

10. Udine, Milan and the Province of Potenza, Italy

Support for Physical, Mental and Social Well-being during the Pandemic in Udine, the Milan Adaptation Strategy 2020, and the Disaster Risk Reduction Governance of the Province of Potenza for an Effective COVID-19 Emergency Response

This chapter presents case studies relating to three different administrative entities in Italy: (a) Milan, a large city; (b) Udine, a medium-size city; and (c) the Province of Potenza, a regional authority that coordinates and assists 100 entities and their related populations: the city of Potenza (65,000 residents) and 99 small and very small municipalities ranging from hundreds to a few thousand residents. The Italian experiences focus on: (a) support for physical, mental, and social well-being during the pandemic in Udine; (b) the Milan Adaptation Strategy 2020; and (c) the disaster risk reduction governance of the Province of Potenza for an effective COVID-19 emergency response.

Challenges

Udine

The elderly account for 26.2 per cent of the Udine population, which is close to 6 per cent higher than the national average. In Udine, there are 49,000 families, among which 34,000 are one-person households; 8,800 people are over the age of 65, mostly women living alone. Loneliness is a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia, which are currently leading causes of mortality and morbidity globally; yet, despite this association with serious public health risks, loneliness and social isolation are still receiving little attention in healthcare. In Udine, therefore, an urgent need emerged to provide support for an autonomous social component for the community.

Milan

Similar to the rest of Italy, the COVID-19 pandemic hit Milan strongly in early March 2020, leading to quick and decisive actions by authorities at all levels. The Municipality of Milan organized its action plan on three levels: emergency

management, support for the members of the community who were not infected but forced to quarantine, and a task force working on Plan Zero for the time when the crisis would end. The main challenges, however, concerned (a) how to reorganize ordinary and essential services for citizens, (b) how to involve and activate the community by providing psychological support, and (c) how to ensure environmentally friendly transitions in the measures needed to counter the economic crisis caused by COVID-19. Thus, the Municipality of Milan developed the Milan Adaptation Strategy for Phase 2, which captures the radical change in the lifestyles of residents and the reorganization of cities. The strategy has taken into account different population targets such as age, health and sanitary conditions, work status and economic situation. The aim was to return to full normalcy as soon as possible but it was also necessary to better prepare citizens for the most likely scenario, to adapt to a "new normal", through a phase of "post-lockdown containment". The Adaption Plan has facilitated the process of transitioning to a new normalcy. The goals of the proposed plan are similar to some of the SDGs, such as SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 13 (climate action).

Province of Potenza

As with Udine and Milan, the Province of Potenza was also confronted with challenges to respond effectively to the health emergencies brought about by the outbreak of COVID-19 while maintaining its efforts regarding sustainable development. Thus, a need emerged to integrate the local disaster risk assessment with the issues related to public health, development challenges and the consequences of the cascading effects on disasters.

Towards a Solution

Udine

Udine, like the Cha-Ting Community of Nanjing, is faced with similar challenges of ageing. In the city, the elderly account for 26.2 per cent of the population, about 6 per cent higher than the national average. In addition to ageing, loneliness is another major challenge facing the elderly in Udine. Loneliness is a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, which are currently leading causes of mortality and morbidity globally. Unfortunately, the lockdown measures due to COVID-19 only exacerbated the issue.

Udine had joined the Healthy Cities movement championed by WHO in 1995 because it had recognized that no one needed to be left behind with respect to health and sustainability. Thus, prior to the pandemic, Udine had established an integrated health promotion office that coordinated with all stakeholders, including WHO, NGOs, the private sector, national and regional Healthy Cities networks, and citizens. That participatory approach, which had been adopted before the pandemic, was enhanced and/or redesigned during the pandemic to improve dealing with the new challenge, tackling its effects and improving its responses to the needs of citizens regarding their health and well-being. It is worth noting that such an approach has always been a crucial component of the local comprehensive strategy implemented by the Municipality to address the achievement of the SDGs.



Physical activities for elderly people – a morning at the park (summer 2020)

Source: Healthy Cities Project Office, Municipality of Udine

Mental health risks can be caused by loneliness and social isolation, both of which may be exacerbated by the measures put in place to contain and control the spread of COVID-19. To address those risks, Udine launched online courses as well as exercises to be practised at home for keeping physically and mentally active; promoted self-care strategies and other cultural practices (i.e., yoga-based breathing as a home-care adjuvant treatment); organized socially distanced activities in parks and open spaces; gathered volunteers (caregivers), private companies and associations to activate neighbourhood networks to be closer to people in need; and provided phone assistance against anxiety and panic and to prevent people from falling into a state of depression.



World Alzheimer's Day (September 2020)

Source: Healthy Cities Project Office, Municipality of Udine

Other important initiatives undertaken by Udine during the health crisis include:

- World Games Day for which more than 60 stakeholders organized recreational and educational activities, games, and sports for all target groups.
- The Playful Paradigm Network that is led by Udine and funded by the URBACT programme (which aims to transfer innovative practices among European cities). The purpose is to provide communities with useful and playful ideas and creative activities to counter a feeling of isolation during the COVID-19 lockdown. For instance, an urban game

has been developed with the aim of experiencing city spaces and interacting with one another virtually during lockdown.

- The No alla Solit'Udine project, which is designed to promote age-friendly environments, social innovation, brokerage, and intermediation. Through this project, network NGOs, volunteer associations, retired craftsmen, etc. provided a wide range of support services to older and frail people in their everyday lives, especially for those living alone as well as those with disabilities or economic difficulties. Activities included training courses for older people and caregivers on how to age well, easy-to-read tools to promote independence at home, and information regarding services and opportunities in the city and lists of volunteers ready to support them.
- Grandparents' Day Award, World Alzheimer's Day, Sustainable Energy Week, Readers' Night and World Health Day, which were all public initiatives involving the community. Various activities were aimed towards (a) raising awareness about the importance of preventing cognitive decline, (b) valorizing the role of grandparents, (c) creating awareness about climate change, and (d) reading about and adopting healthy lifestyles.
- The "Move your minds...minds on the move" programme that included a wide range of activities (brain exercises, games, music, mathematics and logic, memory games, language curiosities, card games, handwriting, cultural laboratories, computer literacy, music therapy) aimed to promote cognitive stimulation for people over 50 years of age and prevent loneliness and isolation through socialization opportunities and intergenerational activities. Those activities used to be in-person but owing to the pandemic, they are now organized through remote learning; and
- The "Distant one meter, close one second", interactive remote conferences via different platforms such as YouTube and Zoom through which people listen to lectures from prestigious international speakers who took part in the International Conference of the International Federation of Telephonic Emergency Services held in Udine in 2019. After listening, everyone is encouraged to then exchange their reflections, comments, ideas, and perspectives on the issues raised.

New initiatives have also been developed in Udine to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, especially with respect to the most vulnerable people in the community. They include: (a) providing additional support and funds to voluntary associations that can reinforce neighbourhood social networks; (b) improving telemedicine and remote preventive services; and (c) providing psychological support to older people in nursing homes. The vast majority of these programmes and initiatives have been assessed through both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The special milieu, based on a co-creative intersectoral approach and on close cooperation between institutions and voluntary associations, was the added value.

The bulk of the actions could be easily transferred to other contexts and cities, since they do not require high investments or special infrastructure or spaces. In fact, they can be activated through the engagement of local stakeholders, volunteer associations and active citizens. For example, the experience of Udine has been scaled up to the regional level through the introduction of a regional law on healthy ageing and loneliness, and funds have now been made available for local stakeholders in order to implement concrete actions.

Being part of the WHO Healthy Cities movement has provided Udine with fundamental guidance in developing local policies and actions aimed at investing in the local population of the city through: (a) greater participation and partnerships for health; (b) designing safe, inclusive, sustainable and resilient urban places; (c) encouraging the adoption of the health-in-all-policies and whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches; and (d) the city health diplomacy and social innovation mechanisms. The role of the Healthy City project has been essential in coordinating the working environment, acting as a catalyst, and building systematic and comprehensive strategies in a more participative and hence empowering and enabling way. The result is several noteworthy initiatives that have been co-created and undertaken for achieving healthier lifestyles, greater solidarity among citizens, and ownership of long-term social programmes and city branding.

Milan

Milan was also strongly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. That led to quick and decisive responsive actions by authorities at all levels. The city also had to tackle the main challenges of how

to reorganize essential services for citizens, how to involve and activate the community by providing psychological support, and how to ensure environmentally friendly transitions in the measures needed to counter the health-induced economic crisis. The Municipality acknowledged that being a resilient city means not only managing climate related risks but also being prepared for every possible threat that may affect and grow exponentially in very densely populated territories. The city decided to address the emergency by planning activities, initiatives, and temporary projects in support of long-term plans, strategies, and actions of the Municipality. To do that, the city tried to find answers to a key question: "How can the fundamentals of environmental transition guide this path and develop a new Green Deal that generates wealth for all?"

Consequently, the Municipality of Milan developed the Milan 2020 Adaptation Strategy for Phase 2 that captures the radical change in the lifestyles of residents and the reorganization of the city. The Milan 2020 Adaptation Strategy for Phase 2 calls for a radical change in citizens' lifestyles as well as the ways in which the city is organized. To facilitate the smooth transition, "economic implications and changes in lifestyles are being addressed at every institutional level"¹² throughout the city. For that reason, the Municipality of Milan decided "to contribute with operational proposals to complement the broader agenda, with the peculiar context of the city of Milan in mind."¹³ As expected, "some of the matters remain [the] responsibility of the national or regional authorities, such as issues of mapping, tracking and assessing people's immunity."¹⁴

The Adaptation Strategy has required the implementation of several policies through different actions such as smart working and desynchronization of work hours both in the private and public sectors to boost flexibility. Second, access to public transportation has been limited, ensuring safe distances, and mobility measures have been taken to reduce traffic and to promote pedestrian and cycle paths (Open Roads and Open

Squares Programme). Parks and sports centers and venues have been gradually reopened and tactical urban planning projects have been developed to provide spaces for children to exercise and play. This is in part thanks to the introduction of a 30 km/h speed limit throughout the city. Digital tools (Citizen's App, WhatsApp Chat and Call Centre) have been implemented to integrate data and demographic services. Neighborhoods are being organized to strengthen public services from a proximity perspective (15 Minutes City). Regarding social aid, Milan Helps (Milano Aiuta) has been launched to maintain and expand collaborative services and delivery of basic utilities. The Food Aid initiative and the Mutual Aid Fund helped create a collaborative economic system to help more vulnerable groups. Lastly, to create "the city of children", city spaces such as squares, gardens, and schools, would be gradually and safely reopened.¹⁵

The Milan 2020 Adaptation Strategy focuses mainly on the following actions: mapping, sanitization, screening, and immunization. It takes into account different population characteristics such as age, health and sanitary conditions, work status and economic situation. The aim was to return to full normalcy as soon as possible. However, it was also necessary to prepare citizens for the most likely scenario, to adapt to a "new normal", through phases such as "post-lockdown containment".

The main objective of the Adaptation Strategy has been to maintain a perspective that considers investments and the protection of people in the city as well as the country at large. Thus, every available resource must be invested to support the productive system of the city and Milan's network of services and public investments. In this way, the strategy will protect vulnerable groups of people; reduce bureaucracy; maintain smart working and high digitalization levels; reorganize the city timetable, use of streets, and use of public space; and rediscover the neighbourhood dimension.

12. Milan 2020 Adaptation Strategy: Open document to the city's contribution, p. 1. Available from: <https://www.comune.milano.it/documents/20126/7117896/Milano+2020.+Adaptation+strategy.pdf/d11a0983-6ce5-5385-d173-efcc28b45413?t=1589366192908>.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., p. 18.



The 'Piazze Aperte' (Open Plazas) Project

Source: City Resilience Department, Municipality of Milan

As part of the Milan Adaptation Strategy 2020, the city developed new lines of action that offered a vision of a Milan as more inclusive, flexible, and participatory, with fast and effective interventions to improve the quality of life. The main objectives were to understand and design new ways to live in open spaces and simultaneously create and enhance a new shared vision of a healthier Milan. Open Plazas (Piazze Aperte) was among the existing projects that the Municipality aimed to strengthen. Since 2018, with Bloomberg Associates, the National Association of City Transportation Officials and the Global Designing Cities initiatives, the project has aimed to bring public squares back to the centre of neighborhood life. Thanks to tactical urbanism, the city succeeded in involving citizens in the process of urban regeneration and in rapidly prototyping new urban frameworks by using short-term, affordable, and scalable interventions. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Open Plaza project has become even more relevant since it represents a landmark for the community and a safe meeting point for the community.

In line with the Piazze Aperte example, Milan decided to experiment with tactical urbanism in a different way in the Open Streets (Strade Aperte) programme. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of roads and public spaces had to be redefined to support the use of bicycles, scooters and other forms of micro- and light mobility that respect social distancing. Since then, during the summer of 2020, 35 km of new bike lanes were introduced, extending the existing bike lane system to over 100 km as of April 2021.

In May 2020 under the Open Streets project, the Municipality of Milan defined a series of regulations thanks to which more than 2,400 commercial activities have been able to recover outside the spaces sacrificed inside under the social distancing

measures. The city measures define sidewalk and pedestrian island areas, roadways, and green spaces as occupiable. Moreover, at the end of 2020, guidelines on how to occupy public spaces were added to the regulations to help to ensure security and regular street flows. Such interventions facilitate the arrangement of tables for bars and restaurants, with the aim of recovering part of the lost occupancy of interior spaces while encouraging the use of green solutions.

Province of Potenza

The Province of Potenza, like Udine and Milan, was also confronted with challenges to effectively respond to the health emergencies brought about by the outbreak of COVID-19 while maintaining its efforts with regards to sustainable development. In the context of the "resilience of communities" policy, the province had joined the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) "Making Cities Resilient" campaign launched in 2010, and it has become the leader of a wide territorial network of 100 municipalities. It is thus substantially engaged with the municipalities in downscaling its regional strategy with regards to the territory of the municipalities and it supports their risk assessments.



An online meeting among Italian provinces about the activities of coordination and assistances to be carried out by the provinces

Source: Province of Potenza

The Province of Potenza, capitalizing on its best disaster and risk reduction (DRR) governance practices over the last decade, outlined the #weResilient strategy for pursuing territorial development through a structural combination of environmental sustainability, territorial safety, and climate change policies. Under the strategy, the province has been implementing a support-and-cooperation approach in

collaboration with local communities (particularly with the municipalities) to integrate sustainable development policies and the requirements of the communities for resilience with regards to urban planning. Under the #weResilient strategy, the Province of Potenza set up a permanent multisectoral and multi-entity local platform aimed at engaging municipalities,

institutions/authorities, stakeholders, major social groups, communities and citizens in translating the strategy into concrete actions. The Province of Potenza has found this strategy to be successful in the management of the COVID-19 emergency.

Project title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for Physical, Mental and Social Well-being during the Pandemic in Udine; • Milan Adaptation Strategy 2020; • Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Governance of the Province of Potenza for an Effective COVID-19 Emergency Response
Spatial scale of the initiative	Udine, Milan and the Province of Potenza
Population involved	Udine: 100,000; Milan: 1.35 million; and the Province of Potenza: 378,000
Cities/Provinces/Countries/Territories/Regions involved	Udine, Milan, and the Province of Potenza, Italy
Sustainable Development Goal target(s)	Udine: 3, 11, 17 Milan: 3, 8, 10, 11, 13 Province of Potenza: 3.8, 10.2, 11.5, 11.a, 11.b, 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 16.6, 16.7
Supported/Funded by	Municipality of Udine, Municipality of Milan and the Province of Potenza in coordination with the Basilicata Region
Implementing entities	Municipality of Udine, Municipality of Milan, and the Province of Potenza in coordination with the Basilicata Region
Project status	Ongoing in all three localities
Project period	N/A
URLs of the practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.comune.udine.it/cittasane/. • https://urbact.eu/collection-useful-covid-19-resources-playful-paradigm-network-cities. • https://www.comune.milano.it/documents/20126/7117896/Milano+2020.+Adaptation+strategy.pdf/d11a0983-6ce5-5385-d173-efcc28b45413?t=1589366192908. • https://www.facebook.com/provpzresilient.