

THE MUNICIPALITY OF RIACE IN THE SOUTH OF ITALY REVIVES ITS DEVELOPMENT HOSTING REFUGEES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

The [American magazine Fortune](#) ranked Mimmo Lucano, mayor of Riace, among the 50 most influential leaders for its innovative work of hosting migrants from all over the world.

Since his appointment to Mayor, twenty years ago, the Municipality of Riace in southern Italy (Calabria Region), hosted more than 6,000 immigrants from 20 countries worldwide. Some of these people decided to stay, repopulating the territory, opening handicrafts, agricultural and other productive activities.

The experience started in 1998 when a boatload of Kurdish refugees reached the shores and the Municipality of Riace offered them the abandoned homes of the village together with training options to start with entrepreneurial activities.

With its 2.000 inhabitants, the municipality of Riace like many villages in rural areas of Italy, had faced an important phenomenon of migration to the cities and decline of its economy. The innovative idea of the Mayor has been to regard these people as a great opportunity to repopulate the territory, revitalising the local economic, social and cultural life.

With the support of associations, volunteers and professionals, this utopia was transformed into thousands of projects and initiatives that have improved the lives of refugees and those of the local population. Taking advantage of local people and refugee's know-how the artisanship of tissues made with [Ginestra](#) or handicraft production of ceramics have been reopened, new enterprises to produce organic crops and many other businesses were started.

Multilingual kindergartens and schools were organized to operate all year. The differentiated waste collection was organized with donkeys to serve all the streets and houses of the neighbourhoods. In this way the collection increased from 1.4% to 40%, allowing the Municipality to decrease taxes for all citizens.

The new lighting public system was completed, as many other public worth initiatives that give value to the culture of many countries.

After almost twenty years, 400 refugees from countries such as Sudan, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and



Palestine are living steadily in Riace sharing with the 2.000 inhabitants the new services and economic opportunities generated by all the initiatives that the municipality undertakes.

The 35 Euro per day that the Italian State offers to the structures securing support to refugees, are invested in vocational training and in the creation of jobs that allows them to live independently and in dignity. Instead of using centres and specific services for refugees, that with a high cost isolate them from the people, in Riace they are taking advantage of the great potential of the population and the local resources.

Thanks to all deployed services, the jobs also increased for the whole population of Riace. Thanks to projects that bring benefits to all, involving the population in the decision-making processes, organizing events, festivals and cultural activities with the participation of so many cultures that live together in the village, the Municipality managed to make Riace an attractive place where everybody is proud to live.

Neighbouring villages to Riace are being progressively involving in these practices. It is hoped that this approach will influence the usual ways of assistance to refugees in Europe, as optimistically underlined by the Fortune magazine.

The Municipality of Riace [famous for its ancient statues](#) today is known as one of the places where a *concrete utopia of ordinary life* is put into practice, as defined by the Mayor Mimmo Lucano. Wim Wenders documented the experience of Riace in his video *Il volo*, describing it as a revolution.

To know more

[Worlds-greatest leaders 2016- Review Fortune.com](#)

[Il Volo in Youtube.com](#)

[Article in euronews.com](#)

[The tiny Italian village that opened its doors to migrants who braved the sea in UNHCR website](#)

[Article in Refugees for co-creative cities.eu website](#)

[Article in BBC.com news](#)

[Article in theguardian.com](#)

[Article in designspolitics.nl](#)

[Article in Cbc.ca](#)

[Article in npr.org](#)

[Article in mediterraneosostenibile.blogspot.it](#)



[Article in Corriere della Sera.it](#)

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