



## International Migrants Day

International Migrants Day is celebrated on December 18 every year. According to the UN Parliament, “The EU significantly increased its funding for migration, asylum and integration policies in the wake of the increased inflow of asylum seekers in 2015. In the forthcoming negotiations on the EU’s post-2020 budget, Parliament will call for additional funding for migration.” This news seems positive, but in reality, Europe, and especially Italy are facing uncertain and hardening realities when it comes to the integration of migrants.

According to the UN Refugee Agency, an average of 44,000 people were forced to flee their homes every day in 2017. Nonetheless, as of Sept 24, 2018, according to BBC, “the Italian government has passed a decree which will make it easier to deport migrants and strip them of Italian citizenship”. Al Jazeera, also further elucidates upon this poignant situation. Journalist, Alessio Perrione writes about the “migration and security” decree, which came into force on October 5, 2018 and was written into law by the Italian parliament last month, which crackdowns on asylum rights by abolishing “humanitarian protection” – a stay permit issued to those who do not qualify for refugee status or subsidiary protection but were recognised as vulnerable.” Ylenia Gostoli, also of Al Jazeera adds that “Critics say the law will end up condemning asylum seekers already on Italian territory to a life without basic rights – making them more vulnerable to labour exploitation and easier prey for organised crime”. It is clear that the changes of law in Italy pose dangerous threats to many migrants already here in Italy, and also for those to come.

Europe and Italy are in dire need to change their EU regulations regarding immigration and asylum rules, as many vulnerable lives are at stake. However, Europe has still not come together in agreement to find a solution for integration and assimilation, and as stated by The Guardian “some countries want tougher external border controls, others fairer distribution of new arrivals. Any solution will have to balance the concerns of “frontline” southern states with those of wealthier northern “destination” states, while dealing with the refusal of hardline central and eastern ones (such as Hungary and Poland) to accept any migrants at all.” Undoubtedly, something needs to be done to change this situation for the better, and it is of crucial importance that positive steps are taken immediately. Human lives are not a matter to be taken slightly. A solution is required for the sake of humanity and peace.

At Gustolab International, we think it is important to support and connect with organizations working



with, and for the rights of migrants. We understand the importance of integration, acceptance and tolerance, and aspire to support these fundamental connections. Through our overarching theme of 'Food Systems and Sustainability', we connect to the bigger picture of human rights, justice, equality, fairness, sustainable practices and organizations. These tie in with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through adherence to these goals, we understand the importance of reduced inequalities and poverty, protection of life, sustainable communities, wellbeing, opportunities for decent work, peace and justice for all and last but not least, sustainable partnerships. We are honored to team up with a variety of impressive organizations who are living examples of working for the betterment and empowerment of migrants. One example is Linaria, a non-profit organization working with native Mediterranean plants, gardens, landscapes and urban environments, to create greener, sustainable spaces, while working with migrants, and creating community. Linaria aims to use a variety of creative outlets and projects to transform spaces, and in turn, create a collective network. The team focuses on sustainable practices while creating meaning, and making positive environmental changes.

Mediterranea is one of the projects coming out of Linaria, in which biodiversity, is perpetuated in plant life in the garden, and spread throughout the city. This connects to reveling in the diversity of the group, connecting with migrants, to come together as one, build a stronger community, by offering work, and integration into a new environment. By building upon many of the migrants' skills, other laboratories have developed, in fields such as wood working, metal working, kitchen transformations using garden herbs and salts and so on.

At Gustolab International, we realize that connecting with the community is an invaluable experience that we give to our students. Whether, it is through a academic and research internship, volunteering session, or experiential lesson, linking with a local organization with a social mission is integral to the formation of global citizens. Students gain insight how to develop empathy, be ethically and socially responsible, compassionate and aware about the realities of the world. Awareness of the word as it is, is the first step in creating positive change. Understanding the global environment develops cognitive complexity and powerful collaboration skills. Respect for all cultures and diversity is reinforced, as students learn intercultural competence and experience multi-cultural contexts. To connect to those from diverse backgrounds and histories, can be life changing. We are lucky to live in a world full of complexities and variety, so let us rejoice in our differences, while coming together as one, in the name of humanity, and remember that, we all laugh in the same language and breathe the same air. UN SDG Action Campaign.