

RETICULATE Project
(n. VP/2020/003/0214)

D3. Deliverable

**Modelling of the experimented
participatory assessment techniques
and report of participatory assessment
(WP2 - task 2.1, 2.3)**

by fio.PSD

April, 2024

Index

Foreword	2
Applying the participatory approach in the One-Stop Shop: from self-assessment to experimentation	4
Short evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations.....	16
What participation means	19
The forms of participation	21
Training and accompanying	26
Training.....	26
The specific analysis.....	27
Actions.....	28
Conclusions and perspectives towards modelling of participatory approaches in services to severe marginalisation	30
Appendix - Outcomes of the self-assessment questionnaire by territory	34

Foreword

The participatory process conducted by fio.PSD within the framework of WP2 aims to identify and analyse the barriers of access, by the target groups, to the social services system in the territory, and to collect and develop indications, suggestions and recommendations so that the One-Stop Shops created by the Reticulate project can be accessible and inclusive places where these barriers can be broken down.

The field research activities, carried out in the territories of Livorno, Grosseto, Pistoia and Lucca/Capannori, allowed a direct involvement of both the service managers and the target groups in the identification of the main criticalities limiting the access of the most vulnerable people to the territorial service system.

The Deliverable 2 "Report on the Development of Generative Approaches Based on the Key Role Played by Citizens in the Care Taking Actions" describes the outcomes of the research activities carried out on the field with the target groups and analyses the context within which homeless and vulnerable households find the main difficulties in being approached and taken care of by services. Starting from these difficulties, the main recommendations that should guide the definition and development of One-Stop Shops are outlined.

In the second phase of the activities under WP2, the action-research work pursued two objectives:

- Accompanying the territories in the implementation of the recommendations expressed by the beneficiaries;
- Promoting the introduction of participatory techniques in services to severe marginalisation.

Within the framework of the first objective, it seemed appropriate to ask how and to what extent the recommendations are actually sustainable and applicable in the creation of the new service, and how the territories have equipped themselves to make the One-Stop Shop a more accessible and inclusive place.

Five months after the start of the WP3 experimentation phase, we addressed a **self-assessment questionnaire** to the territories **on the uptake of the recommendations expressed by the project's target groups**.

The questionnaire aims to stimulate internal reflection with respect to working methods in line with the project objectives. In this way, the questionnaire is proposed as a useful tool for the territories to question themselves on their operational practices and to identify strengths and areas for improvement on which it is possible to intervene in order to encourage the implementation of the recommendations expressed. Moreover, in the spirit of a participatory process, this reflection can be an element of transparency towards the people who were involved in the interviews, providing qualitative feedback and demonstrating that the recommendations expressed were taken into account in the decision-making process that led to the setting up of the One Stop Shops.

The questionnaire was addressed to the project coordinators in the four territories and to the public operators employed in the implementation of the One Stop Shops. A total of 8 responses were collected (1 for Grosseto, 1 for Pistoia, 2 for Livorno, 4 for Capannori/Lucca).

Under the second objective, in the light of the evidence gathered from the interviews with families and homeless people in the four territories, it was possible to understand how the improvement of services can also pass through active listening to the direct beneficiaries. It therefore seemed appropriate to open a discussion between the partners in order to begin to introduce the use of participatory approaches in the One Stop Shops, enabling the services to value all the resources present in the territories in order to provide services that are more targeted and responsive to the needs of the beneficiaries, and for the latter to continue to express their opinion and feel actively involved in the construction of the service.

The confrontation with the territories began with a series of training activities aimed at sharing a common language around the concept of "participation" and "participatory approaches" in the field of severe adult marginality, reflecting on why it is important to place these concepts at the centre of social work, and proposing possible ways of adopting participative approaches.

Subsequently, starting from the analysis of needs, we promoted a series of individualised and tailor-made support activities, aimed at accompanying the territories in the adoption of participatory approaches and practices in the experimentation of the One-Stop Shop in particular and in their own working methods in general.



Co-funded by
the European Union

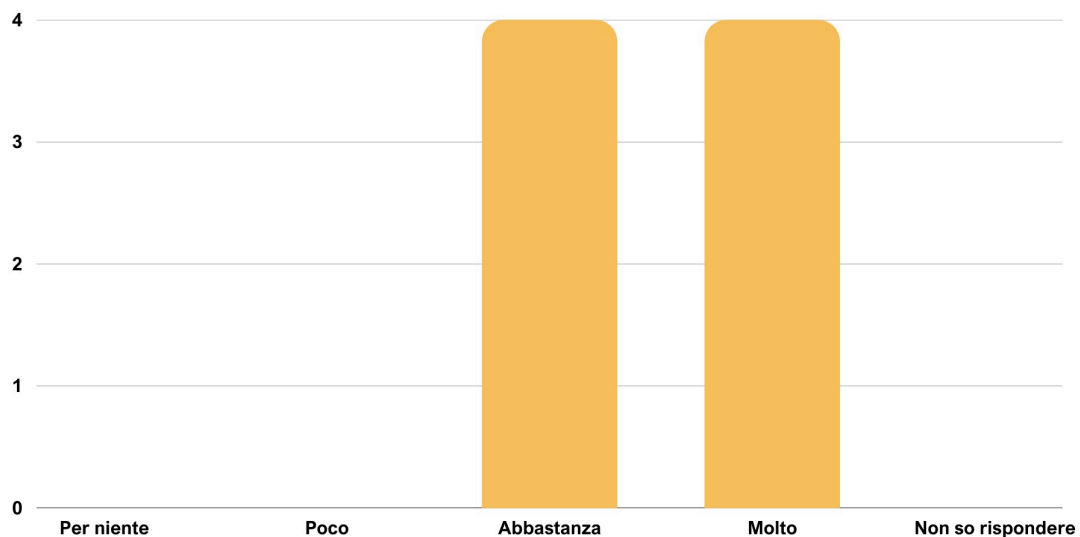


Applying the participatory approach in the One-Stop Shop: from self-assessment to experimentation

For each of the recommendations expressed by the beneficiaries, the territories were asked to express a judgement (not at all, a little, moderately, a lot) regarding the degree to which these indications had been implemented. The interviewees also gave reasons for their response, indicating the methods, levers and limits they had encountered in the process of removal of the barriers of access within the One-Stop Shop.

RECOMMENDATION 1) Expansion of listening spaces dedicated to people addressing services.

"Have you expanded the listening spaces dedicated to people? Meant as appropriate times, places and relational modalities to allow people to express themselves and ensure full reception".



The territories paid significant attention to the recognition of adequate spaces and time to ensure more careful and in-depth listening to the needs of the beneficiaries. Indeed, the respondents believe that the extension of these spaces has been much (4) or fairly (4) improved.

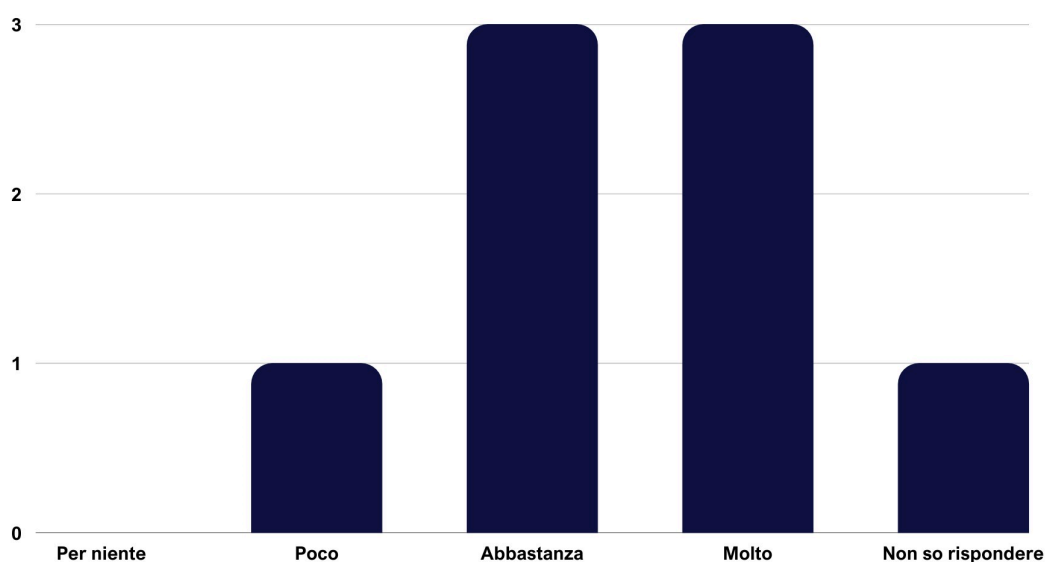
In the territory of Capannori, the One-Stop Shop model experimented allowed better scheduling of appointments, staggered over time, in order to defer the time dedicated to each individual user and avoid interruptions in the narration of their experiences. This also made it possible to increase the possible information to be collected and to approach the users with more realistic perspectives.

In Grosseto, the creation of the multi-professional team will allow to extend the opening hours of the Help Centre and therefore have longer time for reception and listening.

In Livorno and Pistoia, the project made it possible to set up new listening and reception front offices to respond to the requests of the target population. In the last case, this was located at the Albergo Popolare in Pistoia: the office has free access, no appointment is needed, and is open two days a week.

RECOMMENDATION 2) Simplification and support in dealing with bureaucratic

"Have you been able to introduce improvements or innovations in bureaucratic procedures? Simplify bureaucratic procedures for accessing benefits and services, e.g. civil registration, health certificates and financial contributions, and provide support to bridge the digital divide"



The simplification of bureaucratic practices is a challenge that all Tuscan territories are called upon to face in order to facilitate the accessibility of public services. On the whole, the experimentation of the One-Stop Shop has allowed, at least in part, this challenge to be tackled in a more systematic way, although there are those who believe that bureaucratic difficulties continue to be a critical element mainly because of the poor circulation of information on beneficiaries between the competent offices, but also because the experimental phase of the project has not yet allowed a significant impact to be made on those structural factors that limit or make it difficult for citizens to access social and employment services.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that the experimentation of the One-Stop Shop has already made it possible to generate virtuous synergies between the territorial services involved in the project (social and employment services). This

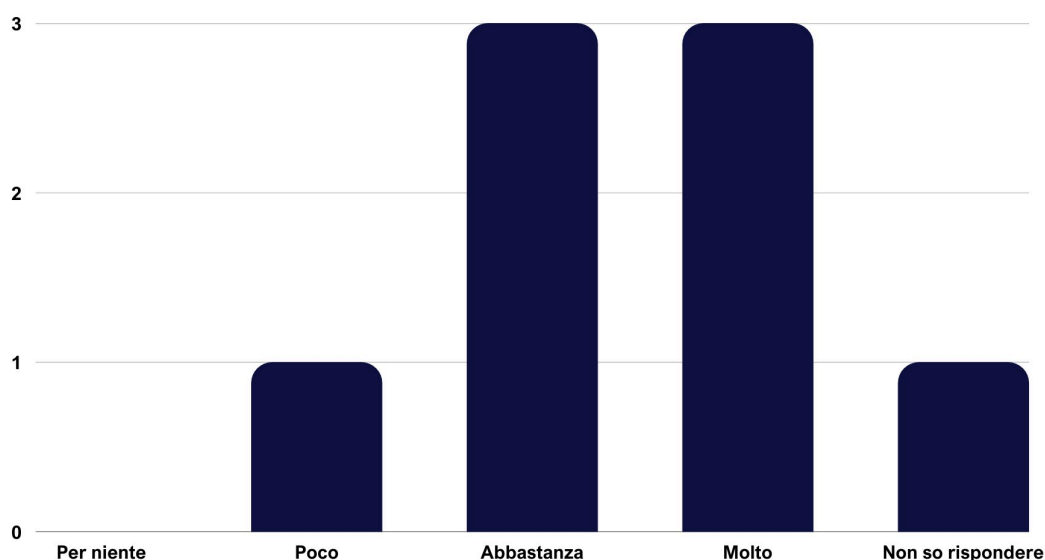
has made it possible to significantly reduce the time of appointments for those taken on through the project (Livorno) and to initiate collaboration procedures with registry offices for reporting and issuing residence documents (Pistoia and Grosseto).

In Pistoia, efforts aimed at administrative simplification have also resulted in the provision within the team of two tutors assigned to provide operational support in dealing with bureaucratic paperwork for citizens who need it.

Significant is also the case of Grosseto, which started a participatory process for the collaboration of the registry offices of the municipality of Grosseto and the municipality of Follonica together with the Social Service and some organisations of the Third Sector to define a protocol/guidelines for access to fictitious registered residence. The launch of a computer literacy course has also been planned, aimed at homeless people who will access the One-Stop Shop with particular attention to the use of e-mail, the creation of the “SPID” (digital identity), and the access to the digital services of the Public Administration.

RECOMMENDATION 3) Improvement of the ability to provide clear and consistent information

"Do you feel that you have improved your ability to provide clearer and more consistent information? Provide people with information on opportunities in the territory, disseminating as much reliable, clear and timely information as possible, also in coordination with other services."



Access to information is one of the main elements of improvement that the target citizens of the Reticulate project have brought to the attention of the territorial services. Self-assessment highlights that the territorial contact people believe, thanks to the One-Stop Shop experimentation, that they have managed to improve their internal capacities to provide clear and coherent information to a moderately (3) or a lot (3) extent.

Only in one case (Lucca) has this improvement not yet fully borne fruit due to the recent start of the trial.

Taking advantage of the opportunities already present in the territory, in Pistoia the service's communication capacity has been facilitated thanks to the location of the



Co-funded by
the European Union

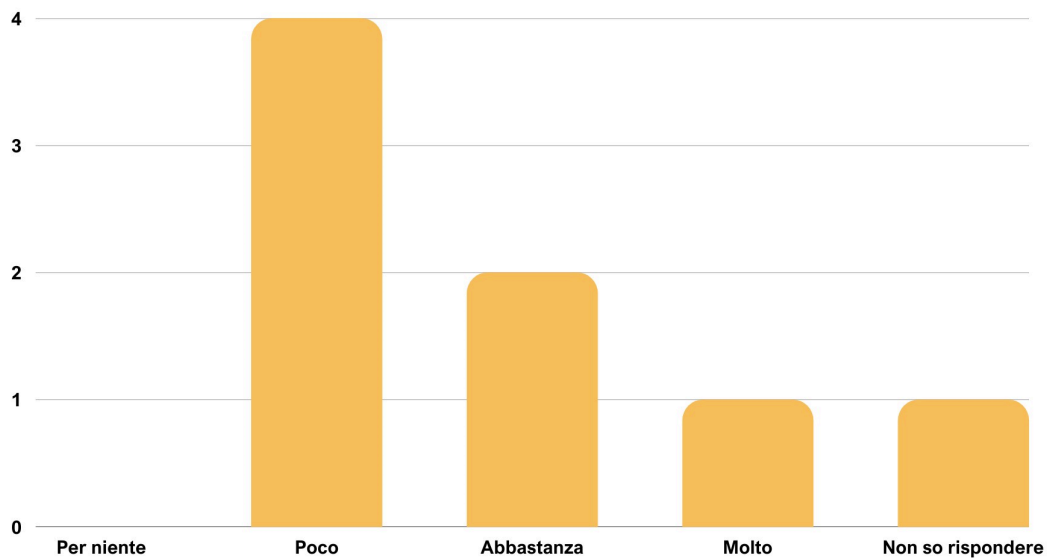


One-Stop Shop within the social secretariat, the gateway to services and the place where information on personal services in the territory can be received.

In Grosseto, on the other hand, an information campaign is being prepared on the Help Centre and its services through the production and dissemination of material such as leaflets, posters, flyers and a small guide on territorial services.

RECOMMENDATION 4) Increase in skills and professionalism to provide communication in multiple languages

Is it possible to ensure communication in multiple languages? Breaking down language barriers through the use of cultural and linguistic mediators and conveying information in multiple languages.

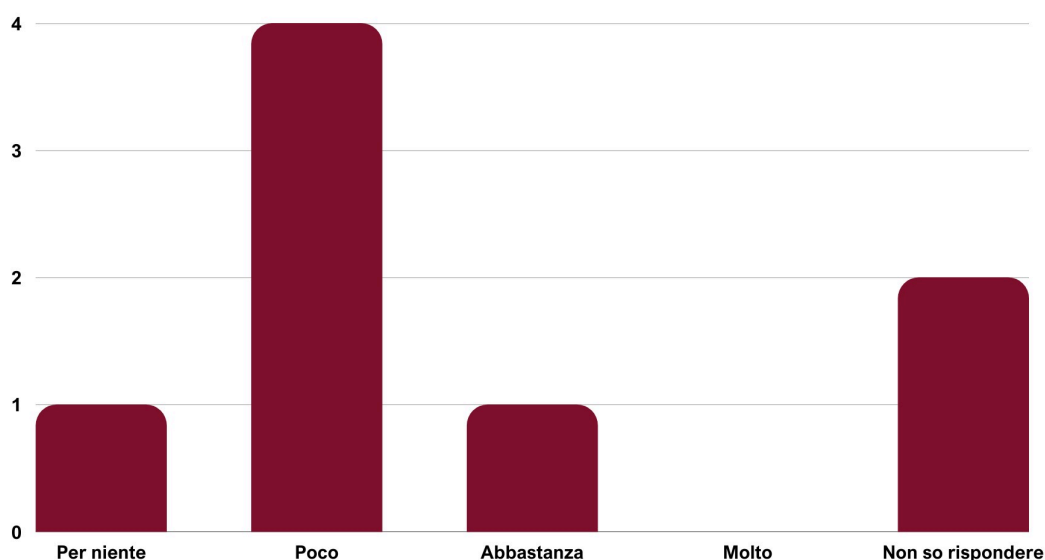


Language barriers, on the other hand, continue to be a difficult element to overcome in the territories. Only three respondents claim that these barriers were to some extent mitigated thanks to the project's experimentation, for example by preparing information material also in English (Grosseto). However, the lack of resources did not make it possible to include the profile of the linguistic-cultural mediator in the project team.

Most territories, although they have this professionalism within the social service, which is made available to the multi-professional team, did not therefore have the opportunity to create a direct link within the project.

RECOMMENDATION 5) Introduction of operational tools to facilitate the collection of feedback from beneficiaries

Are you able to collect opinions and suggestions from beneficiaries aimed at improving services? Collect and take due account of suggestions from people benefiting from services, e.g. through public meetings, interviews, anonymous questionnaires.



Listening to and accepting the opinions and suggestions of the people who use the services represents an important opportunity to promote an improvement of the services themselves, in order to make them more consistent and adherent to the needs of the beneficiaries. However, this approach requires a methodological and organisational framework that territories often don't have. Even in the context of the One-Stop Shop, to date it is not yet possible to envisage a service capable of identifying and understanding the requests that may come from service users.

In fact, more than half of the respondents state that this listening approach aimed at adapting services was introduced. On the one hand, there are those who believe that recommending services is a priority for beneficiaries who rather seek concrete answers to their problems. On the other hand, there are those who recognise the

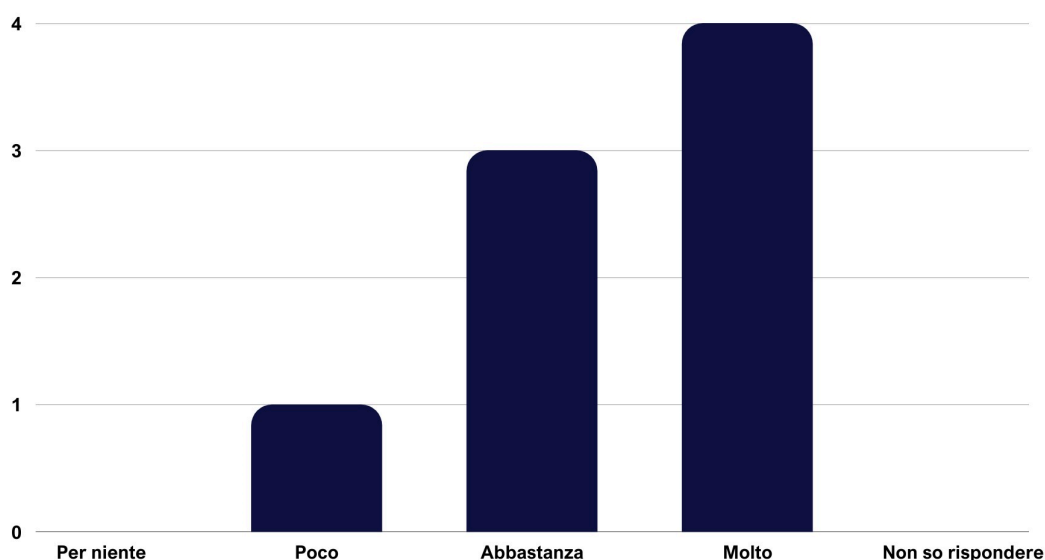
importance of this type of activity, and although they have not managed to implement it, they believe it is an approach that should be disseminated in order to take more account of their beneficiaries' opinions (Grosseto).

In the territory of Pistoia there is no structured system of collecting opinions and suggestions from beneficiaries. However, in the context of the One-Stop Shop it is believed that through the interviews conducted with people and the preliminary analysis it is possible to carry out a survey of the needs of the citizens that guides the organisation of services.

The only territory where the prospects for receiving suggestions from citizens are more favourable is Livorno. Here, active participation activities, such as group meetings between beneficiaries and operators of the One-Stop Shop, are being experimented with the aim, among others, of ensuring that suggestions and opinions on the services offered are taken up by participants.

RECOMMENDATION 6) Introduction of new approaches to ensure greater participation of beneficiaries in their own supportive pathway

Have you introduced new approaches to enable people to participate in decisions concerning their own lives? Ensure effective and formal co-participation in one's life project, allowing people to express their inclinations, desires and perspectives.



The theme of the participation of beneficiaries in the construction of their own life project appears to be strongly emphasised in the experimentation path of the One-Stop Shop.

All territories were committed to ensure approaches that would allow for more intensive and systematic forms of co-participation, with 7 respondents stating that they had succeeded to a fairly or very great extent.

This more intense involvement is based on the methodologies for listening to the needs already in place in the care taking processes carried out by the territories.

The “enlarged” teamwork between the social and employment services is a central element in order to pay attention to all aspects of people's lives, to channel the



Co-funded by
the European Union

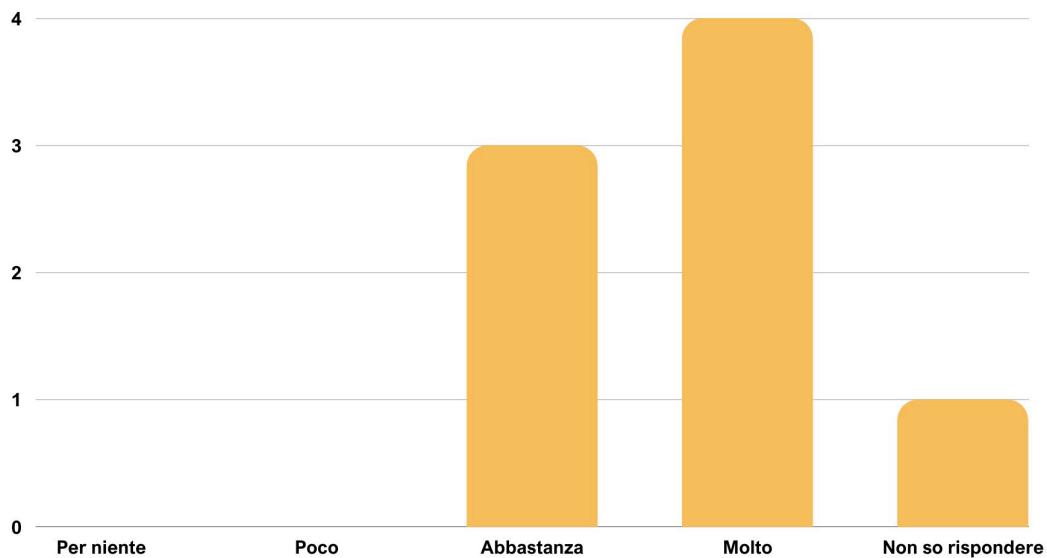


personalised project for getting out of situations of vulnerability, and to enable beneficiaries to express their needs more effectively (Capannori).

There is also the awareness that in the care taking process, even lightly, the guideline to be continued and further explored is not to impose pathways and projects on people "in a paternalistic manner" but to take into account as much as possible their point of view, their desires and their ability of self-determination (Grosseto).

RECOMMENDATION 7) Improved capacity in guiding and orienting beneficiaries towards the opportunities offered by the territory

Are you able to provide more orientation to employment services? Provide adequate orientation and timely information towards employment, training and social-work placement opportunities in the territories.



One of the main objectives of the One-Stop Shop experimentation is to integrate social and employment workers in the team, thus favouring a multidimensional accompanying and care taking pathway to get out of vulnerability paths.

The territories consider that this experimentation has allowed to lay the foundations for strengthening the opportunities for orientation to the labour service network, achieved in a rating ranging from moderately (3) to a lot (4).

The minimum teams established to work on the One-Stop Shops, integrating professionalism from different services, make it possible to experiment joint care taking and to inform and orientate citizens with regard to social, employment and training opportunities more quickly and in a more coordinated manner.

Short evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations

It is clear from the self-assessment questionnaire that in the start-up phase of the project experimentation, the territories made a conceptual and operational effort in order to make the One-Stop Shops more inclusive and accessible places for the most vulnerable segments of the population.

Some of the recommendations made by the target groups turned out to be motivating elements that seem to have guided the design of the new service, but despite these improvements there are still residual barriers to be tackled.

The following graph summarises the positioning of the territories with respect to each of the recommendations expressed by the people interviewed. The figures help grasp that there are above all three fields in which the territories succeeded in receiving and following up more closely the indications provided by the people interviewed in the One-Stop Shop experimentation.

In particular, the greatest improvements are recorded with respect to:

- **expanding of listening space and time dedicated to listen to the beneficiaries' requests** with a view to fostering greater understanding of individual needs and establishing trusting relationships
- **a more coordinated orientation towards socio-employment opportunities** in the territory, through the creation of integrated and multi-professional teams between social and employment services
- **greater involvement of the beneficiaries** within the framework of the case management processes, aimed to the joint definition of the support projects.

However, some difficulties remain in overcoming residual barriers in accessing the service created by the Reticulate project, namely:

- **the setting up of tools to collect requests and suggestions regarding the definition of services** from respondents. This is the main area for improvement, where there is little or no acknowledgement of the recommendations made;
- **the ability to address language barriers**, in particular by providing professional profiles for cultural and linguistic mediation. In this respect, too, responses prevailed indicating that only marginal steps were taken in this direction.

The effort towards the implementation of the last two dimensions examined, on the other hand, is in an intermediate position. Both the ability to simplify and **provide support for processing bureaucratic procedures** and the ability to **provide information in a more comprehensible and timely manner** are indicated in some territories as areas of great improvement, while in other territories they are aspects in which efforts and resources must continue to be invested.

Moving beyond the end of the project, it seems appropriate to proceed towards a systemisation of the methodological and organisational practices being experimented in the One-Stop Shops. On the basis of the self-reflection activity of the territories and in light of the considerations expressed, it is important to continue structuring the service with a view to accessibility and inclusiveness of citizens.

In the light of this picture, it is clear that customised support activities for territories (see the section on *Training and Accompanying Work*) are key to support territories in the continuation of the process of breaking down barriers to access and bottom-up implementation of recommendations.

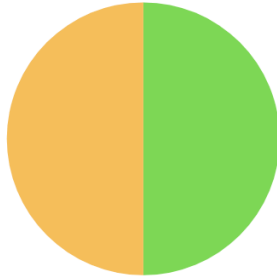


Co-funded by
the European Union

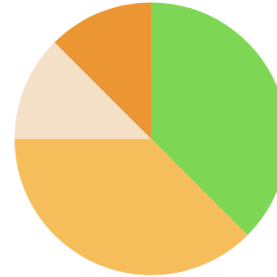


***Degree of fulfilment of the recommendations expressed by the target groups
in the 4 territories***

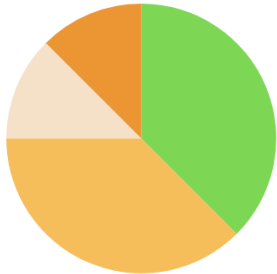
INCREASING LISTENING SPACES



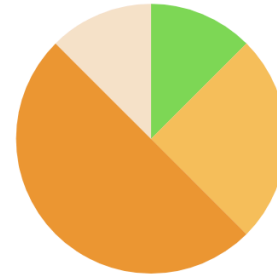
SIMPLIFICATION OF BUREAUCRATIC PRACTICES



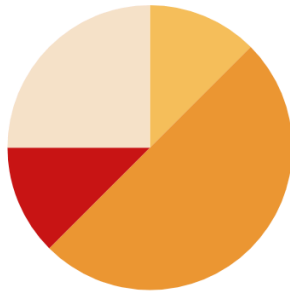
CLEARER INFORMATION



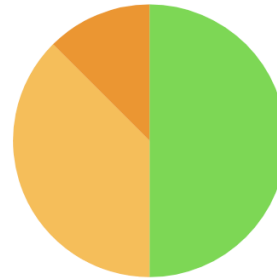
COMMUNICATION IN MORE LANGUAGES



COLLECTING SUGGESTIONS FROM BENEFICIARIES



ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN DEFINING ONE'S OWN SUPPORT PATHWAY



ORIENTATION TOWARDS SOCIO-EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES



■ NOT AT ALL ■ A LITTLE ■ MODERATELY ■ A LOT ■ I DON'T KNOW

What participation means

The term participation refers both to the process by which decisions are made and to the actors who are involved in these processes. With respect to the first dimension, the concept of participation defines the tools and modalities that allow a range of actors to be actively involved in the decisions and actions that affect the functioning of the system of norms, practices and procedures. With respect to the actors involved, the participatory approaches imply that both the actors who traditionally play a decision-making role and the actors on whom these decisions fall become active participants in a **process of change**.

Participation has become an important and debated issue in several areas of public policy as well as in social and health care sectors, primarily in disability and mental health. In these areas, since the 1990s, it has been realised that the opinions of patients and service beneficiaries were often ignored and people found themselves subjected to decisions about their lives and the care they received without any control over them. The introduction of participatory working methods set the pace in changing working practices. Underlying this change has been the recognition, on the one hand, of people's right to express their opinion about the care and support pathways they receive and the way in which they are delivered and, on the other hand, the fact that having had direct experience of a specific life condition makes people to some extent “experts” in identifying their own needs. The experience gained in the field of disability and mental health has progressively spread to other sectors, to the point of becoming a topic of discussion and experimentation in other sectors as well, such as the field of **severe adult marginality**.

A fundamental principle underlying participatory processes is that they are necessarily linked to the activation of **empowerment** processes. Empowerment processes are meant as those modes of action aimed at enhancing personal resources, which give people the confidence and awareness necessary to regain control over their lives and actively participate in society. Reasoning in terms of empowerment does not mean trying to work to change people and, therefore, substituting individual wills, but rather thinking about how services and the very attitude of professionals can contribute to value individuality. However, it is evident that for people in fragile conditions it may be particularly complex to find ways to have a say in their helping relationship, as they face greater personal and social difficulties and barriers, as the research conducted within the Reticulate project shows us.

This means that in order to achieve empowerment and participation, it is the response system that has to change, adapting circumstances to people's needs and

their difficulties, removing barriers in access to services and the helping relationship, so that **people can be involved**.

Adopting this practical and theoretical approach also means making one's modes of action more democratic. When participatory approaches are adopted, it is possible to **share power** with those who may feel powerless and perceive that they do not have control over their own lives.

The forms of participation

Participation can have many meanings and take different forms. Several conceptual frameworks have been identified in the literature. They illustrate how participation is articulated along *a continuum* from a lower to a higher degree of potential influence of people with respect to decision-making processes and the sharing of power and responsibility.

One of the first authors to delve into the subject of participation and to propose a classification of the different forms through which it can manifest itself is **Sherry Arnstein**, who in 1969 published an article entitled "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" in which the so-called "ladder of participation" is presented. The proposed classification basically identifies three levels of participation: "fictitious" participation, characterised by manipulative approaches, in which decision-making power is not really shared and the information provided is partial or even distorted; "symbolic" participation, in which people's involvement is more effective and explicit but does not necessarily lead to change; "active" participation, in which there is a progressive delegation of power to citizens.

Many variants of this classification have been developed over the years. The version we propose in this toolkit, developed from the one proposed by **FEANTSA**¹, aims to be both representative of the different forms of participation but also concise and easy to use for practitioners. With each of the 4 levels of participation it is possible to associate specific methodological tools aimed at involving homeless people, the characteristics of which will be examined below.

¹ Feantsa (2013), Participation Toolkit, Brussels.

The forms of participation

TYPE OF PARTICIPATION	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF TOOLS
INFORMATION	Ensure that people have the information they need	Newsletter Notice boards
CONSULTATION	Take people's opinions and feedback into account in decision-making processes	Questionnaires Interviews Focus Groups Suggestion box
CO-DESIGN	Encourage people to take part in the definition of services and support pathways	Peer education Recruitment support Assisted volunteering
SELF-REPRESENTATION	Give people full control over decision-making processes	Governance of organisations Self-managed projects by users

At this point it should be pointed out that although the benefits of a high level of active participation are obvious, we believe that there are no “right” or “wrong” participatory approaches, or one approach better than another a priori. Rather, **there are approaches tailored to specific circumstances and contexts**, and it is up to the organisation to find the pathway that best suits its needs and aspirations. Even information alone, if properly delivered, can in fact be an important channel and signal of greater inclusiveness of the people the service is addressing to.

Organisations should always be aware of their own actions when starting a decision-making process in order to avoid falling into the trap of unilateral decision-making practices.

Adopting participatory approaches means questioning how to promote an active role of a person receiving care and how to make him/her participate in the decisions and actions concerning the service and the support pathway to be undertaken. As already mentioned, participation is based on the principle of recognising people's right to be involved in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

It is therefore a matter of **operating in a transparent and democratic manner**, towards a direction that is plausibly desired by all organisations dealing with severe marginalisation. However, the drive to adopt participatory approaches cannot be determined solely by ethical motivations, which refer to the dimension of rights and democratic ways of acting. Indeed, it is also legitimate to wonder why the adoption of this type of approach is more useful.

For this reason, it is worth remembering that adopting participatory approaches within one's own organisation brings a number of benefits for the beneficiaries of services and the organisations themselves.

The benefits for the beneficiaries of services are:

- Understanding one's own support relation. There is an issue of transparency in the communication between services and beneficiaries and the possibility for people involved in this type of pathways to be better informed and aware of the support pathway in which they are placed.
- Empowerment. Cultivating and fostering personal opinions and resources is a first channel for enjoying new experiences and opportunities as well as cultivating people's autonomy and empowerment of people, self-confidence and motivation.
- Skill enhancement. Having the opportunity to participate in collaborative processes for the co-creation of services and strategies enables people to develop skills, especially soft or transversal ones, which enrich the pool of resources that can be activated by people, in this context and in other ones.

Although the adoption of participatory approaches is a costly activity for organisations, which may require a considerable initial investment of time and resources, it is important to remember that this initial investment can to some extent be amortized by a range of long-term benefits.

The benefits for services are:

- Development of services more closely tailored to needs. Involving and seeking the opinion of the beneficiaries of a service means having a deeper and more accurate understanding of their needs and expectations. As a result, the solutions and measures developed are more targeted, more adherent to real needs and, therefore, more effective in meeting those needs. Furthermore, since the solutions are agreed upon and validated by those involved, there is a reduced risk of making corrections or changes during the course of the project.

- Empowerment of beneficiaries. The co-created solutions increase the participation of the people involved in the motivation of a specific organisational practice, as they identify themselves more closely with these measures. This can help build stronger relations of trust and collaboration as well as foster more open and transparent communication.
- Skill development. The organisations that promote participatory approaches enter into a life-long learning process that allows to develop different skills within the organisation, from those needed for group facilitation and conflict management to the skills for participatory planning itself.
- Social legitimacy. Finally, the proven effectiveness of participatory approaches contributes to legitimacy and improves the reputational dimension of the organisation by the other territorial and community actors.

At this point the question to be asked is: how can we adopt participatory approaches?

The first step to begin a journey of change with greater participation of beneficiaries is to adopt a positive and open mindset, ready to meet challenges. It is necessary to think deeply about the goals and motivations of what is being done. It is therefore important to start by recognising a clear bottom line: **homeless people who use services can give a valuable contribution to the process of service improvement**. The aim of the participation is to facilitate the implementation of this contribution.

Changing mindsets and professional attitudes towards the goal of ensuring greater participation is certainly not a simple challenge. It implies first of all **initiating a profound internal reflection on the dominant professional ways of acting in the organisation and addressing the issue of power asymmetries** between operators and beneficiaries of the service of the possible prejudices we carry, sometimes unconsciously. This means adapting one's working methods to a new cultural and organisational process, thus creating the structures and conditions for people's opinions to emerge.

A concrete example to start from may be to question how the mere organisation of physical spaces can transmit and reproduce a history of hierarchies and distances. Let us think of the implicit messages sent by a desk placed between the person and the operator, or by the act of noting down on a computer the history and needs of a person without the latter having the possibility of reading what has been noted down. Writing about a person is quite different from writing with a person. Another example is to reason about the language one uses when conversing with a person who does not master technical or professional terms. Questioning these very concrete aspects

means reflecting on the ways in which it is possible to shorten the distance between those who traditionally hold the decision-making power and those who, to some extent, suffer this power or tend to experience the relationship and dialogue with the services in a non-equal form.

When participatory methods are used, intervention measures and care taking are not limited to responding to primary needs in a standardised and performance-oriented manner but **promote the participation of the person in the definition of his or her own inclusion pathway, gather opinions, ideas and desires that may influence the recovery pathway and motivate him or her with respect to the goals to be achieved by activating the resources and capacities the person possesses.** This implies an effort not to focus only on the mere profiling and categorisation of the person, but rather on stimulating the person to tell his or her own perspectives and desires in the first person.

Training and accompanying

"Participation" and "participatory approaches" can have different meanings and refer to different experiences for the participants. Consistent with the project's object of work, it was decided to develop a **participatory and experiential pathway that would allow the construction of a common language** among the participants, in order to allow easier discussion during the course of the project and after its conclusion, as well as group learning.

Personalised assistance in the analysis of the situation and in the design and elaboration of actions, where deemed appropriate and possible by the territories, was also carried out.

The accompanying activities were therefore structured in 3 phases:

- plenary training meetings with all territories;
- meetings per individual territory for specific analysis of the situation and needs;
- implementation of targeted actions with tailor-made support.

Training

Two meetings were held, the first face-to-face and the second online, striking a balance between the need to meet physically to accelerate the creation of communities and to make the events as accessible as possible. The topics covered collaborative processes within the team and the adoption of participatory approaches, wishing to support changes of a systemic nature, implying coherence between means and ends².

First meeting: *Participatory approaches - definitions, theory and practices*

The training took place in Florence aimed to provide a theoretical and practical basis for approaching participation and to bring out the diversity of actions and approaches to the topic. The first part of the day focused on the guiding principles of participation, presenting the theory needed to answer the questions: "What do we mean? How do we proceed? Why is it useful?". It continued with some concrete examples of participatory practices and a workshop discussion on challenges and opportunities.

² Bateson G. (1972), Steps to an Ecology of Mind.

Afterwards, the participants were offered a further workshop activity, in which they were given short descriptions of behaviours that could be implemented in group decision-making processes, such as: "After stating the problem, talk about possible solutions", "During the discussion, make brief summaries of what was said in the group" or "Draw attention away from emotions to prevent them from interfering with the discussion". They were asked to give their opinion on whether or not it would be useful to facilitate collaboration. The group then discussed together the aspects of opportunity or risk of the various behaviours, distinguishing the contexts of application and conducting a final in-depth discussion on the theory of group work.

Second meeting: Making the *work of the multidisciplinary team more effective and functional in adopting participatory approaches*

The meeting took place online. Given the presence of people who had not attended the first meeting, it was considered useful to present a quick summary of the fundamentals identified in the previous training meeting, in particular by briefly reviewing some of the theoretical tools used in the field of services to severe marginalisation in order to encourage the participation of beneficiaries. To this end, a preview of the participatory toolkit developed by fio.PSD³ was presented.

Operational tools of *participatory design thinking* and *problem solving* were then presented, and the seminar continued with the use of "*Participation City*", an exercise specifically constructed for the group from the training needs that emerged from the previous meeting. Participation City consists of a simulation of a Bateson "Steps to an Ecology of Mind", published in 1972, team meeting called to decide between several possible participatory solutions to a given problem. The debriefing then covered elements of content analysis and collaborative processes, concluding with a discussion on which strategies to use to achieve the project objectives and promote the active role of vulnerable or marginalised people.

The specific analysis

Having established a common language and reference practices, one or more customised analysis and evaluation meetings were held for each territory. Each territory, with the exception of Grosseto, attended the meeting with the person in charge of the project plus the managers and female and male operators present in the services.

Capannori

³ PSD (2024), [Toolkit on participatory approaches](#).

Two analysis and co-planning meetings were held. During the meetings, the appropriateness of the needs identified in the previous phases was verified over time, in particular by examining in depth the context data, the implementation constraints and the selection criteria that would guarantee an effective intervention. It was decided to strengthen the adoption of participatory methodologies through training involving the territorial partners, who, given the system's level of interconnection, were identified as important actors in fostering the development of a culture of participation.

Livorno

A meeting took place in which various needs, objectives and hypotheses of strategies for their solution emerged, in the context of a workload situation that allowed the implementation of articulated strategies only after the end of the project. It was therefore decided to structure an orientation by means of an orientation action, which would manage complexity by facilitating decision-making, through the precise definition of the various possible actions and the identification of choice criteria that would allow the territory to evaluate the solutions on the basis of its own priorities.

Pistoia

Two preparatory meetings were held in which interest emerged in exploring *peer support* and in general ways of organising services to encourage people experiencing homelessness conditions to take the initiative. Three possible operational methods were proposed: training, online exchange of national good practices (selected from the fio.PSD database thanks to the monitoring forms collected throughout the national territory), and a *site visit* with discussion of the practices. The group opted for the latter option.

Grosseto

A meeting was held with the service manager, who explained the particular workload, the beneficiary involvement activities already in place, and the particular contingency of uncertainty regarding the continuity of the project. Accompanying solutions centred on the participatory evaluation of events or the exchange of good practices were proposed, but it was assessed that the conditions for a continuation of accompanying activities did not exist.

Actions

Capannori training workshop

The meeting was attended by 12 male and female operators of the territory, belonging to public administration services or private social organisations active in combating severe marginalisation.

The objectives were to:

- move forward in building a common language on homeless people participation;
- recognise the key elements when activating participatory approaches.

The workshop involved an exercise on different listening processes, including listening with judgement and active listening, and reflection on overcoming four obstacles to the adoption of participatory approaches that had emerged in the previous design phases, by means of an ad-hoc developed canvas. In addition to learning about the content, the creation of networks among some participants was significant.

Co-design with Livorno

Four different solutions were elaborated and presented: an action-research on the promotion of participation for an ad hoc group, the co-design of a participatory evaluation to be administered to the team, a training on relational intervention (listening, empathy) addressed to the team, a workshop on the implementation of participatory methodologies. For each intervention the target group was identified, the structure of the action and the desired effects/risks were described.

Study visit with Pistoia

A meeting was held in the Happy Center – Community Laboratory of the Municipality of Bologna, managed by the cooperative Piazza Grande for the consortium L'Arcolaio on the ASP - Città di Bologna notice. The study visit was prepared in a previous meeting with the service coordinator and was attended by two operators of the Piazza Grande cooperative, three managers and operators from Pistoia, and three fio.PSD staff members. During the visit there was an exchange on the methodologies and operational tools for the participation of homeless people, the risks and conditions for success were explored, and it was possible to observe the spaces and interactions within the participatory workshop.

Conclusions and perspectives towards modelling of participatory approaches in services to severe marginalisation

For the social service system, approaching people experiencing homelessness and giving them assistance is not a simple matter. At the same time, homeless people are faced with all the difficulties of daily subsistence and the many barriers they encounter when entering reception facilities or getting the support they need.

Knowing the system of services and how they work, identifying the barriers of access to services that target groups encounter, can be preparatory actions to **develop proposals for overcoming these obstacles and a methodology for the active involvement of the most fragile people** in defining more inclusive and participatory services.

The issue of accessibility is complex. **There are no simple or “one size fits all” solutions to completely solve the support of homeless people or guarantee take-up of welfare benefits for vulnerable individuals and families.** For severely marginalised adults, municipalities usually have ready and first reception services offered on the street or easily accessible facilities, such as temporary dormitories and large social canteens. Almost always these services are offered spontaneously by third sector organisations or in the form of agreements with competent institutions. In more structured intervention systems for severe marginalisation, there are also services for the distribution of material goods and food, shower services, harm reduction and mediation services to find temporary housing. The most innovative Housing First/Housing led projects have very much developed recently. The service system aims to help people cope with basic needs but low-threshold services are hardly oriented towards the social inclusion of the people who address them. These interventions are often a sort of “propaedeutic transition” towards subsequent social welfare pathways within an integrated system of services that should be activated once primary needs have been met (see Guidelines for combating severe adult marginality in Italy, Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2015).

In addition, there are many difficulties that vulnerable families with minor children may encounter in accessing the services they need. The reasons for the difficulty in reaching these population groups can be linked both to the multidimensionality of the problems and the complex needs that the household brings with it and to the functioning of the social services system that sometimes operates in a fragmented or

discontinuous manner, failing to guarantee global and continuous care taking of individuals and families that present greater elements of vulnerability.

There are several studies at the European level that have already investigated what kind of **difficulties a person and a household encounter when accessing minimum income or social assistance measures**, such as, for instance, the thematic study on "minimum income take-up of vulnerable groups, in particular the homeless" carried out within the European Anti Poverty Network (Boccardo 2014). The study highlights different types of obstacles to the full take-up of beneficiaries, such as the lack of communication and information to potential holders who, therefore, do not know their rights and are not in a position to "claim" them (the phenomenon of unknown rights and unclaimed rights). Then there are the administrative barriers and unobtained rights due to a series of bureaucratic practices that the most vulnerable people struggle to fulfil. Finally, cases are also mentioned in which intermediate institutions, such as voluntary organisations, legal protection offices, discourage people from engaging in a battle to obtain the right they would be entitled to because the cost-benefit ratio is not in favour of the people themselves (e.g. it is not convenient to start a legal battle or to undertake the process of collecting the necessary documentation for benefits that would not resolve the condition of vulnerability anyway).

Taking these limitations into account and in order to promote improvement strategies, it may be important to adopt a specific intervention methodology that follows preparatory steps to first of all deepen the knowledge of the territorial service system and better understand its functioning. At the same time, it is necessary to analyse the social profiles of the people who make up the potential users of the services, understand their problems, needs, desires and resources. The proposal developed in this article starts from a participatory approach in order to consolidate an operational methodology.

The methodology Re-Part, *Ripartire dalla partecipazione*, developed by fio.PSD within the Reticulate project, aims to achieve the involvement of families in difficulty and homeless people in the experimentation of an innovative participatory approach for the improvement of services.

Inspired by a recent Feantsa publication in which it was emphasised that the **best way to understand someone's problems is by listening to them**, the premise from which we also started was that knowing the service system and listening to the voices of the people directly affected could make a difference.

The literature on participation and the power of *voice* has provided us with the essential elements on which to develop the methodology. **Constructing the**

reception pathway together with the person is part of the approach known as the capability approach and of the empowerment approach. In social work, both approaches enable operators to increase their ability to engage with their users, to look at people with a proactive gaze, and to take on the role of facilitator of the support pathway. When using participatory approaches, intervention measures and social care are not limited to meet primary needs in a standardised and performance-oriented manner. They aim to promote the participation of a person in the definition of his or her inclusion pathway, gather opinions, ideas and desires that may influence the recovery pathway and motivate him or her with respect to the objectives to be achieved by activating the resources/capacities a person possesses. At the same time, they can stimulate services to develop more adequate and consistent solutions in the long run with higher success rates.

The key words guiding the development of participatory approaches are: **Listening and Active People Role; Capacity; Empowerment; Involvement.**

The proposed Re-Part methodology is a mixed methodology that envisages a first phase of desk analysis (exploratory study) to identify the characteristics of the services and a second phase of field research that aims to meet operators and target groups to collect their opinions, expectations, useful suggestions to strengthen the services, make them more inclusive and appropriate to overcome the state of need, fragility and social marginalisation in which many people who are not able to enjoy an effective pathway of social reintegration find themselves. This type of methodology answers research questions such as: what barriers, problems and needs target groups encounter in accessing territorial social services; what tools and methods can be put in place to improve accessibility to services and favour direct involvement of people in the help pathways dedicated to them; how can an effective and long-lasting help pathway be facilitated. The proposed methodology can be based on three phases and related actions: mapping of territorial social services and consultation of public and private social stakeholders; involvement of people targeted by the services through face-to-face interviews; experimentation of participatory techniques within the services.

The results presented in this report show the **effectiveness of pursuing participatory approaches both when planning a service from scratch and when enhancing existing services.**

Overcoming the barriers of access to services for severe marginalisation through participatory approaches means **developing co-programming pathways, providing a greater circulation of information on the status of services, promoting a personalisation of pathways, accepting the suggestions of people**

interested in services, consolidating collaboration with private social organisations, strengthening the work of the street units, expanding the range of services and differentiating responses on the basis of needs.

Adopting participatory approaches in the area of severe marginalisation is a **question of inclusion and rights**. It means equipping oneself with useful tools in social work. On the one hand, for the beneficiaries it means a better understanding of their support pathway and developing recovery skills; on the other hand, for the social services, it means creating services that are more targeted and adherent to needs; making beneficiaries responsible and reducing the time of help pathways.



Co-funded by
the European Union

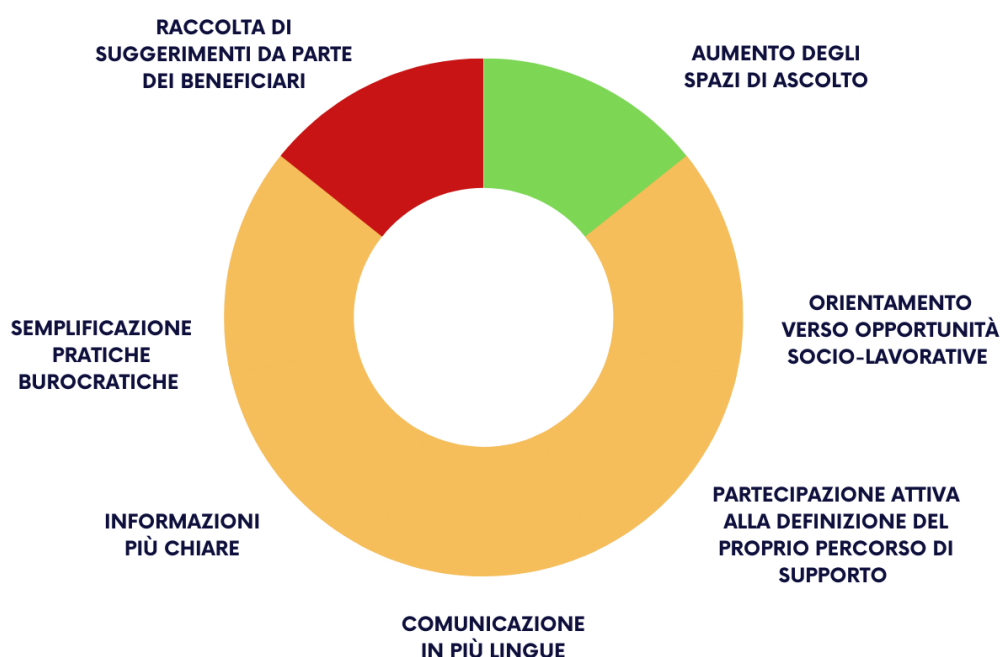


Appendix – Outcomes of the Self-Assessment Questionnaire by Territory

In che modo e in che misura le raccomandazioni espresse dai gruppi target intervistati sono state recepite nella fase preliminare di sperimentazione del One stop shop?

GROSSETO

● Molto ● Abbastanza ● Poco



IN PARTICOLARE, GROSSETO DICHIARA DI AVER:

- Previsto **tempi più lunghi** da dedicare **all'accoglienza e all'ascolto**
- Avviato un percorso partecipativo di **collaborazione tra Uffici anagrafe, Servizio Sociale e Terzo Settore** per definire linee guida **per l'accesso alla residenza anagrafica fittizia**
- Avviato un **corso di alfabetizzazione informatica** rivolto ai beneficiari a supporto del disbrigo della pratiche burocratiche
- Promosso una **campagna informativa sull'Help center**, e materiale **anche in lingua inglese**
- Avviato una **riflessione interna** sulle possibili modalità **per raccogliere e tenere in considerazione le opinioni dei beneficiari**
- Avviato una **sperimentazione per la presa in carico integrata con il CPI**, orientata, laddove possibile, all'inserimento lavorativo e alla formazione professionale



Co-funded by
the European Union



In che modo e in che misura le raccomandazioni espresse dai gruppi target intervistati sono state recepite nella fase preliminare di sperimentazione del One stop shop?

LIVORNO

● Molto ● Abbastanza ● Poco



IN PARTICOLARE, LIVORNO DICHIARA DI AVER:

- Creato un **ulteriore spazio di ascolto e accoglienza**
- **Velocizzato i tempi per gli appuntamenti presso il CPI**
- Realizzato **incontri di gruppo con i beneficiari del One stop shop**, propedeutici anche alla raccolta di suggerimenti e opinioni in merito al servizio
- Previsto il **servizio di mediazione linguistica-culturale** da estendere in maniera struttura nel modello di interventi del One stop shop
- Aumentato il livello di **compartecipazione nella stipula dei progetti individualizzati**
- **Migliorato la capacità di orientamento alle opportunità lavorative** e formative del territorio, grazie alla collaborazione struttura **con i CPI**

In che modo e in che misura le raccomandazioni espresse dai gruppi target intervistati sono state recepite nella fase preliminare di sperimentazione del One stop shop?

PISTOIA

● Molto ● Abbastanza ● Poco



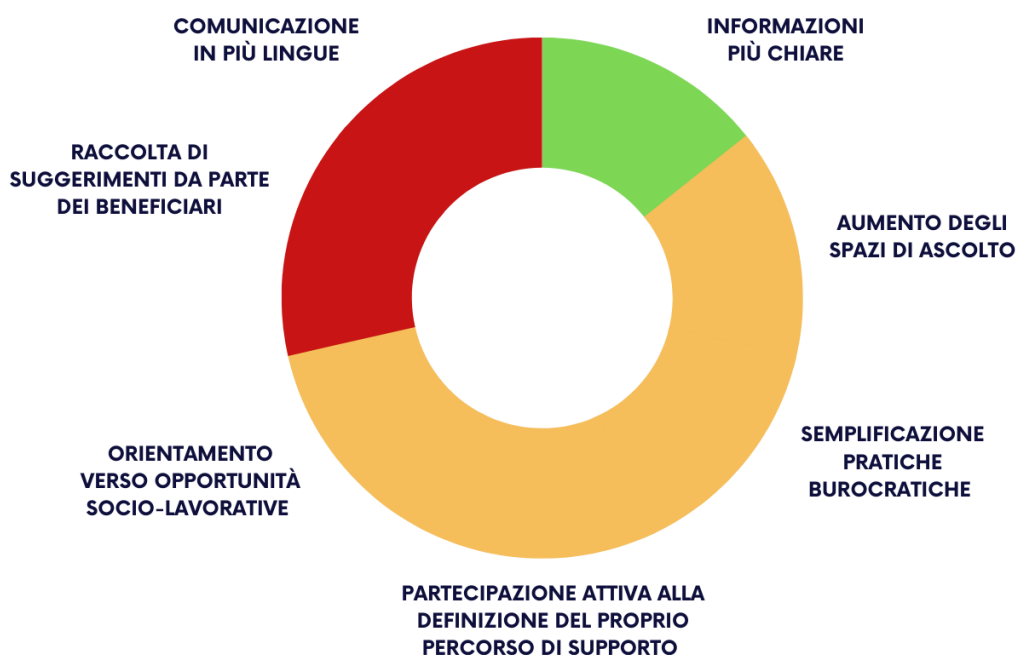
IN PARTICOLARE, PISTOIA DICHIARA DI AVER:

- Aperto uno **sportello di accoglienza/ascolto** presso l'albergo popolare di Pistoia, ad accesso libero senza bisogno di appuntamento ed aperto 2 giorni alla settimana
- Stipulato un **accordo con l'ufficio anagrafe** del Comune per la segnalazione di cittadini in carico al servizio sociale che hanno bisogno di ottenere la residenza fittizia.
- Predisposto 2 tutor all'interno dell'equipe del OSS per il **supporto alle pratiche burocratiche e amministrative**
- **Migliorato la capacità di fornire informazioni sui servizi del territorio**, grazie alla costituzione del One stop shop all'interno del servizio di segretariato sociale.
- **Assenza di un sistema strutturato di raccolta di opinioni** e suggerimenti da parte dei beneficiari
- Rafforzato la capacità da parte dell'equipe multidisciplinare di far esprimere ai cittadini i propri bisogni e aspirazioni, al fine di **far partecipare attivamente i beneficiari alla definizione del proprio progetto di vita.**
- **Promosso maggiormente e più rapidamente le opportunità lavorative e formative del territorio**, grazie alla presenza all'interno dell'equipe del OSS di un operatore del Centro Impiego

In che modo e in che misura le raccomandazioni espresse dai gruppi target intervistati sono state recepite nella fase preliminare di sperimentazione del One stop shop?

CAPANNORI

● Molto ● Abbastanza ● Poco



IN PARTICOLARE, CAPANNORI DICHIARA DI AVER:

- Tentato di **migliorare la calendarizzazione degli appuntamenti**, ampliando il tempo dedicato all'ascolto
- Sperimentato una **messa in rete degli sportelli di segretariato sociale e di accesso ai servizi per il lavoro**, creando una procedura di valutazione del bisogno socio-economico e di presa in carico socio-lavorativo
- Realizzato una **semplificazione delle pratiche burocratiche** per accedere a contributi economici e ai servizi di iscrizione alle politiche attive del lavoro, nei limiti delle competenze territoriali e della fase di sperimentazione del modello di intervento
- **Necessità di sviluppare ulteriormente il servizio di mediazione linguistica-culturale**
- **Assenza di un sistema strutturato per raccogliere suggerimenti** da parte dei beneficiari
- Ampliato il lavoro multidisciplinare con i servizi per il lavoro, con l'obiettivo di una **partecipazione attiva della famiglia nel progetto personalizzato** di fuoriuscita da situazioni di vulnerabilità o percorsi di povertà, secondo la modalità in presenza
- **Migliorato la capacità di fornire informazioni corrette e puntuali**, in merito all'orientamento verso le opportunità socio-lavorative del territorio, grazie alla collaborazione con i CPI



Co-funded by
the European Union

