



Associazione per la Tutela dei MSNA

**AccoglieRete, Association for the Protection of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (MSNA),** is an association that promotes the role of legal guardians for unaccompanied minors.

Established initially by a group of voluntary associations and communities active in the area of Siracusa (Sicily, IT), it began operating in July 2013 in order to create a system of protection for unaccompanied foreign minors arriving by sea on the coast of Sicily.

4.628 unaccompanied minors arrived in 2014 in Sicily and 4,109 in 2015 from Gambia, Egypt, Bangladesh, Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Syria and other areas at risk of persecution and wars. In the absence of legal protection, hundreds of children are exposed to the risk of exploitation and trafficking.

#### **What ACCOGLIERETE does:**

- Facilitate the provision of support to unaccompanied children since their arrival through legal services, cultural mediation and counselling,
- Promotes awareness raising to encourage legal guardianship services in favour of unaccompanied minors;
- Recruits, train and offers supports to voluntary legal guardians;
- Provides legal, social and psychological support services to a network of communities and foster families offering hospitality to unaccompanied children to create a path of cultural integration and education;
- Take the oath and formalise the appointment as legal guardians by the competent judge;
- Meet cultural mediators to interview the minors and understand their migration project;
- Submit the necessary requests for legal protection to the competent authorities (political asylum, permits for minors);
- Support possible reunification processes with family members in Italy or in other European member states;
- Provide logistical support to ensure the maintenance of relationships with the origin families;
- Facilitate the registration of the minors on the National Health Service;
- Provide psychological support to minors, with particular attention to vulnerable cases;
- Promote and support the possible inclusion of children within foster families;
- Provide counselling to legal guardians and foster families during the process.





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As a consequence of the effectiveness and positive impact of the action, in November 2013 AccoglieRete became a legally voluntary association, and in 2014 a non-profit organization. AccoglieRete is composed by 150 legal guardians and more than 30 families that support unaccompanied children on a voluntary basis. Mentors are lawyers, psychologists, doctors, teachers, social workers, educators, former international civil servants and professionals, between 28 and 75 years.

## **IMPACT**

More than 1,500 unaccompanied foreign minors – aged 11 and 17- have been assisted by AccoglieRete in about 3 years of activities. About 30 children are now hosted by: Italian families (22), in solidarity communities (6), and in sports clubs/football teams (2). Reunification with family members was facilitated for many minors.

AccoglieRete approach is based on the role of legal guardian as a fundamental element of the mechanism of support and care for unaccompanied minors, within the migration context. The institutions, civil society and the press have recognized such innovative and effective approach publicly.

