



The MiniMaster for Migrants: Innovating Pedagogy

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An increasing social challenge

- ▶ Worldwide: 258M migrants, 20M refugees (UNCHR, 2017; Bertelsmann, 2016)
- ▶ Italy: Among refugees, rate of minors from 2.8% in 1990 to 5.6% in 2017 (Demurtas et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2018)
 - ▶ Huge social emergency, dramatic political debate



Facing this challenge

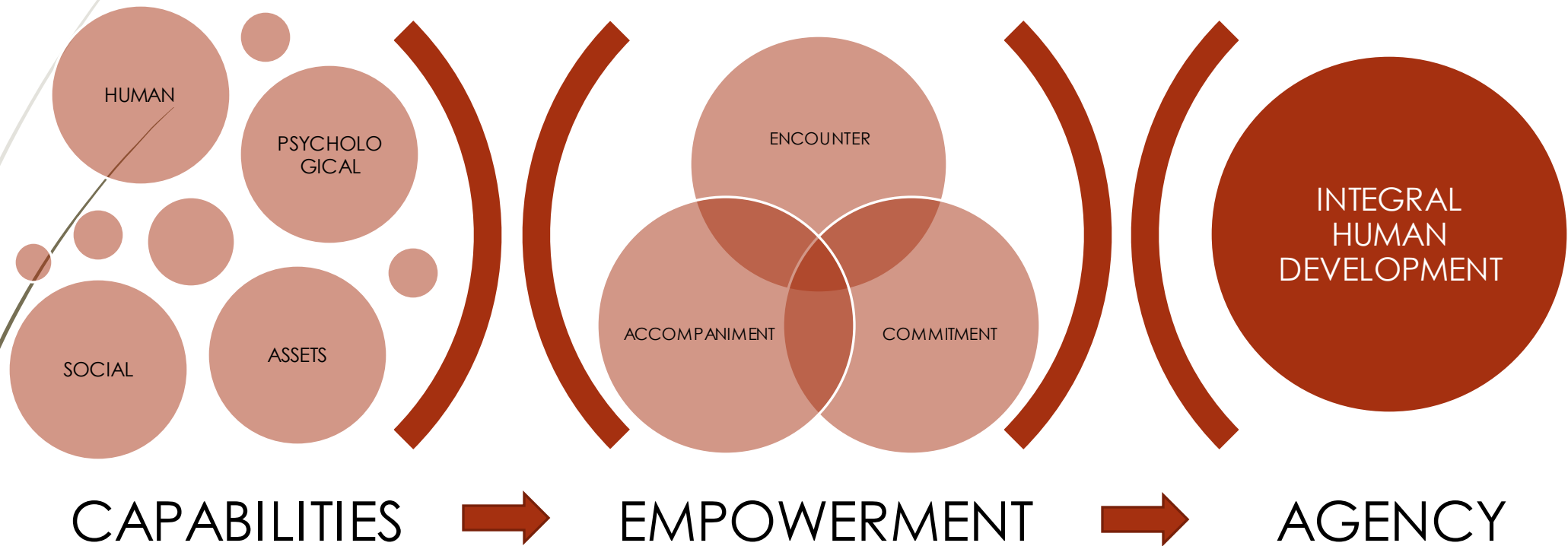
- **Employment** is crucial (Bertelsmann, 2016), but **several barriers** make success rate very low (OECD, 2015)
 - Adequate training, as well as assistance, is needed
- **Training**, however, shows **30% dropout rate for migrants** (18-24 y.o.) in EU. In Italy 45% (CEDEFOP)
- To be more effective, **VET (ecosystem)** should work on **both skills and identity development**



The Cometa approach

- Since 2009 Cometa VET Centre provides migrants with an approach based on integral human development, **professional training and transition to job**
- Minimaster is a **work-based course** (1300 hours) to train future hotel and restaurant staff
- Every year 50-75 young people are supported effectively, through a specific **method of accompaniment**

Identity Development





The steps of training

Welcoming, interview and scouting

- Personalized dossier; beginning of a relationship

Training - Minimaster

- 1,300 hours course including 960h of internship; basic and technical skills are core; local culture

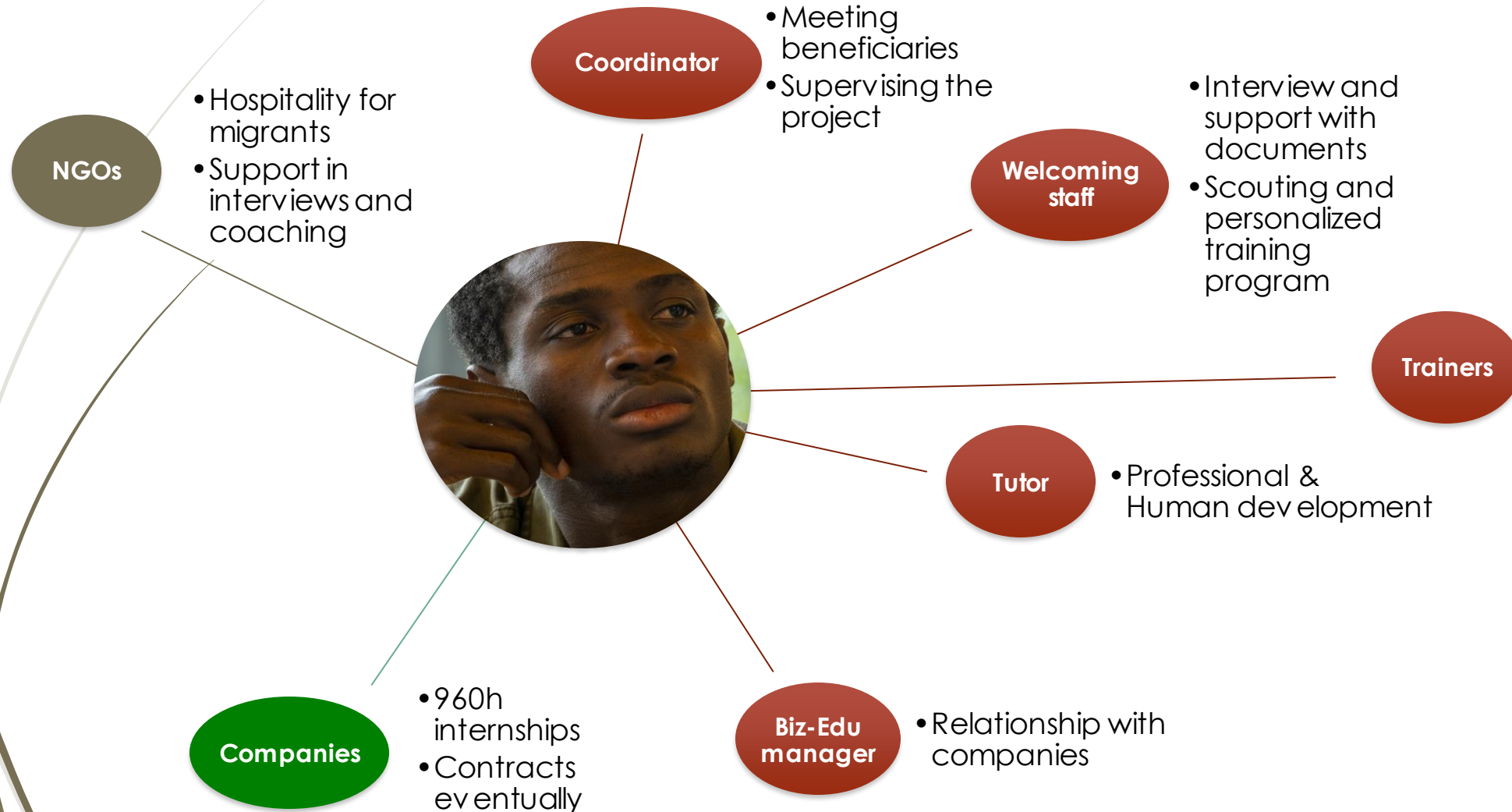
Tutoring

- Personalized support on both professional skills and human development, soft skills

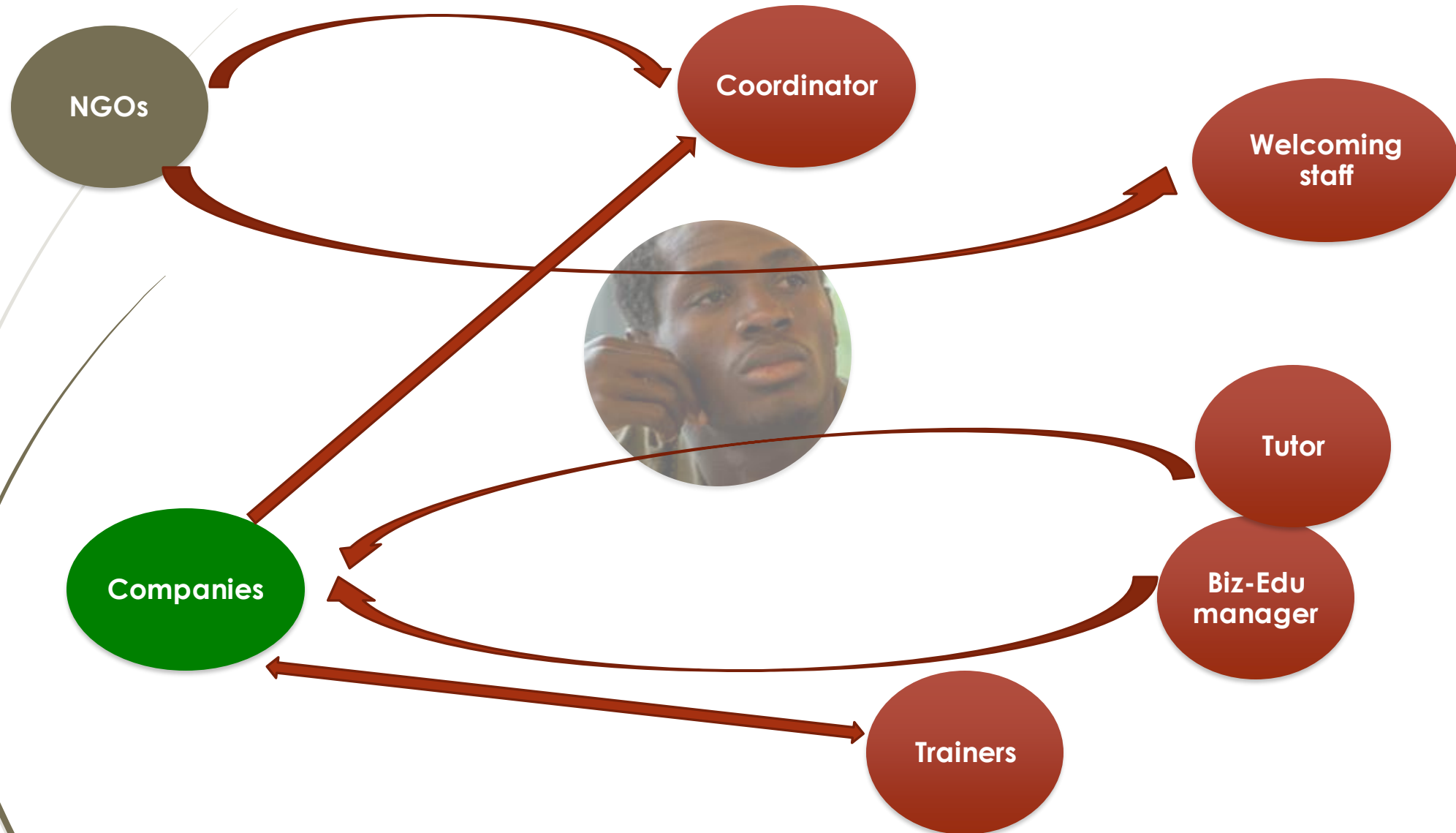
Matching with companies

- Strong collaboration with 700+ companies and special care to every matching

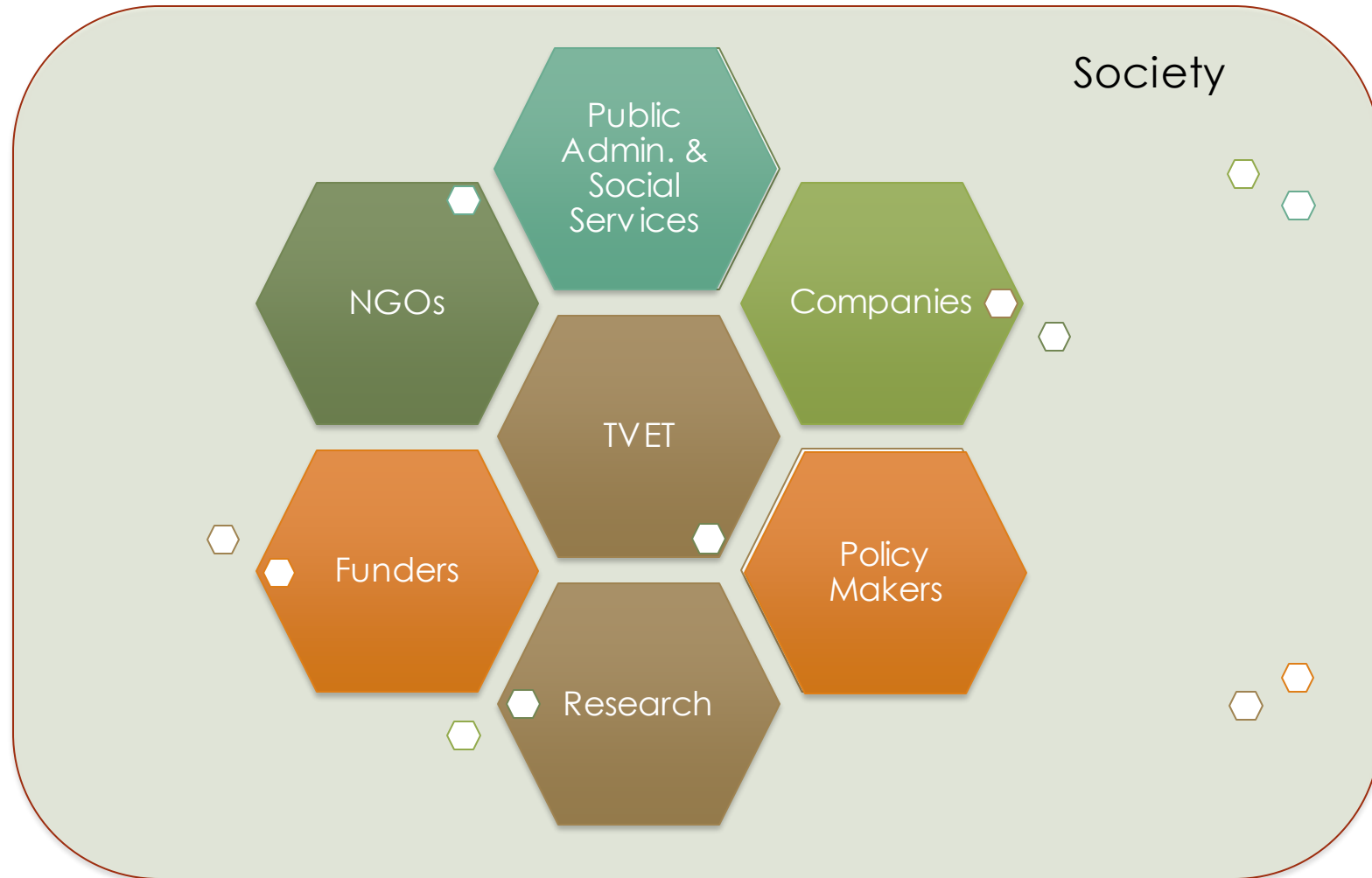
The players: learner-centered



Interconnected roles



The players in the ecosystem





Main results

- Placement rate >70%;
- Average dropout <10%
- Higher integration of learners in the local social context
- Increasing awareness of local ecosystem, namely policy-makers and companies



Lessons learnt

- **Effective training based on:**

- Training mix: professional skills, but also culture, sport, basic skills
- Social Emotional Learning and personal tutoring: consistent integration
- Strong work-based learning and effective collaboration with local companies

- **Importance of an ecosystemic approach to:**

- Strengthen the training & Increase placement rate
- Raise awareness

Learning a New Life at Cometa

Listening to learners' voices*

*Research available at:
Koenig, T. L., & Nardi, P. (2019).
VET for inclusion and identity development: The Cometa approach with young migrants. (S. 224–232).

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3371500>





Emigrant from Nigeria

Faith

- **Birthplace:** Nigeria, close to Lagos
- **Age at journey's beginning:** 20 years old
- **Length of journey:** One year
- **Reason for leaving:** I asked myself, “What kind of life is this? I don’t go to my dad’s people to help me because I don’t feel like someone from there will help me because I am not used to them.”
- “My mom is struggling, with nothing, with no money, and she’s sick.”



The Journey and Its Perils

- I traveled to the Niger border where two men “took some of my hairs from my armpit and private hair [and used it] in a ritual so that I would be scared to run away.”
- “After a time, I realized that they were selling and selling and selling me [for sex]. And, then, we got to Tripoli... [and I was sold] to a woman in France.”
- “But, to God be the glory! The woman that they wanted to do business with in Libya didn’t come.



Cometa and the Future

- ▶ “Everything was ok when I got to Como.” I started in school to learn “how to speak Italian. I heard that the man was still in Libya and so, I was now singing to my God, ‘I’m free, I’m free. I am not going to pay anybody again.’”
- ▶ Before Cometa, “I worked in... a hotel and made a lot of mistakes... But since, I got to Cometa...I learned how to make bed well, how to clean, how to do some house chores.”
- ▶ “I see my future as brighter.” “I don’t want someone again to pass that way [it is not a good path]. If me alone can block the road, I would do it because a lot of souls are going down [this road].”



Emigrant from Somalia

Imam

- **Birthplace:** Eel-deer, Somalia
- **Age at journey's beginning:** 18 years old
- **Length of journey:** 23 months
- **Reason for leaving:** “One day, 7:30 in the morning, my brother went to open the shop. Al-Shabaab arrived and killed him...after that, they started looking for me. I decided to escape; they wanted to kill me.”

The Journey and Its Perils

- Mogadishu, then, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) where I was told, “You have to go to Europe to be sure [Al-Shabaab will not find you].”
- Khartoum (Sudan) where “I worked for free for 5 months” in exchange for a crowded truck ride across the Sahara Desert to Tripoli (Libya).
- I met a Libyan guy who said, “work for free [for 7 months] and I will send you to Italia...Libyans think that people coming from South Africa are like animals. [I was] beaten, sexually abused [and given little food...] When I arrived in Italy (Syracuse, Sicily), I weighed 50 kilograms and I am 170 centimeters tall.”





Cometa and the Future

- ▶ “When I got here, I started studying, but it wasn’t easy at all... hard to learn the language and life was hard...”
- ▶ I started helping another guy from Somalia [and brought him to Cometa] where I was asked, “What about you? Let’s help the other one, but let’s start with you.”
- ▶ “I was used to working in a company with machinery... creating steel plates. Cometa’s staff set me up at the printing shop... I was offered an internship... and then a contract for one year.”
- ▶ “I would like to thank Cometa... because they changed my life and have given me the opportunity to be what I am now.”



Emigrant from Ivory Coast Favor

- ▶ **Birthplace:** Ivory Coast
- ▶ **Age at journey's beginning:** 15 years old
- ▶ **Length of journey:** Approximately 3 years
- ▶ **Reason for leaving:** “My stepmother found an old man... and said to him. [Favor] is now your wife...She said to me, “You have to go and live with this man... I was 15 years old.” I said, “No, and so my stepmother locked me in a room for three days with no food, no water, nothing.” When this happened, my sister contacted me and said, “I know where my husband keeps money. I will take some money and we will leave together.... and this is what happened.”



The Journey and its Perils

- From the Ivory Coast, we went to Benin, Nigeria, then Ghana, Agades, Niger and then, by car, through the Sahara Desert for two weeks. “We arrived in Tripoli and stayed in a room... but the police arrived and kept us in prison for two days.”
- “While in prison, a lady paid the police and we were released.” Asked if she experienced violence of any kind, Favor said, “when in prison in Tripoli, we were beaten.”
- The woman arrange for us to take a boat from near Tripoli. At sea, “we met a German NGO boat then transferred to the Italian Navy which took us to Lampedusa, Sicily. I was sent to Como with my sister. We stayed together one year in Como then, my sister moved to France.”



Cometa and the Future

- ▶ In Como, I first lived in a cooperative that welcomes migrants; the staff said, “we need to go together to Cometa because you need to learn Italian... I want to learn Italian well and then, to work. I like working... here in Italy. I feel good.”



Emigrant from Ivory Coast

Mohammed

- **Birthplace:** Burkina Faso; moved to Ivory Coast as a child
- **Age at journey's beginning:** 15 years old
- **Length of journey:** approximately 4 years
- **Reason for leaving:** “The situation was escalating, and I was feeling a lot of pressure... I am a curious guy. I want to learn new things, to see how the world is operating. The first challenge... was to say, “Am I really going, or shall I stay?” I decided to “go away because it was difficult to stay in the country where I didn’t have many opportunities.”



The Journey and Its Perils

- Mali for two weeks, then, “Algeria for six months... earned some money and moved to Morocco. We lived in the forest for five months. It was too difficult to enter Spain. So I went to back to Algeria for two years.”
- “I spent €1,000 to cross the desert from Algeria and €1,500 to be on the boat from Libya to Sicily. If you pay less, like €500, you risk being sold to the terrorists.”
- “From Lampedusa, I was sent to Milan and to Como. When I arrived, I started school [learning the Italian language]. There was a teacher who “decided to invite me to their house, to live.””

Cometa and the Future



- ▶ At Cometa, “I studied the professional subjects of the bar, of the kitchen and restaurant, and everything about the professional waiter.” Now, “I work at a very beautiful restaurant [and bed and breakfast that serves Dutch, French and German clients] not far from Como.”
- ▶ “Thanks to Cometa, I managed to make my dreams come true... Cometa gave me necessary skills and education and... contacts with my restaurant so now I can earn money... and help my family... This is something I wanted to do when I was living back in my country but couldn’t do.”
- ▶ “I want... three things in life - to get my home, get married and have kids. One of them, I have already realized. I bought the house for my parents and myself [which I am renting out] in the Ivory Coast because I want to be important for the family.”

Cometa Leaders

“Cometa has been helping migrants since 2005, but it has increased... Como is a really touristic city... and some important hotels need staff trained... We concentrate on jobs that Italians don't want to do like housekeeping and being waiters and waitresses in five stars hotels on Lake Como.”



“I see a lot of African people that are like tigers. They want to learn, they want an education, they search for this.”



Paolo Binda, far left,
Head of Oliver Twist School
at Cometa

Mattia Fasana, near left,
Head of vocational training
program for migrants and
other students at Cometa
Paolo Nardi, near right,
Head of International Affairs
and Research at Cometa

Cometa Partners – Local NGOs

“Europe has closed its border to the migrants, but left the borders open for guns, weapons and terrorists. I am upset about how the new right-wing Italian government uses fear of migrants to get people behind them.”

When commenting on his critical viewpoint, the priest nodded and tacitly agreed that he is asking questions about who has power, who does not; whose voice is being heard and whose voice is not.”



Three of the active supporters of Cometa and its many students.

Internship Sponsors

“I was involved with Cometa informally in getting my own work set up at the bar and restaurant. Now I sponsor interns from Cometa.”

“Mohammed is indispensable. He is eager not just to work in the bar, but to open and close [it]. Mohammed is fluent in French and this is of great help to me as many of our guests speak French and they look for Mohammed when they come to the bar.”



Dario
Coffee Bar Manager

Roberto Dotti, a fabrication shop manager with a current Cometa student intern.



Imperiale Hotel
manager at
Lake Como

Working Toward the Future



Abimbola at Lake Como hotel.



Bongani at Cometa class.



Amara inspecting fabric at Como-area industrial printer.



Essential references 1

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Thank you too for listening!

Questions and comments are welcome

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