

Green Skills Train-to-Hire Track

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PART I. INTRODUCTION & PATHWAY EXPLANATION

Italy is at the forefront of utilizing labour mobility pathways for refugee talent. The core partnership of Diaconia Valdese, Pathways International, Talent beyond boundaries (TBB) and UNHCR, serves as the engine of delivery in Italy, jointly driving advocacy with government, designing and implementing innovative train-to-hire programmes, and building the wider ecosystem of partners needed for sustainable scale. Together, they provide coordination, credibility, and collective leadership across all phases of the pathway. The team in Italy engages a wider network of training agencies, third-sector organizations, immigration lawyers, employer associations, and employment agencies whose expertise and operational capacity are essential to effective implementation and long-term impact, while also collaborating with IOM on specific projects and benefiting from a technical support of ITC.

The **Extra-Quota Train-to-Hire Pathway** (allowed by the Law 50/2023) creates a new legal migration channel which is uncapped and outside the traditional Decreto Flussi quotas. Third country nationals and refugees are allowed to access work visas through pre-approved pre-departure training programmes which is uncapped.

The **core mechanism** is simple and powerful:

- **Training in source countries:** Candidates complete at least 120 hours of Italian language and civic education training (to A1) and sector-specific technical training, delivered by accredited providers. To be recognised by the Ministry of Labour, training programmes must be presented by an accredited Italian training institution, include an in-person component, and meet minimum standards for language and technical instruction. Partnerships are typically formed either with Italian providers that have a global presence (e.g. Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Dante Alighieri, Salesians) or with respected technical colleges in source countries (e.g. Turquoise Mountain in Jordan).
- **Employer engagement:** Employers issue conditional job offers before departure. The job offer (minimum 1 year) becomes official once training is completed.
- **Visa issuance:** Candidates receive a work visa not tied to quotas, valid for 1–2 years depending on the contract, and renewable.
- **Integration support:** Upon arrival, candidates are supported with housing, relocation services, mentorship, and community matching (e.g. the “Torino model”).

The **Hire–Train–Move architecture** structures this pathway:

1. **Hire** – Employers sign MoUs with facilitating organisations and training/recruitment partners. Employers share job descriptions, receive shortlists, and conduct interviews. Contracts are conditional on training completion. Documentation (passports, qualifications, CTDs for refugees) is collected upfront.
2. **Train** – Accredited providers deliver Italian language, civic orientation, and sector-specific training (HVAC, electrical, masonry for the green track). Courses are designed with employers and must be approved by the Ministry of Labour. Assessments and micro-credentials ensure quality.
3. **Move** – Upon training completion, the conditional job offer converts into a contract. Employers cover relocation costs in part, and local partners manage visa processes, flights, housing, and orientation. Candidates are linked with mentors and community “buddies” to support integration.

Timelines and accreditation requirements are key success factors. The typical journey from employer agreement to candidate arrival spans **6–8 months**:

- 1 month: Ministry approval of the training project,
- 2–3 months: training abroad,
- 1-2 month: paperwork (housing arrangements, employer verification, *nulla osta* request),
- 2 months: tacit consent of the *nulla osta*,
- 1 month: visa processing.

Employer testimonies are essential for demonstrating credibility and building trust with new partners. Experiences from goldsmith employers in Turin and Orienta in shipbuilding illustrate both feasibility and value. Case stories and testimonials have already been documented through public sources:

- [LinkedIn example](#)
- [Talent Beyond Boundaries press release](#)
- [UNHCR Italy corridors page](#)
- [Facebook case study 1](#)
- [Facebook case study 2](#)

These early testimonies underline the importance of building employer confidence and should be expanded into structured case studies as the pathway scales. In addition to the extra-quota training track, Italy also allows refugees to enter into a dedicated quota (320 yearly for the next 3

years) providing an additional opportunity for candidates that have the skills required by employers.

PART II. DEMAND SIDE – ITALY’S GREEN ECONOMY

Italy is facing acute labour shortages in green and technical trades. The Ministry of Labour and Union Camere estimate that **over 67,000 green-related jobs** in 2025 are unfilled across:

- **Electrical technicians** (installation, diagnostics, repair for residential and industrial systems).
- **HVAC and heat pump technicians** (installation, maintenance, retrofits, F-Gas/FER certification).
- **Masonry and concrete workers** (renovations, seismic retrofits, energy upgrades).

The 2024 *Excelsior* survey confirms that green jobs remain a major component of Italy’s labor demand, with nearly 1.9 million planned hires, equal to about one-third of all new entries. While overall numbers are stable compared to 2023, demand is concentrated in industry (almost 70% of hires) — particularly in construction, mechanical engineering, manufacturing, and utilities — as well as in service sectors such as logistics, ICT, and advanced business services. The most sought-after skills are energy saving and environmental sustainability (required in over 80% of green jobs), alongside increasingly specific competencies for managing green products and technologies. Employers, however, face growing recruitment difficulties, particularly for specialized workers and artisans, where over 60% of vacancies are hard to fill. Overall, the study points to a structural skills mismatch: companies increasingly demand both green and digital competencies, as well as transversal skills like problem-solving and adaptability, underscoring the urgency of strengthening training systems to support Italy’s green transition.

This demand is driven by massive public investments:

- **PNIEC** (National Energy and Climate Plan) and **PNRR** (Recovery & Resilience Plan) commit over €210 billion in green investments by 2030.
- The **Energy bonus renovation incentives** are driving surging demand for retrofitting, insulation, and green building technicians.
- The government’s target is **55% emissions reduction by 2030** and more than **70% renewable electricity**.

MAJOR EMPLOYERS & INDUSTRIAL ACTORS (GREEN-RELATED):

Several large companies and industry associations are central to Italy’s green economy:

- **Confindustria** – Italy’s main employers’ federation, a powerful stakeholder in industrial policy and energy transition debates (already engaged as a partner, with interest being explored among members).
- **Enel Group** – Italy’s largest utility, driving renewables and grid modernization (contacted via THSN, interest being explored as of September 2025).
- **Edison** – One of Italy’s oldest energy companies, expanding into renewables and energy efficiency solutions.
- **Motus-E** – Sectoral association of companies and stakeholders specialized in sustainable mobility and electric vehicle solutions.
- **A2A** – Multi-utility company (energy, water, waste) with green infrastructure investments.
- **Italia Solare** – Industry association and key promoter of photovoltaic deployment and solar innovation (contacted, interest being explored as of September 2025).
- **Siemens Italy** – Electrical and automation technologies.
- **Ferrovie dello Stato** – National rail operator, undertaking large-scale electrification projects.
- **Ariston Group, Viessmann, Vaillant, Panasonic** – Global HVAC and heat pump manufacturers with significant Italian operations.

Alongside these main groups, **70–80% of green jobs in Italy are delivered by SMEs**, especially in HVAC and electrical installation sectors.

For the pathway to succeed, **securing early commitments from employers is urgent**. A handful of anchor employers providing letters of intent or memoranda of understanding would significantly de-risk the model and demonstrate to funders that demand is both real and actionable. While outreach has begun with major companies and associations, further engagement is needed to identify SMEs willing to commit to future hires. Regional and local employer federations - such as **Unione Industriali Torino or Veneto** - can also serve as important entry points for aggregating SME demand. Confindustria, in particular, is well-placed to act as a referral partner at the national level.

PART III. TRACK RECORD SO FAR (PILOTS & PRECEDENTS)

The Italian Train-to-Hire framework is not theoretical: it has been piloted across multiple sectors since 2024 by Talent Beyond Boundaries, Diaconia Valdese and UNHCR Italy with different partnerships:

- **Information Technology (Uganda):** Around 20 refugee workers in Uganda have been selected to work in 7 Information Technology companies with headquarters in Naples, Turin, Udine, and Cosenza through the ReadyForIT project, led by Fondazione Italiana Accenture in partnership with the International Trade Centre and in collaboration with the Turin Industrial Union. More info here: [ReadyForIT](#)
- **Shipbuilding (Egypt):** 240 people (both Egyptians and refugees) will be trained to work in the Italian shipbuilding sector, through the collaboration with the Salesians Don Bosco and other partners in Italy and Egypt. Initial placements in Gorizia and Parma have been secured with thanks to employment agency Orienta.
- **Goldsmithing (Jordan):** Ten candidates from Jordan have been trained and selected to join a jewelry company in Turin through a training program designed in collaboration with employers and goldsmith academies, which Federorafi aims to expand after this first edition. The project is carried out by Fondazione Ghirardi, in partnership with the Turin Industrial Union. More info here: [Goldsmiths for Italy](#)
- **Airport Operations (Colombia):** 40 candidates are in training, with 27 job offers secured into the operational staff of AviaPartner at Rome Fiumicino Airport. A further 50 candidates are in the pipeline for placement at Fiumicino.

Early outcomes from the Italy program:

- 20+ candidates have already landed in Italy, with additional arrivals expected in autumn 2025 and early 2026.
- The projects approximately will have 350 arrivals in 2026 as the track scales up.
- Employer case studies (e.g. goldsmithing in Turin, Orienta in shipbuilding) are being documented to capture lessons on why employers engaged, what worked, and what challenges arose.
- Early results show strong retention and satisfaction levels, mirroring global pilot data which sets 94% of employers willing to hire again through the pathway.
- While the Italy partnership has not yet implemented projects specifically targeting green skills, it identifies strong potential for expansion and scalability in this domain.

The broader Italian framework

The results of the Italy partnership sit within a much wider national effort to expand train-to-hire pathway. Across Italy, more than **6,000 migrant workers** have entered the pathway pipeline, and over **50 projects** have been approved by the Ministry of Labour ([source](#)), which is the very early stage of this new and innovative channel. These figures reflect the cumulative impact of multiple initiatives beyond the refugee-focused corridors, demonstrating that the model is gaining traction as a systematic migration channel in Italy.

Note: As outlined in Part I, the Ministry of Labour requires training programmes abroad to be presented by an accredited Italian provider and to include at least 120 hours of Italian language and civic education plus technical training with an in-person component. These standards are critical to replicating the success of early pilots and ensuring consistency across future projects.

PART IV. COST STRUCTURE & FINANCING MODELS

One of the strengths of the Italian train-to-hire pathway is that it already has a fairly well-developed cost architecture. The core partnership has consolidated data from multiple projects, showing that the per-person cost of moving a refugee worker through the pathway is in the range of **€6,500–€7,500**. These costs cover all pre-departure, training, relocation, and early integration activities.

BREAKDOWN OF TYPICAL COSTS (PER PRIMARY CANDIDATE, BASED ON A COHORT OF 25)

Pre-departure phase ~€1,500

- Outreach, candidate identification, CV preparation, pre-departure support.
- Legal and document review (including CTDs, education certificates).
- Local project officer / career counsellor coordination.
- Candidate transportation for pre-departure logistics.

Training phase ~€1,500

- Candidate support (pocket money, food allowance).
- Italian language and civic education training (120h minimum).
- Technical training (sector-specific, e.g. HVAC, masonry, electrical).
 - This is an average based on skilled candidates receiving short (approx. 2-3-week) technical upskilling.
 - Under the Green Horizons Platform, economies of scale could reduce unit costs.
- Travel for trainers; training rooms and materials; safety at work training.

Departure & relocation ~€2,000

- Flight to Italy.
- Visa fees (~€200)
- Legal support for immigration procedures.
- Certified declaration (“asseverazione”).
- Transfer airport → accommodation.
- Initial relocation support / integration manager (first month).
- Medical checks.

Minor differences reflect variations in local training cost structures, travel, and employer co-contributions.

COORDINATION & SCALING COSTS

In addition to direct per-candidate and variable costs, there are **annual coordination and programme costs**:

- Coordination staff (in Italy and countries of departure).
- Employer engagement and job-matching teams.
- Monitoring and reporting.

It is believed at scale, at least **~700 arrivals per year**, and with innovation this could be reduced to €1,500-2,500 per job offer.

COST VARIATION BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

While the baseline cost per person is €6,500–7,500, there are important **country-specific variations**:

- **Uganda**: higher costs for international trainers and logistics (longer travel, less access to technology) but established partner country.
- **Kenya**: stronger TVET infrastructure may reduce training delivery costs, but higher local staff costs.
- **Colombia**: potentially lower costs for language training (Spanish→Italian easier), but air travel is more expensive.

FINANCIAL MODEL

Partners in Italy are currently working to develop a financially sustainable system that, with the seed support of Italian and international foundations, can evolve into a self-sustaining model capable of scaling up the number of arrivals while maintaining high standards of quality and candidate support.

At present, most employers contribute consistently to program costs, and partners are actively engaging stakeholders and mobilizing additional funding to enhance financial sustainability and employer participation.

This system builds on three complementary sources of financing:

- **Employers** contribute consistently to costs, particularly for the selection and training of their future workforce, either in a direct way or through existing interprofessional training funds (e.g. Fondimpresa, FormaTemp).
- The team in Italy is working towards the introduction of **Income Sharing Agreements (ISAs)** or similar income-based mechanisms, allowing affordable repayments by

candidates only after relocation and employment. This approach ensures that mobility remains accessible to individuals regardless of their financial background, while supporting the long-term sustainability of the program. Repayments are income-contingent and affordable — participants contribute only after relocation and once their earnings exceed a defined threshold. The model aligns incentives among candidates and employers, promotes self-agency and shared responsibility for outcomes, and gradually reduces dependency on grants.

- **The public sector** plays a critical role by co-financing training abroad through development cooperation resources reducing risk and costs and supporting post-arrival integration in Italy.

In addition, the team in Italy is exploring **innovative de-risking mechanisms**, such as insurance or guarantee schemes, to further reduce employer exposure and incentivize participation.

LESSONS FROM INITIAL PILOTS

Drawing on the experience of the pilots implemented to date — in sectors such as IT, goldsmithing, shipbuilding, and airport operations — as well as on the pipelines currently under development, several key factors have emerged:

- Costs should be predictable and transparent.
- Employers and candidates need an end-to-end support that includes all relevant aspects that can only be implemented with trusted partners.
- Legal framework and institutional support are essential.
- Dropout reduction is directly linked to conditional job offers and pre-commitments.
- Hybrid financing models and coordinated cost-sharing between employers, public fundings or foundations, and training funds is critical for sustainability.

Indicative Salary Benchmarks – Solar Panel Installers in Italy

Understanding employer willingness to contribute also requires salary benchmarks.

Approximate annual gross salaries for solar panel installers in Italy are:

- Junior / entry-level: **€18,000 – €22,000**
- With 2–3 years of experience: **€23,000 – €28,000**
- Senior / team leader: **€30,000 – €35,000**
- Highly specialized profiles or project managers: **€40,000 – €45,000**

These figures suggest that employer contributions of 10–20% of salary would typically range from €2,500–€4,500 per hire — close to covering the per-candidate costs outlined above if structured through blended models.

PART V. SCALING THE GREEN TRACK

The current train-to-hire projects into Italy demonstrate that the pathway is legally sound, operationally feasible, and capable of delivering results. Yet, so far, they remain relatively small-scale pilots: dozens of people per sector, with the total pool of participants across all sectors reaching about 6,000 migrants in training pipelines, not yet focused on green skills. If Italy's green economy is to meet its labour demand - estimated at 67,000 unfilled skilled trade jobs in 2025 - the pathway must move beyond pilot scale to become a systematic channel for green-skilled migration.

The ambition for this track is to build a sustainable pipeline capable of placing 1,000 green workers per year by 2030. This would require not just replicating existing projects but also building structured training and mobility infrastructure across both origin countries and Italy.

1. BUILDING TRAINING PROGRAMS ABROAD

The vision is to establish and support a **network of Green Training Programs** in key sourcing countries. These programs are structured as a financial mechanism in partnership with training providers and would deliver:

- **Italian language instruction** (minimum 120 hours for A1, aiming for A2/B1 proficiency).
- **Technical training modules** with curricula aligned to Italian standards and employer demand (e.g., HVAC/heat pump installation, electrical systems, masonry/retrofit skills).
- **Civic orientation and employability training** (workplace culture, safety standards, basic digital literacy).

The first programs and partnerships could be located in **Uganda, Kenya, and Colombia**. Each could train **300–400 candidates per year**, with a combined annual output of ~1,000 workers. Training agencies and Italian NGOs have expressed interest in supporting the development.

- **Uganda:** large refugee population, strong humanitarian partner presence, prior pilot experience (IT).
- **Kenya:** refugee-hosting country with stronger TVET infrastructure and regional connectivity.
- **Colombia:** large Venezuelan displaced population, strong TVET system, Spanish-Italian linguistic proximity easing language acquisition.

2. EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Scaling cannot succeed without employer buy-in. The pathway is demand-led: candidates only move once an employer contract is signed. Engagement is needed at two levels:

- **Large employers** — like Enel, Edison, A2A, Hera, etc can anchor large cohorts.
- **SMEs and regional clusters** — The majority of HVAC, electrical, and construction jobs are in small and medium firms and the all-supply chain. Their engagement requires federated outreach through industry associations like Confindustria, CNA, Motus-E, Italia Solare, Chambers of Commerce, etc.

The scaling strategy combines:

- Securing soft commitments from 5–10 large employers (letters of intent).
- Piloting SME recruitment through federations, supported by subsidies or interprofessional funds to de-risk participation.
- Working with employment agencies (e.g. Adecco) to outreach employers, co-fund training through FormaTemp and de-risk participation through agency work.

3. Financing the Scale-Up

Placing 1,000 workers per year implies €6–7 million in direct programme costs annually, plus ~€700,000–€800,000 for coordination. To scale sustainably, the financing model must:

- Blend employer contributions, ensuring companies invest directly in international hirings through partial coverage of training, relocation, or onboarding costs to strengthen ownership and alignment with labour market needs.
- Leverage interprofessional training funds (compulsory worker levies that can be used abroad).
- Mobilize philanthropy and development cooperation funding for start-up costs and subsidies.
- Integrate Income Sharing Agreements (ISAs), enabling candidates to repay a small, income-based contribution once employed, thus fostering long-term financial sustainability and accessibility.
- Pilot innovative mechanisms (e.g. SROI models, guarantees, insurance products) to attract private capital.

4. Institutional Anchoring in Italy

Scaling requires not just employer engagement but also institutional support in Italy:

- A memorandum of understanding has been signed by the partners with Italian Ministries ([link](#)).
- The Ministry of Labour fast-track training programme approvals.
- Regional training bodies can connect incoming workers into Italy's vocational system.
- Local, and municipality led, integration ecosystems (e.g., the Torino model) should be replicated in regions with high demand: Lombardy, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Toscana, Puglia, Sicily.

5. Risk Management

Scaling to 1,000 per year introduces risks:

- **Dropout risk** in pre-departure training → mitigated with stipends and mentoring.
- **Employer scepticism** → addressed through pilot cohorts, testimonials, and de-risking subsidies.
- **Visa and procedural bottlenecks** → requires public system capacity and tech enhancements in departure countries and in Italy.
- **Integration challenges** → mitigated by mentorship, housing support, and community matching.

6. Timeline for Scale-Up

- **2026:** Pilot green cohorts (50–100 workers) from 1–2 sourcing countries, secure employer commitments.
- **2026–2027:** Establish first Green Training Programs, expand to 300–400 candidates.
- **2028–2030:** Operate three centres in parallel (Uganda, Kenya, Colombia), reaching ~1,000 placements annually.

What We Are Asking For

To achieve this scale-up, we are seeking support from funders and partners for:

- **Seed funding** to establish the first Green Training Programs abroad and develop curricula aligned with Italian standards.
- **Resources for employer engagement**, enabling the partnership to secure large-company commitments and SME federation partnerships.
- **Gap financing** to cover the portion of per-candidate costs not borne by employers, ensuring that each placement (costing €6,500–7,500) is fully funded.
- **Investment in innovation**, including financing pilots for ISAs, guarantees, and revolving funds to de-risk employer participation.

- **Strengthening institutional partnerships**, supporting coordination with ministries, regional training bodies, and local integration ecosystems in Italy.

By supporting these areas, funders can help transform the pathway from promising pilots into a systemic solution delivering 1,000 skilled green workers annually by 2030.

Summary

Scaling the Italian Green Train-to-Hire Track is both feasible and aligned with Italy's labour needs and refugee protection goals. The critical enablers are:

1. Building training capacity abroad.
2. Securing employer commitments in Italy.
3. Creating a blended financing model.

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