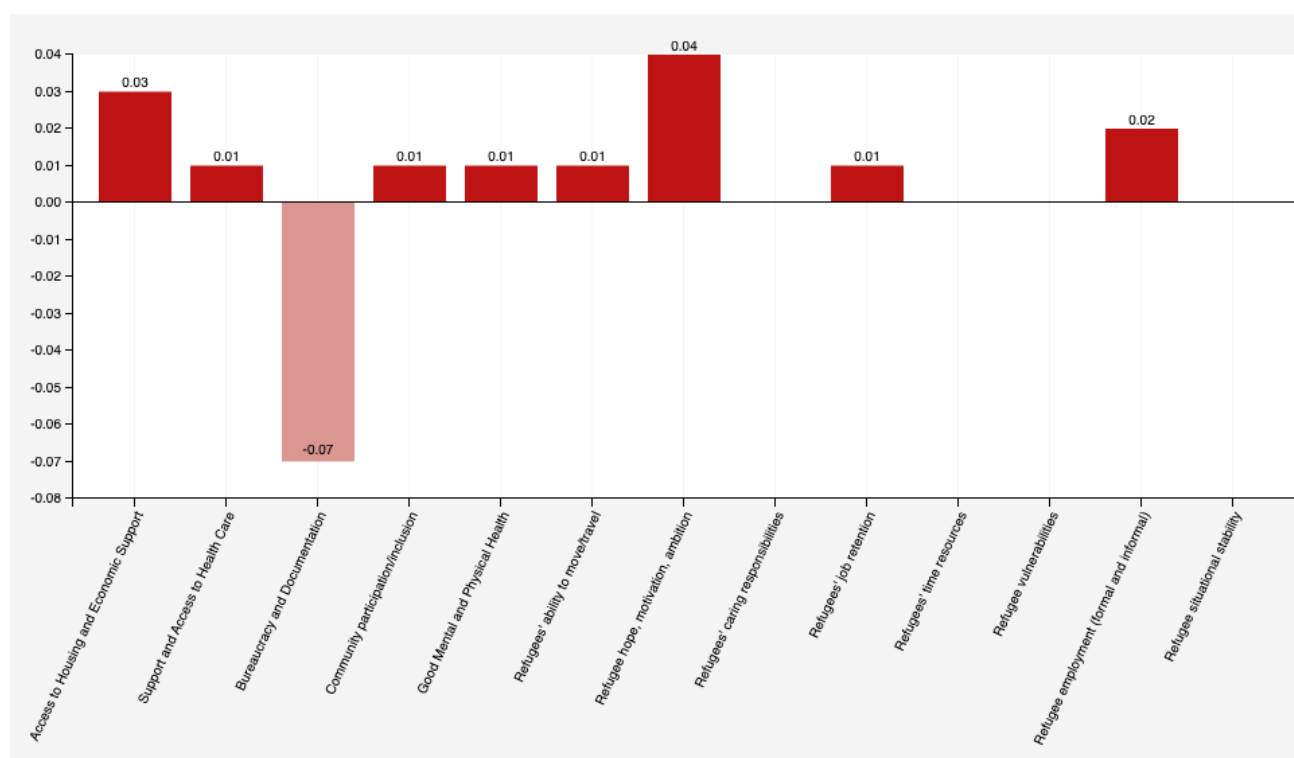
120. **Finding 30: The model suggests, based on it's current design, that the Welcome programme's most significant effects are observed in reducing bureaucratic and documentation barriers—primarily via enhanced coordination between government agencies, CSOs and employers.** It also shows benefits in refugee access to housing and economic support, again through improved collaboration across service providers. Moderate gains were noted in refugee hope and motivation, closely tied to greater awareness of job opportunities and reduced bureaucratic hurdles.

121. Smaller improvements were signalled in employment levels, job retention, access to healthcare, community participation, mental and physical wellbeing, and mobility. However, the changes were insufficient to register substantial effects on more entrenched variables such as situational vulnerability or care responsibilities.

122. A second model was created to test what would happen if Welcome-related inputs were maximised—i.e. all seven input factors set to their highest level (+1 or -1). This scenario represents a theoretical scaling up of Welcome's influence.

Figure 11: Impact of (reported) Welcome inputs at maximum level of change
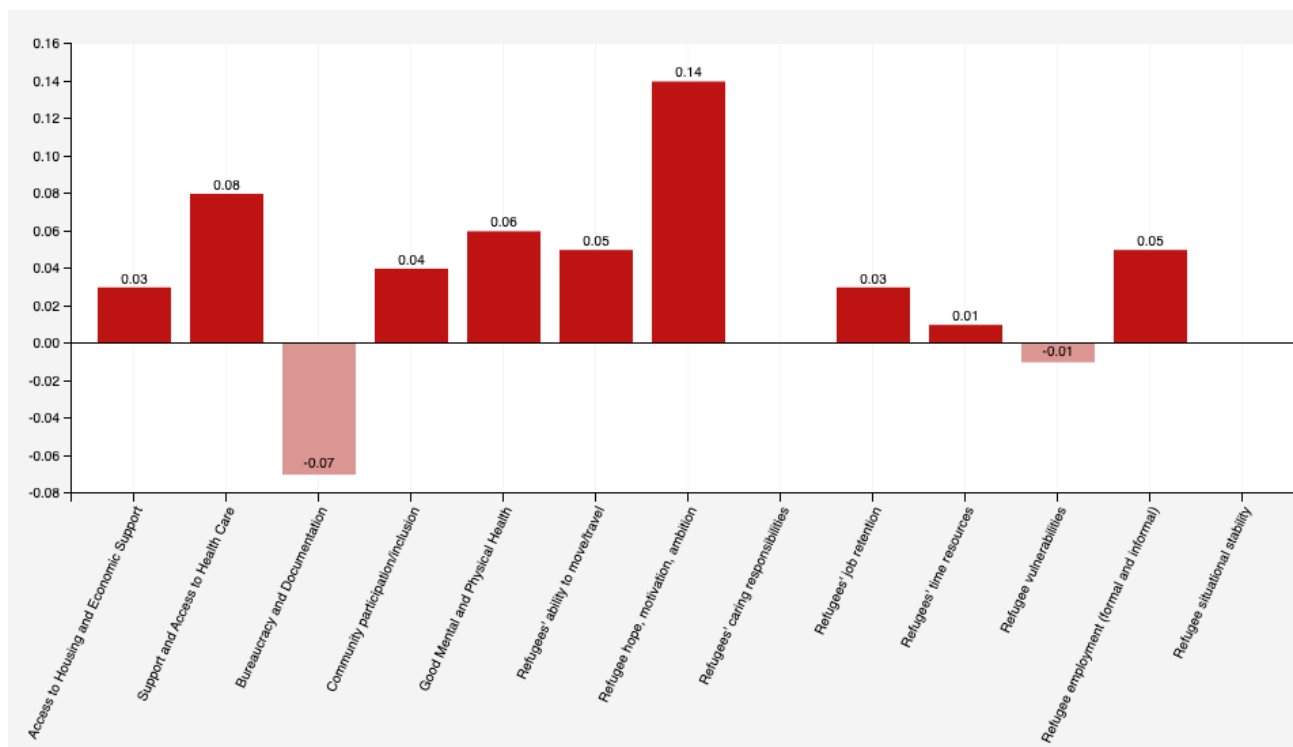
123. **Finding 31: Investing in refugees language skills will produce signficantly stronger employment and integration results.** The results of this model are striking. A major finding is that boosting Italian language skills alone produces a cascading benefit across nearly all other areas. The model predicts strong improvements in refugee hope, motivation and ambition, better healthcare access, stronger employment and retention outcomes, and enhanced mental and physical wellbeing.

124. Taken together, these simulations underscore the value of Welcome's current inputs, while also highlighting the powerful, system-wide impact that could be achieved through intensified investment in areas within its influence. In particular, Italian language acquisition emerges as a foundational enabler, even though it lies somewhat outside Welcome's direct operational scope. The models also show that hope and motivation are highly sensitive to shifts in multiple variables—pointing to the interdependent nature of refugee integration pathways.

125. Finally, this analysis provides strong support for expanding the scope and intensity of Welcome's existing activities. If scaled strategically, the programme could yield even greater benefits across a broad spectrum of outcomes relevant to refugee inclusion.

5. Conclusions

126. This evaluation confirms, through triangulated evidence, that the Welcome programme has achieved success across multiple criteria. It has met its core objectives of building and supporting partnerships between employers and civil society organisations (CSOs), enabling refugees to access meaningful employment in participating businesses, and promoting ethical, inclusive, and respectful workplace practices.

127. Overall, the findings indicate that the Welcome programme is relevant, effective, and sustainable. Its implementation has demonstrated strong adaptability and transferability. While there are areas for improvement, these would build upon an already robust and well-conceived programme design.

5.1 Relevance of the Welcome Methodology

128. The evaluation concludes that the Welcome programme's design and methodology are highly relevant to Italy's current socio-political context. It directly addresses pressing challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers in accessing the labour market, offering concrete responses such as improved access to job information, greater recognition of transferable skills, tailored job-search support, and facilitation of training opportunities—including language support.

129. The programme also effectively supports employers in meeting their corporate social responsibility (CSR) and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) objectives. This is achieved by leveraging existing employer motivation and providing tools, resources, and advisory support for refugee inclusion.

130. Key components of the Welcome methodology found to be particularly relevant include:

- **Co-creation of job inclusion pathways**: These are a signature innovation of the programme, developed collaboratively between businesses, CSOs, and UNHCR. They go beyond traditional labour matching by addressing the specific needs of both refugees (e.g. language barriers, flexibility, skill gaps) and employers (e.g. qualification recognition, workplace readiness).
- **WelcomeNet**: An online platform with over 100 registered CSOs, designed to foster partnerships between civil society and business actors, share good practice, and support the co-design of inclusion pathways.
- **Promotion of DE&I practices**: Welcome works with employers to embed inclusive policies, offering legal guidance, good practice examples, and practical tools for integrating refugees into the workforce.
- **Recognition of refugee skills**: The programme encourages acknowledgement of refugees' existing skills and qualifications, often gained abroad, and supports communication of these in ways employers can understand.
- **Refugee job-search support**: Refugees are assisted in accessing employment opportunities, writing CVs, and developing profiles—particularly through the Welcome-in-One-Click platform.
- **Training and capacity building**: Although Welcome does not directly fund training, it plays a coordination role in linking refugees to language and vocational training already available.

131. The methodology aligns well with the strategic objectives of UNHCR and the Multi-Country Office (MCO) in Italy, complementing existing initiatives aimed at integration and support for vulnerable populations.

5.2 Effectiveness and Efficiency

132. The evaluation finds a strong alignment between programme inputs and observed outcomes. Notable outcomes include:

- **Improved employment outcomes**: Welcome has enhanced employment prospects and job quality for many refugees, evidenced by increased employment rates and reported improvements in quality of life and social inclusion.
- **Greater employer confidence and capacity**: Businesses have grown more confident in hiring refugees and better equipped to meet labour demands and DEI commitments, supported by legal guidance and direct candidate connections.
- **Enhanced DEI and workplace practices**: Participating businesses have improved their policies and work cultures to better support refugee inclusion.
- **Stronger, more diverse networks**: CSOs, government actors, UNHCR, and businesses are now more interconnected, fostering increased credibility, professionalism, and coordination.
- **Shift in public narrative**: Through the Welcome Award and other public engagement, the programme has contributed to reframing refugees as valuable contributors rather than passive recipients of aid.
- **Shared responsibility**: The programme has fostered cross-sector collaboration, enabling a more holistic response to refugee needs by pooling diverse resources and expertise.
- **Improved social infrastructure**: Welcome has supported better coordination between actors, helping to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and documentation barriers faced by refugees seeking work.

133. Insights from the Cognitive Fuzzy Mapping (CFM) exercise reinforce these findings by highlighting the system-wide complexity of refugee labour market integration. The CFM model demonstrates that Welcome has created ripple effects across a range of factors, especially where it has strengthened coordination among support agencies, improved job-seeking skills, and facilitated access to information. Notably, the modelling suggests that modest improvements in these areas have already contributed to gains in refugee wellbeing, motivation, housing access, and healthcare navigation.

134. Importantly, when these inputs were hypothetically maximised in the model—particularly Italian language skills—major system-wide improvements were observed. Enhanced language proficiency alone produced significant gains in employment, mental health, and integration. Although language provision lies largely outside Welcome's direct control, the programme's role in facilitating access to training remains vital. The modelling supports the case for scaling existing Welcome activities, as further investment in these levers would likely yield broad benefits across refugee inclusion outcomes.

135. While a full **cost-benefit** analysis was not feasible, the programme demonstrates likely cost-effectiveness. By enabling refugees to become economically active, Welcome reduces the fiscal burden of unemployment and contributes positively to the economy.[31]Combined with relatively low implementation costs and clear evidence of impact, **the business case for sustaining the programme is strong.**

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[31] Notwithstanding critical scholarship that warns against framing refugee policy objectives solely through an economic lens (Anderson et al., 2011; Easton-Calabria and Omata, 2018), refugees contribute to society in ways that extend well beyond measurable economic output. These include unpaid care work, civic volunteering, and cultural or creative contributions, which are often undervalued or overlooked in integration policy frameworks (Lamba and Krahn, 2003; Lenette, 2016).

5.3 Sustainability of the Programme and Its Methodology

136. The sustainability of Welcome is anchored in its adaptive, stakeholder-responsive design. Several participating companies have adopted internal refugee inclusion policies and practices that are likely to endure beyond the programme's direct support. These structural changes—such as revised recruitment approaches and DEI policies—are typically more resilient to internal organisational shifts.

137. However, the persistence of "soft" outcomes—such as improved attitudes and cultural awareness—may be more vulnerable to erosion, especially with staff turnover. Ongoing reinforcement through internal training and onboarding processes will be important to sustain these gains.

138. The programme's emphasis on co-design and its multi-actor governance model strengthen its long-term viability. Diverse stakeholder involvement has cultivated a shared sense of ownership and accountability. Refugees also stand to retain lasting benefits—such as increased language proficiency, familiarity with Italian work norms, and professional networks—particularly if secured employment is sustained.

139. At the same time, the evaluation highlights the complex environment in which the programme operates, making it difficult to attribute outcomes solely to Welcome. Labour market integration is shaped by a range of structural (e.g. bureaucratic inefficiencies, underfunded protection systems), meso (e.g. inefficient matching, limited cross-sector understanding), and micro (e.g. language and mobility barriers, low job permanence) factors.

140. This complexity underlines the need for systemic action. The evaluation suggests that Welcome—within UNHCR's broader strategic framework—can and should play a stronger advocacy role in addressing barriers at macro and meso levels. The partnerships and networks that the programme has cultivated are valuable assets in this regard, offering a foundation for policy dialogue and broader reform. To ensure sustainability at scale, core elements of the programme may need to be formally embedded within national policy frameworks and reinforced by legislative backing.

6. Recommendations

141. Based on the evaluation evidence, the following key recommendations are proposed for UNHCR. In addition to the three formal recommendations directed to UNHCR, this evaluation also includes a set of suggestions aimed at key stakeholder groups involved in the Welcome programme. These suggestions are intended to inform and support broader reflection and collaboration but are not subject to formal tracking by UNHCR. As these stakeholder groups consist of multiple, often independent entities, a formal management response will not be required for these items.

142. These suggestions are offered in the spirit of constructive engagement and are based on the evaluation's findings and observations. They aim to contribute to ongoing dialogue and improvement across the wider ecosystem of actors involved in the Welcome programme.

Recommended actions	Responsible	Anticipated timeframe
Recommendation 1: Build on and strengthen collaboration with local communities, municipalities, businesses and CSOs to ensure that programming is responsive to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. This might include: • Emphasising mutual benefit and value proposition by continuing to highlight the return on investment for businesses, including meeting social responsibility goals, accessing diverse talent pools, and enhancing company reputation. • Tailor engagement strategies to recognise that different sized companies and sectors may require different approaches. Tailored engagement strategies may be made for SMEs and larger corporations. • Facilitate direct connections and dialogue between businesses and refugees, as well as between businesses and experienced third sector organisations, continuing the work already begun on WelcomeNet and others. This can help deconstruct stereotypes and build understanding. • Promote success stories and best practices by continuing to publicise the successes of companies that have hired refugees through the Welcome programme. • Develop diverse engagement opportunities beyond direct hiring, such as volunteer company schemes, in-kind support, and participation in awareness-raising initiatives. • Strengthen advocacy efforts involving businesses to engage more actively in advocating with the government for policies that support refugee employment. • Improve communication and feedback loops to ensure timely and consistent communication with businesses throughout their engagement with the programme for example by actively soliciting and acting upon feedback to improve the process.	UNHCR MCO Italy lead	6-12 months
Recommendation 2: Create stronger links to services on key issues directly related to labour market integration, with emphasis on refugee	UNHCR MCO Italy lead	6-12 months

health and mental health, housing, and social protection benefits. This might involve through messaging, guidance and advice:

- Promoting awareness and understanding amongst businesses to become more aware of the specific health and mental health challenges that refugees may face due to their experiences and displacement.
- Provide information and resources to businesses on where refugees can access health and mental health services within the local community. This could be facilitated through partnerships with third sector organisations or local authorities.
- Encourage businesses to consider flexibility and reasonable adjustments in working conditions that may support the well-being of refugee employees, particularly during initial integration phases.
- Integrate well-being into support services: while focusing on job placement, third sector organisations may consider integrating basic well-being checks and information about health services into their support for refugees.
- Share information and training on trauma-informed practices. Third sector organisations could benefit from information and training on trauma-informed practices to better support their well-being, allowing this awareness to be passed to employers.
- Encourage businesses to understand the significant difficulties refugees face in securing suitable housing. This awareness can lead to more understanding and potentially, co-designing supportive actions.
- Provide information on local organisations and initiatives that offer housing advice and support to refugees. This could be included in Welcome's resources for employers.
- Develop expertise in local housing systems: WelcomeNet members should aim to develop a strong understanding of the local housing market, regulations, and available support programmes for refugees in their respective areas.
- Collaborate with housing-specific organisations: Welcome Net members should proactively build relationships and collaborate with organisations that specialise in refugee housing or homelessness prevention.
- Highlight housing as a prerequisite for labour market integration in discussions with government entities.

Recommendation 3: Engage in advocacy to endorse and encourage good practice exemplified in the Welcome experience across other institutions that are responsible for refugee integration. This will involve making the case that labour market integration is deeply affected by the wider integration challenge. This might involve through messaging and networking: • Seek formal endorsement and integration of the Welcome model within national integration plans and programmes led by ministries such as the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of	UNHCR MCO Italy lead	6-12 months

Interior. This would lend institutional legitimacy and potentially unlock resources.

- Encourage local governments (municipalities and regions) to officially recognise and adopt the Welcome model within their local inclusion strategies. (The Integration Charter is a positive step in this direction) .
- Support the development and strengthening of local integration hubs in collaboration with municipalities, mirroring the model in Turin, Milan, Rome, Naples and Bari.
- Promote standardisation and dissemination of Welcome-like experiences at the European and potentially global levels through intergovernmental cooperation and policy exchange.

Suggestions for CSOs and the Addecco Foundation

1. Codify and share good practice and between different organisations to foster collaboration and innovation. This might involve:
- Utilising and further developing the Welcome-in-one-click platform not just for job matching but also as a central repository for good practices, methodologies, and tools related to refugee employment inclusion.
- Encourage regular online and offline forums, workshops, and seminars where organisations can present their successful initiatives, share expertise, and learn from each other.
- Promote the creation of communities of practice around specific areas of refugee employment inclusion (e.g., employer engagement, skills assessment, mentorship programmes) to enable focused knowledge sharing and collaborative problem-solving.
- Develop standardised documentation and toolkits that codify effective practices in areas such as outreach to employers, candidate assessment, and post-placement support.

2. Advocate for policy change. Build on gains made in increased visibility and lobbying power with the government, using UNHCR as a useful conduit, to engage in advocacy to influence legislation and policy that affect refugee integration, ensuring that the voices of refugees are included in policy discussions.

Suggestions for Local and National Governments:

1. Strengthen public communication to endorse how refugee integration policy provides an economic win and build the business case for investment in refugee labour inclusion, particularly in terms of language support.

2. Learn from findings of this evaluation concerning employers' needs and acknowledging employers' appetite for refugee inclusion. This involves continued consultation with employers through a formalized working group or committee to advise on what types of support could help employers to meet their recruitment needs through refugee integration.

Suggestions for Employers and employer organizations:

1. Build on gains made through involvement in Welcome by formalising integration policy and practice. These should be monitored regularly for effectiveness.
2. Improve the medium to long-term monitoring of employment outcomes for refugees within the

business. This could be done through annual surveys and would allow organisations to improve future hiring practice and support job security and permanence for refugees.

3. Regularly conduct anonymous and non-judgemental listening exercises to learn from both refugee and non-refugee employees, to understand potential tensions or areas for improved communication and to understand how to sustain inclusion policy

Annexes

Annex 1: [Terms of Reference](#)

Annex 2: Outcome map

Vision
Welcome contributes to a society which values inclusion, equity and tolerance as cornerstones of a robust labour market. This manifests in how citizens, government, employers and businesses view refugees and asylum seekers as potential assets. It also manifests in systematic, sustainable and coherent policy and practice in how refugees and asylum seekers have fair access to employment opportunities.

Misson
Welcome creates bridges between employers/businesses, refugees and asylum seekers and civil society (i.e., those supporting refugees). These bridges provide an opportunity to create meaningful initiatives for refugees and asylum seekers to improve their employability and labour market opportunity through various activities, designed to address both demand side (employer) and supply side (employee) needs. On the demand side, Welcome creates opportunities for identifying staff and skills gaps, providing advice and knowledge on employers' rights and responsibilities as well as good practice on equality, diversity, and inclusion. It seeks to improve refugees' experiences within the workplace. On the supply side, Welcome creates opportunities for improving skills and capabilities including language and interview skills, knowledge of business practices and cultures, and knowledge on rights and responsibilities as an employee. Welcome also assists when needed at a local or national level, to advocate for improvements in bureaucracy and systems.
Overall, the initiative aims to generate a cultural shift in how refugees are viewed, by both refugees and businesses as active participants.

Progress markers (per boundary partner group)			
Hiring managers, HR directors, businesses and employers	**Refugees and asylum seekers**	**Civil society involved in supporting refugees and asylum seekers**	**Government ministries**
Continuous senior executive engagement with recruitment policy concerning refugee and asylum seekers	Access to work inclusion pathways including job-linked training, employment contracts.	Self-reported increase in meetings and interactions with senior level government interlocutors concerning refugees/asylum seekers	Ministers declare themselves more aware of the challenges refugees and asylum seekers face in terms of protection and labour inclusion
Introduction of international standards on refugee protection in recruitment, welfare and long-term staff support policies	Increase in access to Italian language training.	Self-reported use of shared language with private sector and government interlocutors	Ministries show greater awareness of the difficulties of integrating refugee protection and labour inclusion across regions
Clearly written professional development policy in place to ensure refugees/asylum seekers can access better paid and qualified work	Reports of better-quality CVs/letter writing/interviewing from refugees and asylum seekers, over time	Other interlocutors report use of shared language and understanding with civil society	Ministerial interest in reducing vacancies and increasing employment among refugees/asylum seekers

Introduction of process/es for paid internships or other paying labour activation for refugees/asylum seekers	Self-reported increase in time spent in career building	Self-reported increase in sense of hope that networks and advocacy with private sector and government partners will result in improvements for refugees/asylum seekers	Ministries report increased engagement in their relations with partners, such as UNHCR, civil society and the private sector.
Establishment of a technical committee to oversee recruitment and retention policy of refugee/asylum seekers	Self-reported increase in training or other support accessed	Statements on the expansion of the triangulation network with the Government regarding refugees/asylum seekers	
Due diligence procedures introduced to monitor recruitment and retention policy of refugee/asylum seekers	Self-reported improvement in understanding of employer organisations' recruitment and retention policy and practice		
Positive quota for refugees/asylum seekers introduced	Statements related to increased sense of hope regarding future career		
Recruitment and retention policy written specifically to mention refugees/asylum seekers	Statements relating to changes in employment situation		
Introduction of process/es for training refugee/asylum seekers			
Improvements in ability to recognise refugees' qualifications			
Improvements in understanding of refugee employment rights and responsibilities			

Annex 3. Data collection tools

3.1 Outcome Mapping workshop: session description

The Outcome Mapping workshop involved a two hour online facilitated discussion with a range of senior stakeholders with a direct interest in, and involvement with programme implementation and management. Discussions encouraged 'looking back' at outcomes and successes as well as reflecting what participants consider to be the ambitions and aims of the programme going forward.

The first session of the workshop defined the broad current 'mission' for the Programme. Participants were encouraged to be self-reflexive and identify and challenge their own preconceptions and wired-in notions about the programme, being prompted to consider how desired outcomes looked 'in reality'. We presented the draft of our combined evidence and document review and posed a series of questions about the programme's mission (the long-term change, at the macro and meso levels, that the programme is working towards) and goals (intermediate changes that drive towards the mission, to include context-specific actions). We used a series of open-ended questions and challenges, and encouraged interaction between participants. The next session determined the groups and individuals that make up the programme's 'boundary partners' – those for whom the programme intended change and who were also involved in creating change. Boundary partners may be individuals, communities, organisations or groups of these. Once these groups were identified, they informed our data collection samples. Participants were challenged to think about what changes, in terms of the mission and goals, were desired for specific boundary partners.

Session 3 began to plot the markers against which progress towards the mission and goals would be measured, for each boundary partner group. Progress markers are, arguably, the most important items to result from the workshop. They provide the 'flesh on the bones' of the high-level programme ambitions and ground the evaluation in real world experience. A final short session wrapped up the discussion. It is important to note that a specific line of enquiry during the workshop was to establish the implications, desired goals, outcomes and progress markers relating to boundary partner groups as intersecting with characteristics of gender, race, sexuality, age group, and disability. Progress markers were developed in terms of changes and outcomes both for refugees, employers and businesses, for wider communities, and actions concerning policy advocacy and organisational effectiveness within UNHCR and the Welcome programme partners.

3.2 Company survey

Sondaggio di valutazione del programma Welcome
1. Introduzione all'indagine
" Welcome – Working for Refugee Integration" è il principale programma dell'UNHCR in Italia volto a supportare rifugiati e richiedenti asilo nel loro inserimento lavorativo. Opcit Research è stata incaricata dall'UNHCR di condurre la valutazione di questo programa

Per garantire una valutazione accurata, Opcit Research sta conducendo un sondaggio tra diversi utenti e stakeholder del programma, con l'obiettivo di raccogliere le opinioni sulle sfide legate all'integrazione dei rifugiati nel mercato del lavoro in Italia e sul programma Welcome.
Lo scopo dello studio è identificare ciò che funziona e ciò che necessita di miglioramenti. Vi invitiamo, quindi, a rispondere con la massima sincerità. Vi assicuriamo che tutte le risposte saranno completamente anonime e riservate, il che significa che né voi né la vostra

azienda/organizzazione sarete identificati in alcun rapporto di ricerca o in altre pubblicazioni. Per maggiori informazioni sulla protezione dei dati, cliccare qui.

Il completamento del sondaggio richiederà circa 15-20 minuti.

Vi ringraziamo in anticipo per il vostro prezioso contributo a questo studio.
In caso di domande o dubbi su questa ricerca, potete contattare la dott.ssa Ailsa Winton, ricercatrice senior presso Opcit Research, a questo indirizzo: ailsaw@opcitresearch.com

2.
1. Hai conoscenza/esperienza diretta del programma Welcome?

Sì

N
o

3. Informazioni generali
2. Come ti chiami?

3. Qual è il nome della tua azienda/organizzazione?

4. Qual è il tuo ruolo attuale in tale azienda/organizzazione?

5. In quale città lavori?

6. Descrivi brevemente quale rapporto ha la tua azienda con il programma Welcome.

4. Welcome programme
7. Cosa ti ha spinto a partecipare a Welcome? Seleziona un valore per ognuno dei fattori elencati e nella casella sottostante descrivi quelli che non sono elencati.

	Non importante	Poco importante	Moderata mente importante	Important e	Molto importante	Non so
Necessità di forza lavoro						
Responsabilità sociale d'impresa						
Obiettivi delle risorse umane (ad es. diversità, equità e inclusione)						
Esperienza positiva con l'assunzione di rifugiati in passato						
Reputazione dell'UNHCR						

Si prega di descrivere qui eventuali altri fattori non elencati:

8. A tuo parere, quale delle seguenti affermazioni descrive meglio la posizione della tua azienda/organizzazione in relazione al reclutamento di rifugiati?

   La mia azienda non ha reclutato e non recluta ancora attivamente rifugiati

   La mia azienda ha iniziato a reclutare attivamente rifugiati per la prima volta attraverso Welcome

   La mia azienda ha aumentato il reclutamento di rifugiati attraverso Welcome

   Altro (specificare):

9. Come valuteresti l'esperienza della tua azienda con il programma Welcome in relazione ai seguenti aspetti del reclutamento di rifugiati?

	Eccellente	Buona	Accettabil e	Scarsa	Molto scarsa	Non so
Sensibilizzazione						
Processo di assunzione						

	Eccellente	Buona	Accettabile	Scarsa	Molto scarsa	Non so
Formazione						
Supporto continuo						

10. La tua azienda ha introdotto alcune delle misure elencate di seguito in relazione al reclutamento di rifugiati da quando collabora con il programma Welcome? Seleziona tutte le risposte pertinenti:

   Offerta di tirocinio retribuito o altro programma di onboarding

   Quote preferenziali (Politiche di Uguaglianza, Diversità e Inclusione)

   Comitato tecnico per un supporto a lungo termine

   Monitoraggio della politica di assunzione e due diligence

   Coinvolgimento dei dirigenti nella sensibilizzazione e nelle politiche relative al reclutamento di rifugiati/richiedenti asilo

   Altro (specificare):

Si prega di aggiungere eventuali commenti sulle misure intraprese dall'azienda qui:

11. In che modo Welcome ha contribuito a questi cambiamenti?

12. Qual è stato, secondo te, il cambiamento più significativo che il programma Welcome ha apportato alla tua azienda? Descrivi brevemente il cambiamento e spiega perché lo ritieni particolarmente importante.

13. Quali sono stati secondo te gli aspetti meno riusciti del programma? Cosa pensi debba essere migliorato in futuro?

14. Sarebbe disponibile a partecipare a un breve colloquio online come parte della valutazione?

Si

N

o

Dati di contatto (email o telefono)

3.3 Interview guide: Refugees

Topic	Key questions	Prompts
Basic background data	Nationality Age How long been in Italy	*DO NOT ASK ABOUT CAUSE OF DISPLACEMENT OR EXPERIENCES OF JOURNEY. FOCUS THROUGHOUT ONLY ON DETAILS RELEVANT TO WORK SINCE ARRIVING IN ITALY*
Experiences of labour market inclusion and support		
Work experiences	Have you been able to work since being in Italy? Could you tell me about the work you have done?	What role and sector How long employed for and under what terms
	Did you feel that you had a choice over the kind of work you did?	Whether options available were appropriate to needs and experience
	What were the things that influenced your choice of work?	Income, future prospects, status, work life balance, relevant to experience, availability of job offers
	What have been the main difficulties you have faced in finding work? Have these changed over time?	Lack of training, skills, language Lack of knowledge about how to find work Discrimination by employers or local community Legal problems Lack of jobs Lack of the right support

Support received	Did you get support to find work? Could you explain what that support was?	Here we should prompt for the types of support/organisations working with/offered by Welcome. From NGOs, government, UNHCR, businesses, local community Type of support (Training/job skills/contact with employers) How long support given
	(If not mentioned) whether familiar with the Welcome programme, what they understand it to be, and what their contact with it has been	
	Do you feel the support you got was the right kind of support? Did it give you what you needed?	If all refugees supported equally How the support has helped, what direct impacts did support have on their ability to work and the kind of work they do What kind of support is missing or was not appropriate/needed? Eg Did support end once they found a job?
	Overall, how do you feel about the kind of work you have been able to do in Italy?	Big picture, overall feelings not details
	What needs to be done moving forward to help refugees to be better included in the labour market in Italy?	EG by gov, NGOs, employers, host communities, refugees, UNHCR
	Looking back, overall, at your experience of the Italian labour market - what has/have been the Most Significant Change that has happened as a result of the support you have received? Why was it significant?	If they cannot think of one.. Allow this answer Remind them that it could be a small or big change.

Topic	Key questions	Prompts
	Do you have any thoughts on the contribution made by either Welcome or a CSO/NGO or other organisation that helped create the change?	This is a big picture question

3.4 Interview guide: Participating companies

Topic	Key questions	Prompts
Basic background data	Name, role, experience in relation to Welcome programme	
Programme context		
Wider context of the programme	Thinking about the situation of labour market integration for refugees in Italy before Welcome was introduced, what do you think were the main difficulties for refugees? And for host communities?	• Eg Lack of clear policy, lack of understanding, social hostility, discrimination. • Structural, meso, individual levels; any change over time
	Where did the Welcome programme fit in to addressing those challenges?	• Why was the programme needed? • How was Welcome imagined to meet specific challenges for refugees and host communities?
	What would you say were the main goals of Welcome?	• For employers and employees
Programme outcomes		

Role in Welcome and changes	What made you want to get involved in Welcome?	- Need for workers - Social responsibility - influence of the programme on their CSR, DE&I, and HR goals
	Can you describe what the role of your business has been within the Welcome programme?	
	How would you describe your overall experience of recruiting refugees?	What aspects of outreach, hiring, training and ongoing support do you think have worked? And why? Was the experience as they expected? What have they learned as a result?
Programme operation		
Main outcomes	Overall, what has being involved in Welcome done for your company? Are you happy with how it has worked?	
	What have been the main successes of the programme?	● For the company
Mechanisms of change	What are the main mechanisms that allowed this change to take place? What made it work?	● What was needed from companies, but also government, from UNHCR, host community, refugees

Topic	Key questions	Prompts
	What have been the challenges and barriers to success for the Welcome programme?	• Eg internal, funding, coordination, etc • Eg external, changes in political climate, economic conditions in Italy, migration patterns, public opinion
Moving forward	Do you think there is a role for the programme moving forward? What do you think needs to change and what ought to be continued?	• What is not working? Or could work better? • How can impacts be maintained and increased over the short, medium and long term for employers, employees, and host communities
Most significant change	Finally, we are doing an exercise known as 'Most Significant Change'. In this, please tell us, what comes to your mind, intuitively, instinctively, as a 'Significant Change' you are aware of and that you connect to the Welcome programme. Why was the change significant to you What was the contribution of Welcome?	• The change can be big or small.

3.5 Interview guide: CSOs (implementing partners)

Topic	Key questions	Prompts
Basic background data	Name, role, experience in relation to Welcome programme	
Programme context		
Wider context of the programme	Thinking about the situation of labour market integration for refugees in Italy before Welcome was introduced, what	• Eg Lack of clear policy, lack of understanding, social hostility, discrimination.

	do you think were the main difficulties for refugees? And for host communities?	● Structural, meso, individual levels; any change over time
	Where did the Welcome programme fit in to addressing those challenges?	● Why was the programme needed? ● How was Welcome imagined to meet specific challenges for refugees and host communities?
	What would you say were the main goals of Welcome?	● For employers and employees
Programme outcomes		
Role in Welcome and changes	What has been the role of NGOs and CSOs within the Welcome programme specifically?	
	What changes have NGOs/CSOs involved in the programme contributed to?	There are some specific changes we are interested in asking about in relation to key progress markers: Prompt for examples in relation to key progress markers: –expanded network with government and private sector stakeholders –use of shared language with private sector and government stakeholders –networks and advocacy activities with private sector and government partners leading to improvements for refugees
	What have been the main challenges and limitations to these changes coming about?	● Structural, meso and individual levels ● Any particular goals that are not really being met ● Any activities that didn't work as well as hoped and why
	Moving forward, what needs to be done for civil society to better support the labour market experiences of refugees	● Structural, meso and individual levels

	and asylum seekers?	
Refugees/asylum seekers	Do you think the programme has had an impact on refugees and asylum seekers' experiences of labour market inclusion? In what ways?	● Prompt for examples in relation to key progress markers: –Spend more time on career building –better understanding of processes –improved job seeking skills ● Any negative impacts?
	What have been the main challenges and limitations to these changes coming about?	● Structural, meso and individual levels ● Any particular goals that are not really being met ● Any activities that didn't work as well as hoped and why
Programme operation		
Main outcomes	What have been the main successes of the programme?	● Examples for employers, employees, and host communities
Mechanisms of change	What are the main mechanisms that allowed this change to take place? What made it work?	● Examples for employers, employees, and host communities
	What have been the challenges and barriers to success for the Welcome programme?	● Eg internal, funding, coordination, etc ● Eg external, changes in political climate, economic conditions in Italy, migration patterns, public opinion
Moving forward	Do you think there is a role for the programme moving forward? What do you think needs to change and what	● How can impacts be maintained and increased over the short, medium and long term for employers, employees, and host communities

Topic	Key questions	Prompts
	ought to be continued?	
Most significant change	Finally, we are doing an exercise known as 'Most Significant Change'. In this, please tell us, what comes to your mind, intuitively, instinctively, as a 'Significant Change' you are aware of and that you connect to the Welcome programme. Why was the change significant to you What was the contribution of Welcome?	● The change can be big or small.

3.6 Interview guide: Government

Topic	Key questions	Prompts
Basic background data	Name, role, experience in relation to Welcome programme	
Programme context		
Wider context of the programme	Thinking about the situation of labour market integration for refugees in Italy before Welcome was introduced, what do you think were the main difficulties for refugees? And for host communities?	● Eg Lack of clear policy, lack of understanding, social hostility, discrimination. ● Structural, meso, individual levels; any change over time
	Where did the Welcome programme fit in to addressing those challenges?	● Why was the programme needed? ● How was Welcome imagined to meet specific challenges for refugees and host communities?

	What would you say were the main goals of Welcome?	● For employers and employees
Programme outcomes		
Role in Welcome and changes	What has been the role of local government within Welcome?	
	What do you think has changed as a result of government involvement in Welcome? (What have the successes been?)	There are some specific changes we are interested in asking about in relation to key progress markers: –Ministers are more aware of challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers in terms of protection and labour inclusion –Ministers more engaged with UNHCR, civil society and private sector –Ministers actively interested in increasing employment among refugees/asylum seekers ● Any wider changes for government ● Changes in other areas - employers, employees, and host communities
	What are the main mechanisms that allowed this change to take place? What made it possible?	● What was needed within government, but also from UNHCR, from companies, host community, refugees
	What have been the main challenges and limitations for the programme?	● Challenges outside the programme, at different levels ' eg social and economic context in Italy ● Within Welcome - any particular goals that are not really being met and why ● Any activities that didn't work as well as hoped and why
	Do you think there is a role for the programme moving forward? What do you think needs to change or be improved?	● What is not working? Or could work better? ● How can impacts be maintained and increased over the short, medium and long term for employers, employees, and host communities

Most significant change	Finally, we are doing an exercise known as 'Most Significant Change'. In this, please tell us, what comes to your mind, intuitively, as a 'Significant Change' you are aware of in relation to the Welcome programme. Why was the change significant to you What was the contribution of Welcome?	● The change can be big or small.

3.7 Interview guide: UNHCR staff

Topic	Key questions	Prompts
Basic background data	Name, role, experience in relation to Welcome programme	
Programme context		
Wider context of the programme	Thinking about the situation of labour market integration for refugees in Italy before Welcome was introduced, what do you think were the main difficulties for refugees? And for host communities?	● Eg Lack of clear policy, lack of understanding, social hostility, discrimination. ● Structural, meso, individual levels; any change over time
	Where did the Welcome programme fit in to addressing those challenges?	● Why was the programme needed? ● How was Welcome imagined to meet specific challenges for refugees and host communities?
	What would you say were the main goals of Welcome?	● For employers and employees

	What was the role of UNHCR specifically within the programme and how /has this changed over time?	● During inception, delivery phases, and looking to to the future

Programme outcomes - impact of different groups		
Businesses/ employers	How have businesses been involved in the programme? What have been the outcomes of their involvement? (Has the programme been effective in improving how refugees are recruited and supported in employment?)	There are some specific changes we are interested in asking about in relation to key progress markers: ● Prompt for examples in relation to key progress markers: –Offer of paid internship or other onboarding programme –Preferential quotas (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies) –Technical committee for long term support –Monitoring of recruitment policy, due diligence –Continued engagement of senior managers in awareness raising and policy relating to recruitment of refugees/asylum seekers
	What have been the main challenges and limitations to these changes?	● Both for employers and employees ● Not all business sectors involved? ● Structural, meso and individual levels
	Moving forward, what needs to be improved in relation to recruitment issues in order to better support employers and employees?	● Structural, meso and individual levels ● Including other business sectors?
Refugees/asylum seekers	Do you think the programme has had an impact on refugees and asylum seekers' experiences of labour market inclusion? In what ways?	● Prompt for examples in relation to key progress markers: –Spend more time on career building –better understanding of processes –improved job seeking skills ● Any negative impacts?

	What have been the main challenges and limitations to these changes coming about?		• Structural, meso and individual levels • Any particular goals that are not really being met • Any activities that didn't work as well as hoped and why
	Moving forward, what needs to be improved in order for refugees labour market experiences to be better supported?		• Structural, meso and individual levels
Civil society	What changes have NGOs/CSOs involved in the programme contributed to?		• Prompt for examples in relation to key progress markers: –expanded network with government and private sector stakeholders –use of shared language with private sector and government stakeholders –networks and advocacy activities with private sector and government partners leading to improvements for refugees
	What have been the main challenges and limitations to these changes coming about?		• Structural, meso and individual levels • Any particular goals that are not really being met • Any activities that didn't work as well as hoped and why
	Moving forward, what needs to be improved in relation to civil society in order to better support the labour market experiences of refugees and asylum seekers?		• Structural, meso and individual levels
Government	What has been the role of national and local government within Welcome? What changes has government involvement in the programme contributed to?		• Prompt for examples in relation to key progress markers: –Ministers are more aware of challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers in terms of protection and labour inclusion –Ministers more engaged with UNHCR, civil society and private sector –Ministers actively interested in increasing employment among refugees/asylum seekers

	What have been the main challenges and limitations to these changes coming about?	• Structural, meso and individual levels • Any particular goals that are not really being met • Any activities that didn't work as well as hoped and why
	Moving forward, what needs to be improved in order for the government to better support the labour market experiences of refugees and asylum seekers?	• Structural, meso and individual levels
Programme operation - most significant change, challenges and limitations		
Main outcomes	What have been the main successes of the programme?	• Examples for employers, employees, and host communities
	Of these, which is the most important and why?	
Mechanisms of change	What are the main mechanisms that allowed this change to take place? What made it work?	• Examples for employers, employees, and host communities
	What have been the main internal challenges and barriers to success, within the Welcome programme?	• Eg funding, coordination, monitoring, data and knowledge
	What have been the main external challenges for the programme? How might these be better managed or mitigated?	• Eg changes in political climate, economic conditions in Italy, migration patterns, public opinion

Moving forward	Do you think there is a role for the programme moving forward? What do you think needs to change and what ought to be continued?	• How can impacts be maintained and increased over the short, medium and long term for employers, employees, and host communities
	Finally, we are doing an exercise known as 'Most Significant Change'. In this, please tell us, what comes to your mind, intuitively, instinctively, as a 'Significant Change' you are aware of and that you connect to the Welcome programme. Why was the change significant to you What was the contribution of Welcome?	• The change can be big or small.

Annex 4: Evaluation matrix

Evaluation criteria	Key question(s)	Sub-question(s) signalled the literature review	Indicator(s)	Collection methods/data source	Analysis method
RELEVANCE Area of Inquiry 1: How relevant is the methodology of the Welcome programme in promoting refugees' integration within the Italian labour market? How relevant is the Welcome strategy to employers' recruitment and corporate social responsibility (CSR) and diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) goals?	How do refugee participants describe and assess their experience of labour integration with a Welcome company? What aspects of their recruitment, training and ongoing support provided through the company or service provider do they consider functional and why? What aspects do they consider in need of improvement and why? How do Welcome companies describe and assess their experience recruiting refugees? What aspects of outreach, hiring, training and ongoing support do Welcome companies consider functional and why? What aspects do they consider in need of improvement and why? How do Welcome companies describe and assess the influence of the programme on their CSR, DEI, and HR goals? To what extent did the Welcome programme contribute to increased visibility and	To what extent is refugee agency, preference, mobility constraints, self efficacy, hopefulness and resilience identified, encouraged and maintained? Are internal, unobserved, hidden or explicit biases recognised by businesses? To what extent do businesses feel a) pressure from and b) compelled to address local level political hostility and negative public norms towards RSAs?	The Progress Markers developed through the Outcome Mapping workshop Improvements in self-efficacy scores (if available) or refugee reports of improved self-efficacy, hopefulness and agency. Self-reports from refugees of training satisfaction and areas for improvement Training take up and completion consistent with targets. Self-reported identification of areas needed for improvement in terms of CSR, DE&I, and HR. Self reflection reported by hiring managers concerning refugees as employees. Hiring managers and business leaders' self-reported changes in internal practices.	Review of available psychometric measures if available Cognitive Fuzzy Mapping (CFM) workshop with refugees, social workers and others providing support. Review of KPI data on training and support take up. Interviews with refugees Cognitive Fuzzy Mapping (CFM) workshop with employers and businesses. Welcome and non-Welcome. Interviews with business leaders/hiring managers	Quantitative analysis pre and post intervention, triangulation with other data Narrative synthesis of interview and CFM workshops (refugee, businesses) Review of organisation management and internal communication documents (businesses).

			Self reported improvements in internal organisational culture (potential measures might include increased volunteering, improved retention, greater productivity within business (tbc following CFM). Self reported internal business process transformation towards inclusivity. Self-reported integration of Welcome-type practices internally. Self reports of success in recruiting and retaining refugees.	CFM workshops with business leaders.	
understanding of refugees and their protection needs among participating company employees?					
EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY. Area of Inquiry 2: How effective is the Welcome programme in increasing refugees' access to the labour market? How effective has the programme been at assisting employers to reach their recruitment and CSR goals? How effective is the programme in improving the	In what ways have refugees benefitted from the Welcome programme? In what ways have companies benefited from participating in the Welcome programme?	What outcomes and progress markers do refugees and Welcome programme stakeholders consider important? To what extent is refugee agency, preference, mobility constraints, self efficacy, hopefulness and resilience identified, encouraged and maintained? To what extent, if at all, has Welcome addressed the structural, contextual and individual	The Progress Markers developed through the Outcome Mapping workshop Improvements in self-efficacy scores (if available) or refugee reports of improved self-efficacy, hopefulness and agency. Self-reports from refugees of training satisfaction and areas for improvement	KPI data on throughput, employment outcomes. Measures identified in CFM and progress against these.	Quantitative analysis pre and post intervention, triangulation with other data Narrative synthesis of interview and CFM workshops (refugee, businesses) Review of organisation management and internal communication documents (businesses).

capabilities of CSOs in supporting refugees' job inclusion?	How effective was the Welcome programme in promoting the inclusion of refugees in CSR and DE&I policies of the companies participating in the programme? How effective are the corporate partnerships between WelcomeNet members and companies, promoted by the programme, in facilitating recruitment of refugees? How effective has the programme been in facilitating knowledge, dialogue and collaboration between CSOs and companies?	challenges (and interplay of these) faced by refugees? To what extent does Welcome challenge potentially ethicising patterns of labour insertion policy? Both for refugees and for businesses and local communities? Are internal, unobserved or explicit biases recognised by businesses? To what extent do businesses feel a) pressure from and b) compelled to address local level political hostility towards RSAs?	Training take up and completion consistent with targets. Self-reported identification of areas needed for improvement in terms of CSR, DE&I, and HR. Self reflection reported by hiring managers concerning refugees as employees. Hiring managers and business leaders' self-reported changes in internal practices. Self reported improvements in internal organisational culture (potential measures might include increased volunteering, improved retention, greater productivity within business (tbc following CFM). Self reported internal business process transformation towards inclusivity.	CFM with business leaders/hiring managers. Interviews Internal policy documentation and monitoring, staff surveys on workplace satisfaction and culture.	

			Self-reported integration of Welcome-type practices internally. Self reports of success in recruiting and retaining refugees.		
SUSTAINABILITY Area of Inquiry 3: How sustainable are the benefits achieved to refugee workers and in what ways are changes to employers' outreach, recruitment and training practices, in cooperation with CSOs, likely to continue or not? How cost-effective is the Welcome programme, and How may this affect the scalability, replicability and sustainability of the programme?	What are the main obstacles to sustainability of the benefits achieved for refugee workers? What are the reasons for retention or discontinuation of employment among refugees hired through Welcome? What structural changes have Welcome companies implemented to sustain changes in outreach, recruitment and training with refugee workers? What gaps do Welcome companies detect in their efforts to hire refugee workers? In what ways do they intend to fill these gaps? What gaps to We Welcome service providers detect in hiring and training practices? How have they adapted or plan to adapt services to fill these gaps? What findings can be drawn to demonstrate cost-effectiveness?	To what extent is refugee agency, preference, mobility constraints, self efficacy, hopefulness and resilience identified, encouraged and maintained? To what extent, if at all, has Welcome addressed the structural, contextual and individual challenges (and interplay of these) faced by refugees? To what extent does Welcome challenge potentially ethnicising patterns of labour insertion policy? Both for refugees and for businesses and local communities? Does Welcome do things 'differently' to other refugee labour activation projects?	Self-reported challenges and weaknesses of the labour market system, as told by refugees, social workers and those who support refugees. Self reported interventions, actions, qualities observed in the Welcome programme associated with overcoming the challenges and weaknesses. Reports of Most Significant Change amongst key boundary partners (aka stakeholders), and self-reports of how Welcome contributed to these changes. Evidence of location and job stability amongst placed refugee workers. Self reported improved confidence in the hiring of refugees amongst businesses. Reports of programme elements that are not found	Measures identified in CFM and progress against these. Interviews with refugees, CSOs and business leaders. (prompts on themes noted in columns 2 and 3) Most Significant Change data. Internal policy documentation and monitoring, staff surveys on workplace satisfaction and culture.	Narrative synthesis and analysis of interview and CFM workshop data. Narrative analysis and quantitative descriptive analysis of MSC data. Content (thematic) analysis of policy documentation. Narrative analysis of interviews and CFM data Quantitative and qualitative descriptive analysis of recruitment and retention budgets.

			useful or of poor quality – as reported by refugees, business leaders and CSOs and service providers.		
			Self reported (by business leaders) changes in hiring behaviours (recruitment, advertisement, training) and associated cost savings.	Staff recruitment and retention budgets over time.	
			Observed changes in hiring and retention costs amongst participating businesses.		
LEARNING Area of Inquiry 4: What lessons can be learned from the Welcome programme under the three main objectives?	What changes do companies, service providers and stakeholders describe regarding the model of an inclusive society? How have practices changed to prevent and combat xenophobic and racist feelings against refugees? What changes do refugee workers describe based on their experiences working with companies that adhere to the model of an inclusive society? Do refugees perceive a shift in awareness among Welcome company colleagues? What actions do companies, refugees, and other stakeholders believe may have contributed to these changes?	To what extent is refugee agency, preference, mobility constraints, self efficacy, hopefulness and resilience identified, encouraged and maintained? To what extent, if at all, has Welcome addressed the structural, contextual and individual challenges (and interplay of these) faced by refugees? To what extent does Welcome challenge potentially ethnicising patterns of labour insertion policy? Both for refugees and for businesses and local communities?	Self-reported challenges and weaknesses of the labour market system, as told by refugees, social workers and those who support refugees. Self reported interventions, actions, qualities observed in the Welcome programme associated with overcoming the challenges and weaknesses. Reports of Most Significant Change amongst key boundary partners (aka stakeholders), and self-reports of how Welcome contributed to these changes.	Measures identified in CFM and progress against these. Interviews with refugees, CSOs and business leaders. (prompts on themes noted in columns 2 and 3) Most Significant Change data. Internal policy documentation and monitoring, staff	

| | In what ways do companies, service providers and stakeholders describe their contributions to or participation in responsibility sharing towards an equitable society, responsive to the needs of refugees? What actions do they cite that may have contributed to change?

How do companies report influencing, or being influenced by, other companies to employ refugees or implement practices that support refugees? In what ways has Welcome influenced their awareness of the legal framework for refugees and asylum seekers? | Does Welcome do things 'differently' to other refugee labour activation projects? | Evidence of location and job stability amongst placed refugee workers.

Self reported improved confidence in the hiring of refugees amongst businesses.

Reports of programme elements that are not found useful or of poor quality – as reported by refugees, business leaders and CSOs and service providers.

Self reported (by business leaders) changes in hiring behaviours (recruitment, advertisement, training) and associated cost savings.

Observed changes in hiring and retention costs amongst participating businesses. | surveys on workplace satisfaction and culture.

Staff recruitment and retention budgets over time. | |

Annex 5. Additional material

5.1 Literature review

A review was carried out of a) programme literature as well as b) a heuristic review of literature following mini systematic review principles. The latter involved applying structured search terms (see Table A.1) to two databases of peer reviewed research literature.

Table A.1: Original search terms for the review of peer reviewed literature

Terms relating to refugee/asylum seeker	Terms relating to labour integration	Terms relating to policy and programming	Terms relating to other integration	Geographical location
Refugee	Labour activation	Welcome. Working for refugee integration	integration theory	Refugee-receiving countries
Asylum seeker	Labour market integration	Effective Approaches	Social integration	Europe
Migrant	Access to employment	What works	Economic integration	Italy
Undocumented migrant	Employability	Integration policy		Locality
Migrant worker	Employment demand	Integration practice		
Immigrant worker	Labour market opportunities			
	Labour market insertion			

The subject of study crosses many research disciplines and, so, yielded at first a great number of articles that included at least one search term. To finesse the review so that it addresses the key research questions and context, papers were only collected for review if they were published since 2020 and directly addressed the specific Italian refugee labour market context. This process yielded 11 peer reviewed studies. The team also used critical interpretive synthesis (CIS) in its reviewing of studies. This provides a pathway for reviewers to interrogate any pre-existing internal biases when reviewing findings from other researchers. CIS is useful for drawing out additional questions linked to the original research goals. As part of this process, a further paper was included because it identifies an important intellectual challenge for the present evaluation: the potential ethnicisation of labour activation policy for migrants and refugees in Europe. Thus, 12 papers were finally included. In addition, 3 important papers from grey literature were included.

HISTORIC RECENT CONTEXT

Over recent decades, Italy—traditionally a country of emigration—became a destination for immigrants (1990s to the early 2000s). The flow of economic migrants to Italy began to increase significantly from the early 2000s, which coincided with a politicisation of migration and increasingly restrictive policies (Colini, 2022). This serves as a backdrop to what has been regularly termed the 'refugee crisis' in Italy and across the wider European Union (for example see Ortensi and Ambrosetti, 2022; Fasani et al 2021). The refugee crisis refers to a time between 2014 and 2019, when a large increase in the number of refugees arriving in Europe was observed, particularly via dangerous sea

crossings. Refugee arrivals to an EU state doubled between 2014 and 2015 (Eurostat, 2016). By the end of 2016, nearly 5.2 million refugees and migrants reached EU territory (UNHCR, 2022). In the last 2 years, there has been a similar increase in refugee numbers. In 2023, the EU, Switzerland and Norway received 1.1 million asylum applications, representing an increase of 18% compared to the previous year (EU Agency for Asylum, 2024). Yet, according to the International Rescue Committee, Italy is at the centre of the most recent European refugee crisis.

Within Italy, in 2022 Sicily experienced the highest number of disembarkations of refugees, followed by Calabria, Apulia, Sardinia, Tuscany, Lazio and Liguria. During the same period, there were over 20,000 arrivals by land and an estimated 15,000 by air in the country. The increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers over the last 2 years has been linked to the Ukraine war and increasing numbers of refugees from West Africa, particularly Burkina Faso (UNHCR arrivals dashboard, 2023, based on 2022 data). There has been a corresponding increase in asylum applications in Italy, reaching 135,818 in 2023 - a 42% increase between March 2023 and 2024 (UNHCR Italy weekly snapshot, February, 2024). As of mid 2023, there were 308,663 refugees, 102,028 asylum seekers and 3,002 stateless people in Italy. By far the largest number of refugees originate from Ukraine, followed by Nigeria and Afghanistan. The largest number of asylum seekers were from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Egypt (UNHCR Italy, 2024). These developments, as with elsewhere in the EU, have coincided with a rising support for right-wing political views and parties amongst 'native' voters (Campo et al., 2024). As stated in the evaluation ToR, a centre-right coalition was elected to government in Italy in 2022, having campaigned strongly that it would 'stop the boats', referring to refugee arrivals arriving through the North African route .

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN ITALY: POLICY AND PRACTICE

The large increase in refugees and asylum seekers over the last decade in Italy has created tense political debate within host communities, as suitable policy responses were sought to manage their reception and integration. Despite the importance of refugees' labour market integration in this debate, there is relatively scant research on effective practices on labour market integration amongst this group (Fasani, 2021).

Anecdotally, pockets of good practice have been identified in Italy, notably the Welcome programme (Global Compact on Refugees website). Yet integration pathways for refugees and asylum seekers have been characterised as fragmented, with little policy coordination between actors, or between laws and rights. Legislation that would be supportive of refugee and asylum seeker (RAS) integration and protection has been poorly or slowly implemented. Inconsistently funded and implemented information and signposting to new arrivals has also been reported (UNHCR, 2013). This has been accompanied by 'division in the paths towards integration according to different categories of migrants' (Collini, 2023). Moreover, the experience of refugees or asylum seekers varies depending on which reception or accommodation centre they are allocated to, as well as whether support is offered by first or secondary tier reception, and whether support is offered by voluntary sector/CSOs or by the government (ibid.).

The asylum reception system in Italy has been amended by various recent government decrees, which are reported to have been increasingly restrictive towards RAS services. The most recent iteration of the reception system, which responds to law 50/2023, divided the system into two 'tiers' (Collini, 2022): 1) the SAI (former SPRAR) system which is reserved for those granted protection status and 2) the government temporary support system. The latter provides limited and basic support services, compared to the former. Within this system, asylum seekers must wait two months following the formal submission of their application for asylum to be able to receive a work permit. Moreover, asylum seekers are unable to leave their reception centres without prior justification or notice (Asylum in Europe, updated July 2024).

The under-resourced reception system created deep holes in services available for RAS populations. These have, to a large extent, been plugged by civil society actors who have mobilised to support RAS communities in both social protection and integration (Collini, 2022; Fasani, 2021).

Yet, the restrictions on RAS protection take place within a context of demographic imbalance and a tightening labour market: the Italian economy needs new workers. Entire economic sectors are dependent on foreign workers, including the social care sector (Chiaromonte and Federico, 2021). The Italian labour force (active individuals in the age bracket 20-74) is projected to decrease by 8.3% over the period 2022-2070, (Italian Economic Policy Committee - Ageing Working Group, 2024), whilst the foreign population—including refugees—is considerably younger, leading to a net contribution to the available potential workforce (Chiaromonte and Federico, 2021). These trends suggest a mismatch between economic and social needs (workforce and demographic ageing) on one hand, and public policy relating to migration on the other.

As an indication of this, one can consider changes in the grounds provided for residence permits in Italy over recent decades. In 2011, 50% of residence permits were issued for work reasons, whilst in 2019, this figure was only 6%. This contrasts with permits for asylum and on humanitarian grounds, which represented almost 27% of residence permits in 2018. Permits for reasons of family reunification were the most numerous (50% in 2018) (Chiaromonte and Federico, 2021: p.193). For Chiaromonte and Federico (2021: p.194), therefore, in Italy, there is a 'constant mismatch between (i) social and economic needs and the legal and administrative instruments to address them; (ii) new cultural perspectives and the public discourse and media frames that should represent and voice those perspectives; (iii) migration numbers and political discourses about them'. Political narratives which are anti-immigrant strongly underpin this 'lack of syntony' (ibid.) whilst restrictive RAS policy echoes back and amplifies anti-immigrant sentiment, creating a negative policy loop. Campo and colleagues (2024) conducted regression analyses of data on refugee dispersal at the local level in Italy, comparing refugee movement with local political behaviour. The authors find a 'positive and significant effect of the share of asylum seekers on support for radical-right anti-immigration parties, which runs in parallel with a decline in public support for center-left parties' (ibid.: p.167). The authors further provide 'causal evidence' that anti-immigration sentiment does not flow from adverse economic effects brought about by having an increase in refugees and asylum seekers locally but, rather, this is 'triggered by radical-right propaganda and hate-speech' (ibid.: p.168). An important conclusion from this is that the arrival of RAS populations within a community does not have to result in a deterioration of social cohesion and tolerance, provided the issue is not exploited politically and that integration is handled correctly (ibid.). Lessons from another type of integration – that of returning foreign fighters – also indicate the profound importance of honest, democratic and ongoing public diplomacy at the community level, to build social cohesion (Opcit Research, 2021).

LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Labour market integration (insertion or activation) and social protection are two of the 'main domains' that determine refugee integration (Dimitriadis and Ambrosini, 2022). Yet the two strands often do not work in harmony, due, largely, to increasingly restrictive RAS protection policy.

Demand and supply factors, spanning structural, contextual and individual domains, result in a poor quality of experience for refugees and asylum seekers (and migrants in general) in the Italian labour market. In terms of demand, those refugees and asylum seekers and other migrants who are granted the right to work in Italy, the labour market is highly segmented by gender as well as ethnicity. Migrant workers of all types are more likely to be found in the informal economy including many workers within the gig economy. These workers experience serious difficulties in transitioning towards jobs with better pay and conditions (Morici et al., 2022). Refugees and migrants are mostly employed along 'ethnic specialisations' lines, in which employment is often low-skilled and poorly paid, particularly in agriculture, tourism, construction, and domestic work – of the type often avoided by native Italians (Morici et al., 2022; Collini, 2022; also Ambrosini, 2017).

In terms of supply (of skills, qualifications, experience), refugees and asylum seekers face considerable disadvantage on arrival. There are large deficits in Italian language skills, overly bureaucratic and slow processes to recognise formal qualifications (Dimitriadis and Ambrosini 2022; Ortensi and Ambrosetti, 2022) and an inability to verify refugees' references and security checks (OECD UNHCR, 2018; Dimitriadis and Ambrosini, 2022). In formal terms, asylum seekers in Italy are permitted to take paid employment only after sixty days have passed from the submission of their asylum application (UNHCR, website) . Once granted refugee status, a person has the same rights to employment, social welfare and medical care, as an Italian citizen (ibid). Yet, structural and contextual factors shape refugee access to employment (supply side), with administrative systems and processes for asylum applications and social support placing burdens on refugees and asylum seekers, often restricting their movement and ability to go to where jobs are (OECD UNHCR, 2018; Iraklis and Maurizio, 2022; UNCTAD, IOM and UNHCR, 2018; Marchetti, 2020).

In this respect, qualitative research with refugees and asylum seekers and social workers reveals that a complex set of internal negotiations govern how refugees and asylum seekers behave and make decisions relating to work. These, in turn, are affected by RAS support systems that restrict movement and agency (Collini, 2022). Iraklis and Maurizio (2022) found that refugees and asylum seekers often face difficult choices to ensure access to the social support system and labour market. For example, in relation to movement, there is the decision of whether it is possible to commute from smaller towns where they may be housed (within SAI or other system) to large cities for work. The commute in these cases is often difficult and expensive, sometimes requiring them to remain overnight away from their home, for which they may have to rely on their friendship network for a place to stay (which also risks them losing their place in supported housing). Another choice is whether to move to another area to access the SAI system, for which places are limited to certain locations. Some refugees and asylum seekers refuse to move as this would imply losing their job. Others relocate to different cities once they exit the reception system, as they cannot afford or are discriminated against within the private housing market, or move to cities where services and local administrations are more supportive (one such case identified by the authors was Como), whilst others are pressured to change location because they have a health issue that cannot be met where they live.

These examples reveal how the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to 'overcome' hurdles and difficulties is dependent on both informal networks and local contexts. Research finds that individual decisions are approached, by necessity, in ways that may not 'facilitate integration', since these take place within a chaotic system that is not designed for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers (Dimitriadis and Ambrosini, 2022). Similarly, foregrounding the notion of refugee agency and drawing upon labelling theory, Ortensi and Ambrosetti (2022) signal the risk that the Italian reception system may disempower refugees and asylum seekers from exercising agency and control through policies that cast them as 'passive victims' in need of assistance, instead of empowered to make choices that help their integration.

Assuming contextual challenges concerning movement can be overcome, labour activation theory also considers the role of job seeker efficacy and self-esteem at various levels. Morici and colleagues (2022) evaluated the impact of an intervention designed to help refugees access the labour market through a career counselling intervention (CCI) in Italy. The authors describe the critical context in which the CCI operates as including a lack of knowledge of the host country (including language), bureaucratic challenges, discrimination, a highly formalised labour market, reliance on ethnically-specific social networks leading to concentrations in niche low-status, low-paid jobs, and widespread deskilling, with many migrants downgrading to much lower-skilled jobs in the host country. In this context, the CCI is an information-sharing and support mechanism to allow refugees and asylum seekers to rehearse interviews, write CVs, learn about local work cultures, and learn how to search and apply for jobs. The evaluation involved a survey with 223 refugees and asylum seekers in Italy ,and found significant improvements in respondents' self-reported career adaptability and perceptions of self-efficacy, both at work and in searching for jobs. This was linked to encouraging a greater optimism and interest among refugees and asylum seekers in their career, a greater sense of control

over their career, a better understanding of the Italian labour market system, and a greater sense of resilience in the face of challenges. The study did not, however, report on actual labour market outcomes. It should also be noted that while the CCI intervention appears to address face-value needs among refugees and asylum seekers, labour activation science has been criticised as framing refugees and asylum seekers as needing rigid activation interventions in order to become worthy recipients of welfare (Parsland, 2023).

A noteworthy example of 'rigid activation' policy is provided by two authors reporting separately on a specific labour activation initiative in Bergamo, Italy – the 'Integration Academy'. This, the authors report, uses a 'scout/militaristic' approach whereby asylum seekers follow a strict protocol of early rising, limited social interactions and voluntary work in uniforms labelled with the slogan 'Integration Academy. Thanks Bergamo!'. The model is based, according to the authors, on the notion that social protection is dependent upon 'worthiness' rather than on human rights (Marchetti, 2020; Dotsey, 2022).

In contrast, several other authors advocate for a labour market activation policy (and monitoring) that is sensitive and specific to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers who have experienced trauma, rapid and unplanned change, and separation from family (Parsland, 2024, Morici et al., 2022; Ortensi and Ambrosetti, 2022). Relatedly, Collini (2023) argues that refugees' own agency, desires, coping and resilience strategies are essential to understand the efficacy of labour activation policy towards this group. Based on primary qualitative data from refugee respondents, Collini (2023) details the importance of micro level, psychological levers, ideation, affect and aspiration in refugees' employment outcomes.

On the demand side, various factors have been cited as important in understanding challenges and solutions for RAS labour market activation. Orthodox analysis of (un)employment considers structural, cyclical (short-term, market-based, e.g. seasonal) and frictional (employee movement) (un)employment cycles (Chiaromonte and Federico, 2021). Also, these types of (un)employment patterns are linked to specific locations. For example, short term, insecure employment (cyclical) tends to be found in the southern agricultural areas in Italy, whilst industrialised northern Italy is affected more by structural cycles. Like other workers, refugees and asylum seekers must face these labour market challenges. However, they do so with additional risks and challenges. In their analysis of labour market performance over time in 20 EU states, Fasani and colleagues (2021) find labour market outcomes are consistently worse for refugees than for other types of migrants, describing what they refer to as a 'refugee gap' – a difference in employment rates between refugees and other types of migrants (including undocumented migrants). This 'gap' persists for 10-15 years following arrival. Further, the authors report that all migrants, including refugees, suffer scarring effects (labour market disadvantage following periods of inactivity) from a recession (structural unemployment) because those with a weaker labour market position find it more difficult to catch up over time. The study notes that policy and processes within the RAS reception system amplify the negative impacts of (un)employment cycles. Special mention is given to dispersal policies here, which are strongly linked to worse labour market outcomes and a larger refugee-migrant gap (in employment).

At the contextual (meso) level of demand side considerations, grey and research literature signals that employer misapprehension, discrimination, and lack of knowledge about RAS employment rights is important. According to OECD UNHCR (2018), employers and businesses are often unaware of, or confused about the different work entitlements available to refugees and asylum seekers. They are similarly worried about the length of stay granted to asylum seekers, and this may deter them from hiring this cohort. The same report goes on to recommend that the policy community establish a programme to identify skills and gaps, offer training to potential workers and establish a matching service to link labour needs with refugee employees. Difficulties in verifying refugees and asylum seekers' CVs and security checks may also deter employers (ibid.).

Several authors indicate that unconscious and conscious bias against refugees may shape employers' actions towards refugees. For example, and in line with labelling theory, RAS employees may be channelled into low-skilled work with high 'ethnic specialisation' (Collini, 2022). Fossati and Leichti (2020) also report that Italian employers' actions and behaviours are highly influenced by their preconceived notions and views of refugees and by their perception of normative constructs towards this group.

In terms of gender in the labour market, Italy experiences significant segregation both horizontally and vertically. Italy has one of the lowest female labour-force participation rates in Europe, resulting from poor childcare availability and strong gender norms that encourage women to remain out of work in motherhood. For refugee and migrant women in Italy, the labour market is strongly gendered, particularly for undocumented migrant women who are often encouraged into caring or domestic labour that is frequently exploitative (Crippa, 2020).

In Italy, as other advanced economies, labour markets disadvantage older people who face both direct and indirect discrimination. Employers perceive older candidates as needing more training compared to younger ones, and they are also considered less flexible. Indirect age discrimination occurs at the intersection of age and physical health (Dormitova et al., 2020). Whilst there is scant data available on the experiences of older refugees in Italy, these factors must be considered in the present evaluation.

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5.2 Cognitive fuzzy mapping centrality scores

Table A.2 Overall centrality scores (all boundary partner groups)

Refugee hope, motivation, ambition	5.36
Good Mental and Physical Health	4.04
Societal bias and discrimination against migrant/refugees	4
Italian language skills	2.99
Bureaucracy and Documentation	2.96
Support and Access to Health Care	2.79
Refugees have qualifications that are recognised	2.66
Investment in welfare and social protection	2.59
Community participation/inclusion	2.35
Refugee employment (formal and informal)	2.33
Demand for migrant labour	2.12
Access to Job Training and Internships opportunities	2.11
Refugee vulnerabilities	2.05
Competition in the labour market	1.94
Refugees' job retention	1.7
Refugees' ability to move/travel	1.65
Health of the National Economy	1.59
Access to Housing and Economic Support	1.54
Networking and Coordination between support agencies	1.5
Refugees' awareness of jobs available	1.47
Refugees' time resources	1.33
Refugee job seeking skills	1.2
Support for the job application process. CV writing, interview training etc	1.17
Effective Degree Recognition Mechanisms	1.07
Geographic Disparities in support provision	1.07
Information about Available Jobs made accessible to refugees	1
Refugee situational stability	0.88
Refugees' caring responsibilities	0.86
Political Rhetoric	0.83
Supply of social housing	0.69

Note: Text colour denotes level: blue = micro-level factors, red = meso-level, black = macro-level. Source: 8 CFM workshops

Table A.3 Refugee centrality scores

Refugee mental and physical health	3.95	**Total Components**	11
Having recognised qualifications	2.42	**Total Connections**	12
Italian language skills	1.96	**Density**	0.1090909091
Job seeking skills	1.96	**Connections per Component**	1.0909090909
refugee ambitions and hopes	1.5	**Number of Driver Components**	2
Societal bias and discrimination towards migrants	1.16	**Number of Receiver Components**	4
competition with other candidates	1.1	**Number of Ordinary Components**	5
In-company training provision	1.06	**Complexity Score**	2
Caring responsibilities	1		
Ability to travel and move	1		
Health of the national economy	0.46		

Note: Text colour denotes level: blue = micro-level factors, red = meso-level, black = macro-level. Source: 8 CFM workshops

Table A.4 Business leader/HR manager centrality scores

Italian language skills	2.9
Refugees having recognised qualifications	2.53
On job training, internships or employment	2.38
Refugees' job seeking skills	2.03
Refugees' ambition and hopefulness	1.46
Information about available jobs	1.43
Support to access housing and welfare	1
situational stability	1
Support to overcome employment bureaucracy	1
Refugees' awareness of jobs available	0.78
Refugee social and cultural integration	0.63

Note: Text colour denotes level:
blue = micro-level factors,
red = meso-level,
black = macro-level.
Source: 8 CFM workshops

Total Components

11

Total Connections

15

Density

0.1363636364

Connections per Component

1.3636363636

Number of Driver Components

3

Number of Receiver Components

2

Number of Ordinary Components

6

Complexity Score

0.6666666667

5.3 Ethics and data management

Specific ethical considerations

Direct engagement with service users as well as providers and implementing partners adhered to the following ethical research principles:

- All respondents' views will be treated as confidential and will be anonymised if data from a respondent is used in any report.
- Follow the principle of do no harm and proportionate data collection including:
- During group discussions and interviews, respondents will be discouraged from sharing personal stories that are difficult or that may cause them to become upset. Respondents will be encouraged to answer from a general perspective without disclosing personal details about anyone. All participants will be directed to sources of support, as advised by service providers and the client, should they become upset or identify the need for support as a result of the discussions.
- All data collection tools will be developed to be age-appropriate and supportive of different levels of ability including reading ability.
- All data will be analysed to ensure gender disaggregation and understanding of any discriminatory effects at the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, disability, age and social class.
- Qualitative data collection and analysis will specifically seek to understand differential outcomes in terms of age, gender, race, sexuality or other protected characteristics.
- All data collected are stored securely either physically or electronically, using keys and locks or password encryption.
- All research participants' responses are treated as confidential and anonymous unless otherwise advised by the research participant.
- The limits of confidentiality are set out to research participants, including where someone may be identified as at risk of harm.
- Participants will be made aware of the purposes and limits of research and data collection.
- Participants will be made aware that their access to services, their rights and responsibilities will not be affected (either negatively or positively) in any way should they choose not to participate.

Prior to data collection sources of support were identified so that the research team may refer respondents should they become aware of or upset by issues raised during the interviews or surveys.

We worked with UNHCR to establish the best process for ensuring research ethics were observed. Opcit Research regularly works with research ethics boards and has access to university based ethics boards if needed. Given that we carried out primary data collection with service users, we conducted an internal research ethics review, with the assistance of an external colleague who independently reviewed the plans.

The process for ensuring vulnerabilities and sensitivities were addressed was agreed as follows:

- Opcit to work closely with UNHCR focal points and those in direct contact with refugees to recruit research participants. By working with UNHCR colleagues who already know and have worked with individuals, sensitivities and vulnerabilities will be flagged and addressed.
- Potential participants to be provided with an information document setting out the purpose and limits of the research, their responsibilities, and rights. This also states protocols for interrupting or stopping interviews should the discussions become upsetting.

- Workshop participants to be provided with a process for alerting the research team if they require support for accessing venues.
- We worked with UNHCR to ensure that factors that could impede access to the evaluation for certain less powerful groups (along lines of sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQ status, age, background, religion, ethnicity and ability) were minimised to allow wide access across diverse groups, in line with UNEG Guidelines. Where we identified that the experiences of different population subgroups were not represented, we made efforts to augment data collection with additional data collection points weighting these characteristics.

Opcit general data management policy

Personal data protection policy

As part of our research and evaluation work we may collect data from individuals and organisations. The following conditions will be applied in relation to the use and treatment of these data:

- We respect privacy and choices made regarding participation in the study.

- We will not share or sell personal data.

- We are committed to securing and protecting personal data.

- We will not use personal data in any way that we have not made known to respondents

When we are provided with personal data or when we collect personal data, we will use it in accordance with this policy. All research respondents will be encouraged to read this policy.

WHAT ARE PERSONAL DATA? WHAT IS A PROCESSING OPERATION?

"Personal data" means any information that can identify a person directly (e.g. name, e-mail) or indirectly (e.g. through pseudonymised data such as a unique identifier).

This means that personal data includes information such as e-mail addresses, user names, user-generated content, user profile (e.g. journalist, consumer etc.).

Personal data may also include unique numerical identifiers such as the IP address of a computer or the MAC address of mobile devices, and cookies.

Processing is any operation that involves the use of such personal data. This includes collecting, recording or storing the data, or performing any operation or set of operations on the data, including organizing, analysing, modifying, retrieving, using, disseminating, erasing or destroying the data. Processing also includes the transfer of Personal Data.

SYSTEMS AND FACILITIES TO ADDRESS DATA PROTECTION RISKS.

The following procedures and standards are applied in how we process and store data, to minimise the risk of a data breach:

- Before a project commences, we assess whether personal information, as defined above, will be collected and processed.

- If personal data are collected, we will complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment checklist. This determines what standards of data collection and storage must be applied.

- We determine how data will be stored and whether it will be encrypted following our own protocols. However:

- We will pursue encryption in all cases, even when it is not a condition of GDPR to do so.

- Encryption keys will be lodged securely with a named individual within the Opcit Research team but not all staff members will have the keys. This is to ensure their availability in the event of key loss.

- All data must and will be encrypted whenever it is "transported" or "conveyed". For example, this applies to all data that are stored on physical media (laptops, CD/DVDs, USB drives, etc.) as well as data transmitted electronically (email, OneDrive, Sharepoint etc.).

- We determine who the data controller is for each research or evaluation project in consultation with clients.

- We create a Data Management Plan (DMP) for each research or evaluation activity/contract. This will include details of where the data will be stored.

- We ensure that participant information sheets and consent forms include sufficient information to meet the GDPR requirements of transparency and informed consent.

- We will not process special categories of data, unless specific conditions set out in Article 9 of the GDPR are met. Special categories of data are those which reveal racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation.

- If data are collected from children under age 16, parental or guardian consent must be obtained.

- Reporting data breaches: If any team member suspects a data breach has occurred they will inform the Data Protection Officer within Opcit Research. Data breach protocols are in place to determine next steps and mitigation.

Deletion of data

Under the terms of GDPR, we will either return (upon request) and/or delete all personal data after the end of services, or on expiry of a contract or agreement, unless it's necessary to retain the data by law.

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO THE PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

We will only collect and use personal data provided to us, to the extent necessary to carry out our research or evaluation study as explained in participant information documents.

Participation in our research or evaluation is completely voluntary and this will be made clear to research respondents.

We will process and store the data in a way that complies with the applicable regulations (in particular articles 5 and 6 of the GDPR) for all the Processing of Personal Data that it implements. More specifically, we will ensure:

- Data are processed lawfully, fairly and transparently with regard to the Data Subject (lawfulness, fairness, transparency);

- Data are processed for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and are not further processed in a way incompatible with those purposes (purpose limitation);

- Personal Data are kept adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary for the purposes for which they are processed (data minimization);

- Personal Data shall be accurate, kept up to date and every reasonable step shall be taken to ensure that data which is inaccurate, having regard to the purposes for which it is processed, is erased or rectified without delay (accuracy).

- Data shall be kept for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which they are processed

- The data are processed in a manner consistent with the rights of the Data Subjects;

- The data is processed in a secure manner;

- Data is not transferred to persons or organisations located in countries that do not enjoy an adequate level of protection.

If you have any questions or concerns or wish to exercise rights of access, rectification, deletion of data, as well as rights to limit and object to the Processing and portability of Personal Data, please contact: Katie McCracken at katiem@opcitresearch.com