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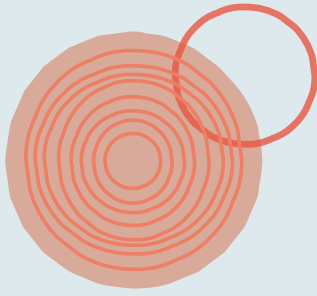
**SPAD**  
Sportello  
Antidiscriminazioni

Comune di Bologna  
CENTRO INTERCULTURALE ZONARELLI

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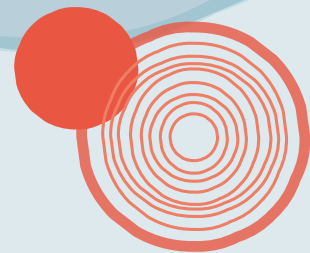
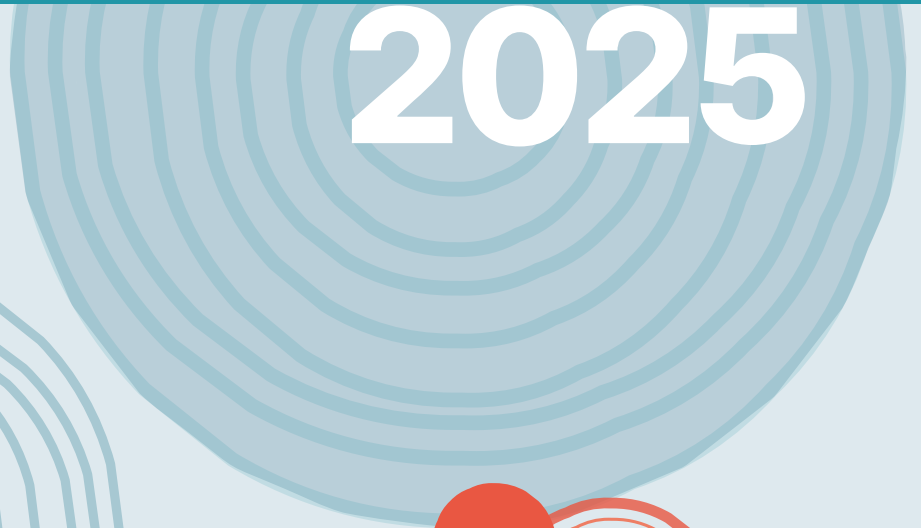


# SPAD



FOURTH REPORT OF  
THE OBSERVATORY OF  
THE **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION  
HELP CENTER** OF  
THE MUNICIPALITY OF BOLOGNA

# 2025



In collaboration with



**Africa**  
& Mediterraneo

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mente

With the support of



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DI BOLOGNA**



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2025



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# PREFACE

In this Report, we present the data from the fourth year of activities of the Anti-discrimination Help Center of the Municipality of Bologna (SPAD).

Active since December 2021, SPAD was created to take charge of cases of discrimination based on racial, ethnic, religious grounds, on origin or nationality, whether “direct” or “indirect”, with a specific focus on multiple and intersectional discrimination. Its distinctive feature lies in its network of 35 associations active in the area, which co-manage its activities together with the Municipality, and in its coordination with other anti-discrimination help centers and networks – such as those dedicated to discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

Among SPAD’s functions – alongside the collection and management of reports of discrimination suffered or witnessed, and the support, guidance, and advice offered to victims to activate appropriate protections, as well as information and awareness-raising actions – there is also the important role of the Observatory on discrimination.

The annual collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data enable the Administration to identify more precisely the origin and persistence of discriminatory phenomena and to take action to promote measures and countermeasures to prevent and combat them.

The increase in the number, pertinence, and territorial diversification of reports – documented in this Fourth Report – is, in our view, a sign of the reliability and recognition that SPAD has earned over time, becoming increasingly rooted in the local community.

This broader “dissemination” has also been supported by training and self-training activities involving not only SPAD staff but also intercultural mediators working across the territory. Equally crucial is the contribution of the SPAD Network associations and the operators on the ground who act as “antennas,” detecting and supporting the emergence of discriminatory situations.

Furthermore, in 2025, SPAD strengthened its role as a cross-cutting support structure within the Municipal Administration and in its relations with other institutions and entities, acting as a facilitator of service accessibility and promoting a widespread anti-discriminatory culture.

By breaking down linguistic barriers that often hinder the exercise of rights, SPAD supported, for example, the multilingual translation of the information brochure “The city can help you to break free from violence. A map to stop violence”, which includes a description and map of services addressing gender-based violence and discrimination, and the design and production of a multilingual information sheet on the regulatory changes introduced by Law 74/2025 on citizenship, focusing on the rights of minor children of those involved.

Then, there is also the important training partnership with the Local Police, which led to the creation of a specialised training programme on ethnic-racial hate crimes. Activities were also carried out outside the Administration, including workshops in upper-secondary schools promoting anti-discrimination and respectful communication.

The potential for development of the “SPAD model” and of the work conducted so far includes strengthening collaboration with the Metropolitan City of Bologna, which – in partnership with the Emilia-Romagna Region – submitted an expression of interest to participate in the UNAR project “Support to Territorial Anti-Discrimination Networks – Capacity Building and Scientific

Coordination”, funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2021–2027 (AMIF). The objective is to reinforce anti-discrimination activities through synergistic actions across multiple levels of governance.

Specifically, the strategy of the Metropolitan City is to consolidate the function of the Anti-discrimination Help Center – SPAD as a central node and to expand the network of territorial “antennas” following a hub-and-spoke model, to create an effective system for detecting and managing discrimination cases.

None of this would be possible without the human capital animating this project.

We extend our gratitude to the entire network of Associations and to all the operators, professionals and practitioners who contribute to SPAD in various capacities.

It is therefore with a renewed sense of commitment – towards deeper community roots and future expansion – that we present the Fourth Report and look ahead to the work of the coming years.



Emily Marion Clancy  
Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Bologna



# INTRODUCTION

The Fourth Report of the Anti-discrimination Help Center of the Municipality of Bologna (SPAD) combines a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the discrimination reports recorded between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. The Report is curated by COSPE and the New Citizenships, Cooperation and Human Rights Office of the Municipality of Bologna. It also includes reflections shared by the associations that are part of the SPAD Network and work on anti-discrimination issues in Bologna.

The Report is divided into four chapters:

- the **first chapter** provides a detailed overview of SPAD's functioning, its outreach, the activities carried out within its different Functions, the handling of cases of discrimination based on "racial" or "ethnic origin", or religion, as well as the procedures for redirecting users to other services when cases concern different discrimination grounds or specific needs outside SPAD's mandate.
- the **second chapter** outlines the legal framework governing discrimination. It presents the main European, national, and local provisions that constitute the current anti-discrimination framework. It also describes the institutional context of anti-discrimination measures in Bologna and the policies adopted by the Emilia-Romagna Region, the Metropolitan City of Bologna, and the Municipal Administration to promote rights and prevent and counter discrimination.
- the **third chapter** contains the analysis of the data and information collected by SPAD during the reference period. Through graphs, tables, infographics, and statistical analyses, the Report describes the situation of discrimination based on "racial" or "ethnic" origin and/or religion in Bologna in 2025. The chapter also includes the results of the joint data-collection and monitoring initiatives carried out by SPAD alongside the STAR and Spazio Cassero Anti-discrimination Centers.
- the **final chapter** presents recommendations, reflections, and observations that emerged during the work process. These recommendations not only highlight future challenges for SPAD, but also aim to inspire and promote changes in public programmes and policies.

The information contained in this Report does not capture all discriminatory situations that occurred in Bologna in 2025, because - as of today - the coverage of the data collection is partial, considering that not all the organisations and desks working to combat discrimination in the Bologna area are part of SPAD. The overall information should therefore be interpreted as indicative, also considering the high number of cases that remain unreported or not recorded as "discrimination".

# METHODOLOGY AND GLOSSARY

As fundamental components of SPAD's anti-discrimination work, the collection, processing, and dissemination of data by the Observatory are essential not only to support the emergence of discriminatory phenomena – often under-reported and underestimated – but also to identify appropriate prevention and response strategies. However, it is important to acknowledge that activities related to data collection and dissemination may have adverse effects on the very people the service aims to support and protect. To reduce this risk, SPAD has always adhered to and implemented the humanitarian principle of “do no harm”, identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as a guiding principle for a human-rights-based approach to data. In this context, “do no harm” means ensuring that data-collection, processing, and dissemination activities do not create opportunities for further discriminatory actions and, even more importantly, that they are used to benefit the communities involved in the analysis.

This methodological note recognises the value of this approach and its guiding principles: participation, privacy, self-identification, data disaggregation, transparency, and accountability<sup>2</sup>. Below is an explanation of how SPAD's development, implementation, and refinement of data-collection and processing methods reflect these principles:

**Participation:** created as a participatory project, SPAD ensures the involvement of the SPAD Network – and the communities affected by the analysis – in multiple phases: during data collection, through operators and case managers who conduct the interviews, and during the processing and dissemination of data, through their participation in the evaluation of reports and in the drafting of the Annual Report.

## NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

In the text that follows, terms such as “race”, “ethnicity”, and “victims” are used. The contestability of these terms is acknowledged; however, they have been retained because alternative terms would lack the semantic clarity required to address these issues with the same precision. These terms continue to exist not only in everyday language, but also in national and European legal-normative vocabulary. Although unacceptable as scientifically grounded categories describing differences between human beings, the concepts of “race” and “racism” remain useful for describing the social and psychological existence of the realities attributed to “race”. Likewise, individuals who experience discrimination may not always recognise or identify themselves in the role of “victim”. Nevertheless, these terms are used here because they are essential for identifying – and therefore discussing – discrimination in the operational context of the SPAD Network. Without them, it would not be possible to name the phenomenon. To highlight that these terms – and the theories underlying them – do not represent SPAD's perspective, they are presented in quotation marks throughout the Report.

**Privacy:** the collection of personal data – such as that collected in connection with reports registered by SPAD, – is protected by Italian and European legislation. SPAD's primary data-protection practices were defined in collaboration with the General Secretariat of the Municipality of Bologna. Anyone accessing SPAD is informed of its privacy notice, which outlines regulations, procedures, and rights regarding the management of personal data. This notice must be read and acknowledged by the person concerned. Finally, the analysis phase requires a process of anonymisation and pseudonymisation before data are shared with the Observatory. Data-processing procedures and specific safeguards for protecting the fundamental rights and interests of all persons involved are established in Bologna City Council Resolution PG no. 827306/2024<sup>3</sup>.

**Self-identification:** to ensure that anyone who turns to SPAD remains fully in control of the process of defining their own identity<sup>4</sup>, each field in the data-collection form allows for an open-ended response and always includes a non-response option. Data collection is therefore limited to essential – but never mandatory – information required for service provision. This explains the significant number of non-responses in some variables presented in the data analysis of Chapter 3.

**Disaggregation:** the ability to disaggregate data across multiple axes of oppression and inequality makes it possible to identify the groups most

affected by discrimination and understand how such discrimination is enacted. Balancing the principles of privacy and self-identification, SPAD ensures the possibility of data disaggregation by collecting – through the report form – the information needed for this purpose (gender identity, origin, citizenship, age, residence, etc.). This process also highlights the intersectional nature of the discriminatory cases recorded.

**Transparency:** in order to provide clear and accessible information on the processing and management of data and on the methodology by which they are analysed, this Report is also intended to give an account, in a clear and transparent manner, of the practices and operating methods of SPAD and its Observatory.

**Accountability:** SPAD is responsible for the impact that data-collection, processing, and dissemination may have on the individuals who contact the Help Center. This includes both the impact of the data-collection process – for example, ensuring that interviews do not retraumatise those involved – and the impact of publishing this Report<sup>5</sup>.

In terms of data processing and analysis, this Report combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data is extracted from the Observatory's database, in which information on the reports received is recorded and archived according to the procedures described above. The process begins with the entry of cases through the completion of a data-entry form. Initially entered based on the information gathered through the report form, cases are later re-evaluated and reclassified on the basis of additional insights acquired during case management. The qualitative analysis derives from reflections emerging during bilateral and/or collective meetings between case managers and the representatives of Function 5. Starting this year, these meetings have also involved SPAD operators. The quantitative analysis, on the other hand, is conducted on the reports registered by SPAD between 1 January and 31 December 2025.

As a first step, the reports received were classified based on their pertinence. All cases that – after a joint evaluation by COSPE and the Municipality of Bologna, co-coordinators of the Observatory Function, and with the essential involvement of case managers – were identified as actual cases of discrimination were considered pertinent, including cases of perceived discrimination. Conversely, all cases involving requests for other kinds of support, those without elements attributable to discrimination, or those outside SPAD's territorial jurisdiction were considered non-pertinent. Finally, cases with incomplete information for evaluation purposes were classified as doubtful. For the purposes of the analysis, discrimination is defined as follows:

**Discrimination:** “any conduct which, directly or indirectly, results in a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on ‘race’, colour, descent or national or ‘ethnic’ origin, religious beliefs or practices, and which has the purpose or effect of destroying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social and cultural fields and in any other field of public life”<sup>6</sup>.

The pertinent discrimination cases were then classified according to the modes of discrimination identified. For this purpose, the following categories were defined:

**Direct discrimination:** different and less favourable treatment than that given to other persons in a similar situation, without objective and reasonable justification, but on the basis of protected characteristics such as “racial” or “ethnic origin”, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, etc.

**Indirect discrimination:** apparently neutral provisions, criteria, acts, rules of conduct, customs or practices which, in their effects, create discrimination, placing a person or group of persons sharing the same protected characteristic at a disadvantage compared to the majority of other persons.

**Perceived discrimination:** an act or behaviour subjectively perceived as discrimination by the person subjected to it, which does not have at its basis elements that are unequivocally ascribable to discrimination or which does not correspond to what is recognised as discrimination at a normative and/or judicial level. The complexity of discrimination legislation, the difficulty of categorising facts as discrimination and the difficulty of detecting discrimination do not in fact guarantee that all cases of discrimination can find legislative coverage and judicial protection. To SPAD, cases of perceived discrimination remain pertinent cases of discrimination, taken in charge (or referred to others if not within SPAD's competence field) and considered on par with legally recognised cases

of discrimination. The perception of discrimination by the offended person (or by witnesses) is a sufficient element to initiate the provision of assistance and support to the offended person. SPAD adopts a broad and multidimensional definition of discrimination, understood not only in the legal sense, but as a complex experience involving social, psychological and cultural dimensions. This choice stems from the awareness that experiences of discrimination often manifest themselves in subtle and nuanced ways, not always attributable to explicit violations of legal norms.

**Harassment:** unwanted conduct with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of the person towards whom it is directed, creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

**Hate speech:** any expression, communication or speech that has the purpose or effect of advocating, promoting or inciting, in any form, “the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons, as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatisation or threat in respect of such a person or group of persons”<sup>7</sup> on the basis of one or more aspects of their identity.

**Hate crime:** a common crime committed against a person, group and/or property associated with them with the aggravating factor of discriminatory motive and motivated by prejudice (*bias motivation*) towards the group identity of the affected people. Hence, a hate crime is any crime under the criminal code where the “victim is targeted because of [their] group identity”<sup>8</sup>.

On the basis of the evidence relating to the discriminating agent, the following categories were also identified:

**Institutional discrimination:** discrimination put in place by institutional actors in the exercise of their functions, or institutional norms, practices or regulations that are objectively discriminatory or apparently devoid of any discriminatory character, but which in their application produce different, i.e. less favourable, treatment than that received by other people, creating barriers that limit the possibilities and opportunities for a group of people sharing the same characteristic.

**Systemic discrimination:** “prevailing cultural norms, policies, practices or attitudes both in the public and private sectors that create relative disadvantages for some groups and privileges for other groups. Social manifestation of structural inequalities, based on deep-seated social hierarchies that are reflected in all social institutions. An ‘invisible’ hierarchy that creates structural privileges and disadvantages”<sup>9</sup>.

With the awareness that fully analysing discrimination requires an approach capable of recognising its complexity – its multiple and often intersectional dimensions that together create situations of unequal treatment – the recorded cases were also classified based on the multiplicity or intersectionality of the discrimination grounds:

**Multiple discrimination (ordinary or additive):** a form of discrimination that occurs on the basis of several discrimination grounds. The term **ordinary multiple discrimination** refers to multiple discrimination episodes that occur at different times and are based on different grounds each time. On the other hand, the term **additive multiple discrimination** refers to discrimination that occurs on the basis of more than one protected characteristic, thus on multiple grounds, that operate separately. In this case, discrimination is the result of the cumulative effect of two or more discriminatory behaviours implemented on the basis of several grounds.

**Intersectional discrimination:** a form of discrimination that occurs on the basis of “two or more grounds of discrimination, which operate simultaneously and interact inseparably, producing distinct and specific forms of discrimination”<sup>10</sup>. In this case, discrimination is based on two or more grounds that interact with each other in such a way that they can no longer be distinguished and separated. It is therefore not the result of a cumulative effect of the combination of several discriminations (as in the case of multiple discrimination), but rather a specific configuration created by the intersection between the different grounds (e.g. gender, origin, religion, etc.).

Entering into the substance of the discriminatory actions identified, these were classified into the following categories:

**Discriminatory treatment:** unfair and discriminatory treatment on the basis of any of the protected characteristics, in a wide range of contexts. This category includes both *differential* treatment, i.e. unjustifiably different treatment in similar situations, and *non-differential* treatment, i.e. similar and apparently neutral treatment, which places one or more groups of people in a situation of inequality with respect to the rest of the people, not compensating for - but reproducing - the disadvantages resulting from substantial discrimination.

**Verbal aggression:** verbal and non-verbal abuse on the basis of any of the protected characteristics, including comments or gestures directed at a person or collective, as well as direct and indirect threats of physical violence or consequences of any kind to the person.

**Physical aggression:** a physical attack based on any of the protected characteristics, ranging from touching, spitting or throwing objects to a violent attack against an individual or group.

**Vandalism:** misappropriation or defacement of property.

**Hate speech:** see above.

**Hate crime:** see above.

**Racial profiling:** the use or influence of racialising stereotypes in the exercise of activities involving powers of control or surveillance. Based on evidence collected in 2025, this year the category has been extended beyond the work of law enforcement agencies alone to include any professional context in which the use of prejudice leads to discriminatory treatment of people on the basis of their "ethnic origin".

**Mobbing:** a set of aggressive and persecutory actions and behaviour and/or social exclusion and psychological violence, which create a hostile climate of continuous intimidation, harassment and pressure (not exclusively in the work environment).

**Reproduction of stereotypes and prejudices:** a process through which stereotypes, i.e. cognitive patterns that reproduce preconceived and generalised mental images of people, or prejudices, i.e. unfavourable or hostile judgments that are superficial, unduly generalised, and rigid<sup>11</sup>, are repeated, reinforced, and transmitted over time, either automatically and unconsciously or intentionally. Through everyday language, media and social networks, education and cultural traditions, social and institutional practices, this reproduction contributes to maintaining inequalities, discrimination and exclusion, making stereotypes and prejudices socially "normal" and difficult to question.

**Sexual assault/violence:** any act that, through force, threat, or abuse of authority, compels another person to commit or undergo sexual acts<sup>12</sup>. This includes all forms of sexual harassment, forced or attempted sexual intercourse, unwanted sexual contact, unsolicited sexual comments, or any other unwanted behaviour imposed on a person without their explicit consent.

**Domestic violence:** "all acts of physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence occurring within the family or household or between current or former spouses or partners"<sup>13</sup>.

**Other:** residual category.

The analysis conducted in this Report aims to classify and examine the discrimination cases recorded by SPAD between January and December 2025, addressing the following questions: Who accesses SPAD? What types of discrimination are reported? Who is discriminated against? Who discriminates, and where? What response actions has SPAD implemented? Are SPAD users satisfied with the support received?

## CHAPTER 1

# SPAD: ANTI-DISCRIMINATION HELP CENTER OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF BOLOGNA

### 1.1 SPAD: consolidation and synergy with the local community in combating discrimination

The SPAD Anti-discrimination Help Center is a service of the Municipality of Bologna currently co-managed with 35 civil-society entities, four of which hold co-coordination roles. Its purpose is to support individuals who are “victims” or witnesses of discrimination and to take charge of reports containing potentially discriminatory elements, in order to identify appropriate solutions. This service complements the activities already carried out by the Metropolitan Anti-discrimination Network across the territory. In March 2025, as part of the renewal of the agreement governing its operations, four new organisations from the area joined the SPAD Network.

SPAD’s work, grounded in the promotion and protection of the fundamental right to non-discrimination, focuses on preventing and countering discrimination based on factors related to “racial” or “ethnic origin”, and religion – whether “direct” or “indirect” – with particular attention to multiple and intersectional discrimination. At the same time, SPAD maintains its function of referring users toward other services in the territory when cases involve different discrimination grounds or other specific needs.

During 2025, the experimental experience of the desk located at the Porto-Saragozza District office (Via Pier de’ Crescenzi, 14) was further consolidated. The office, active since October 2024, complements the services already provided since 2021 at the M. Zonarelli Intercultural Center, open on Tuesdays (from 9:00 to 13:00) and Thursdays (from 14:30 to 18:30). These activities involved the direct participation of district staff specifically identified and trained for this purpose.

The assessment carried out after one year of activity by the New Citizenship Office and the District Networking and Community Engagement Office confirmed the positive outcome of the experimentation. In particular, two elements emerged as added value: on one hand, the involvement of new district operators with expertise in social work and in participation/collaboration (District Networking and Community Engagement Office), and on the other, the spread of anti-discrimination competencies within district offices.

Looking ahead, an opportunity was identified to increase communication regarding the desk operating in the Porto-Saragozza District office, including through dedicated events to present SPAD in community gathering places such as the District Houses. The district desk is currently open on Wednesdays from 9:00 to 13:00 and remains accessible on other days through the usual channels (phone, WhatsApp, email, and online form).

Alongside its core function of welcoming and supporting individuals who believe they have experienced discrimination, SPAD carries out numerous additional activities.

In continuity with the work initiated the previous year, the programme of joint actions for data collection and monitoring of discrimination related to sexual orientation and gender identity has been strengthened. This is thanks to collaboration with the Anti-discrimination Centers (CAD) of APS Arcigay Il Cassero (Spazio Cassero) and MIT – Movimento Identità Trans APS (STAR

Anti-discrimination Center), co-financed by UNAR and the Municipality of Bologna, and with the support of COSPE in its role as co-coordinator of Function 5. As a result, this edition of the Report includes an analysis and processing of data gathered by the CADs mentioned above, providing a more complete and comparable picture of the discriminatory phenomena recorded across the areas covered by the three Help Centers (SPAD, Spazio Cassero, and STAR).

Moreover, SPAD continued to support various departments of the Municipal Administration by acting as a facilitator for access to information, with particular attention to multilingual translations. At the same time, significant investment was dedicated to external training. Particularly noteworthy is the training course for intercultural mediators aimed at strengthening anti-discrimination competencies and enabling them to act as “antennas” across the territory, capable of identifying and bringing to light discriminatory situations that often remain invisible or are not recognised as such by the “victims” themselves.

The Help Center also invested in prevention through workshops addressed to young people, focusing on deconstructing prejudices and promoting respectful communication. Finally, the design of a specialised training programme for the Local Police (Unit for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons) is nearing completion. The objective is to directly connect the expertise of SPAD Network associations with policing activities in the territory, in order to strengthen collaboration in counter-ing discrimination and hate crimes.

All SPAD activities are organised through a structure composed of five Functions:

**Function 1** - Listening and guidance (co-coordinated by the Municipality of Bologna and Associazione Interculturale Universo);

**Function 2** - Victims support (co-coordinated by the Municipality of Bologna and Diversa/mente);

**Function 3** - Information and awareness-raising (co-coordinated by the Municipality of Bologna and Africa e Mediterraneo);

**Function 4** - Training (coordinated by the Municipality of Bologna);

**Function 5** - Observatory on discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, and religion (co-coordinated by the Municipality of Bologna and COSPE).

## 1.2 The Functions of SPAD and what is new in 2025

For the coordination of each Function, SPAD relies on collaboration between the Municipality of Bologna and the following civil-society organisations: Associazione Interculturale Universo, Diversa/mente, Africa e Mediterraneo, and COSPE. The collaboration between the Municipality and these third-sector organisations is based on a co-coordination model within each of SPAD’s specific Functions - an approach of shared and hybrid management that represents both an added value and a key element of success in the SPAD experience.

### 1.2.1 Function 1: Listening and guidance by Associazione Interculturale Universo

Function 1, “Listening and Guidance”, is co-coordinated by the Municipality of Bologna and Associazione Interculturale Universo. This Function includes:

- the collection and registration of discrimination reports submitted by “victims” or witnesses;
- providing users with information on the Help Center’s functions and on the processing of personal data (in compliance with EU Regulation 2016/679, the Italian Privacy Code as amended by Legislative Decree 101/2018, and subsequent modifications);
- in-person in-depth interviews aimed at identifying the discriminatory factor;
- guidance, referral to other territorial services, and taking charge of cases requiring support to “victims”;
- information and communication activities related to listening and guidance;
- coordination between operators, case managers, and the other SPAD Functions.

During 2025, the SPAD team was further strengthened with the addition of 28 new operators, qualified for the role after completing the basic training course promoted by the Municipality of Bologna. This expansion contributed significantly to consolidating the service's operational capacity. In addition to activities directly connected to the Help Center, the staff involved in Function 1 also takes part in case-analysis and evaluation meetings organised within Function 5, and they are actively involved in accompanying users whenever the case management process requires it.

Furthermore, Associazione Interculturale Universo, in collaboration with the Municipality of Bologna and the associations Diversa/mente and AMISS, designed and delivered a training course for intercultural mediators, aimed at expanding the number of people adequately trained in anti-discrimination and enabling mediators to act as "antennas" across the territory - capable of identifying potential discriminatory situations and facilitating their reporting. The course generated interest from over 50 people, and after a pre-selection stage, 23 participants were admitted and completed the training.

In parallel, several outreach activities were carried out to extend the presence and visibility of the service not only within the Municipality of Bologna but also across the municipalities of the Unione Reno Galliera. SPAD operators participated in awareness-raising events and communication initiatives connected to the Municipality's broader efforts to counter ethnic-racial and origin-based discrimination, thereby contributing to increasing public knowledge of the service and its objectives.

## 1.2.2 Function 2: Victims support by Diversa/mente

Function 2, "Victims support", is co-coordinated by the Municipality of Bologna and Diversa/mente. The Function consists in taking charge of sensitive and complex situations that require more in-depth listening and a composite and articulated response; for example, situations in which the discrimination grounds are not immediately identifiable and where the proposed solutions, concerning objective and/or perceived, multiple or intersectional discrimination, require careful discussion within a multidisciplinary group. This Function includes:

- the identification of the skills and resources necessary for case management and, in agreement with the reporting persons, the most appropriate solutions among the following: legal advice or assistance (civil or criminal), linguistic-intercultural mediation, social or conflict mediation, psychological and emotional support, accompaniment;
- the identification of the most appropriate solutions, shared and agreed upon with the persons affected by discrimination;
- the management of relations and communications with the discriminating agent;
- coordination among professionals and operators of the associations involved in the process.

A total of 18 associations of the SPAD Network collaborate with Function 2. They provide counselling or information and awareness-raising interventions (for example, in school or workplace contexts) related to the case under follow-up, on the basis of their specific expertise and competence. Most of them run their own listening desks and already carry out important work in intercepting discrimination. SPAD case managers may refer to Function 2 to receive support in relation to complex cases.

In the course of 2025, there were 5 cases requiring the activation of a multidisciplinary team. Formal activation of legal counselling was requested for 16 reports, in addition to the constant support offered by legal experts to case managers and operators through legal opinions useful for case management. Finally, psychological support was activated in 1 case.

The work of Function 2 highlights the pervasive nature of discrimination. The activation of the multidisciplinary team is reserved for highly complex situations, where analysis of the phenomenon and intervention require an integrated approach. In addition to the support provided for individual reports of discrimination, Function 2 of SPAD has promoted targeted actions, placing strong emphasis on linguistic accessibility as a fundamental tool for the protection of rights. To remove barriers hindering access to information, SPAD has also provided its specialist support in multilingual translations for two major initiatives of the Municipality.

The first initiative concerned combating gender-based violence: the Municipality of Bologna, through the Office for Equal Opportunities, Protection of Differences and LGBTQIA+ Rights, produced the information brochure “The city can help you to break free from violence. A map to stop violence”. This tool, the result of shared work with the network of associations and developed within the framework of the project “Towards a Gender Atlas in Bologna”, provides comprehensive guidance on existing services, mapping Anti-Violence Centers (CAV), Centers for Men Perpetrators of Violence (CUAV) and Centers of the LGBTQIA+ Network. The contribution of SPAD’s Function 2 to this initiative consisted in providing specialist support for translations into 15 languages, ensuring that the information is accessible also to women who, due to language barriers, might otherwise not receive essential information about available support services.

The second initiative concerned collaboration in the production of multilingual information material (also in printed format) on the regulatory changes introduced by Law 74/2025 on citizenship, aimed at informing about the rights and procedures affecting the minor children of the persons concerned. In this case as well, SPAD provided support for translations into 10 different languages, including English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Urdu, Bengali, Tagalog, Albanian and Romanian, facilitating widespread dissemination of information. This engagement on citizenship law was further strengthened by the activation of specific legal counselling with ASGI, requested to analyse and deepen the discriminatory aspects inherent in the application of the law. For further analysis, see the contribution “When parents become Italian citizens, but their children remain foreigners: the 2025 citizenship reform and its discriminatory effects”.

At the same time, SPAD invested in prevention and youth awareness-raising by designing and delivering the workshop “Words that make a difference” for approximately 45 students of an upper secondary school. The activity, led by SPAD case managers and operators, focused on promoting anti-discrimination in a broad sense and on respectful communication of differences. Through workshop-based activities, critical analysis of stereotyped concepts (such as the etymology of the term “clandestine”) and legal insights, young participants were provided with concrete tools to deconstruct prejudice and become active agents of inclusion within their community.

### 1.2.3 Function 3: Information and awareness-raising by Africa e Mediterraneo

Function 3, “Information and awareness-raising” is co-coordinated by the Municipality of Bologna and Africa e Mediterraneo. This Function includes:

- the development and implementation of information campaigns about the services offered, translated into several languages;
- information and awareness-raising actions on related themes, aimed at prevention;
- information activities directed at networks and stakeholder groups, in order to initiate forms of collaboration;
- the collection and dissemination of toolkits and resources for training and educational activities on anti-discrimination.

Throughout 2025, Africa e Mediterraneo continued to support SPAD’s internal and external communication activities, developing interventions aimed at citizens across the Metropolitan Area of Bologna and facilitating information exchange among the associations directly involved in the development of the Help Center and the implementation of its services.

The informational materials designed to give visibility to the Help Center and make its access modalities known underwent continuous revision and expansion to ensure that the information provided remained as clear and accessible as possible.

To increase the visibility of the Help Center and facilitate access, an ongoing effort was made to update and revise the informational materials. This included introducing new formats and re-designing existing materials to make the information even more user-friendly and accessible. For this purpose, multiple language versions of the flyers were produced (Italian, English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Urdu, and Bengali), alongside infographics designed to make key information easily identifiable even for people with limited linguistic proficiency.

To enhance the role of the SPAD Network and to promote collaboration and exchange among its

members, network-engagement activities were strengthened through strategic coordination and team-building meetings. During these meetings, participants discussed relevant themes, planned awareness-raising and promotional initiatives, and shared moments of collective engagement. In particular, during the June strategic coordination event, attention focused on sharing qualitative and quantitative results, analysing exemplary support interventions that helped reflect on both the current and upcoming challenges. A November meeting was dedicated to introducing new operators, and included a collaborative workshop exploring the theme of hospitality. These opportunities for discussion and interaction serve as essential tools to make the work more effective and meaningful.

Organising public events open to citizens, or participating in events and meetings promoted by local authorities or territorial associations, allows SPAD not only to publicise its services but also to create important opportunities for community engagement and collective reflection. A particularly significant moment of participation and commitment was the event held on 21 March, marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, during which the annual Report of the SPAD Observatory was presented. The presentation of the data was accompanied by expert insights and reflections from institutional representatives. A vibrant “artistic-musical street festival” held in Piazza Lucio Dalla served as a backdrop to the event, featuring activities for children and young people during the day, followed by a well-attended evening event with live performances and a DJ set, particularly aimed at younger audiences.

Finally, SPAD’s online awareness-raising campaign continued through posts published on the social-media pages of the Municipality’s Rights Office, featuring thematic content and insights also included in the Observatory Report.

#### 1.2.4 Function 4: Training by Municipality of Bologna

Function 4, “Training”, is coordinated by the Municipality of Bologna. It includes:

- basic training and professional development for Help Center staff;
- training for, and co-training with, other relevant actors operating in the territory.

Among SPAD’s Functions, training plays a crucial role – both for the staff working at the Help Center and as a contribution to the development of knowledge and behaviours that promote anti-discrimination.

In 2025, the Municipality of Bologna launched the fourth basic training course for operators who would be joining SPAD’s activities. The programme lasted 35 hours – 4 conducted in person and the remainder online – and was developed partly using recordings and materials provided by trainers who had led sessions in previous years. The course covered the following topics:

- an overview of SPAD and its functioning, privacy regulations, SPAD’s data-protection measures, and the operator toolkit;
- anti-discrimination law, with a focus on discrimination based on “race”, ethnicity, and religion, addressing Italian, European, and international legal sources and related case law, as well as specific topics such as discrimination in access to education and qualification recognition, employment, housing, healthcare, access to social services, population registry procedures, and religious contexts. An in-depth module was also dedicated to residence-permit regulations;
- procedures for managing a discrimination report;
- an introduction to the system of services available in the territory – both those of the Municipality of Bologna and those of other entities such as ASP Città di Bologna, trade unions, and local associations;
- respectful and non-discriminatory communication.

At the end of the course, 28 new operators were certified, adding to those trained in 2021, 2023, and 2024. In December 2025, at the initiative of Associazione Interculturale Universo (co-coordinator of Function 1), with the support of Diversa/mente (co-coordinator of Function 2) and AMISS (an association collaborating with Function 2), a 26-hour training programme was launched for intercultural mediators.

The objective was to strengthen anti-discrimination competencies and prepare mediators to collaborate with SPAD in various capacities – for example, as key figures (or “antennas”) capable of identifying and reporting discriminatory situations. Since these professionals work closely with a large number of individuals with migratory backgrounds, collaboration with SPAD is particularly important for raising awareness about the Help Center, increasing the likelihood that discriminatory experiences will be reported, and ensuring that people understand the types of support available.

### 1.2.5 Function 5: Observatory on discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, and religion

by COSPE

Function 5, “Observatory on discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, and religion”, is co-coordinated by the Municipality of Bologna and COSPE. This Function includes:

- the collection, analysis and processing of data;
- the drafting of the Annual Report on the reports received by the Help Center, containing data disaggregated by age, gender, district, public or private place, type of discriminating agent, area of discrimination, grounds of discrimination, actions undertaken;
- the promotion of specific projects based on the needs identified.

The SPAD Observatory ensures systematic, periodic and transparent monitoring of the discrimination reports received. The progressive activation, as well as the continuous updating of the data-collection and analysis tools developed within Function 5, their strengthening and recognisability, have contributed to a qualitative improvement of the data collected.

The Observatory oversees and coordinates the entire process of data collection and analysis, starting from the information entered into the dedicated database. The information collected through the report form is entered into the database – through a data-entry form – only after a process of anonymisation and pseudonymisation, aimed at ensuring the protection of the confidentiality of the persons involved. The first level of analysis involves classifying the reports based on their pertinence. This phase makes it possible to distinguish reports attributable to cases of discrimination, and therefore pertinent, from those concerning other types of support requests, hence non-pertinent. This initial distinction represents a fundamental step in ensuring the accuracy of the analysis presented here. Subsequently, the pertinent cases are analysed in depth, not only in relation to the specific characteristics of the discriminatory event (including, among others, the ground of discrimination, mode of discrimination, type of discriminatory action, area, etc.), but also on the basis of the characteristics of those who carry out the discrimination and those who are affected by it.

Analysing discrimination cases is a particularly complex task, requiring adequate time, specific expertise and a structured methodological approach. The complexity of the phenomenon in fact requires an analysis structured into several progressive steps. In continuity with previous years, this process was shared in *ad hoc* meetings with case managers, which represented a fundamental space for exchange and discussion, essential to ensure an accurate and consistent reading of cases and a correct processing of the data collected. For the first time this year, these working moments also involved the direct participation of Help Center operators. The meetings thus became not only a crucial phase of the data-processing and analysis procedure, but also a structured opportunity for discussion aimed at sharing reflections, points of view and observations on the reported discrimination cases, thereby contributing to improving the quality of operational interventions and consolidating increasingly coordinated working practices.

On the same occasion, among the 2025 reports, some cases considered particularly significant and suitable were identified to be briefly included in this Report in the form of short insight boxes, thus adding a qualitative and narrative dimension to the quantitative analysis (see Chapter 3). Through concise accounts of concrete examples of discriminatory situations, these insight boxes aim to highlight the plurality of contexts, dynamics and modalities through which discrimination may manifest itself, increasing awareness of what may constitute discrimination. A further significant innovation introduced in 2025 was the creation of an online dashboard collecting and organising all the data recorded by the SPAD Observatory from its establishment in December 2021 up to the present. The dashboard is configured as an advanced data-visualisation tool,

particularly useful and effective as it is able to provide a clear and immediate summary of the main data relating to recorded discrimination cases. In addition to the aggregated visualisation of the most relevant information, this tool also allows the database to be queried dynamically, through filters based on all available variables. This functionality therefore makes it possible to carry out targeted analyses and to “zoom in” on specific aspects of the phenomenon, offering a more in-depth reading of the data. At present, the tool is conceived as an internal resource, intended for data sharing and consultation by the subjects involved in the Observatory’s activities. At a later stage, the possibility of making a more concise version of the dashboard public will be assessed, with the aim of broadening the dissemination and accessibility of SPAD data through a channel complementary to the Annual Report.

During 2025, the Function 5 team also took part, as trainers, in two training courses organised by SPAD: the first addressed to Help Center operators, the second dedicated to intercultural mediators. During the training sessions, the tools used by the Observatory and the entire process of data collection, processing and analysis were illustrated in depth. Particular attention was devoted to the recognition of discrimination, which is of fundamental importance for those working within the Help Center or acting as “antennas” in identifying potential discriminatory situations in the Bologna area. This work was supported by practical exercises based on real cases received by SPAD, which enabled participants to engage with concrete situations, clarify doubts, share reflections and, above all, transform theoretical references into operational tools usable in practice.

Finally, following the positive experience of 2024, the joint actions for data collection and monitoring of discrimination continued in 2025, in collaboration with the Anti-discrimination Centers of the association MIT - Movimento Identità Trans (STAR) and of the association APS Arcigay Il Cassero (Spazio Cassero), which are supported by UNAR and active within the General Collaboration Pact for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of LGBTQIA+ People and Community in the city of Bologna. Chapter Three includes an in-depth and comparative analysis of the data emerging from this collaboration, which is very important and useful in providing a broader overview of discrimination in the Bologna area.

# WHEN PARENTS BECOME ITALIAN CITIZENS, BUT THEIR CHILDREN REMAIN FOREIGNERS: THE 2025 CITIZENSHIP REFORM AND ITS DISCRIMINATORY EFFECTS

by Giulia Perin, lawyer at the Rome Bar, ASGI

The citizenship reform, introduced by Decree-Law no. 36 of 28 March 2025, converted, with amendments, into Law no. 74 of 23 May 2025, had a very specific purpose: to limit the principle according to which Italian citizenship was transmitted by descent without generational limits. The issue that had been identified was that, in the absence of limits, individuals whose Italian ancestors had emigrated abroad generations earlier were able to obtain recognition of Italian citizenship even without an effective link with Italy. The aim of the legislative intervention was therefore to ensure that only those with a genuine connection to the country could obtain citizenship.

However, the reform, as it was drafted and as it has been interpreted by the Ministry of the Interior, has not produced effects solely on the so-called "Italian descendants". The legislative intervention has also made it more difficult to acquire Italian citizenship for minors who, although born abroad, reside in Italy and are fully integrated into Italian society. In particular, two categories of minors are now penalised:

- (i) children born abroad after their parents have become Italian citizens: these minors no longer acquire Italian citizenship if the birth occurs abroad before two years have elapsed since the parent's naturalisation;
- (ii) minors born abroad who reside in Italy at the time their parents naturalise: for them, the acquisition of citizenship together with the parent is now subject to numerous conditions that did not previously apply.

The difference between the two cases lies in the temporal relationship between the birth of the minor and the parent's acquisition of citizenship. In the first case, the birth occurs when the parent has already acquired Italian citizenship; in the second, the minor has already been born at the time of the parent's naturalisation.

To explain in simple terms how the reform has affected these two categories of minors, it may be useful to start from real cases. Among the many that could be cited, I have chosen two that clearly illustrate the consequences of the reform for minors born abroad who grow up in Italy.

I begin with the first case: that of a minor born abroad to a naturalised Italian citizen.

S. has lived in Italy for almost twenty years. Italy is the country where he studied and where he works. In 2024 he obtained Italian citizenship by naturalisation. A few months after acquiring citizenship, his wife became pregnant. The young woman expressed the wish to give birth in the couple's country of origin because, not yet speaking Italian perfectly - unlike her husband - and being at her first delivery, she thought she would feel more comfortable with a doctor who could fully understand her. Giving birth abroad also had the advantage that the grandparents would immediately be able to meet their granddaughter. S. inquired whether giving birth abroad might have consequences for his daughter's citizenship. He was told that the child of an Italian citizen is Italian wherever the birth takes place. The birth was therefore arranged in the couple's country of origin. The joy at the birth of their daughter was overshadowed after S. went to the Italian Consulate to request a passport for her. There he was told that the child was not entitled to Italian citizenship because, following the latest amendments introduced in the Senate during the conversion of the decree-law reforming the citizenship law, the previously applicable conditions had changed. In the citizenship law - Law no. 91 of 1992 - a new Article 3-bis was added, which applies to all minors born abroad who hold another citizenship. In particular, in a case such as S.'s daughter's, for her to acquire Italian citizenship it is necessary to prove that the Italian parent has resided in Italy for two additional years

after naturalisation. In S.'s case this condition is not met: he obtained Italian citizenship less than two years earlier and therefore, despite having resided in Italy for almost twenty years, under the new rules he cannot transmit citizenship to his daughter born abroad. The couple is thus forced to remain in their country of origin for months: the time necessary for the child to obtain a visa to enter Italy with her parents.

The second case concerns a family that arrived in Italy in 2015, fleeing the war in their country of origin. The family of four – parents W. and F. and their two very young children – arrived in Italy. Recognised as refugees, the couple integrated perfectly into the country that welcomed them and obtained Italian citizenship by naturalisation. They believed – because friends who had already become Italian citizens had told them so – that Italian citizenship would automatically extend to their children: this was provided for by Article 14 of the citizenship law. That article (before the reform) provided that a minor child cohabiting with a person who acquires Italian citizenship automatically becomes Italian together with the parent. When they went to take the oath, W. and F. discovered that the reform had affected their two children's right to acquire citizenship. Article 14 of Law no. 91 of 1992, now to be read together with the new Article 3-bis, requires additional conditions to

be met. Among these is the requirement that only a parent who has resided in Italy for two years before the child's birth may transmit citizenship. As is evident, this condition excludes all minors who arrived in Italy together with their parents. For these minors, Article 14 is no longer applicable: they will have to wait until they turn eighteen to apply for naturalisation, an application that will be granted only if they meet the numerous conditions laid down for this mode of acquiring citizenship.

The situation of W. and F.'s children is not the only problematic scenario: there are further situations in which minors' acquisition of citizenship together with their parents is now either entirely precluded or deferred with a two-year suspension. Without recalling all the hypotheses here, I will simply note that the Municipality of Bologna has prepared a very useful multilingual information notice<sup>1</sup> that clearly illustrates how the current legislation operates.

What I wish to emphasise is that, as the two stories mentioned demonstrate, we are faced with amendments that exclude from citizenship minors who have a particularly strong connection with our country. If we already had a citizenship law that was ungenerous toward those who grow up in Italy, Law no. 91 of 1992 has now become even more restrictive.



The question that those who deal with the law must now ask is: are these amendments legitimate, or are they open to challenge?

In my view, despite the broad margin of discretion enjoyed by the legislator in regulating the modes of acquisition of citizenship, these amendments conflict with numerous principles of our Constitution.

First of all, they are contrary to the principle of equality. The reform introduces a disparity of treatment that is difficult to justify between different categories of Italian citizens, distinguishing them according to the manner in which citizenship was acquired. The “naturalised” citizen is placed in a worse position than the “citizen by birth” with regard to the right to transmit Italian citizenship to their children.

Secondly, the provisions at issue produce effects incompatible with the principle of reasonableness, which is itself an expression of the constitutional principle of equality. The unreasonableness is evident under two distinct profiles. Under a first profile, the reform legislator contradicts itself: it declares that it wishes to prevent access to citizenship by persons lacking an “effective link” with Italy, yet then, inconsistently with that objective, also affects situations in which the link with Italy is undisputed. Under a second profile, the unreasonableness of the legislation becomes evident when examining concrete cases. Minors born abroad who move to Italy together with their parents or join them shortly after birth will be excluded from acquiring citizenship during their minority solely because, at the time of birth, the parent had not yet met the minimum residence requirement now demanded, whereas minors born at a “more favourable” time from a purely chronological standpoint – for example, two years after the parent’s transfer – may acquire citizenship even if they have lived abroad for a significant part of their lives.

Thirdly, as the first scenario demonstrates, the reform may restrict the constitutional freedom of movement of the parent who is an Italian citizen: if a minor born abroad must obtain a visa to enter Italy, the entire family may find itself unable to return to national territory.

Fourthly, the principle of the proper functioning of public administration is also at stake. Any delays in concluding the naturalisation procedure risk harming the new citizen twice: on the one hand, they postpone the acquisition of citizenship; on the other, they may affect the possibility of transmitting that status to children, where it appears that, had the procedure been completed more quickly, the minimum time requirements now demanded for the transmission of citizenship would have been met.

Finally, there is an independent ground of criticism concerning the legislative instrument used: the provisions at issue were introduced by decree-law, that is, by a source which the Constitution permits only in cases of necessity and urgency. It is evident that an intervention affecting a fundamental status such as citizenship would have required a far broader parliamentary debate than that compatible with the compressed timeframe for converting a decree into law. From this perspective as well, the reform appears open to criticism for violating the constitutional rules governing law-making.

It seems to me that there are sufficient grounds to hope for an intervention by the Constitutional Court or by the legislator to remove these serious critical issues. In the meantime, it is important that those who are currently affected by this reform, even if they do not intend to bring legal proceedings, closely follow legislative and case-law developments, so as to be ready to assert their own or their children’s right to citizenship, should the unconstitutionality of the provisions be established or should the legislator intervene to amend the legislation in a finally inclusive direction.

## 1.3 Desk operating procedures and management of reports

Function 1, “Listening and guidance”, and Function 2, “Victims support”, closely related to the desk operations, have as their main objective the reception, listening and handling (or referral) of the reports collected by SPAD. The methods for collecting and managing reports are discussed below.

### 1.3.1 Access modalities

The “victim” and the direct or indirect witness may contact SPAD to report a case of discrimination through various channels:

- In person, at the M. Zonarelli Intercultural Center and at the Porto-Saragozza District office;
- By phone;
- By e-mail;
- Through instant and voice messaging on WhatsApp, including in different languages;
- Through the online report form, accessible via the website of the M. Zonarelli Intercultural Center.

### 1.3.2 The interview and reporting

At the first access to SPAD, the basic information necessary for a preliminary assessment of the case and of the needs expressed by the reporting person is collected. Once the report has been received, the person is invited to an initial interview, held in person, during which the SPAD team (generally composed of a case manager and a Help Center operator) gathers further elements beyond the free narrative of the report. The information collected is entered into the report form, which is organised into the following sections:

**1. Who is discriminated against?** The first data recorded concern the person(s) affected by the reported discrimination, including: gender, age, occupation, origin, citizenship and area of reference. The collection of this information makes it possible to disaggregate the data along multiple axes and thus capture the complexity of the needs of local communities, highlighting the often multiple and intersectional nature of discrimination. This also makes it possible to verify which communities have been reached by information about the presence of SPAD and which instead require more targeted communication actions.

**2. Where does the discrimination occur?** The second group of data collected concerns the context in which the reported discriminatory act took place, namely whether the discrimination occurred in a public space (public offices, hospitals and public health facilities, streets, parks or squares, schools, etc.), in a private space (homes, establishments, companies and organisations, etc.), in reception centers (CPSA, CDA, CARA, CIE, etc.), in stations or on means of transport (buses, trains, airplanes, etc.), or in non-physical spaces such as social media and digital or analogue communication media (print or online newspapers, social networks, advertisements, etc.).

**3. Who discriminates?** The third fundamental category of data concerns the discriminating agent. The five main categories of discriminating agents identified are: private citizens (individuals or groups), private entities (companies, employers, employees, etc.), public services or public administration (offices, managers, employees, etc.), law enforcement agencies (offices, groups or individuals). In cases where discriminatory processes cannot be attributed to specific entities or subjects but are the result of processes intrinsic to the social structure, reference is made to systemic discrimination.

**4. What is the discrimination ground?** In the section of the form dedicated to assessing the discrimination case, the first piece of information recorded concerns the identified/reported discrimination ground: origin/nationality, “ethnic origin”, religion, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, age, socio-economic status, health status, etc. At present, SPAD has competence to intervene and handle cases of discrimination based on “racial”, “ethnic” and religious grounds. In cases where the discrimination ground does not fall within SPAD’s remit, the person is referred to other services.

**5. What type of discrimination?** The form includes a brief narrative summary of the case and allows the type of discrimination suffered/reported to be indicated: direct, indirect, perceived, harassment, hate speech, hate crime. Through the form, the area in which the discrimination occurred is also recorded.

**6. What response can SPAD activate?** The final section of the report form collects information relating to SPAD's proposed operational response. The actions taken in response to the reports received are always designed *ad hoc* and depend heavily on the individual case. The possibility of offering different forms of support, always corresponding to the needs of those who contact SPAD, is also due to the heterogeneity of the organisations that are part of the SPAD Network.

### 1.3.3 Case management

Once the report has been received and the report form completed, the type of intervention that SPAD can activate depends on the nature of the case reported:

- In cases where the absence of a discrimination ground is identified, but other types of needs emerge, the reporting person receives support from the SPAD team through referrals and accompaniment to other services. In cases that are simpler and can be resolved quickly – such as requests for information or technical support in accessing specific services – the reports are collected and resolved during the interview itself, without the need for referral or accompaniment to other services.
- When the discrimination ground (or grounds) is identified, but it does not fall within SPAD's area of competence, the possibility of referral to other services in the area that can offer specific expertise is identified; where necessary, SPAD may organise accompaniment.
- When the discrimination falls within SPAD's area of competence (therefore discrimination based on "racial", "ethnic" and/or religious grounds), the report is taken charge of and handled by Function 2. The support provided may take the form – depending on the needs expressed and the possibilities for intervention – of legal advice/assistance, relations with other subjects for resolution, conflict mediation, linguistic-cultural mediation, psycho-emotional support, etc. If deemed necessary, the "victim" may have a second interview with the association that takes charge of the case, based on the expertise and availability offered. Furthermore, if the reported case is particularly complex and therefore difficult to assess, a multidisciplinary team is activated, a consultation group that can be convened at the request of the case managers. The multidisciplinary team is composed of: the case managers of the case, the coordinators of Function 1 and Function 2, professionals belonging to Function 2 working in the legal field, and, where appropriate, psychologists, conflict mediators and cultural mediators. Depending on the case and the expertise required, experts who can provide greater support in activating the handling process are convened.

When cases proceed within the handling process, the data are collected through a second tool, the management form, where the actions undertaken in support are described narratively up to the date of closure of the case.

Chapter 3, "Analysis of collected data", elaborates in detail on the discrimination reports collected and addressed by SPAD in 2025.

# SPAD ANTI-DISCRIMINATION HELP CENTER

HAVE YOU  
SUFFERED  
OR WITNESSED  
DISCRIMINATION?



Do you need  
urgent help?

CALL THE EMERGENCY  
NUMBERS:

**112** (single European  
emergency number)

**YES 118** (medical emergencies)

or go to a healthcare facility  
for medical assistance.

NO

**A** REPORT THE CASE  
OF DISCRIMINATION TO SPAD

HOW

1

Come to our offices  
in Bologna



Centro Interculturale Zonarelli  
via Giovanni Antonio Sacco 14  
Tue 09:00-13:00  
Thu 14:30-18:30

Quartiere Porto Saragozza  
via Pier de' Crescenzi 14  
Wed 09:00-13:00

2

Call  
+39 051 2196329



Mon-Fri: 9:00-13:00  
Thu 14:30-18:30

3

Send  
a message on  
Whatsapp  
+39 331 7567412  
(also a voice message)



4

Write an  
e-mail  
spad@comune.bologna.it



5

Fill in the  
Google Form



**B** THE SPAD TEAM WILL LISTEN TO YOUR STORY WITH CARE AND ATTENTION  
AND MAY OFFER YOU ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING FORMS OF SUPPORT:



Free legal assistance or advice



Psychological support



Conflict mediation and/or relations  
with other parties for resolution



Referral to other desks or services

INFOGRAPHIC 1. REPORTING A CASE OF DISCRIMINATION TO SPAD

## CHAPTER 2

# LEGAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 European and national anti-discrimination law

In 2023, in its most recent Report on the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (the so-called New York Convention), the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) highlighted that the Italian legislative framework lacks a clear and comprehensive definition of “racial discrimination” covering all the forms indicated in the Convention<sup>14</sup>. In 2024, similar indications also emerged from the most recent Report of the independent human rights monitoring body ECRI, which recommended that the Italian authorities “introduce in Parliament legislation on incitement to racial hatred and hate crimes that includes all the key elements of national legislation against racism and intolerance”.

At the time of writing this Report, no legislative measures have yet been adopted by the Italian legislator to align national legislation with these recommendations. Although the Constitution already provides a legal foundation for the principle of non-discrimination, Italian anti-discrimination law remains incomplete.

Articles 2 and 3 of the Italian Constitution recognise and guarantee, respectively, fundamental and “inviolable” human rights and the principle of equality, according to which

*all citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal or social conditions*<sup>15</sup>.

While not providing an explicit definition of non-discrimination, the entry into force of the Constitution effectively laid the foundations for the construction of Italian anti-discrimination law, which has progressively expanded following various legislative interventions – either autonomous or implementing international or European norms.

In the criminal field, a first definition of “racial discrimination” was incorporated into the Italian legal system with the approval of Law 654/1975, through which the aforementioned New York Convention, opened for signature in March 1966, was ratified. Although fundamental in giving initial shape to Italian anti-discrimination law, Law 654/1975 was not sufficiently effective in curbing racist phenomena in Italy. In 1993, the legislator intervened again, as a matter of urgency, by enacting Law no. 205/93 (the so-called Mancino Law), containing “Urgent measures on racial, ethnic and religious discrimination,” with the stated objective of “providing more effective tools for the prevention and repression of phenomena of intolerance and violence of a xenophobic or antisemitic nature” and, specifically, to counter racist behaviour widely spread among so-called “naziskin” groups and in sporting competitions<sup>16</sup>. The Mancino Law concerned a set of criminal provisions setting out aggravating circumstances applicable to the offences – defined for the first time in the same legislative text – of dissemination, incitement or commission of “acts of discrimination on racial, ethnic, national or religious grounds”<sup>17</sup>. Its promulgation contributed to more clearly defining the scope of protection of anti-discrimination law, although not without difficulties

in application, due to the requirement to prove the offence by demonstrating the publicly and explicitly expressed intent to commit or incite a discriminatory act. In 2006, the penalties provided for by the Mancino Law were mitigated by legislative intervention (Law 85/2006<sup>18</sup>), which restricted the scope of application of the legislation. Today, the Mancino Law, as incorporated by Legislative Decree 21/2018 into the new Articles 604-bis and 604-ter of the Criminal Code, renders discrimination punishable as a crime not as an offence against the “victims,” but when considered an act of propaganda, that is, aimed at “publicly expressing personal convictions in order to influence public opinion and modify the ideas and behaviour of the recipients”<sup>19</sup>.

In the civil field, the principle of non-discrimination was first introduced with the approval of the Consolidated Act of Provisions concerning Immigration and the Condition of Third Country Nationals (Legislative Decree 286/1998), which defined specific protection measures for those who suffer discrimination. With the introduction of the Consolidated Act, a broader definition of discrimination was outlined, including – for the first time – indirect and institutional discrimination. Article 43 identifies as discrimination:

*any conduct which, directly or indirectly, entails a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, religious beliefs and practices*<sup>20</sup>.

As a corollary of this innovation, the second part of the definition provided in Article 43 also specifies that any behaviour is discriminatory

*that has the purpose or effect of destroying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social and cultural fields and in any other area of public life*<sup>21</sup>.

In this way, the definition of discrimination was broadened to include not only explicitly discriminatory conduct, but also conduct whose nature may be considered objectively discriminatory by virtue of the effect it produces, regardless of the presence or absence – at a purely objective level – of an explicit discriminatory component. The introduction of the element of objectivity of effects was fundamental, as it enables the recognition (and consequent protection) of discriminatory actions in the multiplicity of situations in which they may occur, regardless of whether the conduct in question consists of a legally unlawful act. This concerns not only conduct carried out by private individuals, but also by institutional agents and public officials in the exercise of their functions, particularly in the sectors of education, social services and employment<sup>22</sup>.

The concept of indirect discrimination was consolidated within the Italian legal system with the expansion of the legislative framework on discrimination following the approval of Legislative Decrees 215/2003 and 216/2003, which implemented European Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC on equal treatment between persons and in employment, regardless of “race” and “ethnic origin”. It was in Legislative Decree 215/2003 that the Italian legislator, for the first time, provided a precise definition of direct and indirect discrimination. The former occurs when

*on grounds of religion, personal beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation, a person is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation*<sup>23</sup>.

Indirect discrimination, on the other hand, occurs when

*an apparently neutral provision, criterion, practice, act, agreement or behaviour may place persons professing a particular religion or ideology of another nature, persons with disabilities, persons of a particular age or sexual orientation at a particular disadvantage compared with other person*<sup>24</sup>.

Thus the notion of actions with objectively discriminatory effects re-emerges: ways of acting that are not intrinsically or explicitly discriminatory and that, while remaining apparently neutral, may nonetheless produce discrimination insofar as they place a particular person or category of persons in a less favourable position and at an objective disadvantage compared with others. In this way, the concept of discrimination has been further expanded to include situations of structural or systemic discrimination, that is, all situations in which practices or rules apparently devoid of discriminatory character, in their application, produce different or less favourable treatment compared with that received by others, as if invisible barriers limited opportunities.

A further innovation introduced by Legislative Decree 215/2003 was the definition of harassment as a possible form of discrimination, defined as

*unwanted conduct, carried out on one of the grounds referred to in Article 1, having the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment<sup>25</sup>.*

The integration of Italian legislation with European law has therefore significantly strengthened the normative coverage and legal protection for persons at risk of discrimination, even more so after the entry into force of the Amsterdam (1999) and Lisbon (2009) Treaties, which further expanded the system of guarantees and protection of the principle of non-discrimination by granting the European Union greater powers to combat discrimination within its territory. Moreover, the recent Resolution of the European Parliament on “Combating discrimination in the EU”<sup>26</sup> once again drew attention to the need to proceed with the adoption of the horizontal anti-discrimination directive, presented by the European Commission in 2008 and stalled within the Council ever since. The Parliament not only reiterated the urgent need “to adopt a horizontal approach to combating discrimination in order to eliminate the current artificial hierarchy of grounds justifying protection and thus ensure protection for all”, but also urged “Member States to ensure full and correct implementation of the current EU anti-discrimination framework”, expressing concern “about the potential negative impact on individuals and society as a whole” in the event of failure to comply<sup>27</sup>.

In the case of Italy, although European anti-discrimination legislation has been fully and correctly transposed, significant gaps remain in its concrete implementation. The implementation of anti-discrimination law must necessarily be accompanied by case-law development, particularly in the field of “racial” discrimination – which to date has not yet been codified as a specific offence within the Italian legal system<sup>28</sup>.

As a new development compared to the previous year, in 2025 the new “National Plan against Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance” was adopted and published. The drafting process lasted four years, during which associations and interested bodies submitted their contributions to UNAR regarding the main challenges, specific needs and possible strategic responses, during meetings held in June 2021 and subsequently in the thematic working groups of March and April 2023. Drafted with a gender-sensitive approach, the Plan is structured around three transversal axes (information, training and awareness-raising, and the creation and consolidation of local networks) and six priority axes (work and employment, housing, education/culture/sport, health, security/justice, communication/media)<sup>29</sup>. Both a programmatic document and an operational tool, the Plan represents a significant step forward in the process of progressively aligning Italy with European strategies and guidelines in the field of anti-discrimination.

## 2.2 Institutional policies and projects of the Emilia-Romagna Region

At the regional level, as established by the Consolidated Act on Immigration in Article 44 and implemented by Regional Law 5/2004 in Article 9<sup>30</sup>, Emilia-Romagna launched, starting in 2007, a process aimed at creating a Regional Anti-discrimination Center tasked with providing counselling and guidance, preventing potential situations of inequality, monitoring, and supporting projects and actions aimed at eliminating situations of disadvantage, particularly affecting persons of foreign origin<sup>31</sup>. The Center developed through access points distributed across the Emilia-Romagna territory, with the objective of enhancing the many public and private resources already active, well-known and strongly rooted locally<sup>32</sup>.

Since 2014, the Center’s action has also been extended to all discrimination grounds indicated in Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which includes – among others – “race”, skin colour, “ethnic” or social origin, genetic characteristics, language and membership of a national minority. Currently, the regional network includes 157 access points, structured into Territorial Coordination Nodes and Help Desks. Each year, the Region supports the Coordination Nodes in organising local awareness-raising and discrimination-prevention initiatives. The Nodes’ anti-discrimination activities are mainly structured around three areas of intervention: guidance, counselling and monitoring; prevention; collaboration and support for anti-discrimination projects.

By Resolution of the Legislative Assembly of Emilia-Romagna no. 104 of 26 October 2022, the “Programme 2022–2024 for the Social Integration of Foreign Citizens – Emilia-Romagna Plural, Fair, Inclusive 2022–2024” was also approved. Drafted and designed with an intersectional perspective, its objective is to promote interventions that place individuals in conditions of autonomy, overcoming material, social and linguistic gaps, as well as gaps in skills and/or understanding of a new territory, while at the same time countering discriminatory policies and practices, racist and/or sexist actions, practices of exploitation and severe labour exploitation and reduction to slavery. In particular, the Programme’s priority is the fight against discrimination through the support and promotion of the Regional Anti-discrimination Center and through closer connection with policies aimed at combating labour exploitation.

In this sense, the Programme aims to prevent and combat distortions of the labour market (irregular work, undeclared work, gangmaster systems, labour exploitation) through social protection interventions and measures activated within Employment Services, promoting decent and safe work and legality. This objective is also pursued through the interregional project “Common Ground – Interregional actions to combat labour exploitation and support victims”<sup>33</sup>, in close synergy with the system project “Beyond the Street”.

The “Common Ground” project, formally launched in March 2023, targets third-country nationals, “victims” and potential “victims” of labour exploitation, and aims to prevent and combat distortions of the labour market in all sectors (including those other than agriculture), and to promote decent and safe work and legality. The project involves provincial capital municipalities, which act as implementing bodies, responsible for and in charge of the interventions carried out within their respective territories. In each area, interventions are implemented by the provincial capital municipalities in collaboration with qualified third-sector organisations. This structure forms a publicly led network of public and private actors that, across the regional territory, coordinate interventions for the identification, assistance, legal protection and labour inclusion of “victims” of labour exploitation. Thanks to this network, in every province of the region a multidisciplinary and multi-professional team operates in support of “victims”, coordinating with all territorial actors that play a role in addressing labour exploitation: labour inspectorates and other supervisory bodies, law enforcement agencies, judicial authorities, health services, social services, private entities accredited for employment services, trade unions, and third-sector organisations.

The project formally concluded in September 2025. At present, the Region, together with the other partner regions, is participating in the drafting of a new interregional project proposal, led by the Piedmont Region, in continuity with the “Common Ground” project, to be funded under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2021–2027.

### 2.3 Anti-discrimination projects and initiatives of the Metropolitan City of Bologna

In 2025, the Metropolitan City of Bologna, in continuity with its vocation and with the anti-discrimination actions carried out so far, implemented numerous initiatives in collaboration with local authorities, third-sector organisations and schools of all levels across the metropolitan area, paying particular attention to new generations, young people, and students. Among the activities carried out were the eighth edition of the “Activist Manual against Discrimination”; the project “Every Language Matters”, involving the development of five teaching units for Italian as a second language (L2) aimed at young adults and attendees of the Provincial Centers for Adult Education; and the project “Rebels like the Wind”, focused on the participatory creation of a photographic exhibition and promoted on the occasion of the Week against Discrimination in collaboration with UNAR and the Municipality of Bologna. Finally, with the aim of bringing the fight against discrimination within institutions, the Metropolitan City developed, within the framework of SPAD activities and in synergy with the Municipality of Bologna, interventions attributable to Function 3, “Information and awareness-raising”, and Function 4, “Training”, providing training to approximately 100 social desk and Public Relations Office (URP) operators, as well as other staff from local authorities and healthcare organisations in the metropolitan area, and operators from third-sector organisations.

### *Activist Manual against Discrimination “The Anti-Racist Move”*

Since 2017, the Metropolitan City of Bologna - in collaboration with the Metropolitan Anti-discrimination Network - has organised each year a pathway against discrimination in selected upper secondary school classes and vocational education and training (IFP) institutes across the territory, to promote a culture against discrimination in which students themselves play an active role. In 2025, the eighth edition of the project was carried out, focusing on gender-based, intersectional, additive and multiple discrimination. The pathway directly involved 130 students from upper secondary schools and IFP institutes. The project, which lasted an entire year, was structured into several actions:

- a pathway analysing the concepts of stereotype and prejudice, discrimination on “ethnic-racial” grounds from a gender perspective, and the danger of single narratives;
- a pathway on legislation and protections led by Fulvia Casagrande, specialised in anti-discrimination law related to vulnerability factors;
- a theatre improvisation pathway involving the actress of Iranian origin Sanam Naderi, to explore discriminatory dynamics in a creative and participatory way;
- a “world café” on creativity aimed at designing the content of a poster, preparatory to the subsequent artistic workshop;
- a workshop for the creation of anti-discrimination posters, led by the illustrator of Senegalese origin Miriam Panieri and the comic artist Gianluca Varone;
- a visit to places of memory, such as the Fossoli concentration and transit camp (Carpi). Following the visit, students took part in a workshop with the Fondazione Fossoli, focused on analysing historical documents from the period to deepen their understanding of the link between history and mechanisms of discrimination;
- the organisation of exhibitions featuring the posters in each school and a public exhibition held at the Anna Stepanovna Politkovskaja hall of the library in Castel Maggiore.

### *Every Language Matters*

Launched in 2018 to promote multilingualism, in 2025 the project produced and tested five teaching units, accompanied by user guides, for the teaching of five curricular subjects: language education, history and civic education, natural sciences, cooking, dining room and bar service, and electrical systems. The pilot phase involved three institutions: Metropolitan Bologna CPIA 2 “Eduard C. Lindeman”, Montagna of Castel di Casio CPIA, and the Bologna vocational training provider CEFAL, with two training sections (restaurant service operator and electrical systems operator). A total of 149 students participated, distributed across ten classes. The main beneficiaries of the project and the materials developed are teachers working in CPIAs (Provincial Centers for Adult Education) and vocational training institutions engaged with multilingual classes. The tools produced are designed for students attending first-level CPIA courses, with particular attention to young adults (aged 16–18), and for learners enrolled in vocational training pathways placed in classes that are heterogeneous in terms of languages and countries of origin.

### *Rebels Like the Wind*

The project was launched on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, held on 21 March 2025. It is an artistic and educational project of the Metropolitan City of Bologna, conceived by the Aldrovandi Rubbiani Institute and hosted at Palazzo Malvezzi, aimed at celebrating diversity and combating racism through art, fashion and the iconic symbols of the city of Bologna. The project was implemented with the support of UNAR and funded by ESF resources, and also included interactive photo shoots with the photographer from Burkina Faso, Fatoumata Diabaté.

Subsequently, the exhibition was hosted in various venues across the metropolitan area: on 22 October at the Festival of Technical Culture, within the framework of the Fair of Ideas, combined with a fashion show entitled “Architexture,” also conceived by the Aldrovandi Rubbiani Institute, and later at the Media Library of San Lazzaro, from 2 to 6 December. To broaden the interest

generated by the exhibition at the San Lazzaro Media Library, the opening was preceded by a performance focused on gender-based, intersectional, additive and multiple discrimination: “The Hidden Strength – Women Scientists in Physics and in History,” attended by 170 students.

### *Training for combating discrimination in the metropolitan area*

Within the framework of SPAD activities, and in a perspective of synergy and collaboration with the Municipality of Bologna, in 2025 the Metropolitan City developed and completed training activities attributable to Function 3, “Information and awareness-raising”, and Function 4, “Training”. In particular, a training pathway was implemented for operators of social help desks, Public Relations Offices (URP), registry offices, third-sector organisations and other services. The training, lasting a total of 11 hours, was structured into modules dedicated to legislation, inclusive language, experiential pathways and access to SPAD, carried out between 2024 and 2025. The training took place in five districts of the metropolitan area and involved 89 participants: 41 social help desk operators, 16 URP operators, 1 registry office operator, 6 administrative officers, 2 third-sector organisation workers, 1 health registry operator, 2 municipal administrative employees and 20 social workers from ASC Insieme.

## 2.4 The Municipality of Bologna’s anti-discrimination policies and actions

Combating discrimination is a priority issue for the Municipal Administration. The Programme Guidelines for the 2021–2026 mandate, “The Great Bologna: Leaving No One Behind”, envision Bologna as a welcoming city committed to developing policies aimed at granting full citizenship to people with a migration background, through the recognition of social and civil rights for those who have chosen Bologna as a place to live and raise their children, regardless of origin or nationality. Since June 2022, the Administration has symbolically incorporated *Ius Soli* into the Statute of the Municipality of Bologna, pending a hoped-for amendment to national legislation, and has been working to facilitate administrative pathways for the exercise of rights, in close synergy with relevant institutional bodies, particularly with police headquarters. Furthermore, SPAD, launched at the beginning of the mandate, serves as a reference point for individuals who are “victims” of racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination, while also performing a coordination function with registry offices, the local health authority (AUSL), police headquarters, the prefecture, service providers, and local associations.

It is also planned to strengthen the Coordination Node and the Metropolitan Anti-discrimination Network through the involvement of the territorial service system, continuing collaboration with the Metropolitan City in order to develop a more structured, central, and community-based service. To this end, the Metropolitan City of Bologna, acting as lead partner, and the Emilia-Romagna Region, as project partner, submitted an expression of interest to participate in the UNAR-promoted project “Support for Territorial Anti-discrimination Networks – Capacity Building and Scientific Coordination” (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund – AMIF 2021–2027). Within this framework, the objective is to consolidate the role of the Municipality of Bologna’s Anti-discrimination Help Center as a Central Node and to strengthen the network of access points across the metropolitan area (“hub and spoke” model), with the aim of improving the detection and management of discrimination reports throughout the metropolitan territory. Within this broader view to strengthen the service at metropolitan level, SPAD will continue to operate as a service co-designed and co-managed in partnership with third-sector organisations.

The Programme Guidelines also provide for the enhancement of the capabilities of persons with disabilities, enabling them to take a leading role in their pathways toward social and employment inclusion and in shaping their life projects; the strengthening of the role of the Disability Manager within a broader team of Diversity Managers; and the commitment of Metropolitan Bologna to remain at the forefront in promoting the civil rights of LGBTQIA+ communities and in combating all forms of sexual and gender-based discrimination. In this regard, the Municipality has joined the Metropolitan Equality Plan, implementing concrete actions aimed at achieving gender equality and countering all forms of discrimination and delivering training and awareness-raising initiatives on diversity in schools of all levels, professional training programmes for public administration staff on gender-based violence and gender identity diversity, and gender-positive awareness pathways as well as sexuality and gender education initiatives across community social

spaces throughout the city. Implementation of the General Collaboration Pact for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of LGBTQIA+ People and Community continues, alongside cooperation with cities belonging to the READY Network. Gender-free bathrooms have been introduced in municipal facilities, and the adoption of an *alias identity* system has been expanded both for municipal employees and for users of the city's public library system.

Anti-discrimination represents one of the main areas of intervention of the New Citizenships, Cooperation and Human Rights Office of the Municipality of Bologna, which coordinates actions aimed at promoting and protecting citizens' rights and combating discrimination, and represents the Municipality on the Steering Committee of the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism and Xenophobia (ECCAR). The Municipality and the Metropolitan City jointly participated in the UNAR and UNESCO Seminar on "Metropolitan Cities for Inclusion," hosted by the City of Palermo in May 2025, which provided an opportunity to review anti-racism and anti-discrimination activities carried out across different territories and to exchange views on future prospects.

By means of Council Resolution PG no. 697834/2022, a cross-cutting functional unit within the authority was also established, named the "Rights and Plural City Office", coordinated by the unit responsible for anti-discrimination actions within the General Directorate - Administrative Simplification and Citizen Relations Department. The Rights and Plural City Office is also carrying forward the coordination work of the Interdepartmental Working Group, established through Administrative Decree PG no. 445746/2022 of the General Directorate and composed of internal representatives from the various departments; its objective is to ensure integrated action within the Administration regarding the protection of rights, the enhancement of diversity, and the prevention of all forms of discrimination, informing the overall activities of the Administration, activating structured dialogue with external stakeholders, and supporting the implementation of specific projects in these fields.

Within this context, in 2025 a further important step was added through the approval of Council Resolution PG no. 801284/2025, which introduces policy guidelines aimed at consolidating and integrating into the Administration's ordinary activities the promotion of *ius soli* and citizenship rights. Among the objectives set out in the resolution, central importance is given to supporting the participation and involvement of community associations in the Administration's activities, also with the aim of improving service accessibility, as well as to promoting the systematic dissemination within the Administration of knowledge and skills related to citizenship rights. The contents and perspectives of the resolution were presented to associations and to representatives of the various municipal offices involved during a highly attended meeting held on 9 December 2025 at the M. Zonarelli Intercultural Center.

At the same time, efforts continue to expand and strengthen SPAD in order to make it a widespread and accessible service across the territory and to extend its scope to additional discrimination grounds; within this perspective, since October 2024 a physical desk has also been operating at a location in Bologna's Porto-Saragozza district. During 2025, the training programme "Rights and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities," addressed both to municipal employees and to SPAD case managers and operators, was completed; the fourth training pathway for operators to be involved in the Help Center activities was launched and concluded; and a new anti-discrimination training programme for intercultural mediators was initiated.

### *The work of the Diversity Team of the Municipality of Bologna*

In 2025, the valuable work of the Diversity Team of the Municipality of Bologna continued, becoming increasingly consolidated. The Team was appointed by the Mayor in February 2023 and is composed of: Fulvia Casagrande, Michelle Rivera, Daro Sakho, Maximiliano Ulivieri and Nunzia Vannuccini.

The Diversity Team continues to work alongside the Rights and Plural City Office in developing the good management of all dimensions of diversity, contributing to numerous and varied activities. The constant and operational work of the Diversity Team on the procedures and projects of the Municipality of Bologna represents a real strength in consolidating attention not only to the prevention of and fight against discrimination, but also to the management of diversity in the administration of the city from an intersectional perspective.

### *The Local Action Plan for an Anti-Racist and Intercultural City*

On 7 February 2023, through Council Resolution PG no. 76563/2023, the Local Action Plan for an Anti-Racist and Intercultural City (2022-2026) was approved, constituting a strategic document for combating racism and hate crimes. The Local Action Plan (PAL) fits within the broader strategic framework of the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025 and draws inspiration from the intercultural integration policy model adopted by the Council of Europe in 2015. The development of the Local Action Plan took place within the project “SUPER – SUPporting Everyday fight against Racism”, co-funded by the European Union under the REC – Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme. The Plan is the result of a participatory process involving 34 associations, religious communities, informal groups, law enforcement representatives (state police, carabinieri, local police) and municipal service representatives (Libraries and Cultural Welfare, Housing Policies, Sports Department, Welfare and Community Wellbeing Department, Education and New Generations Area, and Demographic Services).

The vision of the Plan is that of a city capable of building shared understanding and collective action to combat structural and institutional racism, engaging the entire urban community and producing meaningful and measurable changes in the everyday lives of people belonging to racialised groups. The Local Action Plan is based on guiding principles including:

1. the promotion of equality as a positive duty of the Administration rather than merely protection against discrimination;
2. priority focus on institutional or systemic racism;
3. mainstreaming of anti-racism policies supported by clear political direction and responsibility;
4. adoption of an intersectional approach acknowledging interactions among multiple forms and causes of discrimination and the plurality of identities;
5. reliance on the “best available science and knowledge” as the basis for policy decisions;
6. active involvement of racialised groups, their organisations and civil society actors committed to equality.

Within the Plan, priority areas of action were identified as: i) training and awareness-raising; ii) data collection aimed at reducing *under-recording* and *under-reporting* of discrimination across the territory, recognised challenges at all institutional levels; iii) citizen services, understood as mapping needs, identifying persistent critical issues and developing appropriate tools and methods to address them. The planned actions pursue improvement objectives across the identified policy and service areas: Housing, Education, Culture, Employment, Demographic Services, Social and Health Services, Sport, Victims Support, and Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue.

More than two years after the entry into force of the Plan, the Rights and Plural City Office, thanks to its coordinating role, is collaborating with the different Departments, Areas and Sectors of the Administration in monitoring the planned actions, through a system of indicators developed in coherence with the objectives and actions of the Plan itself. The Plan therefore constitutes the reference framework for the entire Administration in the field of the fight against racism and discrimination, as well as for the activities and projects developed on these issues.

Within this very framework, in 2025 the project “Trajectories of Gazes” was once again implemented. Through this project, each year artists with diasporic experience “adopt” one or more civic museums of the Municipality of Bologna, acting as guides for a free workshop-based programme held within museum spaces and at the Amilcar Cabral Library, which specialises in the history, culture, arts and knowledge of the countries of Africa, Latin America, Asia and Oceania. The objective is to propose pathways that engage participants in a process of re-elaboration, enrichment, co-creation and transformation of the narratives surrounding the artistic and documentary heritage preserved in the city’s museums and libraries, generating new, broader and more inclusive narratives. The programme is accompanied by a process of collective co-production of a fanzine including reading, listening, viewing and in-depth exploration suggestions. The project reflects the cross-sectoral work carried out among the different branches of the Administration, specifically involving the Amilcar Cabral Library, the Civic Museums Sector and the New Citizenships Office.

Another area of particular attention for the City of Bologna concerns housing. In this regard, thanks to an agreement with the Department of Sociology and Business Law of the University of Bologna, in 2024 the Housing Policies Sector initiated a research project aimed at investigating shared and solidarity-based housing as a tool for individual and collective empowerment in countering discrimination in access to housing based on migratory background, sexual orientation and gender identity. The study, entitled “Evidence of Innovation in Local Housing Welfare. Housing Communities as a Tool for Individual and Collective Empowerment in Combating Gender Discrimination”, stems from the need to analyse the phenomenon of housing discrimination, often difficult to define, with the objective of identifying policies to counter it. The analysis starts from the observation that the coexistence of multiple factors of disadvantage contributes to the invisibility of certain subjectivities and to forms of oppression or subordination, discrimination and social exclusion. The study therefore explores the possibility that housing welfare may contribute to redefining more inclusive policies by placing the role of housing at the center of people’s and communities’ life paths, fostering empowerment processes. The research thus responds to the objectives set out in the 2021–2026 Programme Guidelines, with particular attention to the experimentation of intergenerational and intersectional collaborative living spaces, and falls within the five strategies of the Housing Plan of the Municipality of Bologna, approved in July 2023. In 2025, this research was used for the development of the call for applications, published at the end of the year, for the allocation of 16 housing units within a solidarity-based condominium. The call was designed to create a mixed community that, starting from the possession of the basic requirements for participation, would give space to citizens who, due to different characteristics, may experience difficulties in accessing housing. Among these, two housing units were reserved for households including at least one person with refugee status or subsidiary protection status who had completed their pathway within dedicated reception measures.

### *ECCAR – European Coalition of Cities Against Racism and Xenophobia*

The Municipality of Bologna is a member of ECCAR – the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism and Xenophobia, a network of more than 180 cities committed to exchanging good practices and experiences to implement anti-racism, anti-discrimination and anti-xenophobia policies; during the 2025 General Assembly hosted in Zurich, the Municipality of Bologna was elected to the Steering Committee, together with 25 other cities, for the 2025–2029 mandate, confirming its active role within the Network, which it has also chaired since 2015 through former city councillor Benedetto Zacchioli, whose four-year mandate was subsequently renewed.

The Municipality actively participates in ECCAR working groups addressing Antisemitism, Anti-Black racism and Islamophobia, and in 2025 inaugurated a new working group on “Artificial Intelligence and Ethics in Public Administration”, which it will coordinate in the coming years in collaboration with UNESCO. Artificial intelligence tools are now widely used also within public administrations, bringing with them many opportunities but also critical issues that it is necessary to be aware of, especially in the daily work of combating discrimination (for further discussion of the topic, see the contribution “Urban Intelligence”). From this arises the objective of the new working group, namely to provide cities with practical tools and guidelines for using AI in a responsible, transparent and inclusive way, while at the same time promoting innovation and social justice. On 27 November 2025, the kick-off meeting of the working group was held, during which the Municipality of Bologna and the Metropolitan City presented the tools they are developing in mutual collaboration to address the challenges of artificial intelligence, as well as the local ecosystem characterised by significant European investments. UNESCO and Equinet contributed by further exploring the themes of algorithmic discrimination and the role of public administration in the development of artificial intelligence tools that are inclusive. The first meeting of the working group represented an important opportunity to exchange views with other cities and to make an initial assessment of how the various cities in the Network are managing the opportunities and challenges presented by these tools.

The City of Bologna also participated in ECCAR’s Reporting System, which allows member cities to share local good practices in combating racism and receive evaluative feedback from the Scientific Advisory Committee. In 2025, Bologna presented the pilot participatory review of its educational services carried out within the European project “UNITES – Urban INTEgration Strategies through co-design,” which developed an innovative and easily replicable participation model for revising administrative procedures and processes<sup>34</sup>.

Also in 2025, the Municipality of Bologna and ECCAR offered two young residents the opportunity to participate in the third edition of the ICCAR Youth Boot Camp for Inclusive and Sustainable Cities<sup>35</sup>, held from 31 August to 6 September in Palermo, enabling young participants from different countries to take part in an extensive programme of meetings, exchanges and learning activities aimed at strengthening knowledge and skills so that young people can act as active agents in combating racism and discrimination within their local contexts.

### *New Citizenship Festival and #iussolibologna Communication Campaign*

By Council Resolution PG no. 801284/2025, concerning the “Approval of guidelines to consolidate and integrate the commitment to promoting *Ius Soli* and citizenship rights into the ordinary activities of the Administration”, under the impetus of the Mayor’s Delegate for New Citizenships, Erika Capasso, the Municipality of Bologna deemed it appropriate to outline the active involvement of the different Departments, Areas and Sectors of the Administration in four main areas of intervention: Education, Culture, Accessibility to services and citizenship rights, Oath ceremonies for new citizens, and public celebrations. Within the same resolution, the Administration defined the main actions connected to the above-mentioned areas, confirming an integrated and cross-sectoral approach through the involvement of the Diversity Team and the establishment of a dedicated interdepartmental working group.

The lines of action outlined in the resolution are based on the broader process the Administration initiated in 2022 with the recognition of citizenship rights and the amendment to its Statute, approved by the City Council, introducing the principle of *Ius Soli*.

Starting from 2023, each year the Municipality supports numerous initiatives aimed at promoting participation and civic collaboration, enhancing and making visible the different communities and backgrounds that make up the city’s social fabric.

In spring, on the occasion of the National Unity Day, Constitution, Anthem and Flag Day, an event is organised with young people who have turned eighteen and who acquired Italian citizenship in the previous year. In 2025, young participants took part in a ceremony dedicated to them held in the City Council Hall, in the presence of Deputy Mayor Emily Clancy and the Delegate for New Citizenships Erika Capasso.

In July, the Festival of New Citizenships took place in Piazza Maggiore, a special occasion for dialogue with Bologna’s new citizens and an opportunity to present the different communities living in the local area through a festive moment of music and performances. This year, the public event was preceded by “Voices of Citizenship for a Plural City”, an open and highly attended dialogue among representatives of diasporas, new citizens and young people to share lived experiences of citizenship, recognise the different subjectivities inhabiting the city, and collectively build a shared vision of a plural and decolonial city.

On the occasion of the International Day for Children’s Rights, on 20 November, the annual event was held at Teatro Manzoni with nearly one thousand students from Bologna’s secondary schools. The morning dedicated to raising awareness on the theme of citizenship included a meeting between the Mayor and young participants, featuring a series of testimonies and contributions by young artists, with the participation of Dalla Parte Giusta della Storia.

## URBAN INTELLIGENCE

by Prof. Roberta Calegari, University of Bologna

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly used to support decisions that matter: who is invited to a job interview, which family gets priority for public housing, where social services concentrate their efforts, how resources are distributed across neighbourhoods. These systems are often presented as neutral and objective, but they are developed and deployed within societies already marked by racism, sexism, class inequalities and other forms of discrimination. If we are not careful, AI risks becoming a powerful amplifier of existing injustices rather than a tool to correct them (O'Neil, 2016; Noble, 2018).

To understand this, it is important to look at AI not as a purely technical object, but as a **socio-technical system**. This means recognising that an AI system is not only made of data and algorithms, but also of the **people** who design it, the institutions that deploy it, the rules that govern it, and the communities that are affected by it (Suchman, 2007). In other words, society itself becomes a "variable" of the system: social norms, power relations and inequalities directly shape how the technology works and whom it benefits or harms (Winner, 1980).

Most AI systems learn from historical data. If those data reflect a history of unequal treatment of racialised people, migrants, women, people with disabilities, or poor neighbourhoods, the model will absorb these patterns as if they were normal (Barocas & Selbst, 2016). When the system is then used for new decisions, past discrimination is carried forward into the future.

There are at least three recurring problems:

**Under-representation and misrepresentation.** Some groups simply do not appear in the data, or appear in very small numbers. Others are grouped in ways that erase important differences. These are the "invisibles": people whose experiences and needs are not captured by the data, and whose existence the algorithm therefore cannot "see" (Noble, 2018; Eubanks, 2018). An AI system can be very accurate on the majority and consistently wrong - or simply blind - when it comes to those at the margins.

**Biased labels and hidden proxies.** Even when "race" or "ethnic origin" information is not explicitly recorded, other variables (such as neighbourhood, income, type of job, migration status) can indirectly encode racial information and thus lead to discrimination. If, in the past, employers systematically favoured some groups over others, the historical data will reflect this - for example, fewer "high potential candidates" recorded for people with foreign-sounding names, even when they were just as reliable. When we use these data to train an AI model, the algorithm learns those biased patterns and repeats them automatically, but now hidden behind the appearance of mathematical objectivity.

**Design choices and what we optimise for.** Many systems are optimised for efficiency objectives, like, for instance, cost reduction. This can mean accepting that certain groups bear more errors or more burdens than others. A model that is "good on average" may still be deeply unfair if it systematically disadvantages racialised groups, women, single parents or people with disabilities, especially in high-stakes areas like welfare, housing or policing (O'Neil, 2016; Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018).

These issues do not concern only "race" in isolation. In reality, people live at the **intersection of multiple dimensions**: race, gender, class, age, disability, sexuality, migration status, religion. This is the essence of an **intersectional perspective**: discrimination does not operate along a single line, but through overlapping systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). For example, a racialised woman with a disability may face very different and more intense barriers than a white woman or a racialised man. If our data and our algorithms ignore these intersections, they will systematically fail the most vulnerable people. Because AI systems are socio-technical, they cannot be "fixed" only by changing a formula or adding a few fairness constraints. We need **intersectional and participatory approaches** that bring different forms of knowledge into the design and governance of these systems (Costanza-Chock, 2020). An intersectional approach means ask-

ing, at every step: Who is affected by this system? How might its errors or decisions impact people who are at the intersection of multiple vulnerabilities (race, gender, class, disability, migration, etc.)? It requires us to disaggregate data, to look at differences within groups, and to be honest about what the data does not capture at all (Crenshaw, 1991; Eubanks, 2018). A participatory approach means **involving those who are affected** – especially racialised communities and other marginalised groups – not only as *targets* of data collection, but as active participants in defining the problems, the risks and what a *fair* outcome looks like. It is not enough for experts to speak about discrimination in the abstract: the lived experiences of those who face it must inform how AI systems are conceived, tested and monitored (Costanza-Chock, 2020).

### Beyond fear: towards fair and trustworthy AI

Recognising these risks does not mean that AI is inevitably harmful. It means we must be deliberate in how we design, test and govern AI systems. The good news is that, in recent years, research and policy have started to converge on a series of principles and tools to make AI fairer and more trustworthy. At the European level, the forthcoming **AI Act** and existing anti-discrimination and data protection laws make clear that high-risk AI systems must be transparent, subject to human oversight, and designed to avoid discriminatory outcomes. However, laws alone are not enough: we also need methods and infrastructures that help public administrations, companies and civil society put these principles into practice.

Within the AEQUITAS project, at the University of Bologna, we have worked precisely in this direction: combining technical tools (metrics,

algorithms, synthetic data, testing environments) with participatory approaches, socio-legal analysis and intersectional reflection (AEQUITAS, 2025). In recruitment, education and healthcare, we have seen that the most meaningful progress happens when statisticians, lawyers, social scientists, public officials and people from affected communities sit at the same table and look together at how an AI system really behaves, who it benefits and who it leaves behind. **AEQUITAS brings together a clear methodology and a practical experimentation environment that create a safe testing space for AI before these systems are used on real people.** The methodology helps us ask the right questions – about rights, discrimination risks and affected groups – while the experimentation environment lets us try out different data, algorithms and ways of reading the results to see where a system might behave in a discriminatory way and then adjust or redesign it. These experimentation environments are crucial, because they allow us to spot problems in advance and take action, instead of discovering only later that an AI system has been treating some groups unfairly. AEQUITAS does this by focusing on three main pillars where discrimination can arise: data, algorithms and the interpretation of results.

Starting from the first pillar, **data**, we can see that they are only one important piece of a larger picture. If they are collected and used without asking who is included, who is excluded and how decisions are made around them, AI systems tend to mirror and reinforce existing inequalities. But when data are handled within a broader socio-technical approach – with clear rules, careful governance and attention to the people and power relations behind the numbers – they can help make discrimination visible and support more just and effective interventions. **Algorithms** are another piece.



They are often presented as neutral formulas that simply “follow the data”, but in reality, they embody choices: which objective to optimise, which errors to tolerate, which groups to prioritise or neglect. If these choices are made only with efficiency or cost in mind, algorithms can turn existing prejudices into automatic rules. If instead they are designed with explicit fairness and rights criteria, they can be tuned to reduce unjust gaps rather than reproduce them. Finally, there is the **interpretation of results**. The same score or prediction can be used in very different ways: as a rigid decision, as a suggestion that a human can contest, or as a signal that triggers extra support for vulnerable groups. If numbers are treated as unquestionable truth, AI closes the space for dialogue and appeal. If, on the contrary, results are read critically, discussed with those affected and combined with other forms of knowledge, AI can become one element in a more accountable and democratic decision-making process.

Looking ahead, the University of Bologna is continuing this line of work through new European and national projects on **AI and compliance**, focused on turning legal and ethical requirements into concrete practices for the design, testing and auditing of AI systems. A particularly important development for the city is our collaboration with the Bologna Urban Digital Twin project (“Gemello digitale”), in partnership with

the Municipality. A digital twin is a virtual model of the city that integrates data on mobility, environment, services and population, and that can be used to simulate the impact of different policies before implementing them in the real world. Within the Bologna Digital Twin, our group is working specifically on ensuring the trustworthy and fair use of AI, by bringing together technical, legal and social perspectives, embedding intersectional indicators where appropriate, and involving different stakeholders in the discussion of what “good” and “fair” scenarios for the city should look like. This work is still in progress, but it illustrates a key point: AI can also be used to make inequalities visible, to test policies that prioritise the needs of those who are most disadvantaged, and to support more just and inclusive urban transformations.

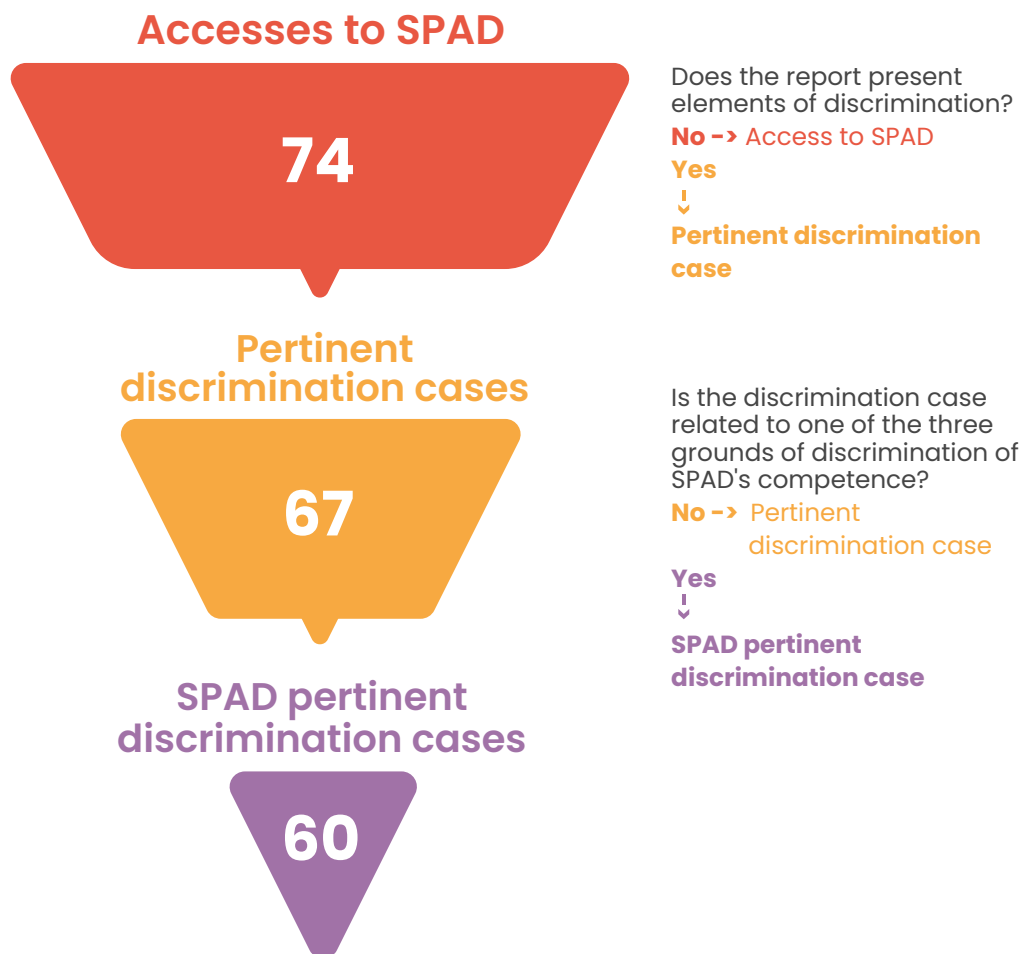
AI will not, by itself, eliminate racism or structural discrimination. But it can either hide and normalise those injustices, or help bring them to light and challenge them. The difference lies in whether we treat AI as a purely technical matter, or as part of a broader socio-technical system where law, politics, social movements and everyday practices all play a role. The challenge for the coming years - for the city, for the university and for all of us - is to ensure that this same commitment guides every new use of AI: to build socio-technical systems that move us closer to justice, not further away from it.

## CHAPTER 3

# ANALYSIS OF COLLECTED DATA

This chapter presents data relating to reports received by the SPAD between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. The first section examines the entire set of accesses, including both cases classified as pertinent discrimination (including perceived discrimination) and those with a doubtful or non-pertinent assessment. From the following section onwards, the analysis will focus exclusively on pertinent discrimination cases. For further details on the method of classification of reports, see infographic 2.

INFOGRAPHIC 2. THE METHOD OF CLASSIFICATION OF REPORTS

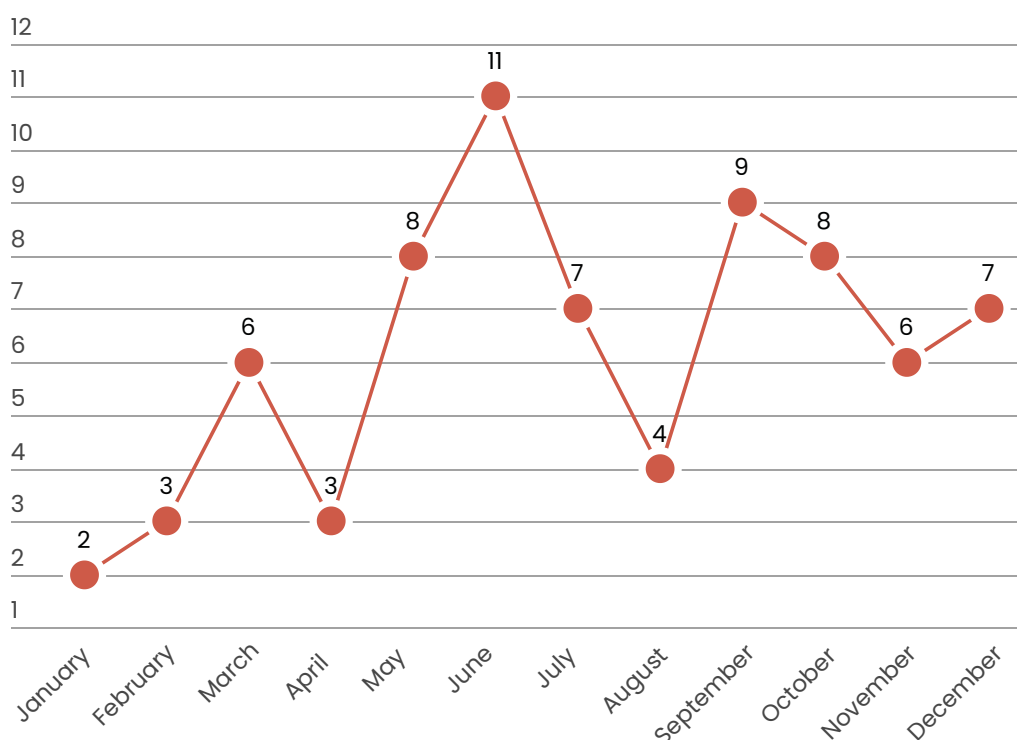


### 3.1 Accesses to SPAD

During the reporting period, SPAD recorded a total of 74 accesses, the highest number ever recorded since the Help Center's inception. This volume of activity marks a significant increase compared to the previous year (+32%), a sign of the service's continued consolidation across the territory. It is important to note that the total number of accesses does not correspond to the total number of reports classified as pertinent discrimination. This is because not all requests submitted to SPAD concern facts or situations attributable to discrimination; requests for support or assistance of various types may also be received - for example, assistance in preparing a CV or in searching for rental housing. In these cases, the SPAD team works to carefully identify the needs expressed and to guide and redirect the person contacting the Help Center towards the service or entity best suited to provide the requested answers or solutions. Although the data on total accesses does not correspond exclusively to reports of discrimination, it remains significant and represents an indicator of the increased trust that people place in SPAD.

**GRAPH 1. MONTHLY ACCESSES TO SPAD**

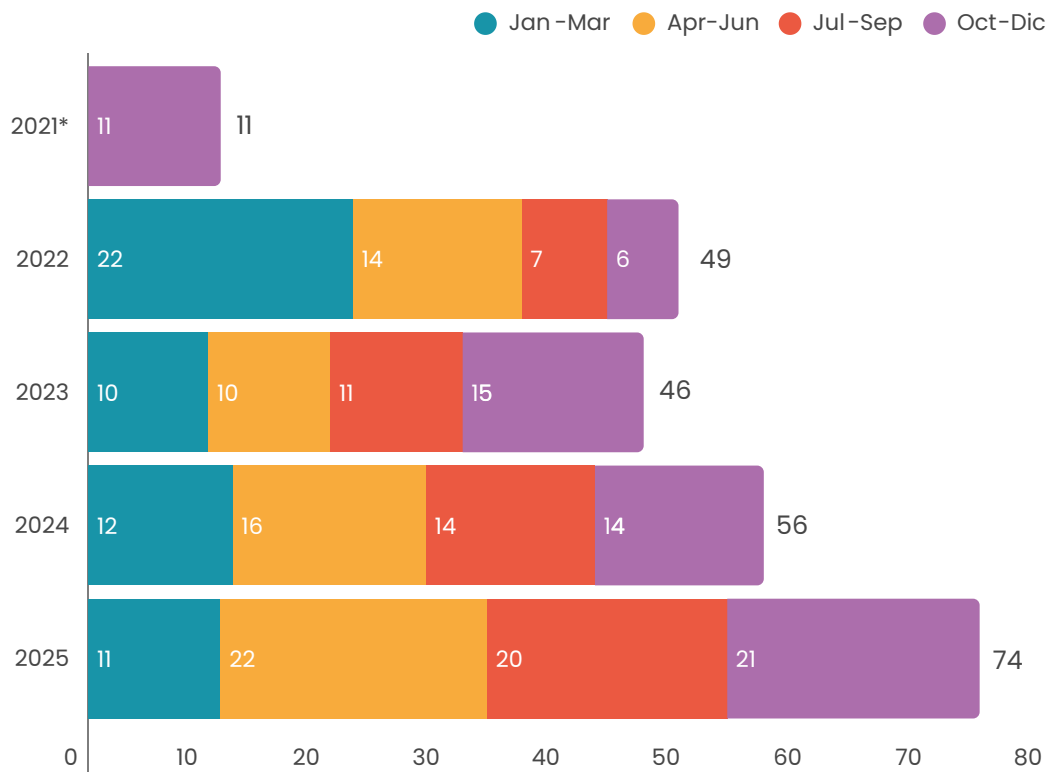
January 2025 - December 2025



The analysis of monthly accesses to SPAD (graph 1) confirms the trend of progressive growth observed starting from the Second Report, which reached its peak in 2025. At the same time, greater stability in the distribution of reports was also confirmed, highlighted by lower variability across the different months of the year. The trend illustrated in graph 2 - which compares SPAD accesses by calendar year rather than by the reporting periods of the four Reports<sup>36</sup> - provides a dual picture, allowing both comparison with previous years and an interpretation of internal dynamics within 2025. A clear change of pace emerges starting from the second quarter of 2025: while in the first three months of the year total accesses amounted to 11 (with an average of 3.6 accesses per month), in the following quarters the number never fell below 20, maintaining a constant average of 7 accesses per month. This trend suggests that the visibility of the March 21 initiatives and the in-person meetings among SPAD Network associations (including the one held in June, corresponding with the annual peak in accesses), the training course addressed to new operators, and stronger coordination between SPAD and local organisations represented the main driving factors behind the observed growth.

**GRAPH 2. ACCESSES TO SPAD BY CALENDAR YEAR**

January 2025 - December 2025



\*The period covering the year 2021 relates exclusively to December 2021, the month during which SPAD was launched

While recognising the importance of these data, it is important to reiterate the persistent level of *under-reporting* and *under-recording* of discrimination phenomena. The increase in reports in 2025 marks a fundamental step forward, but represents only part of a broader phenomenon on which it is necessary to continue investing energy and constant commitment. The results presented here are certainly significant, but they cannot claim to be exhaustive or fully territorially representative. In the field of combating discrimination, the greatest challenge is, in fact, to succeed in bringing to light the totality of discrimination phenomena. This is because a significant share of discriminatory acts often remains undetected and unknown, as they are not reported, denounced and/or recorded as such.

The term *under-reporting* refers to the tendency whereby those who experience or witness discrimination decide not to file a complaint with the competent authorities and/or not to report the incident to relevant networks or associations. This contributes to the underestimation of cases of discrimination compared to their actual extent. The phenomenon of *under-reporting* is often closely connected to *under-recording*, a term referring to the failure to recognise the discriminatory nature of an act by those responsible for handling a report or complaint. As a result, such actions are not recorded as discrimination - and therefore do not feature in the monitoring of the phenomenon - and are consequently not managed appropriately.

Regarding the reasons underlying the decision not to report or denounce discrimination experienced or witnessed, images 1 and 2 present those identified by the SPAD Network in 2023. Although these show common and widely shared elements, it is important to emphasise that this list should not be considered exhaustive or generalisable to all discrimination cases, as each situation is unique.

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IMAGE 1.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MAIN REASONS WHY PEOPLE DO NOT REPORT THE DISCRIMINATION THEY SUFFER (UNDER-REPORTING)?

Perception of being considered inferior  
Minimisation of the discrimination suffered  
Fear of secondary victimisation  
Fear of not being understood/heard  
Ineffectiveness/absence of answers  
Perception of uselessness of the complaint  
Distrust of institutions  
Lack of knowledge of one's rights  
Complexity and cost of bureaucratic procedures  
Lack of media representation Lack of awareness Fear  
Poor and inaccessible information  
Fear of revealing aspects of one's identity  
Need to focus on basic needs  
Feeling of deserving of the discrimination suffered

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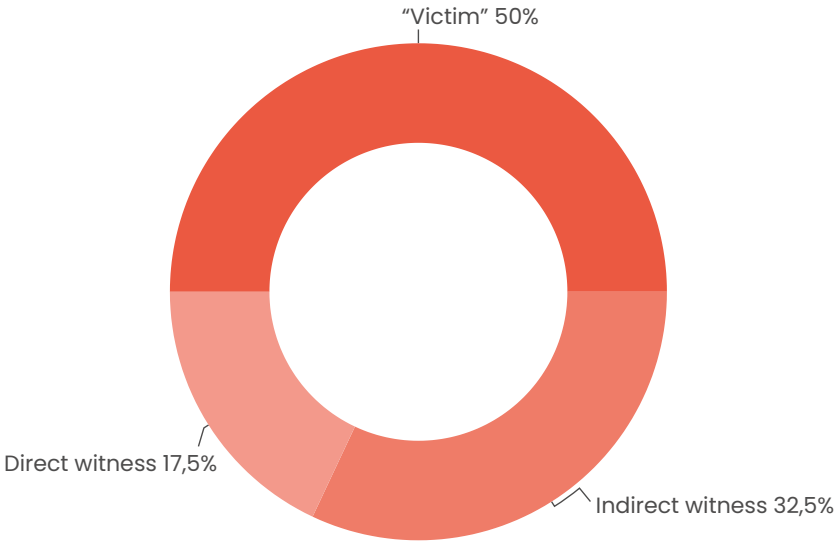
IMAGE 2

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MAIN REASONS WHY THOSE WHO RECEIVE REPORTS OF DISCRIMINATION DO NOT RECORD THEM AND HANDLE THEM AS DISCRIMINATION (UNDER-RECORDING)?

Lack of support from superiors/political forces  
Lack of adequate reporting tools  
Lack of resources  
Internalised discrimination  
Lack of listening skills  
Lack of expertise on the subject  
Inadequacy of relevant legislation  
Widespread culture of stereotypes and prejudices  
Lack of training  
Denial of discriminatory motive  
Lack of political attention on the issue  
Disinterest Victims not believed Personal attitudes  
Normalisation of discrimination  
Lack of linguistic/cultural mediation  
Abuse of power Complexity of bureaucratic procedures  
Lack of a referral system  
Lack of reception/facilitation of complaints by the police

**GRAPH 3. ACCESSES BY USER TYPE**

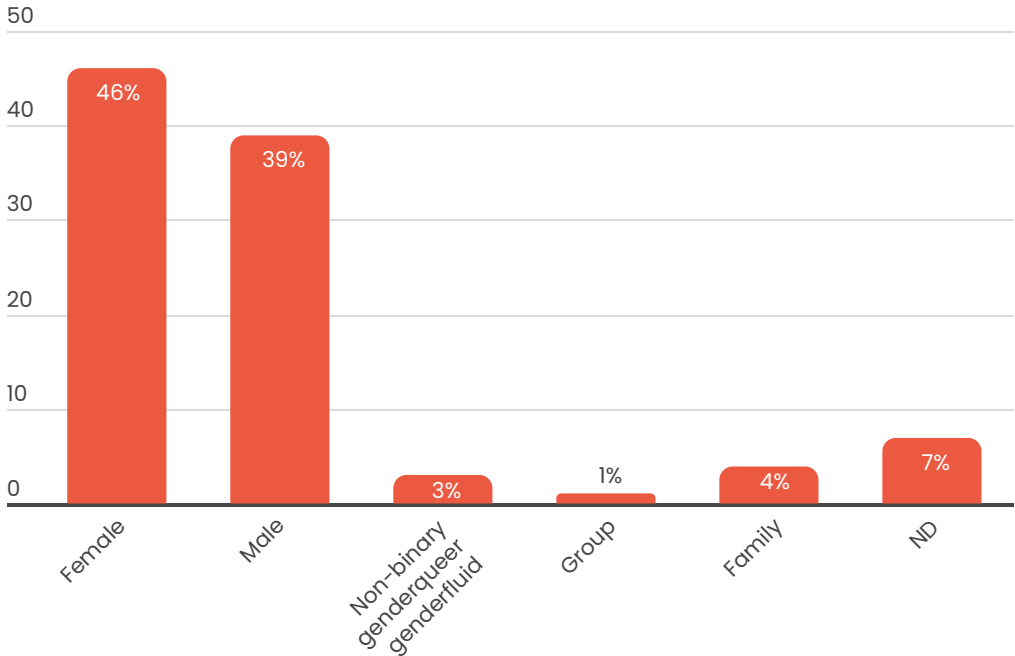
January 2025 - December 2025



In 2025, out of 74 total accesses, half of the reports (50%) were submitted by persons directly involved in the reported events (graph 3). In the remaining cases, the report was submitted by a direct (17.5%) or indirect witness (32.5%), meaning a person neither directly involved nor directly witnessing the discriminatory event, but who became aware of the facts through the "victim" and/or a direct witness (graph 3). Within this scenario, the significant increase in reports submitted by direct witnesses (+10.5% compared to 2024) is particularly noteworthy - a figure that signals positive developments in terms of growing "civic courage" and active participation by Bologna's citizens in combating discrimination.

**GRAPH 4. ACCESSES BY GENDER**

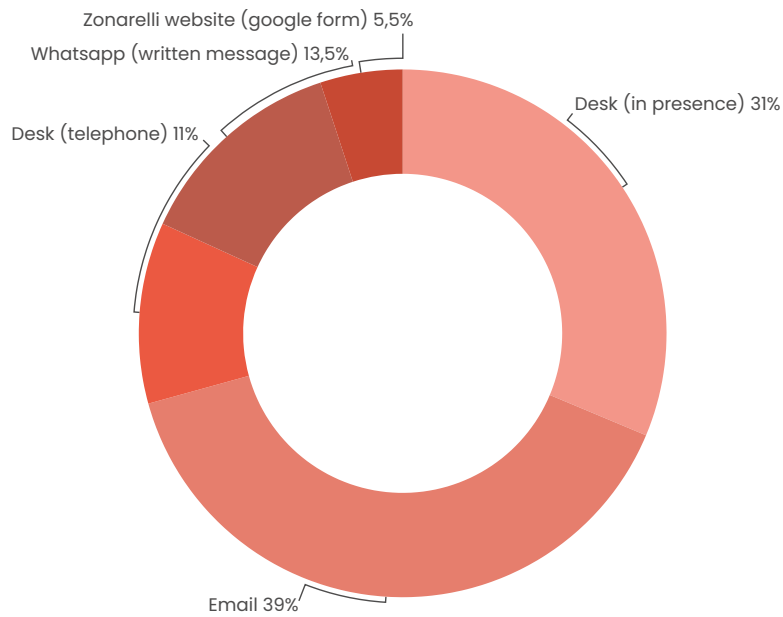
January 2025 - December 2025



The collected data show that among those who submitted a report to SPAD, the majority identify as female, representing 46% of the total. This is followed by 39% identifying as male and 3% identifying as non-binary, genderqueer, or genderfluid (graph 4). A relevant new element compared to 2024 concerns the emergence of collective users: during 2025, the service was also accessed by family units (4%) and groups (1%), categories that recorded no accesses in the previous year.

**GRAPH 5. ACCESSES BY ACCESS MODALITY**

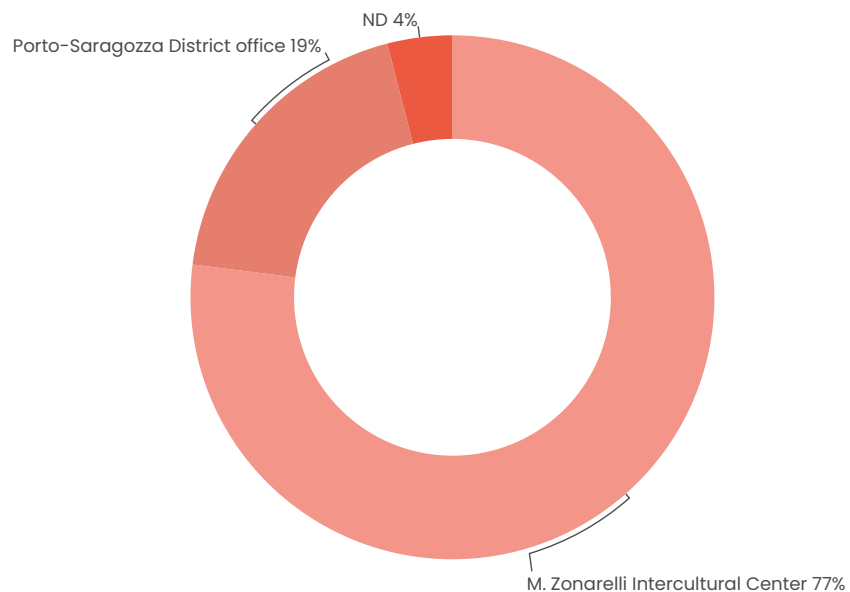
January 2025 - December 2025



During the reference period, email was confirmed as the preferred contact channel for users of the Help Center: in 39% of cases, the first contact with SPAD occurred through this modality. However, 2025 recorded a strong increase in in-person visits to physical offices (31%), with a +11% increase compared to 2024. This development appears closely linked to the strengthening of SPAD's territorial presence, particularly through the consolidation of the second desk located in the Porto-Saragozza district. As illustrated in graph 6, although the M. Zonarelli Intercultural Center remains the main reference hub (77% of reports), in 2025 the Porto-Saragozza desk reached 19% of users (the remaining 4% of cases did not have a physical desk of reference). This suggests that the availability of stable and permanent service points is a fundamental factor in ensuring broad accessibility. Regarding other access modalities, lower incidences were recorded for instant messaging (13.5%), telephone contact (11%), and the online form (5.5%).

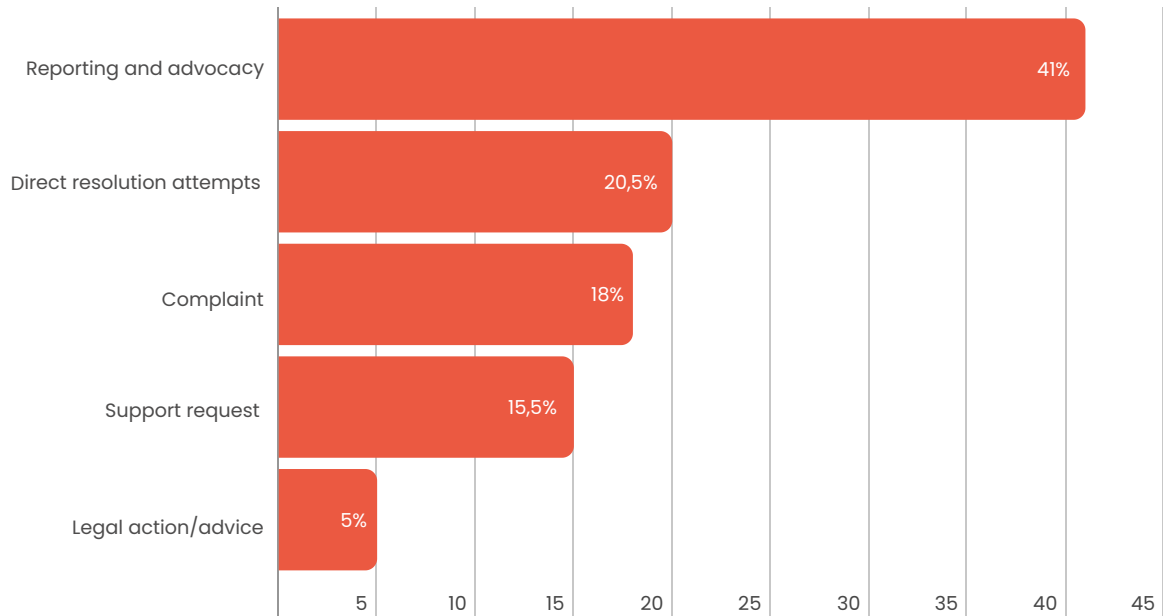
**GRAPH 6. ACCESSES BY PHYSICAL DESK OF ACCESS**

January 2025 - December 2025



**GRAPH 7. TYPE OF ACTIONS TAKEN BEFORE CONTACTING SPAD**

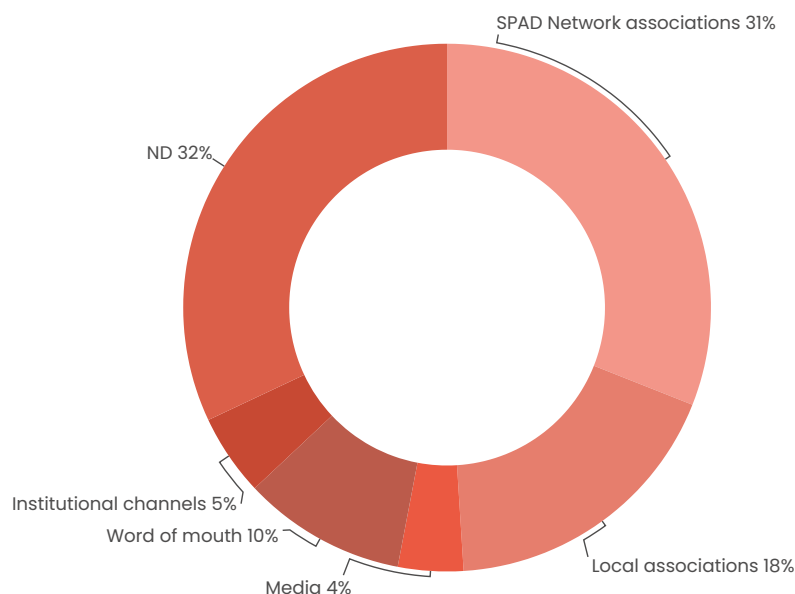
January 2025 - December 2025



Among those who submitted a report in 2025, 40% chose SPAD as their first interlocutor for reporting a discrimination case. Compared to the 20.5% recorded in 2024, this figure highlights how SPAD is consolidating its role as a primary reference point in the territory on anti-discrimination matters. In the remaining cases, 51% had already attempted other types of action before turning to SPAD, including reporting and advocacy actions (41%), attempts at direct resolution (20.5%), filing complaints (18%), or requesting support from other associations or services (15.5%). Discrimination situations that had already been formally reported before contacting SPAD (7 cases in total) were often complex and multifactorial. In these cases, people turned to SPAD not only to report the incident but also to obtain support and guidance within a pathway that may include reporting to law enforcement authorities. In only two cases had legal action or legal consultation been initiated prior to contact with SPAD (graph 7). A qualitative finding that emerged strongly this year concerns the effectiveness of previous reporting or support attempts: many individuals who reached the Help Center after numerous intermediate steps reported having found listening and recognition of their situation for the first time only thanks to SPAD. Often, previous actions had not been effective, generating feelings of frustration and discouragement and leading people to experience situations perceived as “stalled” until contact with SPAD. It must be acknowledged that SPAD’s intervention does not necessarily coincide with the definitive resolution of often deeply rooted and complex issues; however, where other pathways generated stagnation and frustration, SPAD represented for many the first space of genuine listening and recognition of their situation.

**GRAPH 8. HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT SPAD?**

January 2025 – December 2025



When asking SPAD users how they learned about the service (graph 8), the fundamental role of the SPAD Network and the broader network of third-sector organisations in the Bologna area clearly emerged in promoting awareness of the Help Center: 31% of people learned about SPAD through Network associations (+11% compared to 2024), while 18% did so through other local associations (+6% compared to 2024). It is noteworthy that, despite distrust in institutions appearing among the main causes of *under-reporting* according to associations' perceptions, most referrals to SPAD are nevertheless activated by the third sector. Among SPAD Network associations, the contribution of the following is highlighted: Interculturale Universo (8% of reports), Raggi di Sole (5.5%), Casa del Mondo (5.5%), COSPE (4%), Diaconia Valdese (3%), Sconfinamenti (3%), Spazio Pace (1.5%), and Arca di Noè (1.5%). With significantly lower percentages, the remaining users learned about SPAD through word of mouth (10%), through its communication channels (4%), or through institutional channels (5%).



## Denied employment: discriminatory practices in recognising residence permit receipts as valid documentation for employment

A young adult who had arrived in Italy as an unaccompanied minor, in possession of a receipt for the renewal of his residence permit for pending employment issued over a year earlier, had been working regularly through an employment agency. However, when it came time to renew his contract, the agency terminated the relationship and refused to sign a new contract, arguing that the receipt was now too old and no longer valid.

This behaviour constitutes direct discrimination based on national origin and foreign status. Article 5, paragraph 9-bis of the Consolidated Act on Immigration (Legislative Decree 286/98) establishes that the renewal receipt is fully valid for work until the new permit is issued or a refusal is issued. The agency's refusal was therefore based on an incorrect application of the law and on a prejudice regarding the validity of the documents, unjustifiably hindering an integration process that had already begun.

SPAD's intervention focused on formally calling on the agency to comply with the law. This episode highlights how discriminatory barriers to access to work can also manifest themselves through the incorrect application of regulations and the spread of unfounded beliefs about documentation.

## 3.2 Analysis of discrimination cases

The analysis conducted so far has concerned the totality of accesses to SPAD, which – as already noted – does not correspond to the totality of discrimination cases. The process of registering, managing, and analysing reports includes a phase of assessing their pertinence. During this phase, received reports are distinguished by separating those actually related to discrimination situations from those submitted to the Help Center for reasons in no way connected, either explicitly or implicitly, to discriminatory phenomena. It is important to underline that such classification is essential to ensure the quality of the data analysis presented here, so that the data are truly meaningful and contribute to outlining an accurate picture of discrimination within the Bologna territory. However, it should also be clarified that this classification has no implication for the operational activity of the Help Center and does not constitute in any way a criterion for “selection” of SPAD accesses. Even in the case of non-pertinent reports, the objective of the SPAD team remains to guide the user towards possible solutions or redirect them to other entities or organisations capable of addressing the request.

For the purposes of the analysis in this Fourth Report, all cases that proved to be actual discrimination cases (including so-called “perceived” discrimination) were considered pertinent, following a careful joint assessment carried out by COSPE and the Municipality of Bologna, acting as co-coordinators of the Observatory Function, with the involvement of case managers and desk operators. Perceived discrimination cases were included among pertinent cases because, for SPAD, the perception of discrimination by the affected person, or by direct/indirect witnesses, is sufficient to initiate intervention and support. If SPAD’s intervention were limited only to cases explicitly covered by legal provisions, an important range of discriminatory situations would be excluded both from case management and from analysis. Discrimination may in fact manifest itself in multiple forms, from the most unequivocal to more subtle forms that nonetheless have the same effects and impacts on the people targeted. Discrimination phenomena are not exclusively characterised by overt and easily recognisable actions but may take the form of a plurality of acts arising from a complex interplay of prejudices, cultural stereotypes, and social power structures that may be less “visible” but are not necessarily less impactful on people’s lives. For this reason, every form of discrimination must be treated at the same level, both in terms of case management and in analysis and reporting.

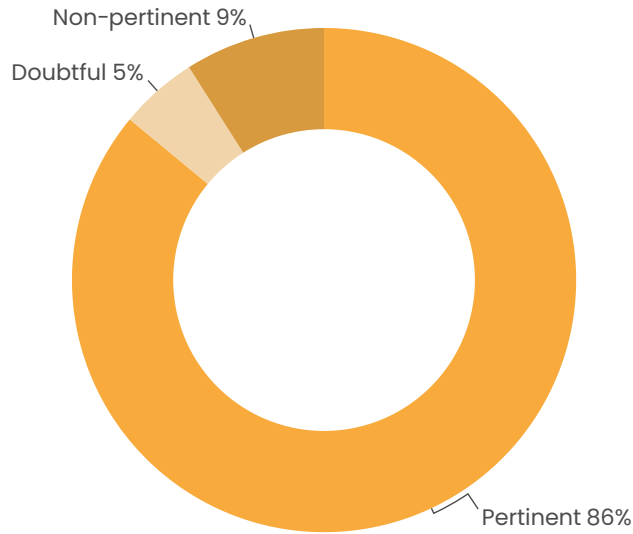
Reports not attributable in any way to discrimination were instead classified as non-pertinent cases, these include requests for other forms of support or assistance – for example, help in preparing a curriculum vitae or searching for rental housing – as well as reports falling outside SPAD’s territorial competence. Cases presenting incomplete information for evaluation purposes were classified as doubtful.

Out of the total number of reports recorded by SPAD during the analysis period, those classified as pertinent discrimination cases amount to 67 (graph 9). These represent 86% of total reports, a calculation reflecting a precise methodological choice: the ratio was calculated on 78 total registrations rather than on 74 physical accesses to the Help Center. This discrepancy derives from four situations that, although referring to a single access and a single report, were registered “twice”. In these cases, the complexity of the discriminatory situation made it possible to identify multiple pertinent discriminations within the same episode, involving different modes, discriminating agents, areas, and response actions. This approach was adopted to ensure maximum methodological accuracy and avoid artificially inflating the pertinence percentage; however, it should be reiterated that, in absolute terms, the pertinent cases analysed remain 67 out of 74 effective accesses.

Therefore, in continuity with the previous year, the high incidence of reports effectively attributable to discrimination situations was confirmed. The value of 86% pertinent discrimination represents the highest peak ever recorded since SPAD’s establishment – surpassing the 80% of the Second Report and the 79% of the Third – demonstrating increasing awareness among Bologna’s citizens of SPAD’s actual field of intervention.

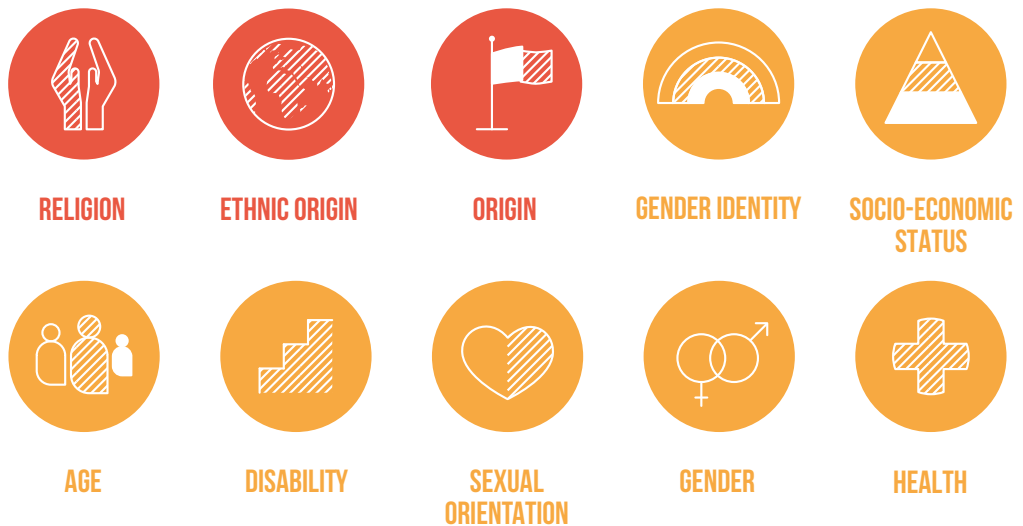
**GRAPH 9. PERTINENCE OF THE REPORTS**

January 2025 - December 2025



During the observation period, SPAD received reports concerning discrimination based on multiple discrimination grounds. The grounds of discrimination (infographic 3) indicates the personal characteristic in relation to which discrimination occurs, namely the reason underlying the discriminatory actions experienced. The identification of different grounds of discrimination results from a purely conventional classification and does not imply SPAD’s adherence to a specific theoretical framework. The discrimination grounds reflect protected categories mentioned in numerous international, European, national, and local human rights protection instruments.

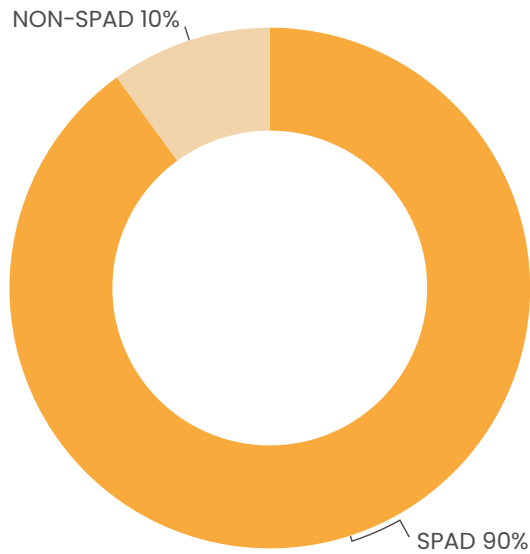
**INFOGRAPHIC 3. GROUNDS OF DISCRIMINATION**



In 2025, almost all pertinent cases recorded (90%) concerned discrimination based on the three factors within SPAD’s mandate (origin/nationality, “ethnic origin”, and religion).

**GRAPH 10. DISCRIMINATION BY TYPE OF DISCRIMINATION FACTOR**

January 2025 - December 2025



Within this framework, a clear prevalence of racial discrimination emerges, overall affecting 70% of cases (52% based on origin/nationality and 18% based on “ethnic origin”), representing an increase of +20% compared to the previous year (graph 11). The third factor within SPAD’s competence, religion, also recorded an increase: although maintaining a more limited incidence in absolute terms, the figure rose from 2% to 4%, effectively doubling compared to the previous year. It is also important to note that all cases recorded under this factor concerned episodes of islamophobia.

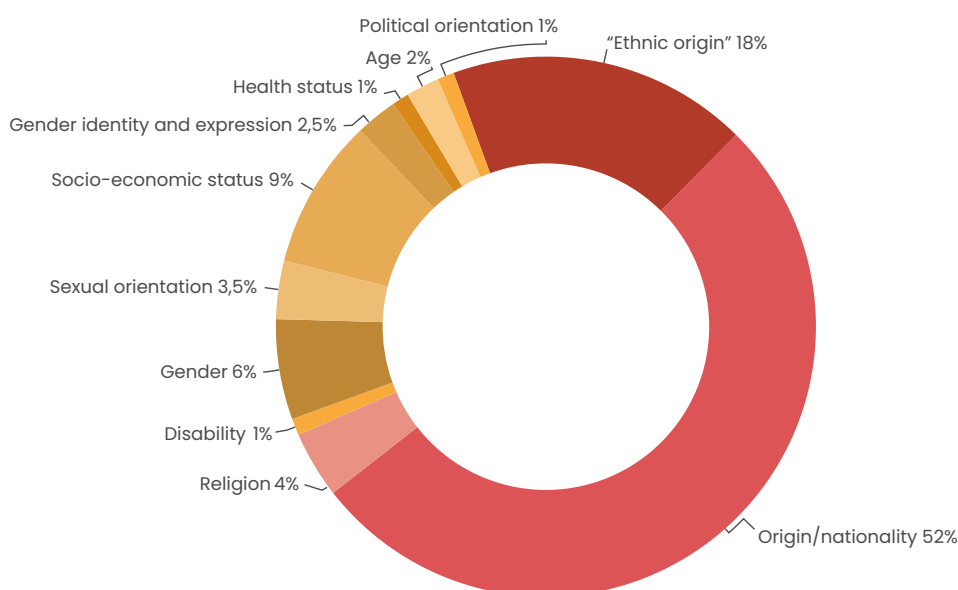
Regarding the remaining discrimination grounds, discrimination based on socio-economic status (9%) and gender (6%) follow in frequency - both particularly frequent because, in numerous cases, they intersect with “racial” discrimination. This highlights how the combination of multiple discrimination grounds - for example, being not only a racialised person but a racialised woman or a racialised person experiencing economic hardship, or both - makes certain individuals more vulnerable to discrimination than others, even within the same population group.

Although with lower percentages, cases were also recorded based on sexual orientation (3.5%), gender identity and expression (2.5%), age (2%), health status (1%), and political orientation (1%). The figure for disability-based discrimination is much lower than the previous year, standing at 1% (-13%).

It is important to recall that SPAD’s current mandate is limited to the three factors of origin/nationality, “ethnic origin”, and religion. The higher number of reports relating to these factors does not necessarily reflect a lower prevalence of other forms of discrimination within the Bologna territory. For a broader overview of discrimination data relating to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, see paragraph 3.4, which contains a joint analysis including - in addition to SPAD data - reports received by the Anti-discrimination Centers STAR of the association MIT - Movimento Identità Trans and Spazio Cassero of the association Arcigay Il Cassero, both recognised by UNAR.

**GRAPH 11. DISCRIMINATION BY GROUNDS OF DISCRIMINATION**

January 2025 - December 2025



In 28% of the 67 analysed cases, an intersection between two or more discrimination grounds was observed. These cases were classified as "intersectional discrimination", meaning discrimination based on several interacting grounds that can no longer be distinguished or separated, producing distinct and specific forms of discrimination. A further 3% of cases were recognised as "multiple discrimination" - discrimination occurring on the basis of multiple grounds operating separately and resulting from the cumulative effect of two or more discriminatory behaviours motivated by different grounds.



## Financial inclusion: obstacles to opening a basic bank account for people of foreign origin

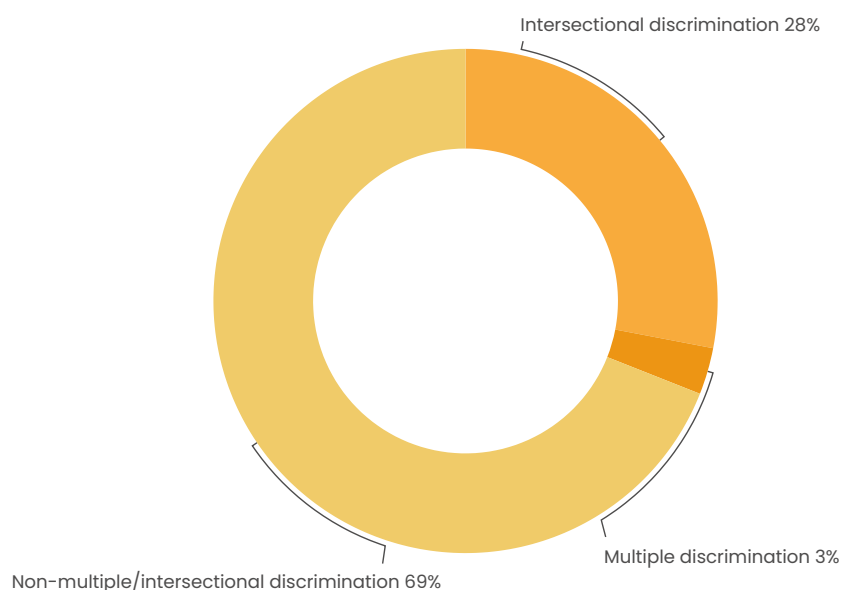
SPAD has identified a recurring problem that hinders the financial inclusion of foreign citizens, particularly asylum seekers, recording numerous cases concerning the opening of basic bank accounts and prepaid cards. Access to these services is often denied through illegitimate requests, such as requiring an identity card despite a provisional residence permit with a photo being legally sufficient for identification. Added to this are unjustified waiting times of up to four months, which create inequality compared to Italian citizens, and the denial of linguistic assistance for those who do not yet master Italian. These practices constitute direct discrimination based on the status of a person of foreign origin, as they impose obstacles and disadvantageous treatment in accessing essential services.

To address the problem, SPAD provides support in the form of legal notices that people can submit to banks and post offices to protect their rights. In more complex cases, SPAD interacts directly with branches or reports violations to the general management of financial institutions, requesting that they correct their internal procedures and ensure equal treatment.

At the regulatory level, Article 126-noviesdecies of the Consolidated Banking Act requires banks to offer a basic account to all persons legally residing in the European Union, including asylum seekers. With regard to identification, Legislative Decree 142/2015 establishes that the receipt of an application for international protection is valid as a temporary residence permit and, as it bears a photograph and is issued by a public administration, it is a valid identity document for all purposes (as provided for by Presidential Decree 445/2000), as confirmed by the circulars issued by the Italian Banking Association (ABI) and Poste Italiane. Finally, imposing disadvantageous conditions or denying a service on the basis of nationality or foreign status constitutes discrimination under Article 43 of the Consolidated Act on Immigration. This includes not only explicit refusal, but also requests for unnecessary documentation or the imposition of unreasonably long waiting times.

**GRAPH 12. PERCENTAGE OF MULTIPLE OR INTERSECTIONAL DISCRIMINATION**

January 2025 – December 2025



For a comprehensive overview of intersections among discrimination grounds, see table 1. The origin/nationality factor most frequently intersects with socio-economic status (27%), gender (22%), and religion (11%). Moreover, in five analysed cases more than two discrimination grounds were identified.

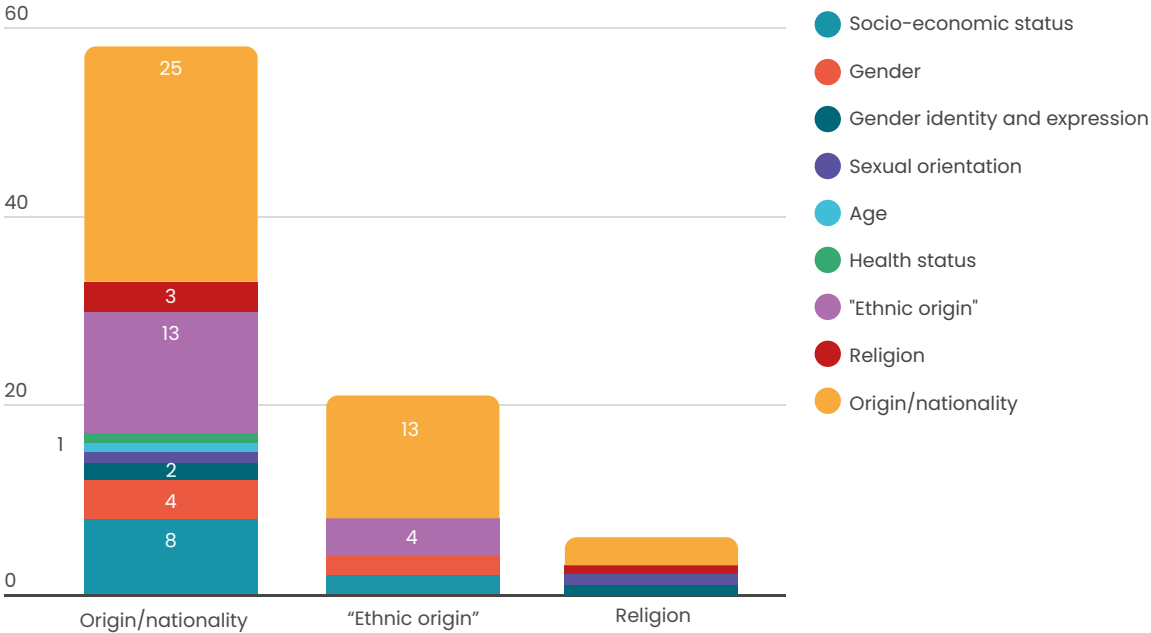
**TABLE 1. INTERSECTIONAL DISCRIMINATION BY GROUNDS OF DISCRIMINATION**

Grounds of discrimination	N. of cases	% of cases
Origin/nationality + socio-economic status	5	27%
Origin/nationality + gender	4	22%
"Ethnic origin" + gender	1	5%
Origin/nationality + religion	2	11%
Origin/nationality + gender identity and expression	1	5%
Origin/nationality + age	1	5%
Origin/nationality + "ethnic origin" + socio-economic status	1	5%
Origin/nationality + socio-economic status + health status	1	5%
Origin/nationality + socio-economic status + age	1	5%
"Ethnic origin" + socio-economic status + gender	1	5%
Origin/nationality + religion + gender identity and expression + sexual orientation	1	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100%</b>

Graph 13 illustrates in detail how intersectional discrimination operates, showing how - within a single discrimination case - different grounds may simultaneously underlie the same episode, affecting a person or group at the same time. For SPAD, paying close attention to intersectionality in data processing and analysis is essential: intersectionality highlights the specific characteristics of people affected by discrimination and emphasises the different types of impact it may have. This approach helps identify the specific needs of those concerned, enabling more targeted support and assistance.

**GRAPH 13. INTERSECTIONAL DISCRIMINATION BY GROUNDS OF DISCRIMINATION**

January 2025 - December 2025

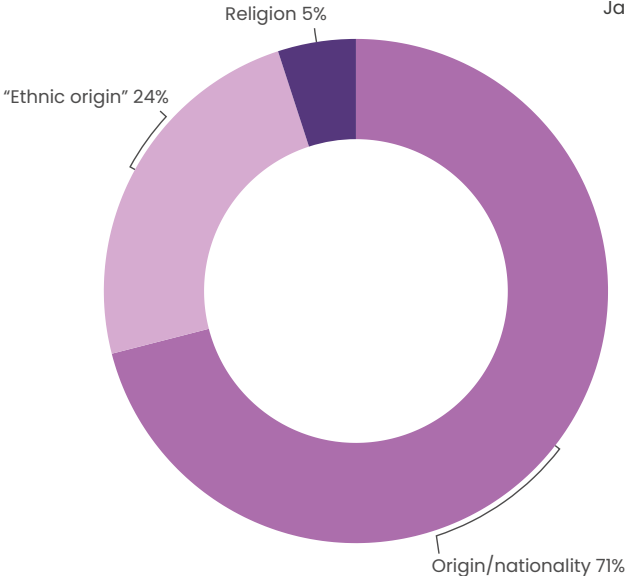


**3.2.1 Analysis of discrimination cases on SPAD factors**

Following this general overview of pertinent discrimination cases, the analysis presented below focuses exclusively on cases falling within SPAD’s competence, therefore relating to discrimination based on the three factors addressed by the service. Out of 67 pertinent discrimination cases, 60 fell within SPAD’s scope of competence. Of these 60 cases, a large percentage (71%) concerned discrimination based on the factor of origin/nationality, followed by those based on “ethnic origin” (24%) and religion (5%).

**GRAPH 14. DISCRIMINATION BY SPAD DISCRIMINATION FACTORS**

January 2025 - December 2025



**TABLE 2. DISCRIMINATION BY SPAD DISCRIMINATION FACTORS**

Grounds of discrimination	N. of cases	% of cases
Origin/nationality	55	71%
"Ethnic origin"	19	24%
Religion	4	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>78*</b>	<b>100%</b>

*\*The total takes into account cases of multiple/intersectional discrimination, in which the discrimination grounds are multiple*

Before proceeding with the detailed analysis, it is appropriate to clarify the nature of the classification of the data presented in this Report. The assessment of cases is based on the testimonies collected and on the follow-up investigations carried out after the initial interview; the data derive from careful work of listening, verification and analysis of the reports received by the Help Center. Given the intrinsic complexity of discriminatory dynamics, the interpretation of the data presented here should be understood as a phenomenological analysis: the role of this Report is not judicial, but analytical. The Observatory does not act as a court: its task is to provide a qualified and multi-disciplinary interpretation capable of framing discrimination as a complex social phenomenon, restoring centrality and dignity to the lived experiences of the people involved.

Examining the modes in which discrimination reported to SPAD manifested itself (graph 15), direct discrimination proved to be the most widespread (48%, +10.5%). This category includes all situations in which one or more persons were treated differently and less favourably than others in a similar situation, without objective and reasonable justification, but on the basis of one or more aspects of their identity.

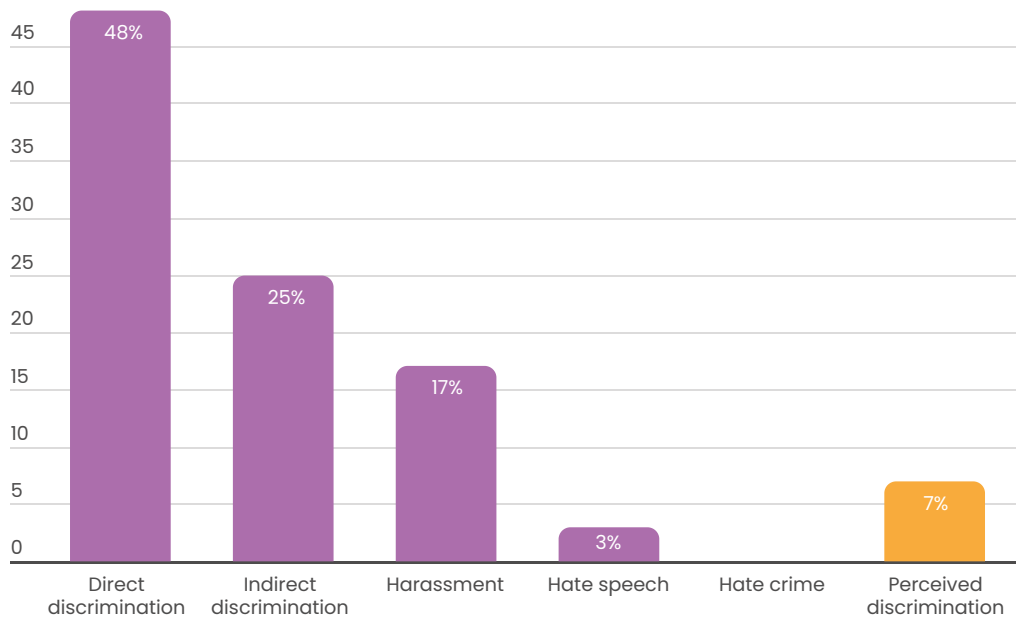
Second in frequency are cases of indirect discrimination (25%, +6%), which concern provisions, criteria, behaviours and practices that appear neutral, but whose effects produce discrimination. These are followed by harassment (17%, +4.5%), understood as unwanted conduct having the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of the person targeted, creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Significantly decreased compared to the previous year, so-called "perceived discrimination" accounts for 7% (-15%). "Perceived discrimination" refers to acts or behaviours subjectively perceived as discriminatory by those who experience them, which, however, do not present unequivocal elements attributable to discrimination or lack explicit legal recognition. This classification does not in any way imply a hierarchy between discrimination considered "real" or "effective" and others: as already emphasised, this type of discrimination is handled by SPAD in the same way as other forms, since the perception of discrimination by the affected person (or witnesses) is considered sufficient to activate assistance and support procedures. Nevertheless, it is also important to underline that these cases often involve different operational management: the range of possible response actions is more limited - for example, legal action cannot be initiated due to the absence of a legal basis - and frequently includes empowerment actions and/or psychological support. The persistence of this category, although reduced, highlights how the current legal framework still fails to capture the full complexity of discriminatory dynamics.

Lastly, hate speech cases account for 3% (-6%), a category that includes any form of expression, communication or discourse intended or having the effect of advocating, promoting or inciting, in any form, "the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons, as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatisation or threat"<sup>37</sup> on the basis of one or more aspects of their identity.

**GRAPH 15. DISCRIMINATION BY MODE OF DISCRIMINATION**

January 2025 - December 2025



The two different colours are used to distinguish between legally recognised and non-legally recognised modes of discrimination

In addition to the mode of discrimination, another fundamental indicator for understanding the different ways discrimination manifests itself concerns the type of discriminatory action. Although with different percentages, the three main categories remain the same as in 2024. Out of the 60 cases, in 59% of situations discrimination manifested itself in the form of discriminatory treatment. This category includes both *differential* and *non-differential* treatment. Differential treatment refers to situations in which people in similar conditions receive different treatment without objective justification and on the basis of aspects of their identity. Conversely, non-differential treatment occurs when the same measure is applied to everyone without considering an initial condition of disadvantage or inequality. In this latter case, the apparent neutrality of the measure ends up reproducing and consolidating existing substantive discrimination.

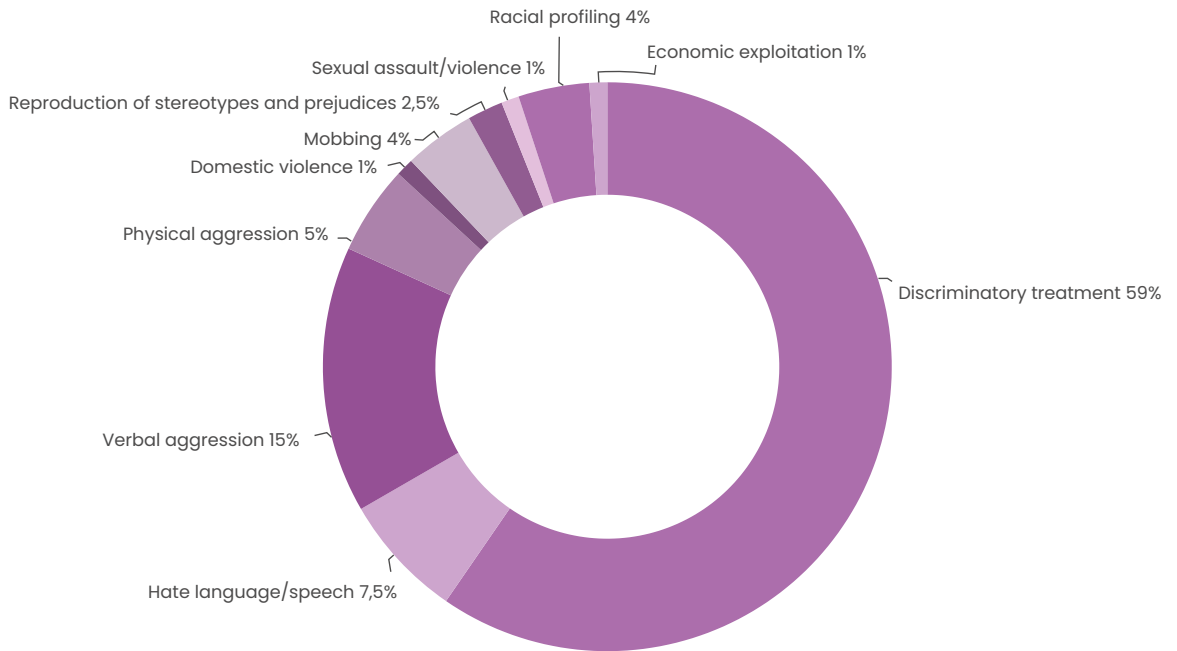
This is followed by cases of discrimination through verbal aggression (15%), including all forms of verbal abuse, threats, comments or intimidating gestures directed at the “victim”, and the use of hate language or hate speech (7.5%). Less numerous were cases of physical aggression (5%), a category including all forms of physical attack based on any protected characteristic, ranging from touching, spitting or throwing objects to violent assaults against a person or group.

Less frequent were cases of racial profiling (4%) - a category which, starting from this year, has been extended beyond law enforcement activities to include any professional context in which the use or influence of racialising stereotypes leads to discriminatory treatment based on “ethnic origin” - and cases of mobbing (4%), defined for the purposes of this Report as a set of aggressive and persecutory actions and behaviour and/or social exclusion and psychological violence creating a hostile environment of continuous intimidation, harassment and pressure (not exclusively in the work environment).

During the analysis, the need emerged for an ongoing methodological update in order to include categories not previously foreseen but necessary to reflect the complexity of the cases handled. Thanks to this integration, 2025 recorded for the first time reports concerning the reproduction of stereotypes and prejudices (2.5%), economic exploitation (1%), and forms of violence attributable to sexual assault (1%) or the domestic context (1%).

**GRAPH 16. DISCRIMINATION BY TYPE OF DISCRIMINATORY ACTION**

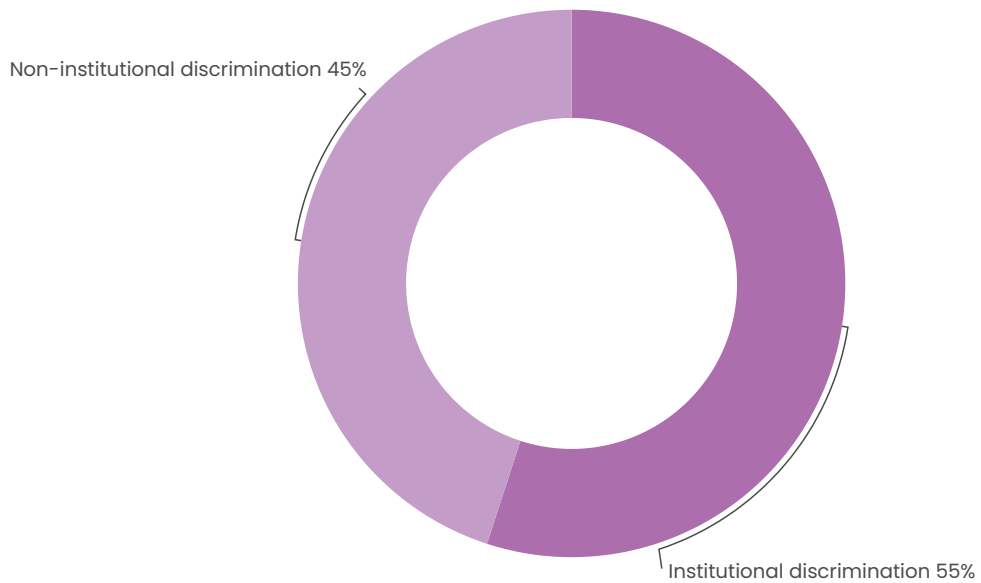
January 2025 - December 2025



A particularly significant finding emerging from the analysis concerns institutional discrimination, identified in as many as 33 out of 60 cases (55% of the total). This means that in these episodes the discriminating agent was identified in one or more institutions, institutional actors acting in the exercise of their functions, or institutional norms, practices and/or regulations having the purpose or effect of producing discrimination against a group of people sharing a specific characteristic.

**GRAPH 17. PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION**

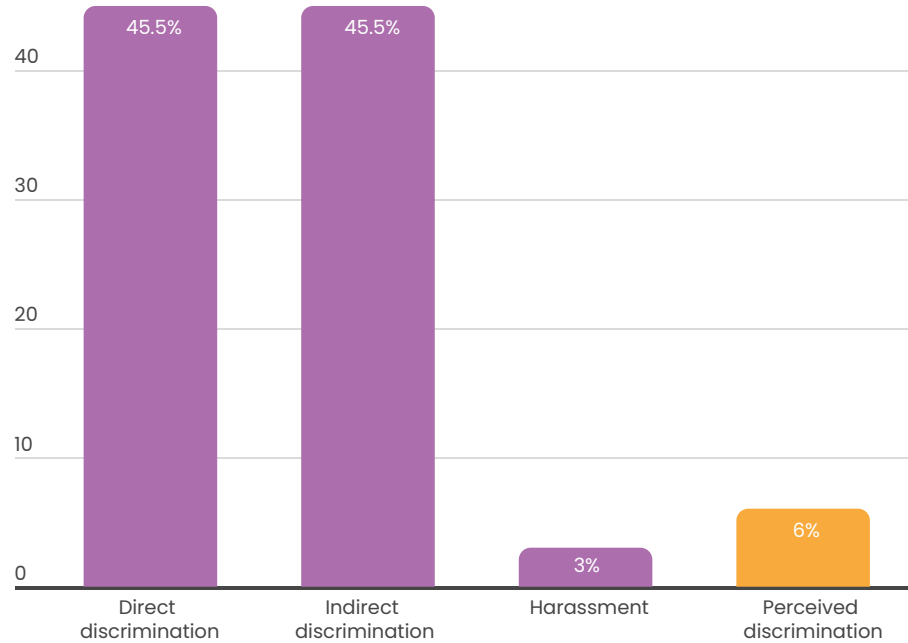
January 2025 - December 2025



Of these 33 institutional discrimination cases, the majority manifested as direct discrimination (45.5%) or indirect discrimination (45.5%), demonstrating how institutional barriers emerge both through explicit acts and through apparently neutral practices that disadvantage specific categories of people. A smaller percentage was classified as perceived discrimination (6%) or harassment (3%).

**GRAPH 18. INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION BY MODE OF DISCRIMINATION**

January 2025 – December 2025



The two different colours are used to distinguish between legally recognised and non-legally recognised modes of discrimination

The two different colours are used to distinguish between legally recognised and non-legally recognised modes of discrimination. In terms of discrimination grounds, all institutional discrimination cases concerned racial discrimination, either based on origin/nationality (80%) or “ethnic origin” (20%). Among these, cases of intersectional discrimination also emerged, specifically between origin/nationality or “ethnic origin” and aspects such as socio-economic status, gender, gender identity and expression, and age (table 3).

**TABLE 3. INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION BY GROUNDS OF DISCRIMINATION**

Grounds of discrimination for institutional discrimination cases	N. of cases	% of cases
Origin/nationality	17	52%
Origin/nationality + “ethnic origin”	5	15%
Origin/nationality + socio-economic status	3	9%
Origin/nationality + gender	2	6%
“Ethnic origin” + gender	1	3%
Origin/nationality + gender identity and expression	1	3%
Origin/nationality + age	1	3%
“Ethnic origin” + political orientation (multiple discrimination)	1	3%
Origin/nationality + “ethnic origin” + socio-economic status	1	3%
Origin/nationality + socio-economic status + health status	1	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100%</b>

## DISCRIMINATION IN ACCESS TO PUBLIC HOUSING: FROM A REPORT TO SPAD TO THE TO THE RULING OF THE COURT OF BOLOGNA

In July 2025, Ruling no. 1902/2025 of the Court of Bologna marked an important turning point in the right to housing. The subject of the ruling concerns the case of a Gambian citizen, legally residing and engaged in a university programme, excluded from the ranking lists for the allocation of public residential housing (ERP) because unemployed at the time of verification of the requirements. This condition – that of exercising regular ongoing employment – should not preclude access to public housing, yet the regulation imposes it as an additional access requirement only for persons of non-EU origin, and not for Italian citizens.

The Court of Bologna upheld the appeal, recognising in the current regulation a violation of the right to equal treatment. The ruling represents an important result not only for the applicant, but for all persons of non-EU origin: in addition to ordering the reinstatement of the citizen in the ranking list, the Court also instructed the Municipality of Bologna and ACER to refrain from including the discriminatory requirement in ERP calls already in progress (if not yet concluded) and in future ones.

The role of SPAD was decisive and fundamental: the case had in fact been reported to the Help Center, which first received the report and took charge of the case, which was subsequently transmitted to ASGI for judicial appeal.

The ruling represents a concrete step forward for the affirmation of the right to housing and for combating forms of discrimination that are perhaps less visible, but structural and deeply

rooted. The right to housing must be universal, fair and guaranteed.

The commitment now moves to the national level: as declared by Deputy Mayor Emily Clancy, the Municipality of Bologna and the Emilia-Romagna Region will take an active role in promoting the amendment of the regulation at national level.

This case highlights how the work of SPAD can go beyond support and assistance in individual reports and contribute to triggering concrete actions for the prevention and combating of discrimination for the benefit of the entire community. Starting from the reception and recognition of reported discrimination, SPAD is configured as a promoter of change which, beginning from the local reality, can increasingly have a concrete impact also at the national level.



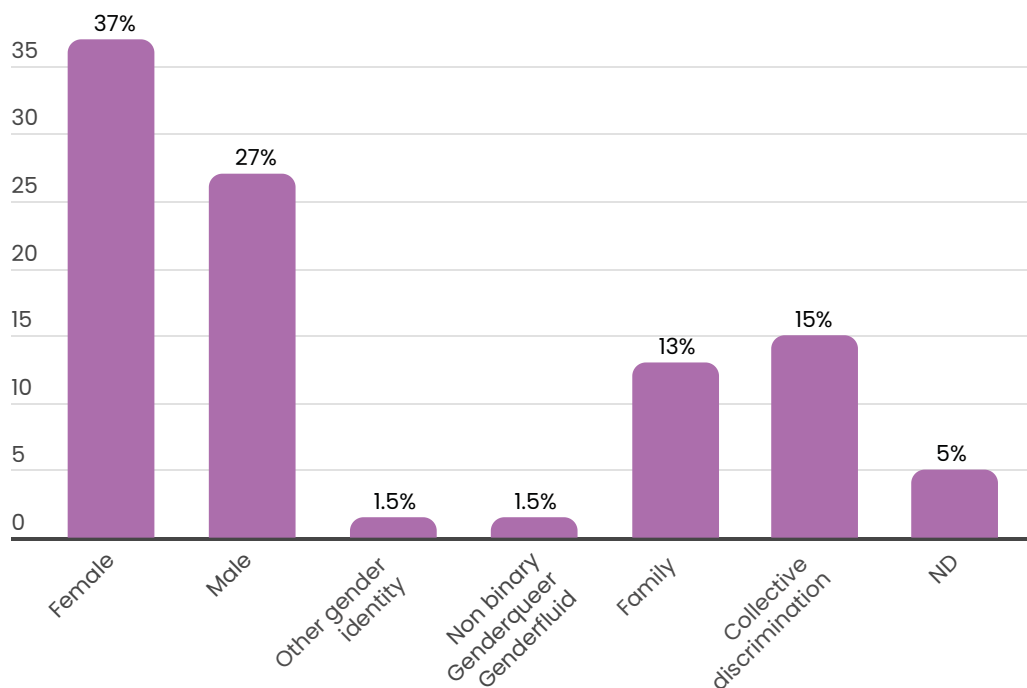
### 3.2.2 Who is discriminated against?

Understanding the profile of people affected by discrimination is essential in order to provide a concrete dimension of who is discriminated against and, consequently, to more effectively direct measures for the prevention of discrimination, information on rights, and awareness-raising of public opinion regarding population groups most exposed to discrimination. This section presents a profile of people affected by discrimination in Bologna, disaggregated by gender identity, age, occupation and country of origin.

From a gender perspective, for the second consecutive year, the category most affected by discrimination was that of people identifying with the female gender (37%), although showing a decrease of 10% compared to the previous year. At the same time, “victims” of male gender slightly increased (27%, +2%), thereby reducing the gap previously recorded and eliminating the 2:1 ratio between women and men affected by discrimination. In 2025, a significant presence of discrimination affecting not single individuals but groups (15%, -1%) or families (13%, +10%) was also recorded. Cross-referencing these data, it emerges that the decrease relating to women (-10%) is substantially compensated by the increase in cases involving families (+10%). This suggests a partial change in discriminatory dynamics: there has been an increase in those affecting the collective and relational dimension of the family compared to those affecting individual women. Finally, a noteworthy figure concerns the emergence of gender identities that had not been statistically recorded last year: cases were recorded relating to persons identifying as non-binary/genderqueer/genderfluid (1.5%) or with another gender identity (1.5%).

GRAPH 19. DISCRIMINATION BY GENDER OF “VICTIMS”

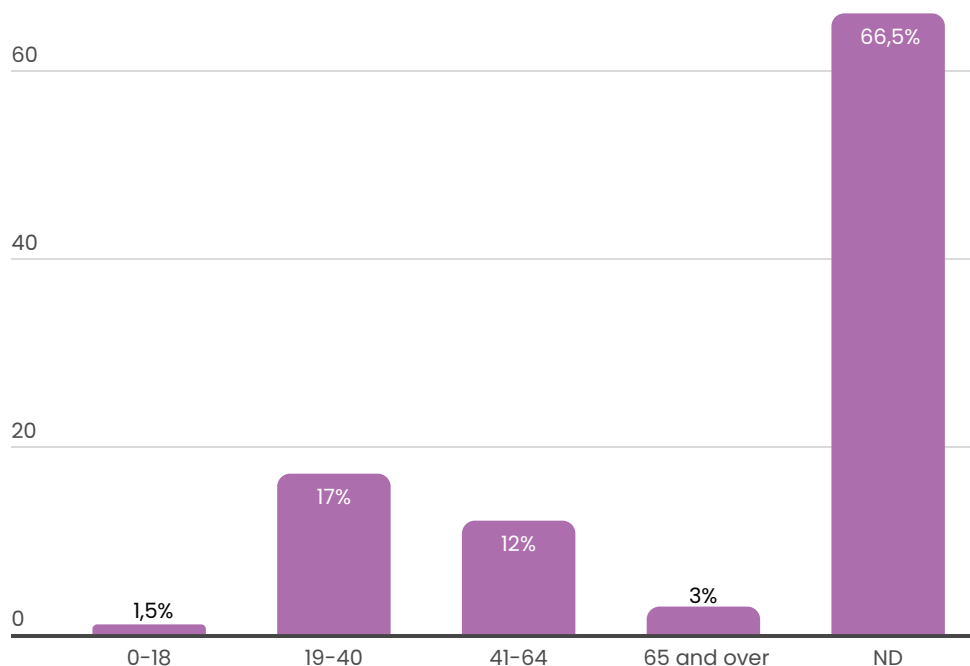
January 2025 - December 2025



In relation to the age of people affected by discrimination, the age groups with the highest number of reports were 19–40 (17%) and 41–64 (12%). Only one case concerned minors. In continuity with previous years, a very high number of non-responses emerges for the “age” data (40 cases equal to 66.5% of the total), mainly because - in line with the “do no harm” methodological approach - where the reported issue is in no way linked to a specific aspect of a person’s identity, unless directly declared by the person involved, the data are not collected as they are considered not relevant.

**GRAPH 20. DISCRIMINATION BY AGE OF "VICTIMS"**

January 2025 - December 2025



A further aspect identified in the analysis of discrimination cases recorded by SPAD concerns the employment status of persons affected by discrimination, which - similarly to the "age" data - represents one of the categories with a high percentage of non-responses (58%). Looking at the answers received, it is possible to observe that employed persons were affected more frequently (23.5%). They are followed by unemployed persons (10%) and students (8.5%).



### Access to housing and national origin: the unlawful request of the "Italian" guarantor

SPAD received a report from a couple of professionals who experienced discriminatory treatment during negotiations to rent an apartment. Despite a solid financial position and the fact that one of the pair grew up here, the landlord gradually raised the barriers to entry, requiring disproportionate financial guarantees.

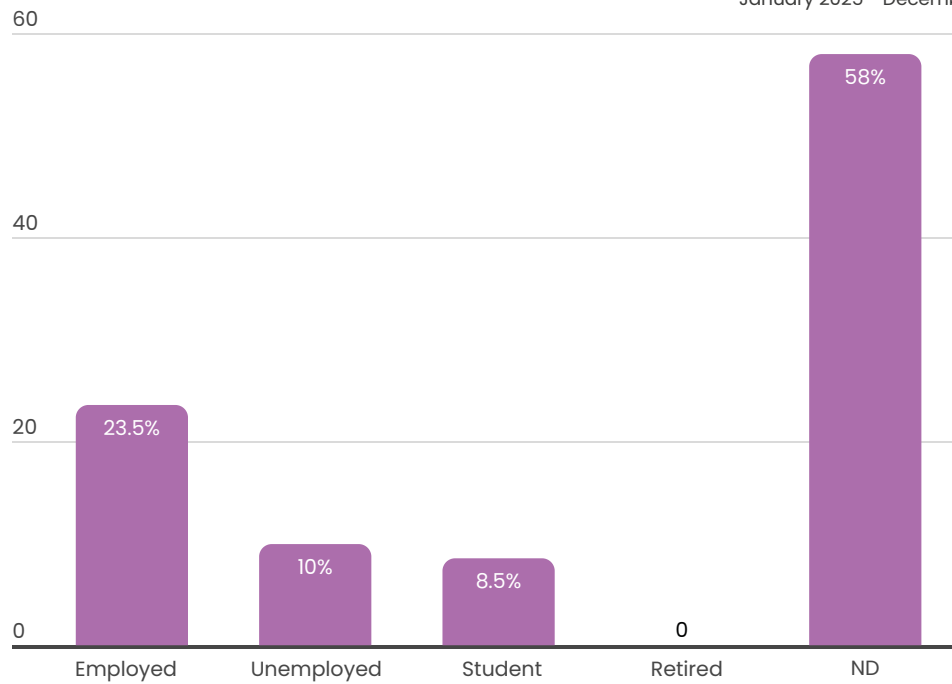
A parent, with a permanent contract, offered to act as guarantor. However, the owner deemed this guarantee insufficient, explicitly requesting the presence of an additional "Italian" guarantor in addition to the one already provided. This request, devoid of any objective justification, revealed a bias based on the family's origins, making the tenants' history an arbitrary criterion of unreliability.

This episode constitutes direct discrimination in access to housing. Imposing differentiated requirements or additional burdens based on prejudices related to origin violates Article 43 of the Consolidated Act on Immigration.

Faced with this violation, SPAD listened to and advised the couple, offering legal support to take action against the discrimination they had suffered. Although the couple chose not to take legal action, SPAD's intervention was fundamental in responding to their need for justice and transforming an experience of "pain and sorrow" into an official report. The couple's intention was to inform SPAD so that awareness-raising actions on discrimination in the housing sector could be put in place, with the aim of preventing similar conduct against future tenants.

**GRAPH 21. DISCRIMINATION BY OCCUPATION OF "VICTIMS"**

January 2025 - December 2025



With regard to the origin of persons affected by discrimination, what emerges most clearly is the variety of countries of origin (for a detailed overview, see infographic 4). Contrary to the data of the Third Report, in 2025 there were more cases involving persons from Africa (18 cases in total, +5) than those relating to persons from Asia (10 cases in total, +2). In almost all cases received, the citizenship of the person coincides with their country of origin; two cases instead concerned persons with Italian citizenship and another country of origin, namely Afghanistan (1 case) and Egypt (1 case). In absolute terms, persons of Philippine origin (5 cases) and Nigerian origin (4 cases) were the most affected by discrimination. They are followed by persons from Tunisia (3 cases), Egypt (3 cases) and Peru (3 cases).

**INFOGRAPHIC 4. DISCRIMINATION BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF "VICTIMS"**



### 3.2.3 Who discriminates and where?

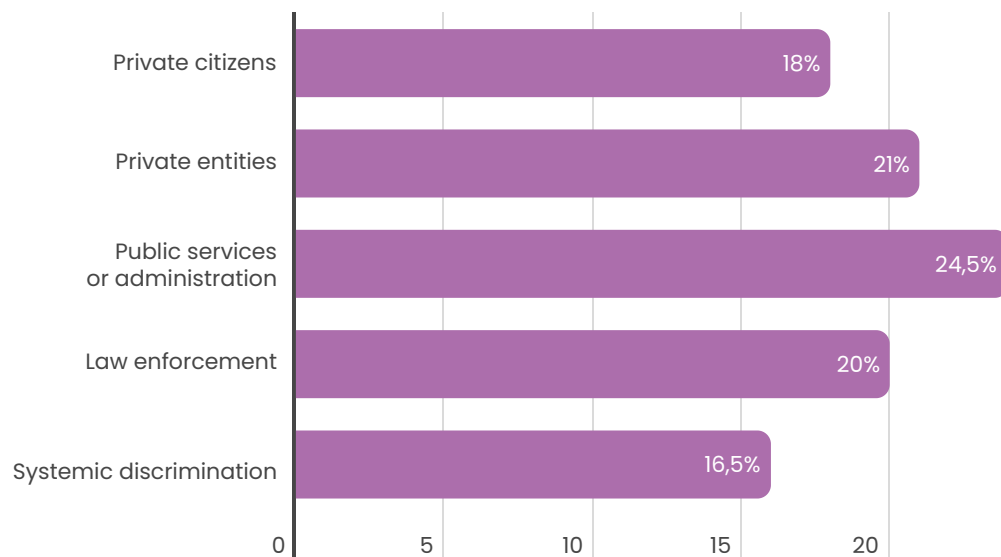
In the analysis of the 60 cases of discrimination, a total of 82 discriminating agents were identified, a higher number than the cases considered because in several episodes responsibility for discrimination was attributable to more than one subject at the same time. The identification of this responsibility represents a crucial step: defining who carries out the discriminatory act is not only fundamental in order to provide adequate support to the affected person, but also makes it possible to develop more structured prevention and counteraction strategies, capable of acting beyond the single case to address systemic phenomena.

In order to make this analysis more accurate, from 2025 onwards data collection has been integrated with new categories aimed at specifying the relationship between the affected person and the discriminating agent, where the latter is a private individual (or group), distinguishing between strangers, acquaintances, colleagues, family members, parents and partners.

A first interesting element relating to the analysis of discriminating agents concerns the rather balanced distribution of cases among macro-categories (graph 22): cases range from 16.5% of systemic discrimination to 24.5% attributed to public services or administration.

**GRAPH 22. DISCRIMINATION BY DISCRIMINATING AGENTS**

January 2025 - December 2025



Discrimination by public services or administration ranks first in terms of frequency – a deliberately broad category that includes public offices or services (12%), public employees (7.5%), but also laws, regulations, notices and practices (5%). This is followed by cases of discrimination attributed to private entities, i.e. companies, associations, foundations and other non-public entities, which account for 21% of the total. Among these, many reports concern the credit sector (banks), the real estate sector and commercial establishments. Out of a total of 17 episodes, 6 were perpetrated by employees, 5 directly by private entities themselves, 4 by organisations/associations and 2 by employers.

In third position, and slightly increased compared to 2024, discrimination by law enforcement agencies accounts for 20% of the total. In particular, most of these episodes occurred at police headquarters, where individuals reported significant delays and discriminatory treatment in the management of procedures relating to residence permits (12%).

Lower, instead, is the figure relating to discrimination carried out by private citizens (18%), showing a clear decrease compared to the previous year (-9%). Among these, episodes carried out by persons unknown to the “victims” (14%) or only slightly known to them (2%) prevail.

Finally, systemic discrimination represents 16.5% of the total. In these cases, no individual perpetrators were identified; rather, a system of customs, norms, practices, attitudes and/or rules was recognised as the main discriminating agent. These are, essentially, structurally widespread situations, placing certain groups of people in a position of disadvantage compared to others, thereby creating discrimination.

**TABLE 4. DISCRIMINATION BY DISCRIMINATING AGENTS**

<b>Discriminating agents</b>	<b>N. of cases</b>	<b>% of cases</b>
<b>Private citizens</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Private citizens (individual)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12%</b>
Stranger	7	9%
Acquaintance	1	1%
Colleague	1	1%
Family member	0	0%
Parent	0	0%
Partner	1	1%
<b>Private citizens (group)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6%</b>
Strangers	4	5%
Acquaintances	1	1%
Colleagues	0	0%
Family members	0	0%
Parents	0	0%
Partners	0	0%
<b>Private entities</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>21%</b>
Private entities	5	6%
Private entities (employer)	2	2,5%
Private entities (manager)	0	0%
Private entities (employee)	6	7,5%
Private entities (organised group)	0	0%
Private entities (organisation/association)	4	5%
<b>Public services or administration</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24,5%</b>
Public services or administration (manager)	0	0%
Public services or administration (employee)	6	7,5%
Public services or administration (public office or service)	10	12%
Public services or administration (law, regulation, notice or practice)	4	5%
Public services or administration (political representative)	0	0%
<b>Law enforcement</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20%</b>
Law enforcement (individual)	3	4%
Law enforcement (group)	3	4%
Law enforcement (office, police station, etc.)	10	12%
<b>Systemic discrimination</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16,5%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>82*</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*The total takes into account cases of discrimination for which more than one discriminating agent was identified

Out of the total of 60 discrimination cases, the number of places of reported discriminatory events was slightly higher, because in more than one case more than one location was identified as the space in which discrimination occurred. Although the majority of events took place in public spaces (55%), the most significant figure for 2025 concerns the exponential growth of discrimination occurring in private spaces (45%), with an increase of 30% compared to the previous year. The gap between public and private, which amounted to 57.5 percentage points in 2024, drastically decreased in 2025.

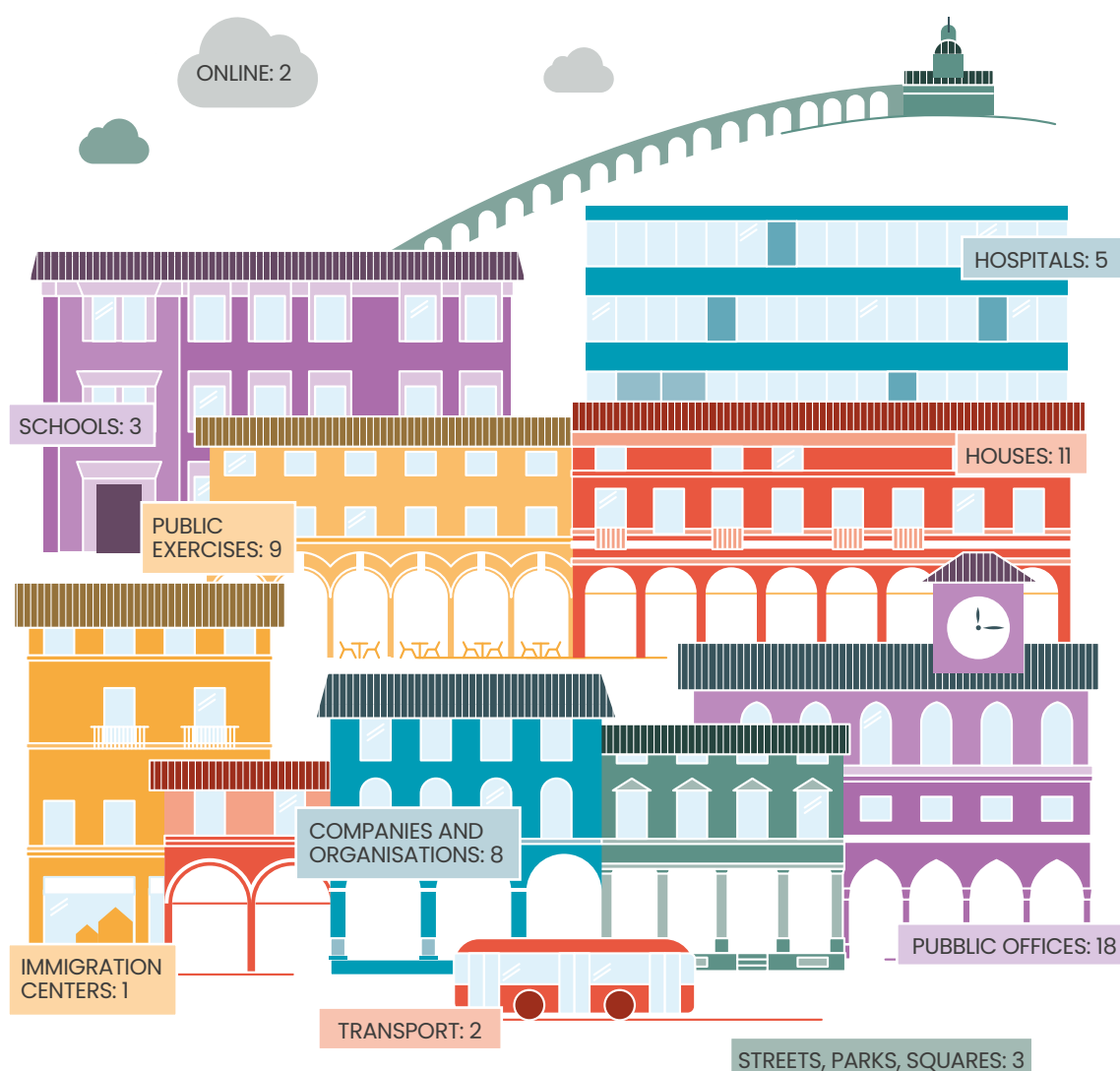
**TABLE 5. DISCRIMINATION BY PLACE OF THE DISCRIMINATORY EVENT**

Place of the discriminatory event	N. of cases	% of cases
<b>Public</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>55%</b>
Immigration centers	1	1,5%
Public hospitals and health facilities	5	8%
Public schools	2	3,5%
Stations or public transport	1	1,5%
Public streets, parks or squares	3	5%
Public offices (Municipalities, provinces or regions)	1	1,5%
Public offices (police headquarters, prefectures or police stations)	10	16%
Public offices (others)	7	11%
Public housing	2	3,5%
Online	2	3,5%
<b>Private</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>45%</b>
Public exercises	9	14,5%
Companies or organisations	8	13%
Private homes	9	14,5%
Museums or galleries	0	0%
Private schools	1	1,5%
Private health facilities	0	0%
Private transport	1	1,5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62*</b>	<b>100%</b>

*\*The total takes into account cases of discrimination for which more than one place of the discriminatory event was identified*

With reference to public spaces, public offices are confirmed as the places where the highest incidence of discriminatory phenomena was recorded, with a total of 18 cases (28.5%). Looking more closely at this figure, a strong concentration emerges in police headquarters, prefectures or police stations, which alone account for 10 cases (16%), followed by other types of public offices (7 cases) and, to a lesser extent, municipal, provincial or regional offices (1 case). These are followed, among public places of discrimination, by hospitals and public healthcare facilities (8%) and places of aggregation and transit such as public streets, parks or squares (5%). Finally, with a more limited distribution, schools, public housing and online spaces each account for 3.5%. Compared with the previous year, the contraction of discrimination occurring online is particularly significant, decreasing to 3.5% and marking a reduction of 11.5% compared to 2024. A similar trend is observed for episodes occurring at stations or on public transport, reduced to 1.5% (-7.5%). With regard to private spaces, on the other hand, most discrimination was reported in public exercises (14.5%) or private homes (14.5%). This is followed by discrimination occurring within private companies or organisations (13%).

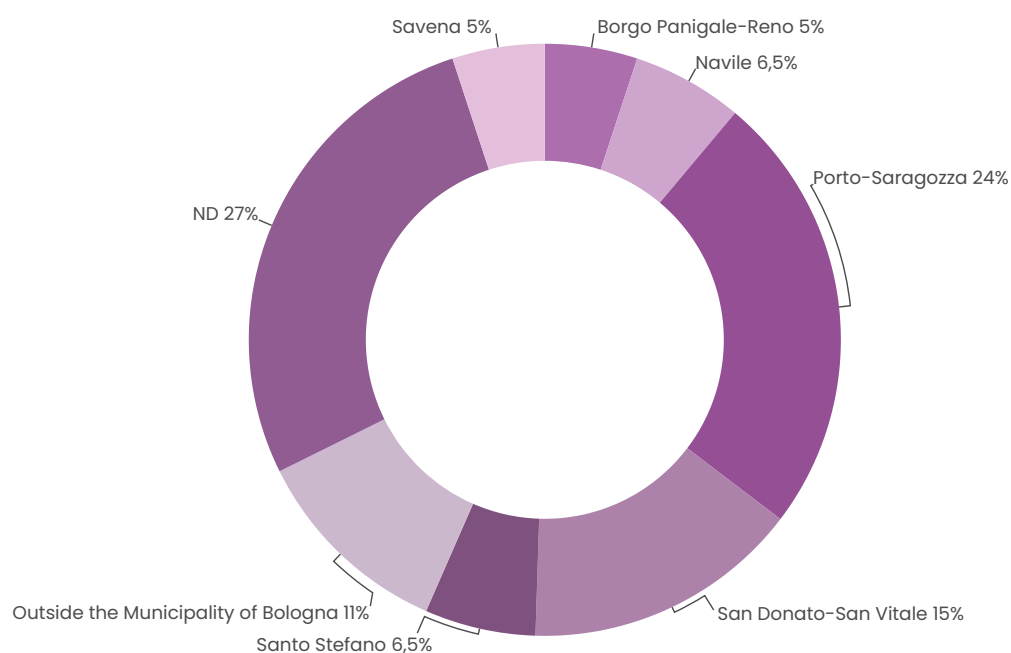
## INFOGRAPHIC 5. PLACES OF DISCRIMINATORY EVENTS



With reference to the location of discrimination, a new feature introduced in this fourth edition of the SPAD Report concerns the analysis of the districts of the Municipality of Bologna where the discriminatory episode occurred. It is not surprising that the two districts with the highest number of reports are those hosting the two physical SPAD desks: 24% of reports took place in the Porto-Saragozza district, followed by San Donato-San Vitale with 15%. The territorial distribution continues with the Santo Stefano (6.5%) and Navile (6.5%) districts, followed by Borgo Panigale-Reno (5%) and Savena (5%). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that reports concern not only episodes relating to the area of the Municipality of Bologna, but also those referring to other areas within the Metropolitan Area (11%). Specifically, in 2025, 2 cases were recorded in the Municipality of Castenaso and single reports in the Municipalities of Monte San Pietro, Bentivoglio, Calderara di Reno, Alto Reno Terme and Granarolo dell'Emilia. These figures are an encouraging sign with respect to SPAD's objective of expanding its territorial coverage to the entire Metropolitan Area of Bologna.

**GRAPH 23. DISCRIMINATION BY DISTRICT OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF BOLOGNA**

January 2025 - December 2025



To complete the information on “who discriminates and where,” it is also necessary to examine the data relating to the area of discrimination - which is different from the place, because it concerns not the physical space in which discrimination occurred, but the “subject matter” and context of the discrimination itself. Out of the total of 60 discrimination cases, 65 areas were identified, as for some reports intersections between different areas were recorded.

In continuity with previous years, the area in which the highest number of discrimination cases was recorded is that relating to the provision of public services (37%). Specifically, these cases concerned:

- issuing/renewal of residence permits (9 cases) - a category confirmed again this year as the most frequent;
- procedures for opening a bank account (6 cases);
- procedures for registration in the national health service and/or the choice of a general practitioner (3 cases);
- filing of complaints (2 cases) - in both cases SPAD identified situations of secondary victimisation and *under-recording*;
- allocation of public residential housing (2 cases);
- other individual cases concerned procedures for the election of citizenship, issuance of authorisations, provision of benefits and social services, intercultural mediation services in administrative procedures and critical issues linked to the reception system.

Significantly lower is the figure relating to the provision of services by private establishments, a category in which only 5 cases were recorded.

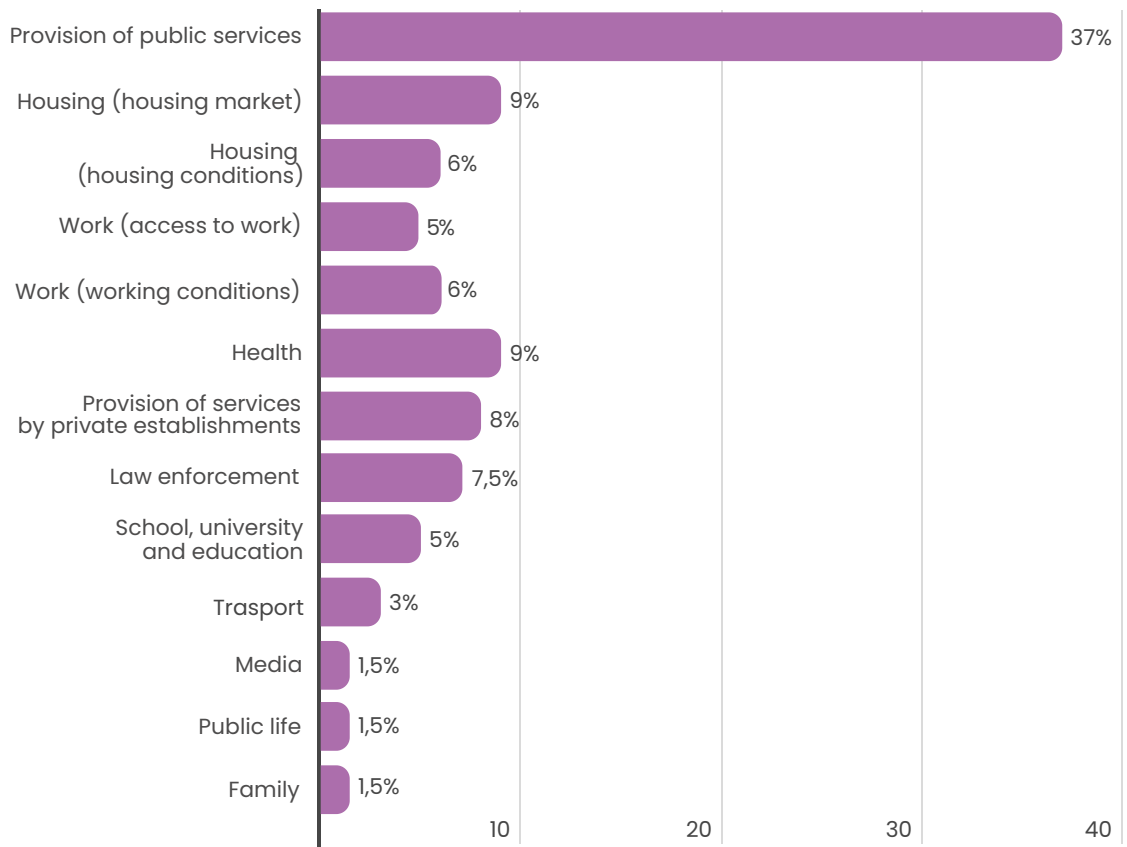
The “housing” area is confirmed as one of the most critical, with 15% of reports. Specifically, 9% relates to access to the real estate market, where prejudice, discrimination and exclusionary requirements prevent access to housing; while the remaining 6% concerns housing and living conditions, relating to quality of daily life and relationships with property owners, co-tenants, neighbours, etc.

Sharply increased compared to 2024, cases relating to the “work” category account for 11% of the total. Among these, 6% concern working conditions, including both internal dynamics in the relationship with employers and/or colleagues and episodes occurring in interactions with the public or customers; the remaining 5% relates instead to opportunities for access to the labour market.

A significant increase was also recorded in reports concerning health (9%), a category which includes situations of insufficient or inadequate healthcare assistance, linguistic or bureaucratic barriers and objective difficulties in accessing care. These are followed in frequency by areas relating to the actions of law enforcement agencies (7.5%), the school, university and education sector (5%), and the transport sector (3%). Cases recorded in the areas of family, public life (a field including situations relating to public spaces and places, mainly linked to the personal sphere of the person involved in the discriminatory episode) and media remain isolated episodes, with only one report each.

**GRAPH 24. DISCRIMINATION BY AREA OF DISCRIMINATION**

January 2025 - December 2025



## COMBATING DISCRIMINATION IN SCHOOLS. EVIDENCE, CRITICAL ISSUES, AND EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES BASED ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES

by Nicoletta Landi, anthropologist, PhD, COSPE consultant

As can be seen from numerous projects by COSPE - which include processes of quantitative-qualitative monitoring such as "Butterfly Effect. Changing words to change the world"<sup>1</sup> - discrimination in schools is still a widespread and often underrated problem. It can manifest itself through attitudes, behaviours or decisions that treat the student population unfairly based on personal characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, ability, socio-economic status, socio-cultural background or religious belief. These forms of exclusion not only compromise the well-being of subjectivities involved, but also negatively impact their school performance and ability to experience school as a safe and welcoming environment. Addressing the issue of discrimination therefore means promoting a culture of respect, equality and participation for everyone. During the implementation of the project, numerous interesting data emerged that can be analysed to stimulate change. In short, the "butterfly effect" referred to above is based on the idea that small variations in initial conditions produce large variations in the long-term behaviour of a system. This is precisely what the project has aimed to achieve, by seeking to reinforce positive behaviours in young people aged 11 to 19 in order to combat discrimination and promote respect for all differences, providing the tools to understand what discrimination is, its forms and their intersectionality, how the web can amplify its impact on people's lives, and encouraging active commitment to supporting people who are victims of it, with the aim of building a society capable of isolating and depowering these phenomena.

The target group consisted of students and teachers in lower and upper secondary schools, educational staff in non-formal contexts, activists, local authorities, associations, families, and citizens. The project included an online training course for teachers and educational staff as well as the production of the "Butterfly Effect" Manual, containing 12 educational itineraries for teachers and educational

staff. The project saw the participation of a complex partnership made up of numerous national organisations<sup>2</sup>.



According to quantitative and qualitative data collected to monitor the implementation and impact of the project (a total of 2,642 questionnaires collected between October 2023 and December 2024, nationwide), young people frequently experienced discrimination. This was particularly true with regard to gender identification. One testimony, for example, states: "They [the teachers, ed.] used me as an example to explain diversity and emphasise it in an essay, and then completely misrepresented my gender identity and sexual orientation, all without asking my permission" or "Teachers did not accept my request to address me using the masculine form. I argued, but in the end I preferred to drop out of school, the place that should be most welcoming to me". In this sense, school is seen as a potentially unwelcoming place for students who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. From a gender perspective, the percentage of people who prefer to self-identify or not identify who have experienced discrimination and harassment - 50% and 62% respectively - is higher than young people who identify with traditional genders, with a slight predominance of girls (33%) over boys (30%).

Where examples of discrimination are given, the most frequently reported cases were severe teasing or mockery (35%) and exclusion and indifference by classmates (30%). This was followed by sexual jokes, comments and gestures (14%) and physical aggression (9%). To a lesser extent, there were cases of discrediting (4%), publication of images without the consent of the person portrayed (4%) and bullying and discrimination based on cultural or family background (3%).

Among the causes mentioned, the most common are gender identity (being or feeling male, female, or other - 15%) and personal or family background (where a person comes from and where their family comes from), skin colour, the language spoken by the person or their family, and migration of the person or their family (14%). These are followed by emotional and sexual orientation (who I like, who I fall in love with - 11%), and age (8%). Disability or health status, physical appearance, the socio-economic situation of the family, as well as political and personal opinions each account for 5%. Finally, we find religion (4%) and friendships and dislikes (3%). 1% of people who completed the questionnaire do not understand the reason for the discrimination or harassment they have experienced.

Discrimination - viewed and interpreted through the lens of intersectionality - also impacts the lives of young people of foreign origin, racialised ones, or those with a migration background: "I have been called a gy\*\*\* several times in a derogatory sense (I am of Roma ethnicity, born in Hungary)" or "a classmate of mine was teased because of the colour of her skin". Those living with neurodivergences are not immune either: "A classmate teased a girl

because she is autistic, using strong words". Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that although such violence and microaggressions take place online, they have a profound impact on the general well-being of younger people: "I was teased online for my physical appearance, to the point of having anxiety attacks and panic attacks". The violence also translates into physical acts: "At school, they often called me a "ne\*\*\*\*" and a "f\*\*\*\*\*g gay" or "dy\*\*\*\*" because at the time I was dating a girl, even though they knew I had also been with a boy. I was insulted for my physique, for being poor, for being black. Because I am black, they punched me in the face". There are many testimonies of this kind: "He strangled me and kicked me, saying he was joking" or "One of my friends was teased and beaten up", highlighting how, even if not direct targets of violence, many young people are in effect victims of witnessed violence. Particularly serious are the testimonies that attribute forms of aggression and discrimination to adults - and even to teaching staff: "One day I was insulted by my teacher... while my classmates laughed".

In general, gender identity appears to be the main cause of jokes, comments and gestures of a sexual nature (19%); emotional and sexual orientation is the cause of most cases of discrediting (19.1%) and cases of exclusion and indifference (11.6%), together with personal and family background (11.6%). This appears to be the main cause of many other types of discrimination and harassment: mockery (13.8%); physical aggression (12.6%); bullying and discrimination based on ethnic origin (16.3%) and the online publication of images without the consent of the person portrayed (16.3%). The persistence of gender stereotypes and widespread misogyny support the spread



of testimonies such as: “They told me I was an easy girl, but I was a virgin” or “They labelled me as ‘the one who likes to get drunk and pick up boys in nightclubs’ when all I wanted to do was enjoy the evening. But they created a label to pin on me”. As the data reveals, discrimination and violence have deep and diverse roots and, as can be seen from the testimonies of young people, have a profound impact on their lives.

This data analysis shows a worrying and structural pattern of onlife<sup>3</sup> discrimination, which cuts across the experiences of younger people. Overall, the data collected shows that discriminatory and violent behaviour is widely normalised, often downplayed or trivialised, but actually has a deep and lasting impact on young people’s psychological, emotional and social well-being. This normalisation acts as a silent mechanism that makes it more difficult to recognise violence, seek help and activate effective collective responses. Discrimination and exclusion, especially when repeated and experienced in spaces such as social media, class chats or informal educational environments, have a strong impact on young people’s identity formation, self-esteem and sense of belonging. Without adequate tools to understand and name what is happening, there is a risk of internalising the violence suffered, transforming it into shame, isolation or self-blame, or of reproducing it in turn in relationships with peers. In this context, involving and activating young people,

providing them with interpretative tools, safe spaces and concrete actions for participation, is a fundamental lever for prevention and transformation. It is not just a matter of transmitting knowledge or behavioural norms, but of promoting learning that intertwines cognitive and emotional dimensions, capable of making visible the dynamics of power, discrimination and exclusion that permeate increasingly onlife daily relationships. Creating participatory and engaging educational projects that focus on human relationships, emotional experiences and the concrete experiences of young people means investing in a broad and conscious form of emotional education. Emotional education that helps to recognise and name emotions, develop empathy and relational responsibility, manage conflict and take a stand against injustice, actively countering the culture of violence and discrimination. From this perspective, emotional education is not a separate or accessory field, but an essential component of efforts to combat discrimination: it contributes to building more welcoming educational contexts, more equitable relationships and communities capable of caring for the emotional and relational well-being of all those involved. Finally, strengthening these skills means recognising young people not only as recipients of interventions, but as active agents of change, capable of imagining and practising more equitable, respectful and supportive forms of coexistence.

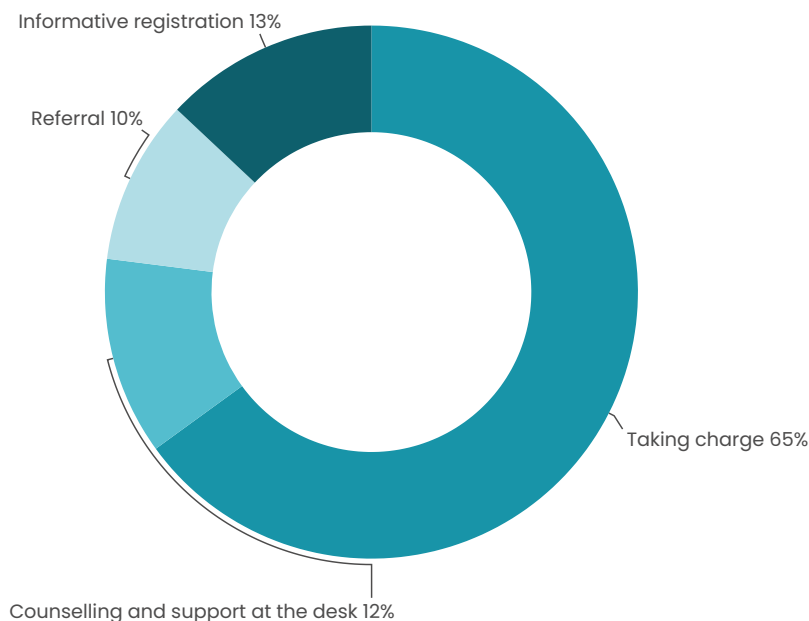
*\* Insults and offensive terms have been partially censored in the text through the use of asterisks, in order to avoid the explicit reproduction of violent and discriminatory language. This choice responds to the need to protect readers and, in particular, those who may be affected by such expressions, without however watering down or minimising the seriousness of the content analysed, which remains clearly recognisable in its meaning and impact.*

### 3.3 Analysis of response actions

After receiving and registering a report, SPAD's possibilities for response differ not only according to the content of the report, but also - and more importantly - to the needs expressed by who reports the episode.

**GRAPH 25. TYPE OF RESPONSE ACTION TAKEN**

January 2025 - December 2025

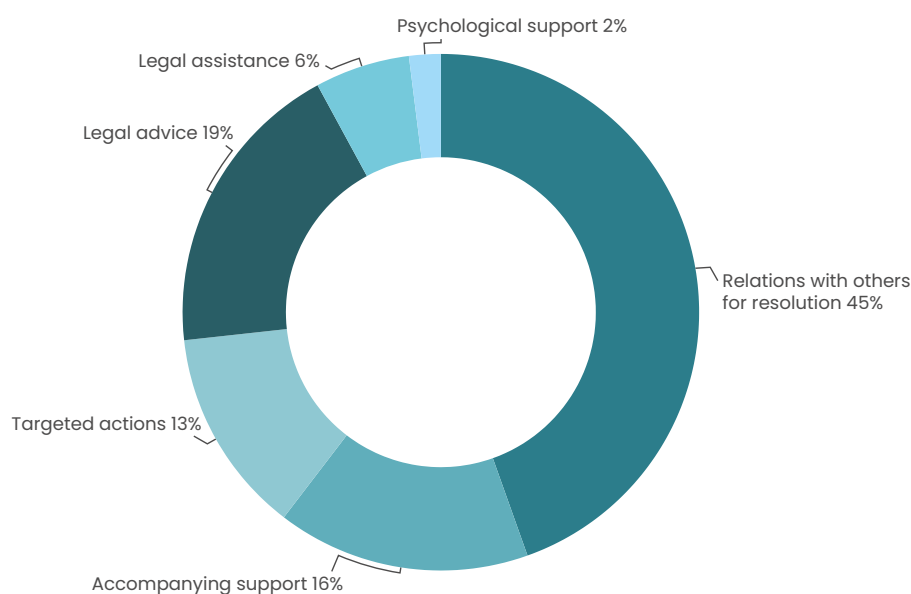


In most cases, reports were taken charge of directly by SPAD (77%), either through a second-level taking-charge (65%) or - in cases of simpler and more immediate management - through first-level taking-charge, i.e. resolved with the first counselling and support at the desk (12%). The case management can take the form of various specific actions, including: relationship with other subjects to find a solution (45%), accompanying support to other services (16%), legal advice (19%) or legal assistance (6%), psychological support (2%). In 13% of cases, case management also involved the promotion of targeted actions, i.e. actions that vary according to the specific situation and may include systemic interventions, such as the formulation of recommendations addressed to specific subjects involved, advocacy actions (promotion and protection of people's rights), awareness-raising interventions or information campaigns.

If it is deemed that other parties, either internal or external to the SPAD Network, are better suited to provide support, the report is referred to them: in 2025, this procedure was applied in 10% of cases. Finally, in 13% of cases, at the request of the person who made the report, SPAD proceeded with a simple informative registration. In these cases, while not taking charge of the case and taking no actual action in response, the reports are recorded with the ultimate aim of contributing to the emergence of the phenomenon of discrimination in the Bologna area, thus feeding the territorial monitoring.

**GRAPH 26. SPECIFIC TAKING CHARGE ACTIONS**

January 2025 - December 2025



In order to ensure better management and resolution of reports, SPAD has often collaborated with numerous other entities. It is important to note that these interactions are twofold: in some situations, SPAD deals directly with the entities recognised as responsible for discrimination in an attempt to reach an effective and timely resolution, while in others, other entities are called upon to offer specific forms of support. In a large percentage of cases, this involved activating collaborations within the SPAD Network (27%); the involvement of other associations outside the Network was more residual (3%). The multidisciplinary team was activated in 5.5% of cases. The Municipality of Bologna was involved in 4.5% of cases. Among the external entities most involved, meanwhile, were the Bologna Police Headquarters (6%), Poste Italiane (5.5%) and AUSL, the Bologna local health authority (4.5%). The complete list of actors involved in taking charge of or referring cases can be found in table 6.



### When racism remains invisible: an emblematic example of *under-recording*

While entering a shop, a woman of foreign origin with her children was stopped by staff, who required her to leave her bag attached to the stroller on the outside, without offering her a safe place to store it and without making the same request to other customers. Her attempt to ask for clarification led to a conflictual situation, during which the woman reported being subjected to insults.

This situation is subject to assessment in light of Article 43 of the Consolidated Act on Immigration, which protects equal treatment in access to goods and services.

The woman also reported difficulties in filing a formal complaint. Her report was not formalised on the basis that, in the absence of a hospital prognosis, there were no grounds for proceeding.

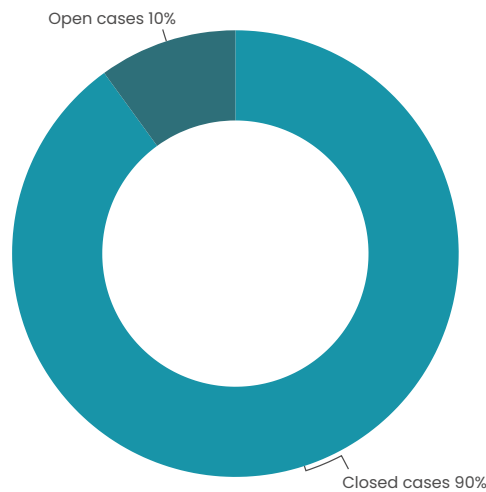
The episode is an example of *under-recording*. Arguing that it is impossible to take action in the absence of visible physical injuries risks overlooking the verification of a potential discriminatory motive, which is punishable regardless of physical damage. The difficulty in having one's testimony acknowledged can turn a potential violation into a "non-event", making the phenomenon invisible in official statistics and weakening the relationship of trust between citizens and institutions.

**TABLE 6. ACTORS INVOLVED IN SPAD RESPONSE ACTIONS**  
Actors who collaborated with SPAD in case management and/or resolution

Involved actors	Number	Percentage
SPAD associations	21	22%
Other associations	3	3%
Multidisciplinary team	5	5,5%
Municipality of Bologna	4	4,5%
Local police	3	3%
Law enforcement	3	3%
Police Headquarters of Bologna	6	6%
ASP City of Bologna	2	2%
Social services	2	2%
AUSL of Bologna	4	4,5%
Poste Italiane	5	5,5%
UNAR	2	2%
Real estate agencies	2	2%
Employment agencies	3	3%
Schools	2	2%
Public exercises	1	1%
Private individuals	3	3%
Others	7	7%
No other actors involved	18	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>

As of 31 December 2025, most cases had been closed (90%), while 10% were still open and being worked on.

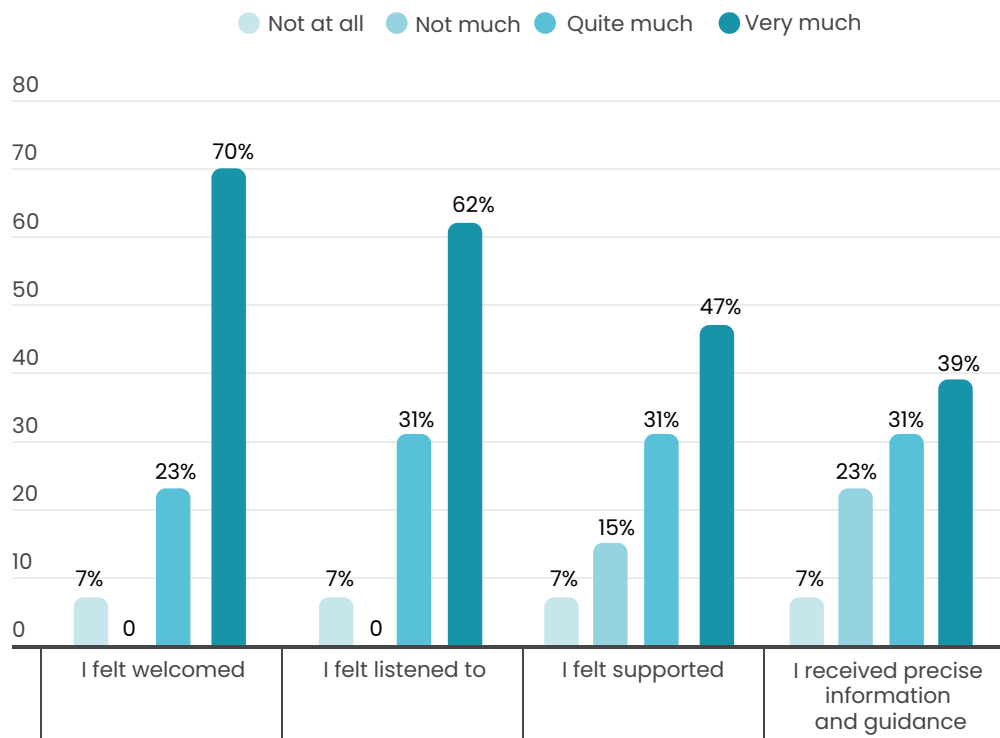
**GRAPH 27. PERCENTAGE OF CLOSED CASES**  
January 2025 – December 2025



### 3.3.1 Analysis of SPAD user satisfaction level

As in previous years, a survey was conducted in 2025 to gather feedback from SPAD users on the support they received and the responses they obtained after submitting their reports. The survey was conducted on cases assessed as “pertinent” during data analysis and closed by 31 December 2025. Respondents were first contacted by email and then by telephone.

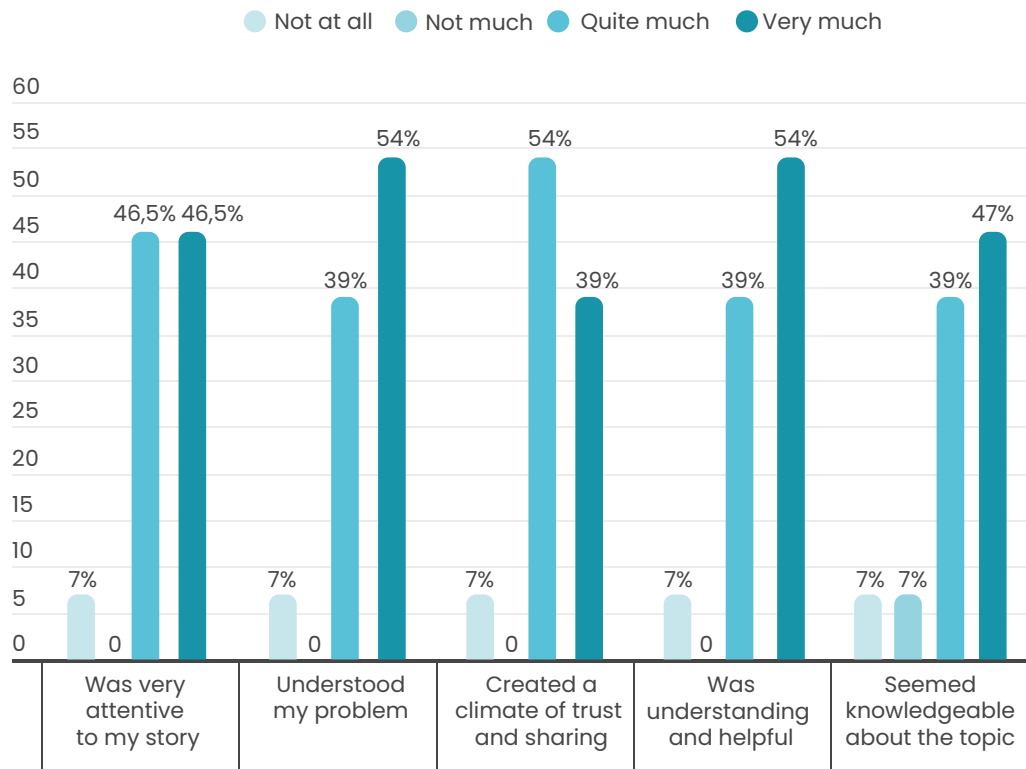
**GRAPH 28. EVALUATION OF THE EXPERIENCE WITH SPAD**  
Year 2025 surveys



Based on the responses received, a very positive assessment emerges regarding the experience with SPAD (graph 28). In particular, the aspects evaluated most favourably were the welcoming atmosphere (93% positive responses) and attentive listening (93% positive responses). Slightly lower than the first two aspects, but still positive, were the accuracy of the information received (70% positive responses) and the support received (78% positive responses).

**GRAPH 29. EVALUATIONS OF THE EXPERIENCE WITH THE SPAD TEAM**

Year 2025 surveys



As regards the experience with case managers and desk operators, most respondents gave a positive assessment in all aspects (graph 29). SPAD users particularly appreciated their ability to listen, understand problems and establish a climate of trust and sharing.



## Religious discrimination: the hijab as a factor of exclusion in the labour market

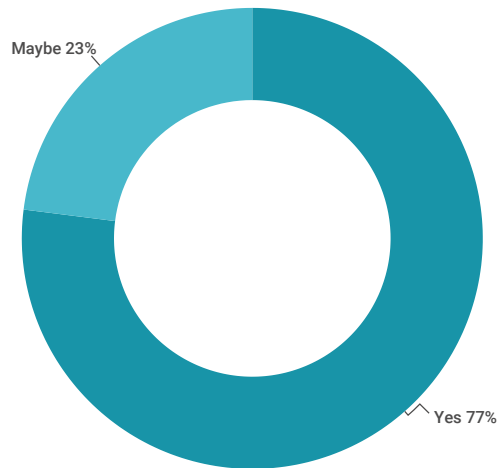
In the context of a job placement program for vulnerable people, a woman was referred to an employment agency for positions in the service sector. During the interview, the candidate was asked whether she wore the hijab daily, citing the alleged resistance of some client companies to accept veiled personnel in public-facing roles.

This behaviour can be considered discrimination based on religious beliefs and practices. According to the law, the use of the hijab can be restricted only if its absence constitutes an “essential and determining requirement” for the performance of the activity, a condition not demonstrated in this context. It is important to emphasize that the law equates an order to discriminate with discrimination itself: the intermediary is required to recognize the unlawfulness of such requests from client companies, as it cannot justify disadvantageous treatment based on discriminatory instructions received from third parties.

SPAD intervened, calling on the agency to comply with legislation and urging a review of its practices, so that staff are adequately trained to recognize the illegitimacy of such requests.

**GRAPH 30. WOULD YOU RETURN TO SPAD?**

Year 2025 surveys



Finally, based on their previous experience, none of the respondents said they were disappointed with the assistance they received or ruled out the possibility of contacting SPAD again. This figure marks a clear improvement on 2024, which had already recorded a positive balance: while in 2024, albeit to a minimal extent, 9% of users stated that they would not consult the Help Center again, this percentage fell to zero in 2025. Specifically, 77% of respondents expressed complete satisfaction, confirming that they would contact SPAD again if necessary. The remaining 23%, on the other hand, stated that they would “probably” contact SPAD again, even though their problem had only been partially resolved. This last finding is particularly noteworthy: it suggests that even when a case is not fully resolved, the quality and value of the support provided build a lasting sense of trust. Consequently, users view SPAD as a reliable resource regardless of the final outcome – which, it should be noted, often depends on the nature of the case or external variables beyond SPAD’s control.

In conclusion, the foregoing considerations reflect a more than positive assessment by users of SPAD’s intervention methods and – at the same time – offers interesting insights on potential areas for improvement in the near future, which are further elaborated in the following chapter.



## Public transport and hate speech

SPAD received a report concerning racist graffiti inside a public transport vehicle. Thanks to the report made by a citizen, the transport company took immediate action to remove the offensive graffiti.

This episode is an example of hate speech. The use of blatantly discriminatory language in a public place transforms an essential service into a hostile environment, damaging people’s dignity and sense of collective security. Prompt removal is a fundamental protective measure: the permanence of hate messages contributes to the “normalisation” of prejudice, lowering the threshold of sensitivity to racism.

Intervening promptly means reaffirming that public spaces are inclusive, where there is no legitimacy for any form of verbal violence.

### 3.4 Joint actions for data collection and monitoring of discrimination

in collaboration with APS Arcigay Il Cassero and MIT – Movimento Identità Trans APS

From 2022, with Council Resolution PG no. 697834/2022, the Municipality of Bologna provided for both the territorial diffusion and the extension of SPAD to other discrimination grounds. With particular reference to discrimination based on gender identity and/or sexual orientation, the extension has provided for the establishment of a solid collaboration with the Anti-discrimination Help Centers already present in the area. During 2025, collaboration with Cassero and MIT continued with the aim of consolidating the integrated city system for data collection and monitoring of discrimination established in 2024 (see the Third Report of the SPAD Observatory).

Together with SPAD, the Help Centers involved in this joint action are the STAR Anti-violence/ Anti-discrimination Center and the Spazio LGBTQIA+ Cassero Anti-discrimination Center:

#### STAR Anti-violence/Anti-discrimination Center

The STAR Anti-violence and Anti-discrimination Center, promoted by MIT Movimento Identità Trans APS in partnership with the CSAPSA social cooperative and the Centro Donna Giustizia, is mainly funded by UNAR, together with contributions from the Municipality of Bologna provided through the LGBTQIA+ Pact. During 2025, STAR operated as a low-threshold specialist center for the prevention, detection and combating of discrimination and violence against LGBTQIA+ people, with particular reference to trans people, people with a migrant background and people involved in sex work. The activity developed from the Bologna office and the Ferrara territorial office, integrating steadily with the network of social, health, anti-violence and anti-trafficking services. The Center guaranteed continuity of access, telephone availability and the possibility of taking charge even in emergency situations, confirming its role as a point of reference for both the people directly involved and the referring agencies.

Throughout 2025, STAR operated in a context characterised by an increase in the structural vulnerability of LGBTQIA+ people, exacerbated by housing instability, administrative irregularities, job insecurity, and worsening conditions for access to services. In this context, the Center's role was not limited to emergency management, but assumed a systemic mediation role between individuals and institutions, promoting access to rights, risk reduction, and the activation of pathways for exiting violence. The operational model was based on an integrated approach that combines reception, risk assessment, psychological support, legal counselling, social support, and interventions on employment and housing, overcoming the fragmentation of traditional services.

Data collected during 2025 confirms that almost all people accessing the STAR Center experience multiple marginalisation. In terms of user composition, over a third of reports concern trans people (approximately 35%), while a smaller share concerns cis-lesbian women and cis-gay men accessing the Center due to incidents of violence or discrimination related to sexual orientation (approximately 8%). The remaining portion of reports include trans men and non-binary individuals, who fall within the categories described above in relation to the identified discrimination factors.

The age groups with the most reports among people assisted by the STAR Center in 2025 are those between 18 and 35 years old (approximately 55%) and between 36 and 55 years old (approximately 23%), followed by people over 55 (approximately 7%) and those under 18 (approximately 2%).

From a socioeconomic perspective, a high concentration emerges of people outside the labour market or employed in precarious and informal jobs. A significant portion of those supported are sex workers, often without contractual protections and more exposed to violence, blackmail, and exploitation. Inactive individuals are predominantly affected by poor health, post-traumatic stress, legal issues, or serious housing difficulties.

Over half of the people taken in have a migration background, with a significant proportion lacking stable residence permits. This factor has a decisive impact on their ability to report

violence, access services and build paths to independence, making highly specialised intervention necessary in terms of rights, regularisation and protection.

The reports collected by STAR Center show a strong prevalence of intersectional forms of violence and discrimination, in which the intertwining of multiple vulnerability factors creates conditions of systemic exposure to discrimination. The main types of violence detected include:

- psychological, verbal, and relational violence in family and romantic settings;
- discrimination and mobbing in the workplace and educational contexts;
- exclusion from housing and services based on gender identity, sexual orientation, or legal status;
- physical and sexual violence, particularly in street contexts and in sex work;
- blackmail and threats related to documents, residence, or the visibility of one's identity.

Many cases present a combination of private and institutional violence, in which the lack of protection and the denial of services result in a recurrence of harm.

The STAR Center has implemented complex and personalised care, which has included:

- welcome interviews and risk assessments;
- specialised psychological support for victims of violence;
- legal counselling and support;
- activation of anti-trafficking channels in cases of exploitation;
- hospitality in emergency facilities in cases of immediate danger;
- support in finding housing and accessing residence;
- career counselling and job placement through the employment desk.

The added value of the Center was its ability to build real paths out of violence, intervening on the material conditions that made autonomy impossible.

These figures demonstrate STAR's effectiveness in reaching those most vulnerable to discrimination, violence, and exploitation within the Bologna and Ferrara areas. The service plays a strategic role in protecting rights and preventing the chronicity of violence, particularly for trans migrants and sex workers, who remain largely excluded from mainstream service channels. Thus, in 2025, STAR's role was confirmed as a key infrastructure in the local anti-violence and anti-discrimination system, capable of transforming emerging needs into concrete paths of safety, self-determination, and inclusion.

### **Anti-discrimination Center Spazio LGBTQIA+ Cassero**

The Anti-discrimination Center (CAD) Spazio LGBTQIA+ Cassero was founded in July 2022 in ATS with Piazza Grande, thanks to UNAR funding that has enabled the establishment of numerous anti-discrimination centers managed by LGBTQIA+ associations throughout the country. The UNAR funding continues to be the CAD's main source of funding, along with contributions from the Municipality of Bologna provided through the LGBTQIA+ Pact.

This opportunity has allowed Cassero to significantly invest in listening to, counselling, and supporting LGBTQIA+ individuals who have experienced discrimination and violence, expanding the organisation's existing service offerings. Specifically, a structured and comprehensive approach has been developed, aimed at helping individuals escape discrimination and violence, including psychological support, legal counselling, and employment and housing counselling.

People who come to the CAD are welcomed by a multidisciplinary team composed of a social worker, a project manager, a counsellor, seven psychologists, a psychiatrist, six lawyers, and fifteen helpline volunteers. The professionals and volunteers at the Anti-discrimination Center adopt the peer method, which values shared experiences in overcoming discrimination and violence. This approach helps to break down barriers linked to *minority stress* and encourages

people to approach the CAD, which becomes a point of access and reference for local services, with which it collaborates on an ongoing basis.

People who turn to the CAD bring with them stories of discrimination and violence that are often alarming and surprising, especially considering that most of them live or work in Bologna, a city generally considered welcoming towards LGBTQIA+ people.

When a person experiences discrimination and/or violence, they can find themselves feeling lonely and isolated. Combating loneliness is therefore a central objective of the CAD. Through the Cassero community, the team acts as a bridge to the association's social, recreational, and cultural groups, acting as an important catalyst for change.

For Spazio Cassero, intersectionality means being ready to welcome the unexpected. From the moment the service was designed in 2022, it was clear that it was impossible to imagine a "standard" LGBTQIA+ person. People who experience discrimination can be young or old, rich or poor, with or without citizenship. Within this wide range of experiences, discrimination is layered and intertwined, requiring flexible intervention that can be adapted to individual situations.

To address this complexity, the strategy adopted is networking and teamwork. This approach is particularly applied in the collaboration with La Casa delle Donne, with which joint interviews are conducted, and with the Arca cooperative, which manages SAI facilities for LGBTQIA+ migrants. In 2025, two CAD interns participated in the new training program promoted by SPAD. One of them subsequently joined the team as a Spazio Cassero operator, strengthening the synergy between the city's anti-discrimination help centers.

Also in 2025, Cassero, through the CAD, participated in the Serra Zanetti call for proposals, obtaining management of two ACER apartments. These apartments allow for emergency response, offering temporary accommodation to LGBTQIA+ individuals who have experienced violence. Most of the people hosted in the apartments are migrants, who are subsequently included in the SAI system.

During 2025, Spazio Cassero took on a total of 92 new individuals. Between them, 51 reported incidents of discrimination or violence that occurred within the Bologna Metropolitan Area. Consistent with the purpose of providing an accurate picture of the phenomenon at the local level, the joint analysis in the following section focuses exclusively on this subset. However, significant data emerges from the remaining reports: 14 individuals, despite residing or being domiciled in Bologna at the time of accessing the service, reported experiencing discrimination in their country of origin. This is a significant number (15% of the total, 22% if considering only reports from individuals in the Bologna area), which highlights how experienced discrimination is often the primary cause of migration and arrival in Bologna, further confirming the role of the CAD as a point of reference at the supra-local level.

Looking at the content of the reports recorded in 2025, first of all, the care of minors continued, as they continue to turn to the CAD in search of a safe space to live their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. At the same time, 2025 saw a particularly marked increase in cases of intersectional discrimination, particularly against racialised LGBTQIA+ individuals. As highlighted above, many of these are migrants who come to Bologna in an attempt to escape serious discrimination and violence suffered in their countries of origin because of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. However, such discriminatory dynamics are often reproduced in the context of arrival, both within the communities to which they belong and, in some cases, in the community that welcomes the migrant.

Racialised LGBTQIA+ people continue to be the group that reports the most serious and traumatic forms of violence, particularly physical and sexual violence. The stories that emerge from the cases taken on are often characterised by prolonged abuse and multiple experiences of violence, which have a profound impact on psychological well-being and the possibility of building paths to autonomy and stability. These situations have necessitated constant and structured collaboration with other specialised organisations in the area, including Casa delle Donne, in order to ensure adequate support in the process of coming forward, processing trauma and escaping violence, through integrated and multidisciplinary work.

There have also been numerous cases of intersectional discrimination related to gender identity and/or sexual orientation and socio-economic status. Rejection and discrimination by the family frequently lead to forced removal from the home, exposing people to conditions of severe marginalisation and, in some cases, homelessness. Added to this are the persistent difficulties in accessing the housing market in the metropolitan area, which aggravate the living conditions of both LGBTQIA+ people who are Italian nationals and those with a migration background.

In 2025, there was also an increase in the number of LGBTQIA+ people with mental health issues and/or psychiatric diagnoses being admitted to the service. This trend made it necessary to further restructure the service, adding a psychiatrist to the team, strengthening specific skills through dedicated training courses and working more closely with the public health system.

With regard to the forms of discrimination and violence reported, physical and verbal aggression continues to be the most common type. This is accompanied, with increasing frequency, by difficulties related to self-acceptance and processes of internalised discrimination, as well as critical issues related to the disclosure of one's gender identity and/or sexual orientation. These dynamics are particularly relevant in the case of racialised and migrant people, who face a double level of discrimination in accessing and participating in public and social life.

Since the CAD was established, 357 people have accessed it, with each person accessing it an average of three times. Of these people, 47.8% were cis men, 25.1% were cis women, and 27.2% were trans and non-binary people. In terms of employment status, 41.4% of reports were made by employed persons, 28.3% by unemployed persons, 27.6% by students, and only 2.6% by retired persons. Of the total number of visits, 73% of people were from Italy, 25.5% were from outside the European Union and only 1.4% were from European Union countries. The age groups with the most reports were 18-35 (62.6%) and 36-55 (26.5%), followed by people over 55 (7.9%) and under 18 (2.9%). Finally, in terms of educational level, of the total number of reports, 21% of people had primary or lower secondary education, 39.5% had attended secondary school, while 38.5% had a bachelor's degree, master's degree or were enrolled in a postgraduate course.

Alongside its work in providing support, the CAD has consolidated a structured prevention and advocacy programme, intervening in institutional and professional contexts where discrimination occurs or is combated. Training activities have involved over 450 people from social and health services, law enforcement agencies, third sector organisations and the health sector, strengthening skills and responsibilities in the protection of LGBTQIA+ rights. Dialogue with the academic world and the activation of curricular internships complete an action aimed at having a systemic impact on local practices and policies.

### 3.4.1 Towards an integrated analysis of discrimination

In line with the path traced in previous years, 2025 saw the consolidation of the synergy between the SPAD, STAR and Spazio Cassero Help Centers. The adoption of unified data-entry tools enabled the creation of a shared database, from which data was processed through a qualitative and quantitative analysis based on the categories of analysis defined in the previous year. All three desks agreed on the need to adopt a broad and multidimensional definition of discrimination, understood not only in legal terms, but as a complex experience involving social, psychological and cultural dimensions. This choice is based on the awareness that experiences of discrimination are often subtle and nuanced, and that they do not always manifest themselves in explicit violations of legal norms, especially with regard to homophobia and transphobic actions, for which, it should be recalled, there is still no legislation recognising this aggravating circumstance. Therefore, the definition adopted also takes into account aspects such as perceived discrimination, micro-aggressions and fear of coming out, which, although not always legally recognised, have a significant impact on people's lives.

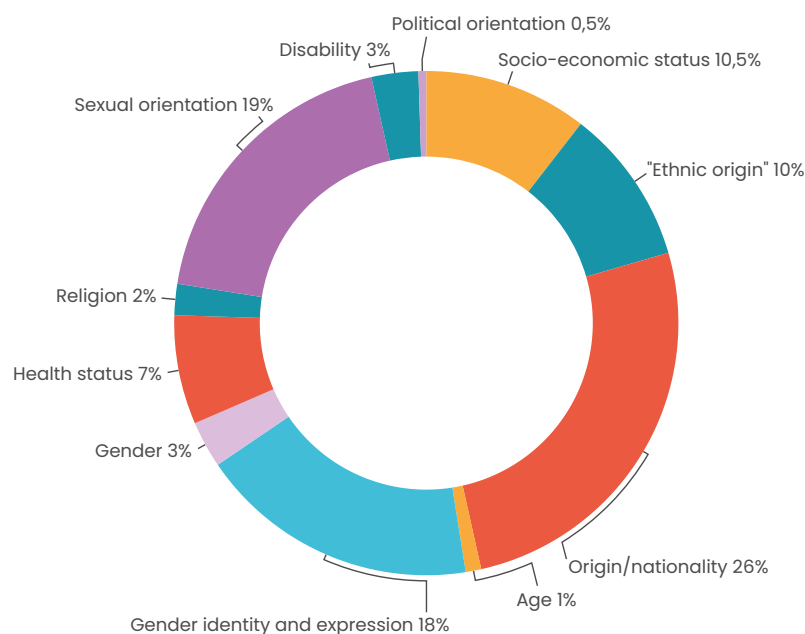
The joint analysis presented in this section collects all reports received by the desks in the period between 1 January and 31 December 2025, covering the Bologna metropolitan area. This analysis provides an overview of the experiences of discrimination experienced by people residing in the Bologna area during 2025. In total, 152 reports (67 SPAD, 34 STAR, 51 Spazio Cassero) were analysed across the following dimensions:

- Grounds of discrimination, with particular attention to intersectionality;
- Type of discriminatory action;
- Discriminating agent(s);
- Area of discrimination.

Firstly, reports were classified on the basis of discrimination grounds, i.e. the personal characteristics underlying the discriminatory treatment identified. Although, as in 2024, most cases still concern discrimination grounds falling within the remit of the three desks, the distribution of frequencies changed in 2025: unlike the previous year, when discrimination based on sexual orientation was the most prevalent, in 2025 “racial” discrimination – whether based on origin/nationality (26%) or “ethnic origin” (10%) – was the most numerous (graph 31), accounting for 36% of the total (+6.5% on 2024) . This change in trend was significantly influenced by the increase in reports recorded by SPAD during the year: SPAD’s pertinent discrimination cases almost doubled, from 32 in 2024 to 60 in 2025. This is followed, in order of frequency, by discrimination based on sexual orientation (19%) and gender identity or expression (18%). The percentages of discrimination based on socio-economic status (10.5%) and health conditions (7%) are also significant – factors which, as will be seen later, often intersect with those covered by the three desks. Lower, on the other hand, are the percentages of discrimination based on gender (3%), disability (3%), religion (2%), age (1%) and political orientation (0.5%). For further details, see table 7.

**GRAPH 31. JOINT ANALYSIS: DISCRIMINATION BY GROUNDS OF DISCRIMINATION**

SPAD - STAR - Spazio Cassero



**TABLE 7. JOINT ANALYSIS: DISCRIMINATION BY GROUNDS OF DISCRIMINATION**

SPAD - STAR - Spazio Cassero

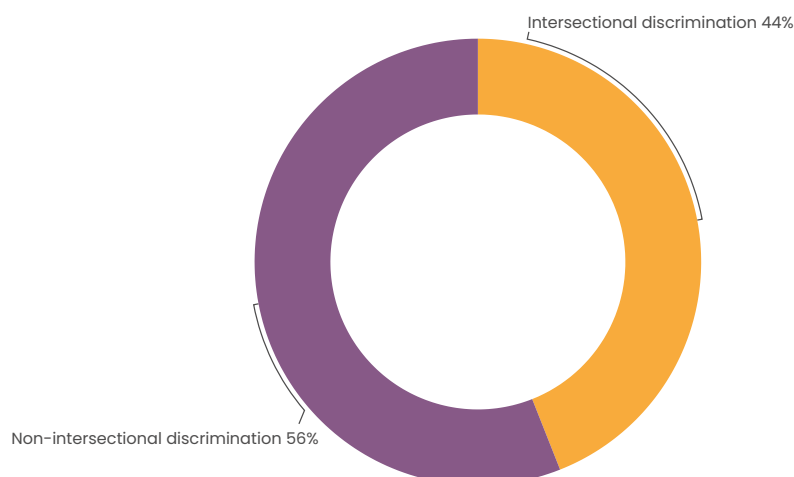
Grounds of discrimination	Total	SPAD	STAR	Spazio Cassero
Origin/nationality	67	55	10	2
Ethnic origin	25	19	5	1
Sexual orientation	49	4	6	39
Gender identity and expression	47	3	25	18
Gender	7	6	1	0
Religion	4	4	0	0
Disability	8	1	1	6
Health status	18	1	9	8
Socio-economic status	27	10	14	3
Age	2	2	0	0
Political orientation	1	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>255*</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>77</b>

\* The total takes into account cases of multiple/intersectional discrimination, in which the discrimination grounds are multiple

Of all the cases analysed, 44% concern situations of intersectional discrimination (graph 32), i.e. discrimination based on two or more grounds which, acting simultaneously, interact with each other in such a way that they can no longer be distinguished and separated, producing distinct and specific forms of discrimination. A more in-depth analysis shows that almost half of these cases (45%) can be traced back to the intersection of the grounds of discrimination covered by the three desks (highlighted in purple in table 8). Looking at the rest of the grounds of discrimination, it is clear that the factors covered by the three desks tend to intersect most frequently with socio-economic status (25 cases, 37%), health status (16 cases, 24%), gender (7 cases, 10%) and disability (7 cases, 10%). These data highlight how identity factors such as national origin, “ethnic origin”, sexual orientation and/or gender identity often act as real social determinants: belonging to marginalised groups exposes individuals to a significantly higher risk of slipping into economic and/or health insecurity, confirming that discrimination itself is a cause of structural vulnerability.

**GRAPH 32. JOINT ANALYSIS: PERCENTAGE OF INTERSECTIONAL DISCRIMINATION**

SPAD - STAR - Spazio Cassero



**TABLE 8. JOINT ANALYSIS: INTERSECTIONAL DISCRIMINATION BY GROUNDS OF DISCRIMINATION**

SPAD – STAR – Spazio Cassero

Grounds of discrimination	Total	SPAD	STAR	Spazio Cassero
Sexual orientation + gender identity and expression	8		2	6
Origin/nationality + gender identity and expression	5	1	4	
Origin/nationality + sexual orientation	1		1	
Origin/nationality + gender	5	4	1	
"Ethnic origin" + gender	1	1		
Gender identity and expression + "ethnic origin" + origin/nationality	1		1	
Gender identity and expression + sexual orientation + "ethnic origin"	1		1	
Sexual orientation + "ethnic origin" + disability	1			1
Sexual orientation + origin/nationality + disability	2			2
Sexual orientation + origin/nationality + health status	1			1
Gender identity and expression + origin/nationality + socio-economic status	1		1	
Gender identity and expression + "ethnic origin" + socio-economic status	1		1	
"Ethnic origin" + socio-economic status + gender	1	1		
Origin/nationality + religion + gender identity and expression + sexual orientation	1	1		
Origin/nationality + socio-economic status	6	5	1	
Gender identity and expression + socio-economic status	6		6	
Sexual orientation + socio-economic status	1		1	
Gender identity and expression + health status	3		3	
Origin/nationality + age	1	1		
Sexual orientation + disability	3			3
Sexual orientation + health status	4			4
Origin/nationality + religion	2	2		
Socio-economic status + health status	1		1	
Origin/nationality + "ethnic origin" + socio-economic status	1	1		
Gender identity and expression + socio-economic status + health status	5		2	3
"Ethnic origin" + socio-economic status + health status	1		1	
Origin/nationality + socio-economic status + health status	1	1		
Gender identity and expression + disability + health status	1		1	
Origin/nationality + socio-economic status + age	1	1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20</b>

As noted above, and in line with the objective of providing an accurate picture of the phenomenon at the local level, the data analysis in this paragraph does not include reports collected by Spazio Cassero relating to discrimination suffered in the country of origin. However, it is essential to provide an overview of these cases, which represent a central part of the support and assistance work carried out by the Help Center. This activity focuses in particular on welcoming people to Bologna who often arrive in the area after seeking asylum precisely because of the violence they have suffered in their own country, supporting them in identifying effective strategies to overcome the trauma and discrimination they have experienced. As regards the main data, all of these reports (14 cases) present sexual orientation as ground of discrimination. As all cases involve intersectional discrimination, the other most frequently recorded grounds are “ethnic origin” (29%, 12 cases), socio-economic status (19%, 8 cases), gender identity and expression (10%, 4 cases) and origin/nationality (5%, 2 cases).

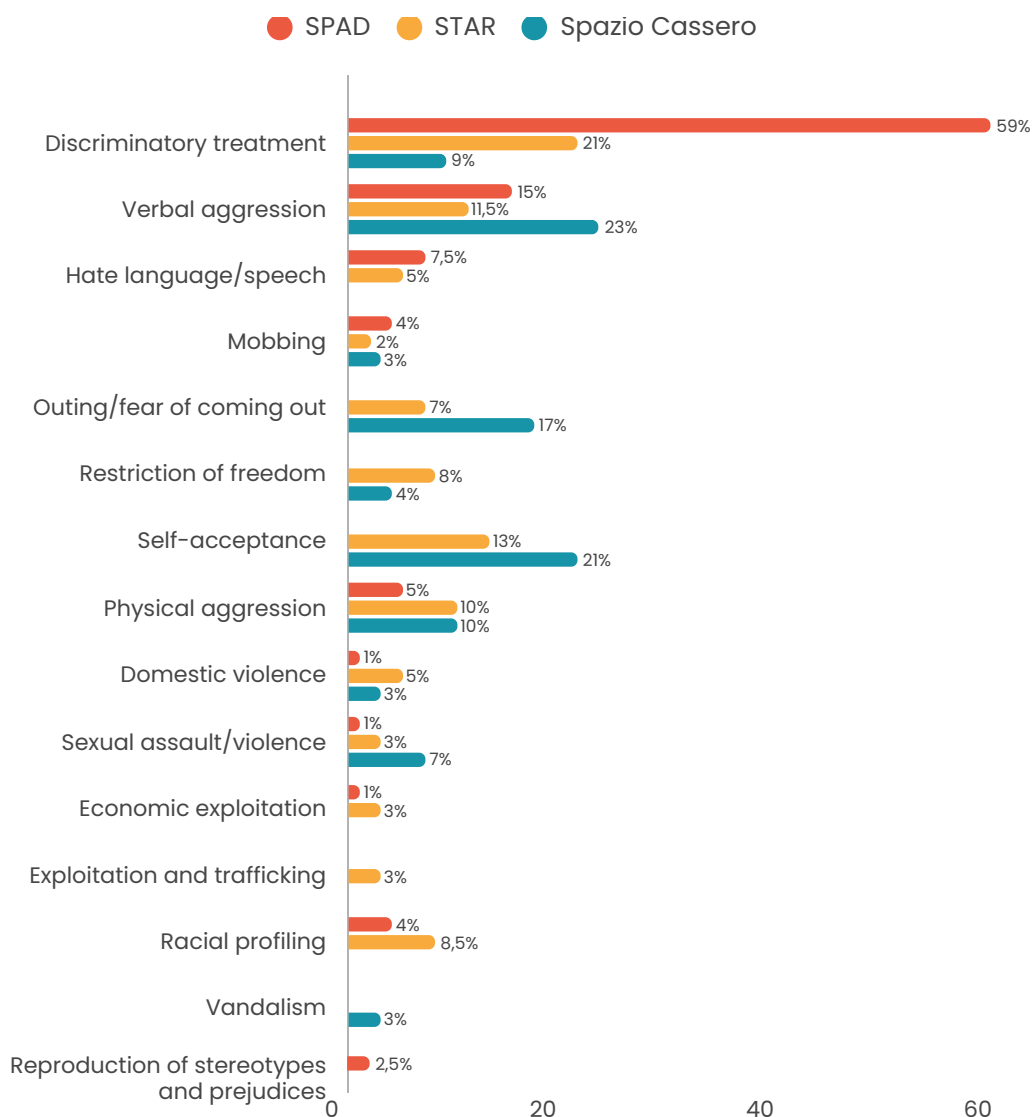
Before analysing the data, it is important to highlight a methodological aspect regarding the content of the reports recorded by the three desks. All the graphs below present the data as percentages rather than absolute values. This methodological choice was made in order to make the comparison of data clearer and more immediate – an operation that would otherwise have been more complex, given the different numbers of cases collected by the three desks in 2025. The use of percentage values allows the data to be standardised, thus facilitating the comparison and interpretation of similarities and/or differences.

Analysing the type of discriminatory action (graph 33), it is clear that the most frequent categories are the same as in 2024, but with different weights. This year, in fact, out of the total number of cases analysed, the type of discriminatory action found to be most frequent on average is discriminatory treatment (second in terms of average frequency in 2024) – a category that includes all forms of treatment considered unfair and discriminatory on the basis of one or more aspects of the identity of the person or group affected. This prevalence is strongly determined by the incidence of data collected by SPAD, where discriminatory treatment accounts for 59% of reports. For both SPAD (59%) and STAR (21%) desks, discriminatory treatment emerged as the most recurrent discriminatory action; for Spazio Cassero, on the other hand, the percentage value of this case stands at 9%. In second place is discrimination in the form of verbal aggression (first in terms of average frequency in 2024), understood in a broad sense to include all types of verbal abuse, mockery, threats, slander, comments or intimidating gestures directed at the “victim”. For Spazio Cassero, this is the most numerous category (23%). The percentages for SPAD (15%) and STAR (11.5%) are lower, but still significant. The incidence of physical aggressions, on the other hand, remains at a constant threshold between 5% (SPAD) and 10% (STAR, Spazio Cassero) for all three desks. Also noteworthy is the data relating to reports classified as hate speech or language by SPAD (7.5%) and STAR (5%), while no such cases were recorded by Spazio Cassero.

Some of the discriminatory actions included in this analysis are mainly linked to dynamics of oppression, exclusion and prejudice that directly affect members of the LGBTQIA+ community. For this reason, a disparity can be observed in the data collected by the three desks across a series of response categories related to this variable: SPAD did not record any cases related to these forms of discrimination, while both STAR and Spazio Cassero recorded a high incidence of reports of this type. In fact, there were numerous cases in which the discrimination recorded by the latter took the form of actions to expose sexual orientation and/or gender identity or fear of coming out (17% for Spazio Cassero, 7% for STAR), difficulty in accepting oneself (21% for Spazio Cassero, 13% for STAR) – an alarming sign of the spread of internalised homophobia and transphobia – and limitations on freedom (4% for Spazio Cassero, 8% for STAR).

**GRAPH 33. JOINT ANALYSIS: DISCRIMINATION BY TYPE OF DISCRIMINATORY ACTION**

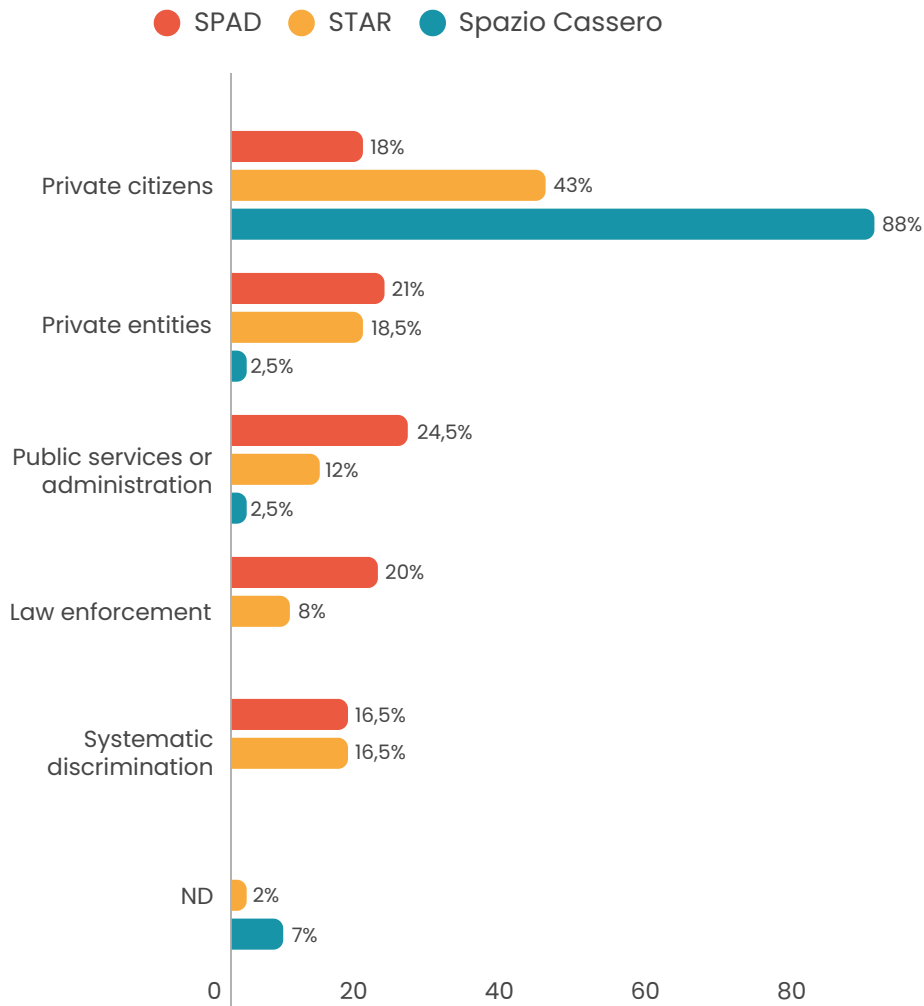
SPAD - STAR - Spazio Cassero



An analysis of the discriminating agents, i.e. the persons or subjects identified as responsible for the reported discrimination, confirms the observations on the differences, already highlighted last year, between the data collected by SPAD on the one hand, and those collected by STAR and Spazio Cassero on the other. In 2025, the different areas of competence of the three desks are clearly reflected in the distinction between the institutional and interpersonal dimensions of the discrimination reported. For STAR and Spazio Cassero, where almost all reports concern discrimination related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, the category with the highest incidence is that of private citizens: in the case of STAR, these account for 43% of the total number of cases recorded; in the case of Spazio Cassero, the percentage rises to 88%. It is therefore clear that discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people, at least those reported to the two desks analysed here, is almost always perpetrated by private individuals, particularly those who already know the person who has suffered discrimination, whether they are mere acquaintances (6% for STAR, 10.5% for Spazio Cassero), family members (14.5% for STAR, 23% for Spazio Cassero) or parents (6% for STAR, 17% for Spazio Cassero) or partners (10% for Spazio Cassero). This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that homophobia and transphobia is a manifestation of patriarchal violence, which can make the family an unsafe place for LGBTQIA+ people. In situations of intersectional discrimination and violence, where sexual orientation and identity intersect with "ethnic origin" or origin/nationality, the risk can be exacerbated. The domestic and community space, which should offer support and protection in contexts of violence and discrimination, may not be available and may even become an unsafe space for the reasons mentioned above; this is in addition to situations of racism experienced outside the community of reference.

**GRAPH 34. JOINT ANALYSIS: DISCRIMINATION BY DISCRIMINATING AGENTS**

SPAD - STAR - Spazio Cassero



In stark contrast to the other two desks, for SPAD, cases in which the discriminating agent was identified as private citizens accounted for 18% - the second lowest category in terms of frequency. In the case of SPAD, discrimination by public services or administration (24.5%) has the highest incidence - a figure which, together with that relating to law enforcement agencies (20%), confirms the persistence of more or less explicit forms of racism, even at the institutional level. With lower percentages, but still increasing compared to 2024, the STAR and Spazio Cassero desks also recorded discrimination by public services or administrations (12% for STAR, 2.5% for Spazio Cassero) and law enforcement agencies (8% for STAR). There were also numerous cases of discrimination by private entities (21% for SPAD, 18.5% for STAR) and those identified as systemic discrimination (16.5% for both SPAD and STAR), with more cases reported by SPAD and STAR than by Spazio Cassero.

It is particularly interesting to note that SPAD, a Help Center that mainly handles reports of "racial" discrimination, presents an extremely balanced distribution of discriminating agents. Unlike the other two desks, there is no single predominant actor: cases range from 16.5% of systemic discrimination to 24.5% attributed to public services or administration. These data confirm the structural nature of racism: the phenomenon appears to be the result of a complex system of different actors, whether public or private, individuals or subjects, which contribute in almost equal measure to creating a widespread system of discrimination.

**TABLE 9. JOINT ANALYSIS: DISCRIMINATION BY DISCRIMINATING AGENTS**

SPAD – STAR – Spazio Cassero

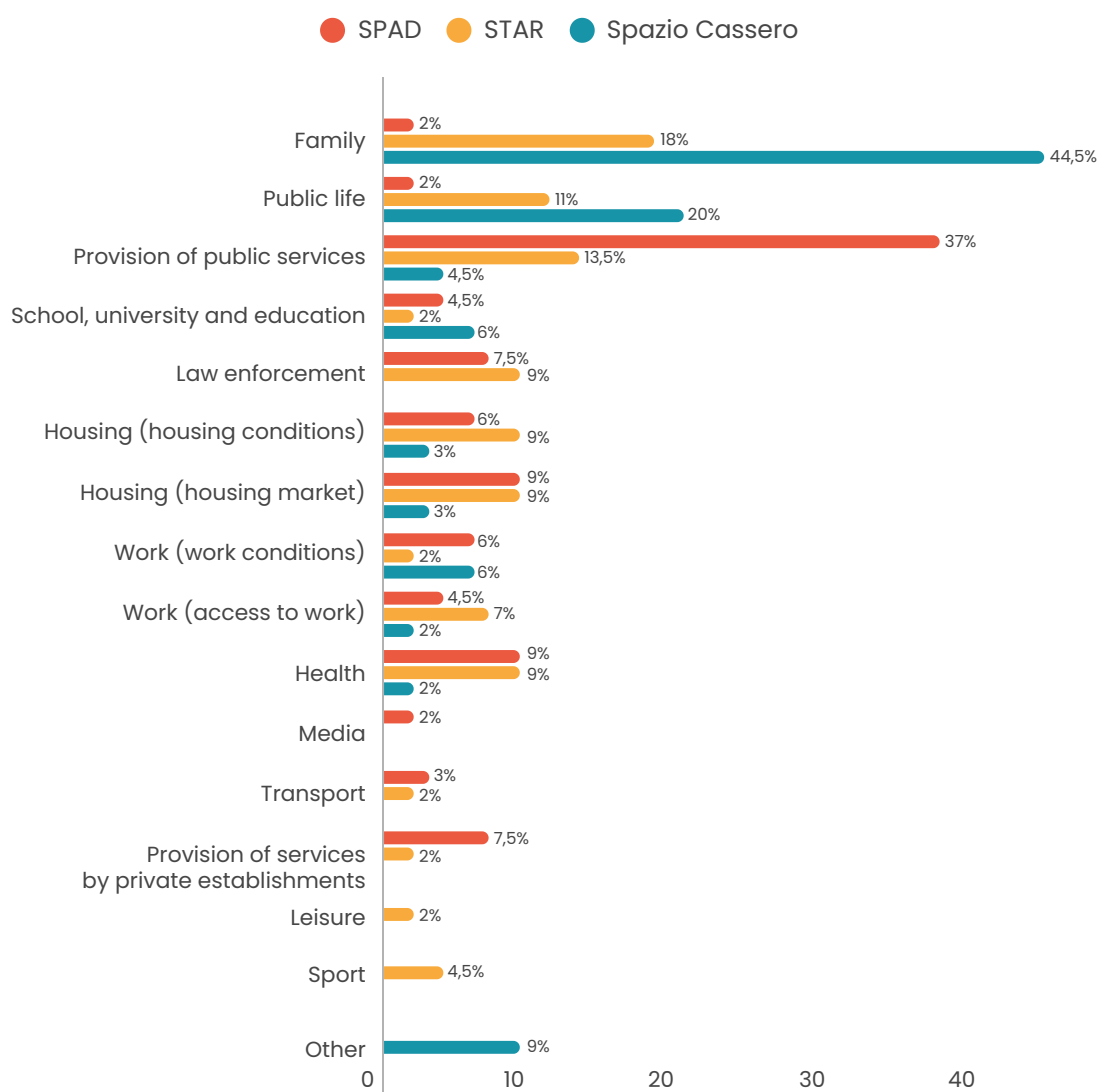
Discriminating agents	SPAD	STAR	Spazio Cassero
<b>Private citizens</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>Private citizens (individual)</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>59%</b>
Stranger	9%	12,5%	9%
Acquaintance	1%	6%	8%
Colleague	1%	2%	8%
Family member	0%	12,5%	15%
Parent	0%	2%	9%
Partner	1%	0%	10%
<b>Private citizens (group)</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>29%</b>
Strangers	5%	2%	8%
Acquaintances	1%	0%	2,5%
Colleagues	0%	0%	2,5%
Family members	0%	2%	8%
Parents	0%	4%	8%
Partners	0%	0%	0%
<b>Private entities</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>18,5%</b>	<b>2,5%</b>
Private entities	6%	12,5%	0%
Private entities (employer)	2%	2%	2,5%
Private entities (manager)	0%	0%	0%
Private entities (employee)	7%	2%	0%
Private entities (organised group)	0%	0%	0%
Private entities (organisation/association)	5%	2%	0%
<b>Public services or administration</b>	<b>24,5%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>2,5%</b>
Public services or administration (manager)	0%	0%	0%
Public services or administration (employee)	7,5%	2%	0%
Public services or administration (public office or service)	12%	4%	0%
Public services or administration (law, regulation, notice or practice)	5%	4%	2,5%
Public services or administration (political representative)	0%	2%	0%
<b>Law enforcement</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Law enforcement (individual)	4%	2%	0%
Law enforcement (group)	4%	2%	0%
Law enforcement (office, police station, etc.)	12%	4%	0%
<b>Systemic discrimination</b>	<b>16,5%</b>	<b>16,5%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>ND</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Further interesting observations emerge from the analysis of the area of discrimination, which refers not so much to the physical space in which it occurred, but rather to its “subject matter”, its content, and the context in which it manifested itself. Here too, a reading of the data reveals a marked difference between the three desks: while for the STAR and Spazio Cassero desks most reports concern the areas of “family” (44.5% for Spazio Cassero, 18% for STAR, 2% for SPAD) and “public life” (20% for Spazio Cassero, 11% for STAR, 2% for SPAD), in the case of SPAD, it is the area of “provision of public services” that recorded the highest percentage of cases (37% for SPAD, 13.5% for STAR, 4.5% for Spazio Cassero). These data are therefore closely correlated and particularly consistent with the findings of the analysis of the discriminating agents. It is interesting to note that the differences that emerged reflect the specific characteristics of the communities and situations that each Help Center deals with: In the case of “racial” discrimination recorded by SPAD, a significant proportion of reports concern, as already mentioned, an institutional context. Conversely, in the case of discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people recorded by STAR and Spazio Cassero, the incidence of this form of discrimination is significantly lower, while there are more reports closely linked to the personal sphere of the “victims”, which mainly occur within the private or social sphere.

Lower, but still significant, are the figures recorded by the three desks in the areas of “housing” (15% for SPAD, 18% for STAR, 6% for Spazio Cassero) and “work” (11% for STAR, 10.5% for SPAD, 8% for Spazio Cassero) - see graph 35 for details on the sub-categories of the two areas. Finally, the data from SPAD (7.5%) and STAR (9%) on the areas of “law enforcement” and “health” (9% for both SPAD and STAR) and from SPAD (4.5%) and Spazio Cassero (6%) on the area of “school, university and education” were similar.

**GRAPH 35. JOINT ANALYSIS: DISCRIMINATION BY AREA OF DISCRIMINATION**

SPAD - STAR - Spazio Cassero



The integrated analysis presented here confirmed the main findings that emerged in the previous edition of this Report, marking a decisive step towards the establishment of an increasingly structured joint monitoring system. This work is the result of the consolidation of the synergy between the three Help Centers SPAD, STAR and Spazio Cassero. The importance of continuing this commitment lies in its ability to bring to light phenomena that, by their very nature, often remain hidden or underestimated. By analysing the data and cross-referencing various discriminatory factors, the three desks have been able to move beyond viewing discrimination as a mere legal category and recognise it in all its complexity as a social and political issue. The data collected highlights a multi-dimensional reality: an increasingly accurate understanding of the complexity of discrimination can and must inform effective prevention and countermeasures. Only through constant and shared monitoring will it be possible to transform knowledge of the phenomenon into concrete action.



## The right to health and language barriers: critical issues in obstetric and gynaecological care for women of foreign origin

SPAD has received reports of some critical issues regarding the accessibility of obstetric and gynaecological services at certain hospitals. The main problem concerns the management of language barriers in maternity wards and clinics and in obstetric emergency rooms. The reports received show that foreign users with limited knowledge of the Italian language often encounter difficulties in communicating with healthcare personnel during childbirth. Due to the difficulty of immediately activating professional language mediation services, the use of automatic translation tools or the involvement of family members, including minors in some cases, has been observed for the transmission of clinical information and sensitive medical communications.

This situation constitutes potential indirect discrimination: the organisation of the service, while offering the same care to all, effectively disadvantages those who do not speak Italian. The language barrier prevents the building of a relationship of trust between midwife and mother, a fundamental element for safe and dignified care. Without effective communication, the right to health is not fully guaranteed, as it hinders the patient's ability to express informed consent. The use of improvised interpreters also undermines confidentiality and medical accuracy.

Based on these findings, SPAD made suggestions aimed at optimising language mediation, proposing to review and speed up the protocol for activating the service, particularly in high-urgency departments such as obstetrics.

Positive actions are already underway in this regard, including the launch in Bologna of the project "A Thousand Days - Nurturing Care", promoted by the Municipality as part of the PN Metro Plus National Programme and co-funded by the European Union. Through collaboration with the third sector, the initiative aims to build an integrated system of interventions to support families from pregnancy to the first two years of life, with a specific focus on the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups. The activation of a multidisciplinary team composed of midwives and linguistic-cultural mediators could be the right way to overcome communication barriers in the case study as well. In fact, even though the project has a strong territorial and home-based focus, the provision of a dedicated help desk and, above all, training for healthcare professionals constitute fundamental steps in transforming the management of the language barrier from an emergency issue to a structured activity. Interventions of this kind are essential to ensure that linguistic fragility does not compromise clinical effectiveness and respect for human dignity, guaranteeing every woman the full exercise of her right to health.

# CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Over the coming year, SPAD will be called upon to consolidate and strengthen its role as a territorial safeguard against discrimination, facing challenges and new prospects for growth. This section illustrates the challenges and prospects for the development of SPAD, based on the experience of its first four years of activity and a series of meetings and consultations with the SPAD Network, which remains open.

## 1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPAD MODEL IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA - AMIF UNAR PROJECT

Among the prospects for development is participation in the national project led by UNAR "Support for Territorial Anti-discrimination Networks - Capacity Building and Scientific Coordination - Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2021-2027", already mentioned in other parts of the Report. As part of this project, which sees the Metropolitan City as the leader and the Region as a partner in the Emilia-Romagna area, the Municipality of Bologna will participate as an implementing body in order to strengthen the Anti-discrimination Network in the metropolitan area by consolidating the SPAD Central Node and strengthening the network of Antennas in the metropolitan area.

## 2. INCREASED VISIBILITY OF SPAD

The consolidation of SPAD necessarily involves enhancing its visibility in order to develop a more widespread presence throughout the territory. As already noted in previous editions of the Report, the data confirm a correlation between communication activities and an increase in reports: every awareness-raising

initiative produces an immediate response, demonstrating how knowledge of the possibility of reporting is closely linked to the SPAD's ability to maintain a presence in the public sphere and inform people of its existence. With this in mind, it is a priority to optimise the effectiveness of information tools, increasing the production of materials characterised by accessible and inclusive language, in order to reach a wider and more diverse audience, while ensuring their strategic distribution in the busiest and most popular locations. This approach aims not only to inform, but also to make the Help Center a well-known, reliable and accessible presence for the entire community.

Information will also need to be enhanced in terms of awareness of the support opportunities for "victims" of discrimination provided by SPAD, of rights and of various forms of discrimination. With this in mind, and following discussions during the training course with intercultural mediators, it is a priority to accompany the dissemination of materials with awareness-raising activities aimed at potential users. The aim is to promote greater awareness of one's rights through the organisation of events dedicated to specific critical areas, such as housing, work and the acquisition of Italian citizenship, both in terms of the procedures for obtaining it and the rights that come with it.

## 3. OWNERSHIP AND LOCAL PRESENCE

Alongside communication activities, the development of SPAD must be based on strengthening the SPAD Network, i.e. the network of collaboration partners. Building a system of stable, structured relationships with local associations is an essential strategic

objective. Through the establishment of regular meetings for discussion and planning, it is possible to transform occasional participation into ongoing cooperation. An active and co-responsible network is, in fact, an essential prerequisite for defining awareness-raising initiatives that truly meet the needs of local communities, thus ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of the social impact in the long term. It will also be a priority to promote the role of intercultural mediators trained in anti-discrimination: these “SPAD antennas”, operating extensively throughout the territories, will be able to play a key role in informal listening and guidance, encouraging the emergence of reports.

#### **4. OPENING OF A NEW DESK IN THE NAVILE DISTRICT**

Following the opening of the two desks at the M. Zonarelli Intercultural Center and in the Porto-Saragozza district, a third desk will be experimentally opened in the Navile district in 2026, thanks to collaboration with the district administration, inside a redeveloped local market and, in particular, in a space managed by the Municipality and a network of associations.

#### **5. CONSOLIDATION OF GROUP AND TEAM SUPERVISION ACTIVITIES**

In order to enhance the effectiveness of Function 2, the intention is to invest in expanding the network of professionals and partner associations, with a view to achieving an increasingly qualified multidisciplinary exchange. This strengthening should go hand in hand with a renewed focus on the organisational well-being and methodological

resilience of those working on the front line. To this end, it would be important to establish a supervision system dedicated to SPAD operators (F1 and F2), which is essential for dealing with the most complex cases and mitigating the emotional burden inherent in such support pathways.

#### **6. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION ACTIVITIES**

As part of the aforementioned three-year AMIF project, cooperation with the Metropolitan City is planned to expand anti-discrimination training with courses and workshops aimed at various target groups, including teachers, educational staff, local police, healthcare personnel and employment agencies staff. Depending on the target audience, these courses will aim to promote greater awareness of rights, recognise and effectively combat discrimination, and ensure fair and non-discriminatory access to services.

#### **7. STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION WITH SCHOOLS**

In synergy with the training courses and guidelines approved by the City Council regarding collaboration with the University of Bologna in the field of global citizenship education, it would be necessary to strengthen SPAD’s collaboration with educational and school contexts. Strengthening SPAD’s action in schools, based on the positive experiences achieved with some educational institutions in 2025, means promoting greater awareness of rights, providing concrete tools for understanding reality, recognising discrimination and feeling empowered and supported in reporting it.

## REFERENCE NOTES

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34. The project video is available at the link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7sLdfr6Viag](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7sLdfr6Viag)
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**Insight: Combating discrimination in schools.  
Evidence, critical issues, and educational perspectives based on young people's experiences**

1. For further details: <https://www.cospe.org/paesi/italia/68994/effetto-farfalla-cambiamo-le-parole-per-cambiare-il-mondo/>.
2. COSPE, Zaffiria, Lunaria, Amnesty International Sezione Italiana (AIIT), Dipartimento di Sociologia e Diritto dell'Economia dell'Università di Bologna (SDE), Carta di Roma (CdR), CoNNGI, Oxfam Italia (OIT), Associazione Italiana Donne per lo Sviluppo (AIDOS), O.S.V.I.C – Organismo Sardo di Volontariato Internazionale Cristiano (OSVIC), EMERGENCY – Life Support for Civilian War Victims, LIBERA. Associazioni, nomi e numeri contro le mafie, Gay Center/ Gay Help Line (GC), Regione Toscana (RT). In collaboration with the National Network for Combating Hate Speech and Phenomena. Funding body: AICS – Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. With the contribution of EUROPE DIRECT Florence.
3. Contraction of “online” and “life” used to describe the current situation in a hyper-connected world where there is no distinction between being online (digital life) and offline (analogue life).

**For further information:**

- **UNAR – National Office Against Racial Discrimination** – Italian government body promoting equal opportunities and combating racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination.
- **Council of Europe – No Hate Speech Movement** – Council of Europe campaign against hate speech, particularly online. Actively involves young people.
- **ILGA World** – International organisation for the rights of LGBTQIA+ people, committed to monitoring global discrimination.
- **Openpolis – Data on inequality and discrimination** – Authoritative source of data and analysis on discrimination and inequality in Italy, useful for educational and civic studies.
- **Educare alle differenze Network** – national network of associations, including COSPE, which works in education with children, adolescents and adults to promote freedom to be oneself, build open imaginations and cultures, combat all forms of discrimination and deconstruct stereotypes.
- **National Network for Combating Hate Speech and Phenomena** – a network of organisations, including COSPE, which have long been involved in studying, mapping and combating hate phenomena and hate speech.

**COSPE projects on combating discrimination in schools:**

- **YOU (TH) CARE FOR CHANGE.**  
Available at: <https://www.cospe.org/temi/ambientenuoveeconomie/71466/youth-carefor-change-coinvolgere-le-nuove-generazioni-su-azioni-innovative-congiunte-e-multidimensionali-che-affrontano-le-sfide-globali/>
- **BEE. Boosting Gender Equality in Education.**  
Available at: <https://www.cospe.org/paesi/italia/61845/bee-boosting-gender-equality-in-education/>
- **Play4! Innovative Media Education Strategies to Combat Sexism and Discrimination.**  
Available at: <https://www.cospe.org/paesi/italia/61690/play4-strategie-innovative-di-educazione-ai-media-contro-il-sessismo-e-la-discriminazione/>
- **Butterfly Effect: Changing Words to Change the World.**  
Available at: <https://www.cospe.org/paesi/italia/68994/effetto-farfalla-cambiamo-le-parole-per-cambiare-il-mondo/>
- **GenerAzione 2030 – Regional Alliances for Global Citizenship Education (GCE).**  
Available at: <https://www.regione.toscana.it/-/generazione-2030-alleanze-regionali-per-l-educazione-alla-cittadinanza-globale-ecg->
- **GINGLE: Parents, Teachers, and New Generations Fight Exclusion.**  
Available at: <https://www.cospe.org/paesi/italia/74191/gingle-genitori-insegnanti-e-nuove-generazioni-lottano-contro-lesclusione/>



## **ARE YOU A VICTIM OR (DIRECT OR INDIRECT) WITNESS OF DISCRIMINATION? REPORT THE CASE TO SPAD:**

**IN PRESENCE** at the desk at the M. Zonarelli Intercultural Center,  
Via Giovanni Antonio Sacco 14 (Tue 09:00-13:00, Thu 14:30-18:30)  
and at the Porta-Saragozza District office, Via Pier de' Crescenzi 14 (Wed 09:00-13:00)

**BY PHONE** at 051 2196329 (Mon-Fri 9:00-13:00, Thu 14:30-18:30)

or via **Whatsapp** instant messaging at +39 3317567412

**BY EMAIL** by writing to [spad@comune.bologna.it](mailto:spad@comune.bologna.it)

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