



***Guidelines for the design and management  
of housing transition pathways with a  
collaborative and inclusive approach***

***By Anci Toscana***



The project is funded by the Asylum,  
Migration and Integration Fund of  
the European Union



Generalitat de Catalunya  
Departament d'Igualtat  
i Feminismes



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# *Guidelines for the design and management of housing transition pathways with a collaborative and inclusive approach*

## Introduction

Anci Toscana is a partner in the project "[Includ-EU: Regional and local expertise, exchange and engagement for enhanced social cohesion in Europe](#)" (863744-AMIF- 2018-AG-INTE), led by the International Organisation for Migration (OIM). Includ-EU, financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (863744- A.M.I.F.- 2018-AG-INTE), started in January 2020 and will end, with extension, in September 2023. Within the framework of its actions, Anci Toscana, with the support of Sociolab, Simurg and Codici Ricerca e Intervento, conducted a pilot project on the regional territory aimed at the creation of a permanent territorial network to provide integrated answers with a long-term vision to the housing needs of vulnerable migrants. The pilot's objective was to define a model that promotes an effective, sustainable and respectful housing transition through research that relies on two key elements: adopting a participatory approach and promoting collaborative living solutions through public-private partnerships. The assumption is that independent living pathways can be strengthened by measures that focus on people's involvement and support their creation of varied social networks and capacity for collective action.

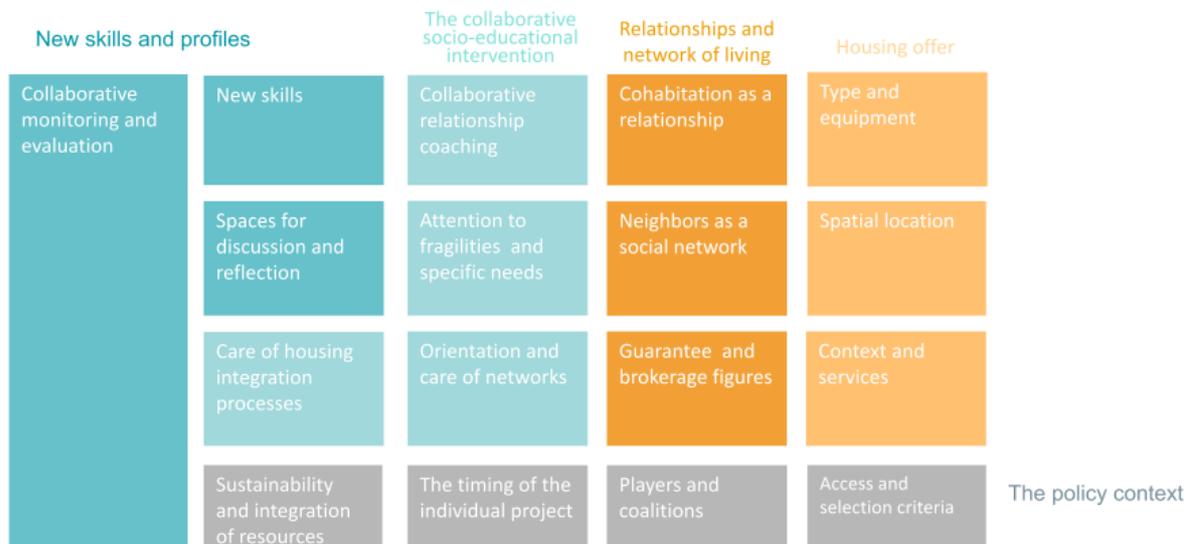
Starting from these premises, a concrete result of the pilot's actions was the construction of a **self-assessment tool** to guide the design process of new transitional housing projects dedicated also, but not exclusively, to persons of foreign origin and in monitoring and evaluating those in progress, in support of those working at different levels in policies or individual projects. Indeed, the direct target group is the design and implementation team of individual housing projects, but some of the variables considered also concern policymakers and institutions. Specifically, the tool is open, flexible and adaptable. It represents a guide on the aspects to be considered when preparing, initiating and implementing a housing transition project in a collaborative and inclusive key, directed (also) at third-country nationals.

The self-assessment tool focuses on five dimensions:

1. The proposed **housing offer**
2. The **development paths of relationship and networks** supporting housing transition
3. The approaches and modalities of the **collaborative socio-educational initiative** developed within the projects
4. The **profiles and skills are** to be included and supported within the experiments.
5. The **contextual elements** provided by **policies and funding programmes**

In the following, the different dimensions will be analysed individually. Then, for each of them, a set of questions useful for self-assessment of the project will be proposed, also from a collaborative and participative point of view.





## 1. Housing offer

The first self-assessment dimension concerns the housing offer and is characterised by the variables: type and equipment (buildings on the ground, *ex novo* or re-use and conversion of existing buildings; individual shared and non-shared housing; collective solutions with shared services, similar to hostels or dormitories), spatial location, context and surrounding services.

### TYPOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

While on the one hand, the presence of individual and personal spaces where one can find one's intimacy is fundamental, on the other hand, no less important are the spaces for sharing and aggregation of the people included within the different housing projects, which can help to live more serenely the spaces of the house and mitigate the potential tension between cohabitants.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Has the need for intimacy of the persons benefiting from the housing solution been considered in organising the space? Has the possibility of customising some aspects of one's living space been considered? Are communal spaces (garden, balcony, living room or kitchen) adequate for the number of residents? Is the space organisation reconsidered with the beneficiaries of the flat? Are premises available to implement collaborative collective facilities (e.g. a standard laundry service)? Is it possible to activate a path of community co-design around these?*

#### <-> New projects

*Have its collective equipment been discussed with possible future inhabitants? Is the layout designed to be changeable over time? What possible changes that can occur in the compositions of the inhabitants are to be considered? Have collective meeting facilities been provided for the different communities present?*

### SPATIAL LOCATION

Spatial location is an element that should not be left behind in transitional housing projects compared to other criteria of housing opportunity and/or affordability.

Indeed, it represents a central factor for people's quality of life and the opportunities for autonomy they can build. However, it must be carefully evaluated concerning the risk of social isolation linked to housing solutions without territorial communities of reference. One of the elements considered central to the success of housing transition processes is the presence of settlements where it is possible to build exchange courses with neighbouring communities.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Was the territorial context taken into account in the choice of location? What could contextual elements be interesting for strengthening the autonomy processes of the people who live or will live in the project? On the other hand, does the chosen spatial location present risks of social isolation? What alternative solutions can be adopted?*

### CONTEXT AND SERVICES

The proximity of housing concerning urban services is a central parameter of habitability, especially for people on a housing transition course looking towards autonomy, who often come from recent immigration backgrounds and are unlikely to have the availability of individual fast means of transport. In this sense, it seems relevant to locate housing for inclusion and transition in the vicinity of services necessary for independent living, such as commercial services (e.g. supermarkets), places of sociality and personal well-being (e.g. sports facilities, places of worship), soft mobility infrastructures (e.g. bicycle lanes) and public transport hubs.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Which services are close to the housing initiative? What services can be central to the people accommodated? How can the accessibility of these services be facilitated? For example, how can independent travel be promoted? Are there services considered necessary and not present on which collaborative projects between the housed persons can be activated?*

## 2. Relationships and living networks

The second dimension of the self-assessment tool concerns the development of positive and meaningful relationships, inside and outside the housing project, that favour the variables that characterise the person's social inclusion: cohabitation as a relationship, neighbours as a social network, guarantee and brokerage figures.

### COHABITATION AS A RELATIONSHIP

Cohabitation appears to be a common practice for those with few resources to invest in housing, thus also coming out of reception projects. The quality of cohabitation depends on rules (however important) and personal issues of affinity and dialogue. Positive elements of this modality are the sharing of expenses and the lowering of costs. But, still, it is also a housing solution that helps to combat feelings of loneliness, to have peer support and to expand one's social network.

Within this framework, the process of selecting housemates and the opportunity to pick and choose oneself becomes important. For example, new housemates can be selected and taken over collaboratively by the house's inhabitants, who select friends and acquaintances by relying on their network of informal contacts. In these cases, it is necessary to maintain forms of negotiation on the new profiles to be included to avoid forming overly homogeneous groups that do not always favour

integration processes. Where participatory choice processes are not possible, it seems essential to set up a path of knowledge and sharing, which cannot be taken for granted.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*How are the internal relations of the project judged by the inhabitants? Has a participatory process been defined to include new people in cohabitation? How much are the beneficiaries of the initiative involved in the choice? Which elements have worked in past experiences, and which ones have not? What alternative possibilities to cohabitation can the project bring into play in case of stress or incompatibility for the persons included?*

#### <-> Projects not involving cohabitation

*Is cohabitation a possible element of participation and/or housing affordability for the person benefiting from the initiative? What devices are in place to avoid processes of social isolation of people? Are there other upcoming relationships that you can invest in as a project?*

### NEIGHBOURS AS A SOCIAL NETWORK

Projects, primarily when located in varied contexts, have the opportunity to develop a social network of proximity, starting with neighbours. Nurturing this relationship is a crucial element in the quality of life of the people benefiting from the project. Conversely, a relationship often taken for granted or taken for granted represents a possible field of intervention and collaborative experimentation, including via formal moments of confrontation and facilitation.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*How do people in the housing context judge neighbourly relations? What investment has the project made around neighbourhood relations? Were presentation moments with people close to the initiative planned? Have sharing activities been promoted among neighbours? Have key figures been identified among them with whom to foster the relationship between the people hosted?*

### GUARANTEE AND BROKERAGE FIGURES

Due to reliability bias, independent housing projects are often dedicated to profiles generally not considered 'desirable' for the housing market. One element that can help is the presence of figures with the role of brokerage and/or guarantee towards possible housing solutions outside the projects. These include, first and foremost, employers.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Do the project's beneficiaries have meaningful relationships they can rely on outside the project? For example, has any thought been given to possible brokerage with the project's beneficiaries? Does the process also provide moments of sharing personal life plans with people outside the project? Have forms of coaching and mentoring with people from outside the project been tried to facilitate the housing transition?*

### 3. Collaborative socio-educational initiative

In addition to being defined by specific targets, typically excluded from other forms of access to housing, housing inclusion and transition projects are characterised by the presence of more or less established forms of the socio-educational initiative. This dimension is essential for starting reflections to improve current projects and develop new professional skills. The question underlying this section of the self-assessment tool concerns whether and to what extent a specific educational

approach aimed at housing is developed in the initiatives. The variables that comprise this third dimension of the tool are the collaborative accompaniment of relationships, attention to fragilities and specific needs, orientation and care of networks, and care of housing processes.

### COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP COACHING

Experiences of cohabitation or collaboration require continuous accompaniment, which does not end with customised educational paths. Accompaniment to living is a complex form of support for individuals and groups within social habilitation projects that has a twofold fundamental objective: on the one hand, to provide people with a positive living experience centred on mutual respect and shared rules; on the other hand, to foster individual and community autonomy towards housing transition.

Various approaches and operational solutions can be implemented based on these two primary objectives. The accompaniment process can be based on a 'covenant of coexistence', i.e. the definition of shared rules. If, on the one hand, the need to establish rules is emphasised, especially in cohabitation experiences, on the other hand, precisely with a view to the development of relational skills, it appears crucial to guarantee moments of discussion and collaborative redefinition of the rules established *ex-ante* by the project. Accompaniment to living is also a social mediation device within the different living experiences. At the same time, the organisation of cultural and social events must also be encouraged.

Collaborative living accompaniment is thus outlined as a process that provides practical support for daily tasks. It enables the management and facilitation of confrontation between cohabitants, organising moments of discussion to find shared solutions and promote initiatives for sharing and mutual support. Thus, collaboration must be an instrument of relational autonomy and not only of 'animation', i.e. it must set specific objectives concerning the person's enabling relationships, skills and opportunities.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Does the project foresee dedicated figures for collaborative housing support? Are there moments of the standard definition of the rules of coexistence? Are there disputes or conflicts generated within the living experience subject to facilitated mediation paths? Are regular discussions organised among the beneficiaries of the housing project? Are there facilitated moments of co-design of recreational, playful and cultural activities?*

### ATTENTION TO FRAGILITY AND SPECIFIC NEEDS

In the context of housing projects, alongside the generalist orientation, it is necessary to consider the recurring specificities shown, for example, by profiles with a migration background. For example, any traumas induced by the migration process, which may have been very long and violent, must not be overlooked when designing solutions. In addition, the persons hosted often have recent migration histories, which require constant work to rebuild a social fabric and consider certain cultural elements that may compromise the processes of housing integration. Finally, migration background can intersect with other social and economic fragilities, which it is crucial to take into account. In addition to constant accompaniment, it is essential to design complex initiatives that respond to different dimensions of need: housing, employment, and social and relational needs.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Are integrated tools used to read the needs of the people in the projects? How are needs and objectives shared between operators and beneficiaries of initiatives? Are there collaborative tools*



that solicit the views of the people benefiting from the initiative (e.g. Collaborative Individualised Educational Plans)?

### ORIENTATION AND CARE OF NETWORKS

This variable emphasises the central role of the territorial network and services around the housing project. The housing accompaniment process may include orientation functions to services and networks that allow people to be directed to services in the area - e.g. migrant desk, housing, specialist service - or to be taken into care. The aim is to encourage better coordination of the resources put in place by the territory. At the same time, the orientation function alone is not enough. The territorial network can only function well if it includes both the nodes of public services and those of the third sector and the world of associations and voluntary work. *Conditio sine qua non* of its functioning seems to be the presence of a person dedicated to its care and internal communications who takes charge of building co-planning spaces for the paths to the autonomy of the persons included in the housing projects for transition. This role is not necessarily internal to individual projects. It can also be played by those public players in charge of local service planning or by the joint action of players in the area.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Has the project identified areas and/or network communication devices? Are there paths and/or tools for co-designing individual educational initiatives with other relevant players in the territory? Are there internal resources dedicated to networking and engaging other players in housing transitions? Are networking activities with the local community around the initiatives planned?*

### CARE OF HOUSING INTEGRATION PROCESSES

When entering the project, it is rare for the person to be self-sufficient in terms of economic and domestic management (e.g. paying a utility bill, cleaning the house, preparing a meal). This is particularly the case for those projects whose relevant target group is people leaving the reception system. Moreover, people's 'living skills and culture' levels can generally be very diverse. Therefore, it is essential to take care of housing insertion processes to avoid creating moments of tension and conflict that can compromise the path towards autonomy.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Is there a specific support phase during the initial stages of project inclusion? Have support tools been developed for this phase (from information material to specific training sessions)? What skills do you need to verify from the outset to be part of the project? What instruments are foreseen to recover them? How is the entry of new participants into the group taken care of? Are specific knowledge and welcome activities planned?*

## 4. New profiles and skills

Another dimension concerns the profiles and competencies needed to implement collaborative living initiatives for the housing transition of people with a migration background. The variables to be considered in this dimension are new skills, spaces for discussion and reflection and collaborative monitoring and evaluation.

### NEW SKILLS

A housing transition project in a collaborative and inclusive key requires diversified competencies within the working team, on the one hand, to guarantee the socio-educational accompaniment



already mentioned, and on the other hand, to develop collaborative co-design tools and participative processes around housing issues.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Is the construction of an in-house multidisciplinary team planned? Are there people with experience in participatory processes and co-design tools? Which skills not present in the project today can be helpful in the autonomy paths of the persons benefiting from the housing initiative? Are figures with specific expertise in housing planned? Is there a provision for training and updating the skills of project workers?*

#### **SPACES FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

Social work around fragile housing is strongly urged by the daily emergencies related to problems of living together in different housing experiences and requests for individual support. This is why teams need moments of internal support and sharing, if possible, also facilitated and supported by external expertise through supervision and accompaniment.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Were there specific supervision sessions on housing transition issues? Have tools for sharing learning been developed in the housing support initiative? Is it possible to develop moments of confrontation with external professional figures who can help highlight solutions and strategies for project improvement?*

#### **COLLABORATIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

A final variable concerns monitoring and evaluation activities to be developed to report on activities and, above all, for the definition of learning and lines of development. In addition, it would be desirable for the evaluation practice to be developed in a participatory manner with the persons included in the various housing projects and to define outward communication tools that enhance the positive impacts of the projects.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Are internal monitoring and evaluation tools foreseen for individual projects? What tools are used to evaluate the outcomes of the project beneficiaries' pathways? Are the expected results, both in terms of output and outcome, clear to the people involved in the project? Is there clarity in the desired impacts to be achieved? Have tools been developed to question people in the housing project to improve the initiative's effectiveness? Are evaluation activities also used to communicate project outcomes and impact to the outside world?*

### **5. The policy context**

The last dimension concerns the mix of programmes and funding from different policy axes underpinning transitional housing projects for people with a migration background. The variables here are access and selection criteria, players and coalitions, the timing of the individual project, sustainability and integration of resources.

#### **ACCESS AND SELECTION CRITERIA**

To overcome the limitations posed by some projects (e.g. F.A.M.I. projects) regarding the identification of specific targets, with many rigidities in access requirements, it would be essential to use a mix of resources in the design of initiatives that favour the housing mix concerning the people

to be involved in transitional housing projects. The presence of mixed groups capable of bringing resources and competencies within them makes it possible to avoid concentration processes and instead favour spaces where integration processes start from the living context.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Were social mix strategies identified within the project? Has the possibility of using a mix of resources to free the project from a single housing target been considered? Which social mix experiences have worked in the past? Which profiles could facilitate and support the housing transition process of people with a migration background?*

#### ACTORS AND COALITIONS

The projects for housing transition see the centrality of the public-private relationship and of co-design, a process regulated by the Procurement Code, as well as of the role of the Health Society and of the social housing agencies, where present: the former because of its pivotal role concerning the network of services to be activated to facilitate people's autonomy, the latter because they can foster operational support to housing search paths and play a role of guarantee and intermediation beyond temporary solutions.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Have co-planning tables been set up between public bodies and third-sector players in the area? Has a relationship with the social and health services in the area been defined? For example, has a collaborative practice been developed with the Health Society, if present? Has the existence of social housing agencies been considered? Is there a possibility of developing joint projects to support their establishment?*

#### INDIVIDUAL PROJECT TIMING

Those who leave the reception system follow paths to autonomy that are not always linear as they may be conditioned by many factors, not least the lack of housing experience and the difficulty of finding a place on the market so that the time horizon for autonomy varies from 6 to 18 months. Therefore, it is essential to define the possibility of a transition to further accompanying paths within or outside the project. However, one must emphasise the importance of making it clear both at the project level and in the relationship with the beneficiaries of the initiatives, the deadline - which must be there to prevent the housing transition from becoming a life-long condition - and the stages of increasing autonomy.

#### Set of self-assessment questions

*Has the project developed specific strategies to stay within the defined time constraints? For example, have alliances been built to ensure continuity of housing for people, even at the end of the project where autonomy is not achieved?*

#### SUSTAINABILITY AND INTEGRATION OF RESOURCES

It would be desirable to plan at the level of the LODE (Optimal Level of Operation in Regional Public Housing) the continuity of initiative measures, creating a response system that avoids fragmentation and allows the aggregation and systematisation of the different support measures and their resources. Sustainability over time for projects can be provided by building an ongoing mix of resources determined by tapping different sources of funding and programming. This activity requires a high investment in design and a high degree of flexibility over time. In some cases, part of the sustainability may come from the economic co-participation of the people involved and the



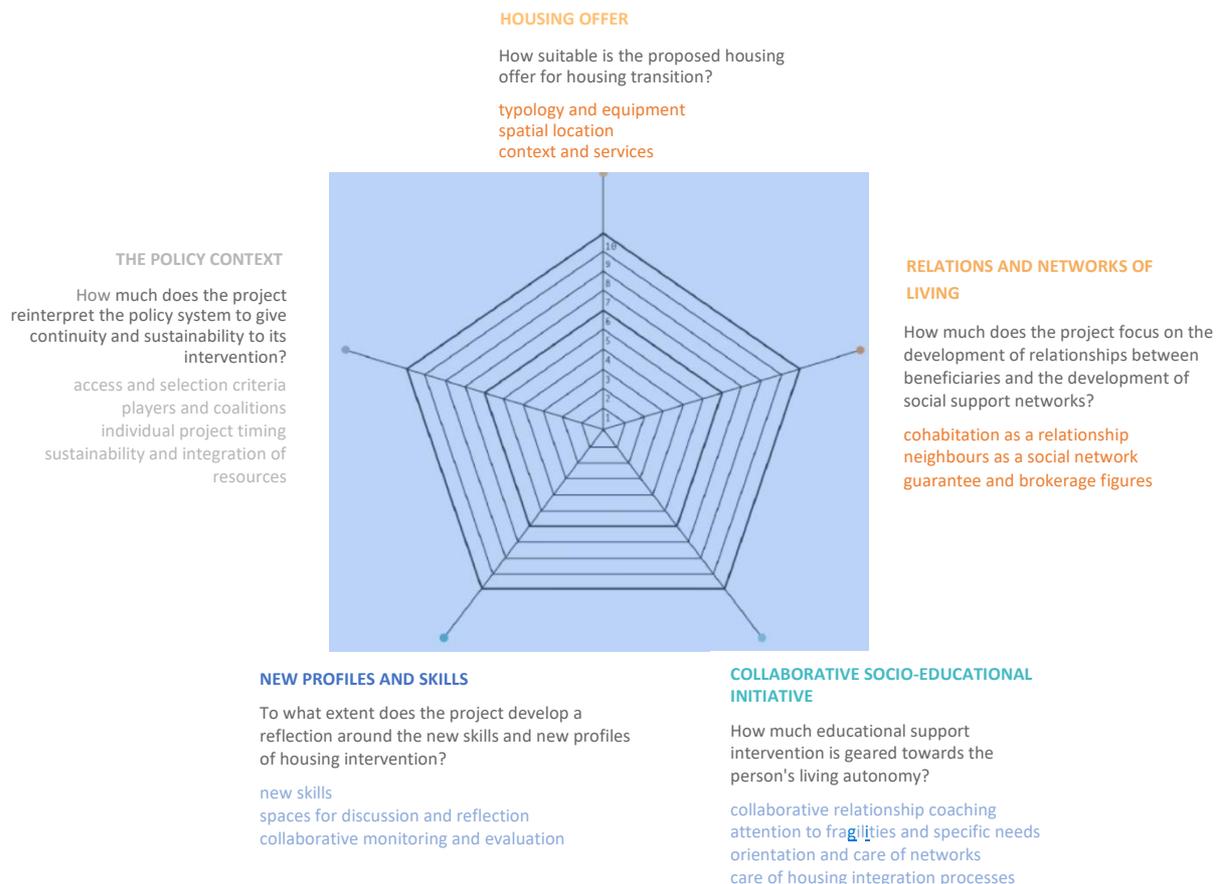
inclusion of solvent targets (e.g. students and young workers) in the housing inclusion pathways of more vulnerable profiles.

Set of self-assessment questions

*Has the project been defined flexibly so that other funding can be tapped? Are resources foreseen for planning on new funding axes? Has reasoning been started around the mix of resources on which the project structure is based? For example, can a housing quota be provided for solvent targets?*

**The self-assessment chart**

From the five dimensions analysed and their variables, it was possible to draw a self-assessment chart to identify improvement areas and initiate internal comparisons for development over time. The graph presents a general question for each area that can be answered by referring to the reflections elicited by the different variables it contains. The self-assessment exercise must be seen as a reflective and subjective process valid to trigger processes of strengthening individual projects. It is precise because of its flexibility that the tool can be used in discussions between operators of transitional housing projects, either in its entirety or by isolating specific dimensions considered priorities by the project.



**Insight box - a pilot project within INCLUD-EU**

Within the framework of Includ-EU, Anci Toscana conducted a pilot project in the region to implement a model for designing and managing housing projects (also) for third-country nationals, which focuses on a collaborative and inclusive approach. The two main activities are summarised

below: a regional-scale **mapping** of good practices of housing projects also intended for third-country nationals and an **analysis of three experimental contexts** selected because they are paradigmatic of some widespread approaches in the field of social housing for people with a migrant background. The methodologies used range from desk research to semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Although the focus of the research was on temporary housing solutions put in place by projects intended for citizens enjoying international protection who had left the reception system in the Region of Tuscany, intending to foster their autonomy on the housing market in the long term, also included those projects in which a possible coherence between the specific research target and a generalist vocation capable of encompassing it was evident. The experimental contexts selected, as well as the tool presented, dialogue with all those housing projects involving vulnerable groups with difficulties in finding a response in the private housing market, thus trying to highlight a universalist approach for social policies attentive to the individual needs of people and the fragilities of specific groups.

### Collaborative, appreciative mapping

The first research activity gave rise to an appreciative and collaborative mapping desk of the territorial responses to the housing needs, including temporary ones, of citizens of foreign origin, in particular asylum seekers and refugees coming out of reception facilities, focusing on two aspects, coinciding respectively with housing "demand" and "supply": on the one hand, the actions implemented by SPRAR/SIPROIMI managers in accompanying guests coming out of reception programmes to independent living (demand); on the other hand, the hospitality and collaborative living projects implemented on the regional territory in the context of public housing, social housing or other territorial housing practices (supply). Through this mapping, 18 initiatives were identified, which were then analysed and deepened in the next phase of work.

### Deepening good practice and selecting experimental contexts

Starting from the mapping carried out, an evaluation grid was constructed for housing initiatives intended (also) for persons from third countries, which was subsequently taken up and improved throughout the project until a set of criteria for comparing the different experiences was defined. This activity made identifying the specific features of initiatives targeting third-country nationals possible, highlighting characteristic elements to further explore in subsequent modelling phases. These elements are the project in general (promoter, status of implementation, players involved, source of funding, consistency of supply), the specific target group and the accompanying model (duration of the housing project for beneficiaries, access criteria, collective services and non-housing functions, presence of support and inclusion pathways, support for collaborative pathways within the project).

The analysis revealed the presence of at least three leading families of initiatives: projects that field a specific social housing offer through ex novo initiatives or the renovation of entire buildings; projects that field a diffuse offer through single dwellings, often shared; projects that support the finding in the private, social and/or public offer without fielding the direct management of dwellings.

Starting from this mapping, seven initiatives classifiable as 'good practices' were selected according to an internal criterion of exhaustiveness concerning the presence and consistency of the various dimensions analysed in the evaluation grid - with particular attention to the collaborative and participative component - and according to a transversal criterion of heterogeneity from the territorial, governance, organisational and economic/financial points of view. The experiences identified were subjected to an in-depth qualitative analysis through interviews with representatives

of the managing bodies of the individual projects.

The seven initiatives selected for qualitative analysis are:

1. PARACADUTI Project - Accompanying Processes to Responsibility and Autonomy. The completed project, in place of which the project that represents its natural evolution, was analysed: Cohousing Valdinievole Health Society
2. Mugello House Agency
3. E.V.V.A.I - Empolese Valdarno Valdelsa Open Inclusive
4. INSIDE AUT: individual socio-economic integration plans for the autonomy of international protection holders
5. Casa Simonetta
6. WE ITA: Generative WElfare for Actively Integrating Everyone
7. Tecnoseal Solidarity and Growth Cooperative Housing Project

From the results of the interviews conducted, the team again selected three experimental contexts with which to investigate the success factors and investigate the possible collaborative and participative approaches tested by the projects.

The three experimental contexts selected are:

1. Empolese Valdelsa Valdarno (provinces of Florence and Pisa) with the project E.V.V.A.I - Empolese Valdarno Valdelsa Aperti Inclusivi led by Consorzio CO&SO Empoli with a broad partnership also involving the Società della Salute;
2. Valdinievole (province of Pistoia) with the Cohousing Valdinievole and Diamoci Le Ali projects promoted by the SdS Valdinievole;
3. Grosseto with the cohousing projects promoted by the Cooperativa Solidarietà e Crescita and WE ITA: Generative WElfare for Integrating Everyone Actively promoted by the SdS.

#### Network analysis, pilot testing with selected projects and validation

Starting from the three selected projects, the research team began a participatory modelling process that developed around two specific axes: the analysis of the networks in which the projects are embedded through mapping and listening to the players - coordinators, operators, beneficiaries - involved in a participatory process that compared their different points of view with on-site activities and focus-groups. These in-depth activities revealed critical elements and possible axes of project development, highlighting the need to direct the work output towards the pragmatic and operational self-assessment matrix (presented in detail in the previous pages) in favour of collaborative approaches to housing the inclusion of third-country nationals. The self-assessment tool, which gradually emerged during the process, was finally tested in a follow-up meeting with the contact persons of the three experimental contexts to verify its effectiveness.