



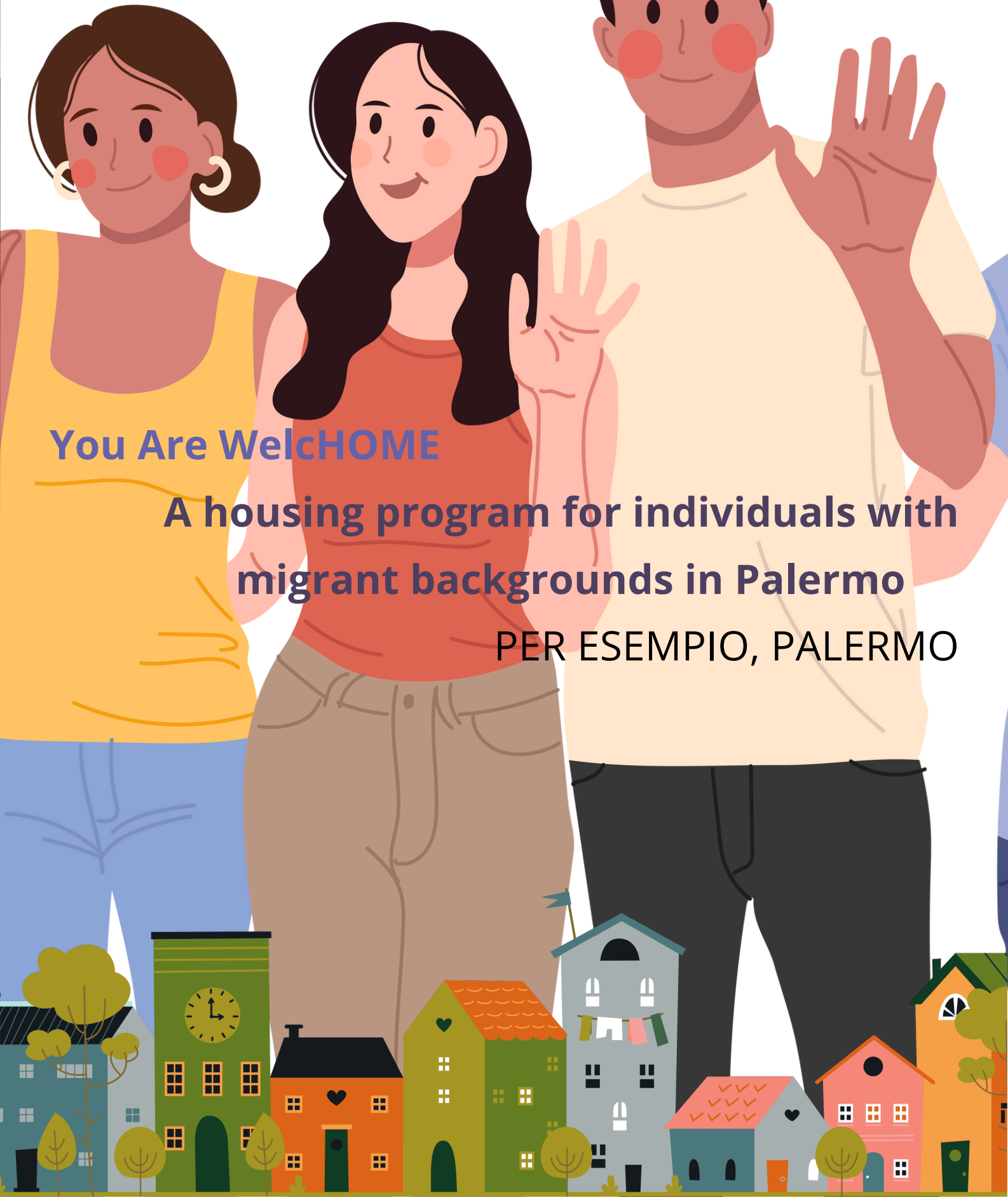
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INCLUDATE
Educating for Inclusion



PerEsempio



You Are WelcHOME

**A housing program for individuals with
migrant backgrounds in Palermo**

PER ESEMPIO, PALERMO

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In the complex tapestry of global migration, Italy stands at a pivotal point, welcoming diverse communities seeking a new beginning. As migration dynamics continue to shape the cultural, social and economic landscape, a thorough examination and reassessment of Italy's integration initiatives and policies becomes paramount. This introspective journey seeks to unravel current policies' effectiveness, challenges and potential improvements, recognising their profound impact on the lives of people with migrant backgrounds and the social fabric. Through this exploration and the creation of the "Housing Inclusion and Comprehensive Support Programme" we seek to understand the current conditions and chart a course towards more resilient, inclusive and responsive policies that promote equity and prosperity for all.

The "You are WelcoHOME: A Comprehensive Housing Programme for Individuals with Migrant Backgrounds in Palermo" is a two-year draft programme developed as part of the "Includate - Educating for Inclusion" project, co-funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ programme. This initiative is implemented by an international partnership of seven institutions and organisations from Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Poland. The overall objective of the project is to enhance the capacity of those involved in supporting the integration of people with a migrant background, focusing on strategies for inclusive cities and local communities, as well as the implementation of local action plans and community integration strategies for people with a migrant background. This paper represents the collaborative efforts of a multidisciplinary group of key stakeholders committed to supporting people who have experienced migration. The findings are based on both desk research and information gathered from stakeholders during the community mapping and reporting workshops and focus groups held throughout the project.



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INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 01

This chapter provides a comprehensive demographic and contextual analysis of migrant communities in Palermo, Italy. Building upon previous research conducted as part of the project, it highlights the identified needs within these communities, providing valuable insights into their specific challenges, needs, and desires.



1. DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Palermo, the largest city on the Italian island of Sicily, boasts a population of approximately 670 thousand residents, making it a vibrant and bustling urban centre. Within this diverse population, over 25 thousand individuals come from various foreign backgrounds, contributing to the city's rich cultural tapestry. Representing a mosaic of cultures, these residents hail from 132 countries, creating a dynamic and inclusive community where people from different parts of the world coexist harmoniously.

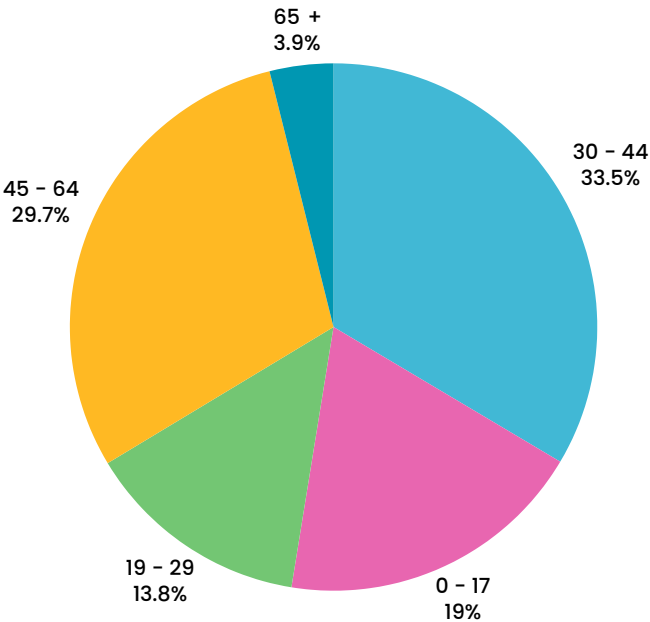
Among Palermo's diverse migrant population, several prominent groups stand out, each bringing their own unique traditions, languages, and customs to the city's cultural landscape. Notable migrant communities include those originating from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Romania, Ghana, the Philippines, and Tunisia, adding to the city's vibrant multicultural fabric.

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Insights from a recent 2021 study conducted by the Municipality of Palermo provide valuable insights into the demographic composition of the migrant population. The study reveals that migrants primarily fall within the 30 to 44 age group, constituting approximately 33.5% of the migrant population. Additionally, individuals aged 18 to 29 account for 13.8% of the migrant demographic. It is noteworthy that there is a higher prevalence of unaccompanied minors in Sicily compared to other parts of Italy. In fact, about 22% of all unaccompanied minors in Italy reside in Sicily. These findings underscore the unique demographic profile of Palermo's migrant community and highlight the need to address the challenges faced by different age groups among migrants to ensure their successful integration into the local community.

Gender distribution varies depending on the country of origin; for instance, individuals from Bangladesh, Ghana, Gambia, and Mali are predominantly male, whereas communities from Romania, Poland, or Ukraine are mostly female-based. In contrast, migrants from Sri Lanka, Tunisia, and the Philippines exhibit a more balanced distribution, often comprising families.



2. NEEDS ANALYSIS

Through desk research, community mapping exercises, reporting, and engaging focus groups and discussions, a thorough assessment of the needs within migrant communities and relevant organisations dedicated to migration and social integration has been conducted. This multifaceted approach has unveiled a spectrum of recurring needs that demand attention and action. Among the most prevalent needs are:



01. Access to housing

Many migrants face challenges in securing safe, affordable, and stable housing, hindering their ability to integrate into their new communities effectively. Making renting more accessible for people is a key action.



02. Access to public services

Ensuring equitable access to healthcare services and support networks is crucial for addressing the physical and mental health needs of migrants and their families. Increase information points where migrants can get all the necessary info about their rights and services available, and increase the numbers of cultural mediators in public offices (i.e. migration offices, courts, schools, hospitals, etc.)



03. Access to the labour market

Ensuring access to employment opportunities and skills development programmes is crucial for migrants to achieve economic self-sufficiency and successful integration into the labour market. Enhancing work opportunities for migrants, including entrepreneurial avenues and specialised courses that enrich their employability, is essential in this endeavour.



04. Access to education

Providing access to quality education and tailored support for young migrants is essential for their academic success, social development, and future prospects. Increased opportunities for migrants to further their studies (i.e. more scholarships, free learning opportunities, specific courses) are also essentials.



3. HOUSING

Discriminatory practices, limited availability of social housing, and negative perceptions faced by individuals experiencing migration contribute to housing inequalities in Palermo and Italy as a whole. This impedes their integration into the housing market and fosters an environment conducive to racial and xenophobic discrimination. Recognising these issues underscores the necessity for comprehensive measures to ensure equal access to housing, irrespective of ethnicity, skin colour, gender, sexual orientation, or background.

In a 2020 report, the Council of Europe noted that the increasing homelessness particularly affects migrants, young people, women, families, and children. Housing vulnerability and hardship are more prevalent among immigrants than natives, where migrants generally earn lower incomes and are disproportionately impacted by rising rents, especially in urban areas. Distrust of landlords towards foreign tenants and speculative attitudes have further exacerbated the situation, leading to a significant rent increase of 20-25% for foreigners. Consequently, individuals experiencing migration often need to turn to public and nonprofit entities to secure adequate housing.

Racism and xenophobia pose significant obstacles for migrants in Palermo and Italy, impacting their access to suitable and safe housing. Discriminatory attitudes perpetuate systemic inequalities, hindering integration into the housing market. A 2019 study by the Migration Policy Centre (MPC) revealed obstacles such as racial profiling, higher rental prices, and landlords refusing to rent based on ethnicity or legal status. Negative public perceptions and stereotypes also affect housing outcomes, leading to discriminatory treatment by landlords, neighbours, and local communities.

Reports, including Amnesty International's 2022 findings, highlight discriminatory practices by landlords against people of colour experiencing migration in the European Union, ranging from outright refusal to discriminatory rental terms based on race, nationality, or legal status. The Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in 2021 emphasised structural barriers hindering migrants' access to suitable housing in Palermo, including legal complexities and the lack of culturally sensitive housing policies.

Addressing racism and xenophobia is crucial for promoting inclusive and humanitarian housing practices in Palermo and Italy.

A culturally, linguistically, and gender-sensitive approach is necessary to dismantle these structural barriers and ensure equitable access to housing for all. The needs assessment reveals critical housing-related needs for migrants experiencing racial discrimination in Italy. These include an urgent requirement for an augmented availability of suitable housing options to alleviate shortages and overcrowding, as well as addressing discriminatory practices within the housing market to ensure equitable access to affordable housing. This Action Plan aims to tackle these challenges through targeted objectives.

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INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 2

This chapter, called “strategy” delves into the comprehensive Action Plan designed to address critical housing-related needs for migrants facing racial discrimination in Italy. The needs assessment conducted uncovers pressing issues, including shortages in suitable housing options, overcrowding, and discriminatory practices within the housing market. To tackle these challenges head-on, the Action Plan outlines three key objectives.



2. STRATEGY

The formulation of the Action Plan's strategic objectives is rooted in a comprehensive needs assessment, which unveiled pressing housing-related challenges encountered by migrants facing racial discrimination in Italy. This assessment underscored urgent imperatives, such as the imperative for an augmented availability of suitable housing options to mitigate shortages and overcrowding, alongside the imperative to tackle discriminatory practices within the housing market to ensure fair access to affordable housing.

In the subsequent pages of this document, we will delve into these strategic objectives in greater detail, exploring the specific actions to be undertaken to implement the Action Plan effectively. By examining each objective closely and outlining the related actions, we aim to provide a comprehensive roadmap for addressing the identified housing-related needs and combating racial discrimination against migrants in Italy.



2.1 OBJECTIVES



01. Enhance access to safe, affordable, and sustainable housing for individuals facing racial and xenophobic discrimination due to migration



02. Increase the capacity building and collaboration and cooperation among nonprofit organisations, service providers, educational institutions, and public authorities to implement anti-discrimination methods



03. Raise awareness about the challenges of racial and xenophobic discrimination faced by people with migrant backgrounds, particularly related to housing, within the general public

OBJECTIVE 1: Enhance access to safe, affordable, and sustainable housing for individuals facing racial and xenophobic discrimination due to migration

Action 1. Conduct a thorough needs analysis and mapping of services for migrants experiencing racial discrimination, with a specific focus on housing contexts

Action 2. Provide intercultural training to support individuals in their search for housing and to acquire skills and knowledge for a successful rental process

Action 3. Establish a local technical working group for the Housing Inclusion and Comprehensive Support Programme, involving non-profit migrant organisations, institutions, letting agencies, and communities/organisations

Action 4. Develop innovative housing guarantee solutions in collaboration with institutions and letting agencies to address financial barriers faced by migrants

Action 5. Pilot test the Housing Inclusion and Comprehensive Support Programme with local participants from migrant communities to gather feedback and make necessary adjustments before full implementation



OBJECTIVE 2: Increase the capacity building and collaboration and cooperation among nonprofit organisations, service providers, educational institutions, and public authorities to implement anti-discrimination methods

Action 1. Provide training and resources to non-profit organisations, service providers, educational institutions, and public authorities to enhance their understanding of anti-discrimination methods and practices

Action 2. Establish partnerships and joint initiatives between non-profit organisations, service providers, educational institutions, and public authorities to implement effective anti-discrimination strategies

Action 3. Facilitate networking events and workshops to promote collaboration and information sharing among different stakeholders involved in anti-discrimination efforts

Action 4. Develop guidelines and best practices for implementing anti-discrimination methods, tailored to the specific needs and contexts of each stakeholder group

Action 5. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of anti-discrimination methods across different sectors, and provide support and guidance to address any challenges or barriers encountered



OBJECTIVE 3: Raise awareness about the challenges of racial and xenophobic discrimination faced by people with migrant backgrounds, particularly related to housing, within the general public

Action 1. Develop educational materials and campaigns to raise awareness about the prevalence and impact of racial and xenophobic discrimination in housing

Action 2. Organise community events, seminars, and discussions to foster dialogue and understanding about the experiences of people with migrant backgrounds facing discrimination in housing

Action 3. Collaborate with media outlets to amplify messages and stories that challenge stereotypes and promote empathy and inclusion towards migrants

Action 4. Engage with local authorities and policymakers to advocate for policies and initiatives that address systemic discrimination and promote equal access to housing for all residents

Action 5. Evaluate the effectiveness of awareness-raising activities and adjust strategies based on feedback and outcomes to ensure maximum impact



Expect results

The expected results for the 3 objectives identified are divided into two main target groups: The “beneficiaries” (i.e. people with a migrant background) and the stakeholders (i.e. non profit organisations, local institutions and the local communities)



Access

- Improved knowledge of the local culture and language
- Improved knowledge on housing rights



- Improved access of suitable housing, with specific emphasis on ensuring that the particular needs of migrant communities are met



Cooperation

- Increased trust and collaboration between organisations working in the field migrant communities



- Increased collaboration between actors and stakeholders
- Increased knowledge of local services available



Awareness

- Improved acceptance and positive attitudes towards people experiencing migration and their integration in society



- Decrease in systemic racism and xenophobia towards people with a migrant background

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INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 03

In this chapter, we move from planning to action as we see together how to implement our housing accessibility initiative for migrants in Palermo. Our focus is on working together, being innovative, and including everyone. We'll explain the steps we're taking to tackle housing discrimination and make sure everyone has access to safe, affordable, and sustainable housing. From changing policies to reaching out to communities, everything we do aims to make housing fairer for everyone who lives here. Come join us on this journey to make Palermo more inclusive and welcoming for all.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the action plan for enhancing housing access for migrants in Palermo will unfold over two years, with a focus on collaborative partnerships, implementation actions, and capacity building among stakeholders. The following phases outline the approach to be taken:

1. Partnership establishment: the initial phase will prioritise the setting up of collaborative partnerships among stakeholders, including NGOs, letting agencies, public housing authorities, and migrant communities. These partnerships will serve as the foundation for coordinated efforts aimed at addressing housing discrimination and promoting inclusivity in Palermo's housing system.

2. Implementation of actions: the subsequent stage will focus on the actualisation of the various actions outlined in the action plan. This includes conducting needs analysis, mapping of services, and intercultural training sessions. Non-profit organisations will play a crucial role in facilitating these activities, leveraging their expertise and community networks for effective delivery.

3. Innovative initiatives launch: innovative initiatives, such as the development of smart housing guarantee solutions and the testing of the Housing Inclusion and Comprehensive Support Programme with local migrant participants, will be launched during this phase.

4. Capacity building and collaboration: efforts will be made to strengthen the competencies of various stakeholders in anti-discrimination methods and practices. Workshops, training sessions, and networking events will facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration, fostering a supportive ecosystem for housing inclusion.

5. Public awareness campaigns: public awareness campaigns will be developed to raise awareness of the challenges of racial and xenophobic discrimination in housing and to promote positive attitudes towards migrants. These campaigns will use different channels to reach diverse audiences across the city.

6. Continuous monitoring and evaluation: throughout the two-year implementation period, continuous monitoring and evaluation will be conducted to track progress, assess the effectiveness of interventions, and make necessary adjustments. Feedback mechanisms will be established to solicit input from migrants and community members, ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are addressed.

The implementation of this action plan will be coordinated by a designated implementation team, with oversight from relevant stakeholders. Funding for the programme will primarily come from the City of Palermo's budget, with potential applications to external sources for additional funds, such as European programmes (i.e. Erasmus+). Continuous monitoring and evaluation will ensure that the programme's objectives are met effectively and that adjustments can be made as needed to achieve desired outcomes.



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