



3.1. Implementing Housing First in Italy through ESF and FEAD

3.1.1. Context: Housing First in Italy 2011-2021

Over the past 10 years, Housing First has become more widely used to address homelessness in Italy. In 2011, prompted by the rising numbers of destitute and homeless people in cities, the Italian National Institute for Statistics (ISTAT) carried out a country-wide homeless count, followed by a second count in 2014. Results of these two studies showed that while homeless numbers had essentially remained the same over the years, the services offered on a national scale were very diverse and uneven.

At the same time, to meet EU standards for social inclusion – as outlined in the Europe 2020 Strategy – Italy needed to reform its policies to help raise 2.2 million people out of poverty. A set of tools that could be implemented evenly throughout the country was required. Fio.PSD (the Italian Federation of Organisations for Homeless People) suggested the government draft guidelines for all stakeholders to follow and was tasked with supporting the drafting committee by providing technical advice and collecting recommendations and good practice examples from across the country. The Fio.PSD was chosen because of its long-standing experience with homelessness and Housing First, which includes direct cooperation with service providers and homeless people. Their work resulted in the ‘Guidelines for tackling severe adult marginality in Italy’ (*Linee di Indirizzo per il contrasto alla Grave Emarginazione Adulta in Italia*), a benchmark to guide planning of homelessness services, officially approved in 2015.¹²

Why was this case study selected?

Fio.PSD is the leading homelessness organisation in Italy, responsible for advocacy, delivering training, and promoting Housing First practices throughout the territory. It played a key role in defining the national housing-led homelessness strategy, steering decisions of the drafting committee and pushing for Housing First to be used as a key policy principle. Thanks to their work, the national homelessness strategy was drafted through a bottom-up participative approach involving several stakeholders at multiple governance levels – from national Ministries to regional and local authorities – and has the dual goals of (a) making homelessness services as homogeneous as possible; (b) shifting the system away from emergency solutions and towards a housing-led approach.

However, the work of Fio.PSD did not end there. In addition to supporting the drafting committee, the organisation also supervised implementation of the projects under the 2016-2019 call for proposals (see below), training social workers and later conducting evaluation in collaboration with the University of Bologna.¹³ An additional follow-up report, covering the most recent period, was published in 2021.

12 Fio.PSD, *Il percorso delle Linee di Indirizzo*. <https://www.fiopsd.org/linee-guida-contro-grave-emarginazione/>

13 See: Prandini, R. & Ganugi, G. (2020). *Monitoraggio Avviso 4/2016: Il contrasto alla grave emarginazione adulta e alla condizione di senza dimora*. Rome: fio.PSD. Accessible at: https://www.fiopsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Report_Monitoraggio_Avviso_4.pdf

Following approval of the new strategy, in 2016 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies – Italy's MA for the ESF and FEAD – published a call for proposals with a budget of €50 million for the 2016-2019 period. The budget was divided between FEAD (50%) and ESF (50%) funding, with the latter including the National Operational Programme (NOP) for inclusion.

In 2021, the central government renewed the interest in homelessness policy in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza, PNRR), allocating €450 million to the provision of Housing First services and €2.8 billion to increasing the social housing stock.¹⁴ The NOP for inclusion was also renewed with an additional €93.6 million funded through REACT EU, bringing the total NOP investment to €1.3 billion for the 2021-2027 financial framework. As a result, Housing First initiatives are funded through the NOP, whose main aim is to reduce levels of vulnerability among people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The NOP aims to prevent an increase in poverty rates by investing heavily in Housing First practices. This is a significant and unprecedented investment in Housing First.

3.1.2. 2016-2019 Call for Proposals

The [2016 call for proposals](#), led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, aimed to fund projects tackling adult deprivation and homelessness through ESF and FEAD. Its specific goal was to back regions and local authorities in the strengthening of services using ESF funds and the supply of material assistance to homeless people using the FEAD, and implementing a strong Housing First approach centred upon social inclusion and tailored support.

Specific investment priorities were outlined in the call, along with eligible beneficiaries. These included for instance: regional authorities; cities with more than 1,000 homeless people and at least 250,000 inhabitants; towns with more than 400 homeless people (based on the follow-up study conducted by ISTAT in 2014). The call also stated a specific deadline for applications and described the amount of funds each beneficiary would be receiving, as well as the distribution process.

The call also explicitly stated the following criteria for evaluating applications:

- present a gap the project would aim to fill (for instance, the lack of a specific service),
- list the concrete results beneficiaries wish to achieve through the project, and
- describe how the project falls into the broader territorial homelessness strategy.

How were the funds used?

As stated above, projects hoping to receive funding under the ESF-FEAD scheme should have been aimed at (a) providing material assistance to homeless people (FEAD), or (b) strengthening existing services (ESF). The types of projects that could be financed were outlined in the call for proposals drafted by the Managing Authority.

14 Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza, accessible at: <https://italiadomani.gov.it/home.html>

Typology of services for homeless people (ESF-FEAD Funds) (N 77)

December 2021

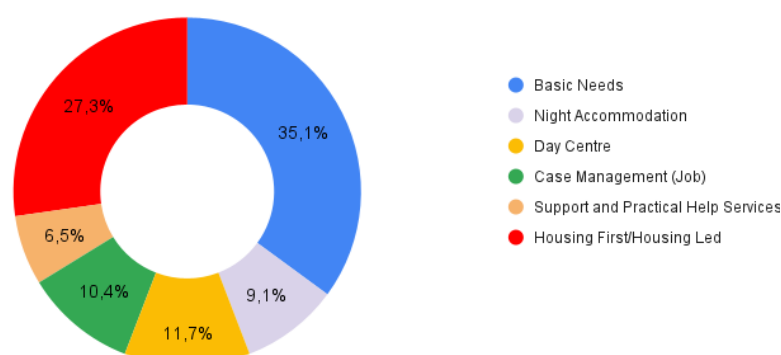


Figure X: Use of ESF and FEAD under the 2016-2021 call for proposals. Source: Cortese & Pascucci (2021). *I servizi come agenti del cambiamento nel contrasto alla Homelessness. I risultati del Monitoraggio qualitativo Avviso 4/2016 e Fondo Povertà.*

ESF

- Building interdisciplinary teams (including social workers, educators, cultural mediators, psychologists, etc.) to provide individualised, targeted support to homeless individuals.
- Pilot projects.
- Homelessness prevention.

FEAD

- Material assistance and food distribution (for instance clothing, personal hygiene products, emergency kits, housing equipment).
- Other material goods associated with broader social inclusion projects (for instance, “clothes and tools associated with training activities that aimed to introduce homeless people into the job market”¹⁵).
- Support measures leading homeless people towards independence and autonomy (for instance to access social services, complete bureaucratic procedures, and other types of multidimensional support).

Contact:

Fio.PSD – segreteria@fio.psd.org

ESF Managing Authority: Ministry of Labour and Social Policies – [online contact form](#)

Interested in knowing more?

[Fio.PSD website](#) (in Italian).

[2016 call for proposals drafted by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies](#) (in Italian).

15 Prandini, R. & Ganugi, G. (2020). *Monitoraggio Avviso 4/2016: Il contrasto alla grave emarginazione adulta e alla condizione di senza dimora*. Rome: fio.PSD. Page 6. Accessible at: https://www.fiopsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Report_Monitoraggio_Avviso_4.pdf