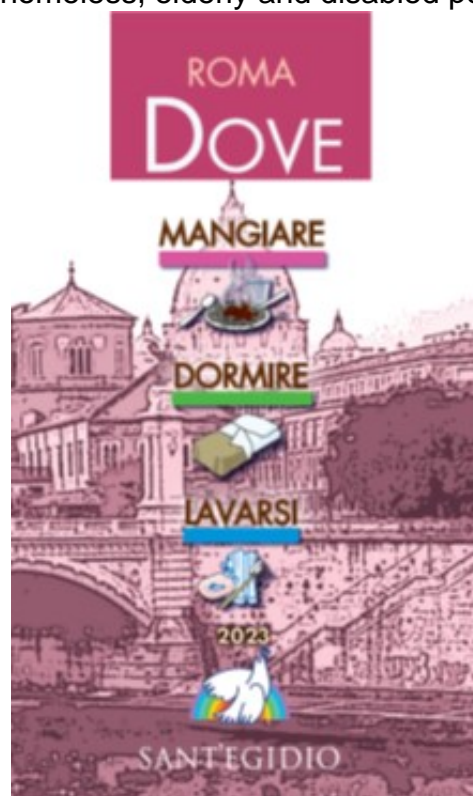


## Poverty: Community of Sant'Egidio, almost 10% of Italians in need. Record numbers of meals and aid parcels distributed as a result of the pandemic

As a result of the pandemic, followed by a widespread crisis, the needs of persons facing economic insecurity have increased. As many as 5.6 million people are living below the poverty threshold, accounting for almost 10% of all Italian residents. The figures provided by the voluntary and solidarity sectors are emblematic. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the Community of Sant'Egidio delivered over 1 million meals in Italy including via soup kitchens (500,000 in Rome, Genoa, Novara, Frosinone and Lucca) and itinerant meals - twice as many compared to the previous year. Food parcels also increased threefold, to over 600,000. As many as 250,000 food parcels have been distributed since the beginning of 2022, 120,000 of which in Rome. These are some of the figures released today in Rome during a press conference for the presentation of the latest edition of the guidebook "Dove mangiare, dormire, lavarsi" (Where to eat, sleep, wash), also known as the "Michelin guidebook for the poor." The traditional Christmas lunch offered by Sant'Egidio is now in its 40th year. It began in 1982 with a small group of people in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere (Our Lady in Trastevere) and since then has reached out to some 250,000 people in 70 countries worldwide. Many Ukrainian women and children will also be present. **Christmas lunches and distribution in Italy.** On the 24th of December, volunteers in Rome will provide itinerant Christmas dinners, at railway stations and at the usual places where homeless people live. Approximately 20,000 guests are expected to attend lunches and festive events on December 25, with the distribution of food parcels across various neighbourhoods of the city and its metropolitan area. Some 80,000 people in Italy will take part. Over one hundred cities in addition to Rome will be participating. The Community of Sant'Egidio has provided accommodation to 1,000 homeless, elderly and disabled people in Rome and in several Italian cities over the past few years.



[\(Where to eat, sleep and wash\) provides information on public and private services in Rome for persons in need, both Italian and non-Italian, along with useful information on how to access registered residence, medical assistance, vocational training and employment, welfare and pension benefits, accommodation, etc. It will be published in other Italian cities \(Florence, Genoa, Milan, Naples, Padua\), in Europe and in Buenos Aires. This year's edition includes](#)

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thirty-three soup kitchens in Rome (29 of them free of charge); itinerant food distribution in 28 neighbourhoods thanks to the support of 51 associations; thirty-five dormitories (32 free of charge);

four shelter homes for sick persons and relatives of hospitalised persons; 28 personal hygiene units; 78 parish listening centres. Furthermore, a new healthcare section provides information on applying for medical aids and prostheses. **Appeals to policymakers and citizens.** During the press conference, the president of the Community of Sant'Egidio, **Marco Impagliazzo**, made a number of appeals to politicians and citizens. The following was asked of the Italian government

"to extend the immigration 'flows decree' to include professional profiles such as nurses and caregivers,

indispensable in assisting elderly and disabled persons." "I understand that the Flows Decree is currently being debated", Impagliazzo said. "We have been pressing various governments on this matter for some time now. The latest decree concerned 69,700 people. We are asking to extend it also to those countries lacking direct agreements with Italy, such as Venezuela, Peru and other Latin American countries with a more extensive culture of professional nursing." Sant'Egidio is asking for "the equivalence of qualifications and a flows decree that will also cater for the needs of families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. He pointed out that "according to Eurostat, Italy needs at least 200,000 workers a year, while only half of the 69,700 workers under the last flows decree have arrived, due to very serious bureaucratic hurdles." **10% of all citizens facing difficulties.** "Politics should not only be carried out in television debates or on social media. It is necessary to rediscover the culture of listening to people's actual needs," he said, calling on institutional leaders to "take more and better notice of those 10% of citizens facing economic difficulties" – namely, over 5.6 million people facing poverty. "This is a time of poly-crises - he pointed out -, in other words, a crisis caused by many factors. These include the severe consequences of the pandemic, the financial crisis of inflation and prices, aggravated by the war in Ukraine, accompanied by the gas crisis. Single-income households, women, the numerous elderly persons with low pensions, along with precarious workers, have been the hardest hit." For example, a home "is the first request of many people." Sant'Egidio's Housing First programme "has enabled dozens of people, including many lonely elderly people, to find a home, establish micro-shared housing, with the support of voluntary workers and small subsidies to restart and be reintegrated into the labour market." **On the subject of citizenship income**, Impagliazzo added, on the sidelines: "Obviously an anti-poverty benefit is of fundamental importance. Italy has finally adopted this social protection measure, the last country in Europe, together with Greece, a fundamental service for citizens. The problem arose from its being tied to employment. Admittedly, it should be reconsidered, but it should definitely never be revoked." **On International Volunteer Day** - there are approximately 6 million volunteers in Italy - the President of Sant'Egidio highlighted an increased "request for showing solidarity, including from new Italians, people who were previously assisted and now give a helping hand motivated by feelings of reciprocity." He thus made an appeal to "join the Community of Sant'Egidio and help us get people off the streets in order to help them live a full life enjoying rights and dignity they deserve." At the same time, "do not forget to support the Ukrainian people with concrete assistance", he said. The Community has been sending out aid through its local groups, especially electric generators, due to the continuous power outages. The campaign "Set an extra place at your Christmas table" is ongoing with the solidarity Text Message 45586, aimed at guaranteeing Christmas lunch and gifts to all recipients. For updates: 06. 4292929

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