



**MODELS AND SCHEMES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF
REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN ITALY:
ACTIONS CARRIED OUT BY
THE INTEG.R.A. PROJECT AT LOCAL LEVEL**

Final Report

Rome, March 2005

Credits:

The present document is produced by the staff of Censis coordinated by Andrea Toma and composed of Gabriella Addonisio, Giuseppe Lubrano, Chiara Luti, Chiara Piccirilli. Chapter four “Integ.r.a. in the framework of the transnational partnership” is elaborated with the collaboration of Federico Fossi. Chapter 5 “Recommendations” is elaborated by Marilisa Fantacci.

English elaboration and translation: Davide Di Pietro

Many thanks for their special contribution to: Anci – Associazione Nazionale dei Comuni Italiani, Unchr – Alto Commissariato delle Nazioni Unite per i rifugiati, Abita, Acli, Ancst/Legacoop, Anpas, Arci Nazionale, Auser, Caritas Roma – Arc.ta SS. Sacramento, Cies, Cir, Cnca, Cooperativa Nuovo Villaggio, Drom – Consorzio Nazionale della cooperazione sociale, FormAutonomie, Ial, Cisl, Ics, Medfilm Festival, Obiettivo Lavoro, Oim, Sunia, Teatro di Nascosto, UniTs, Università si Roma La Sapienza – Dipartimento di Sociologia della Comunicazione e Dipartimento di Teoria dello Stato, Comune di Ancona, Comune di Bergamo, Comune di Bitonto, Comune di Catania, Comune di Forlì, Comune di Genova, Comune di Roma.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
1. The role of the Integ.r.a. project in the framework of policies on asylum in Italy	7
1.1 The strengthening process of the reception policies	8
1.2 From reception to inclusion. The Integ.r.a. project as a test of a social, professional and housing inclusion model	14
2. The projects at local level. The leadership of the Municipalities and the value of the local network	19
2.1 The availability of data and information at the central and local level	21
2.2 The availability of lodgings	25
3. The social profile of refugees and asylum seekers	29
3.1 The profile of the beneficiaries of the project according to the Integ.r.a. Data Bank	30
4. Integ.r.a. in the framework of the transnational partnership.	32
4.1 A shared knowledge of the current rules and practices followed in Europe	35
4.2 The DASRIE matrix	37
4.3 The recommendations of the International Partnership	38
5. Recommendations	40

INTRODUCTION

Equal is the EU initiative devoted to human resources, financed by the European Social Fund for the period 2000-2006. In the framework of the European Strategy for Employment, Equal aims at drafting innovative approaches and policies devoted to the fight of discriminations and inequalities in the labour market and at the same time favouring testing actions on a transnational basis.

The Integ.r.a. project carried out in the framework of the EU initiative Equal had as main objective, the social, professional and housing inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers through a networking action promoted by the Public Administration bodies at local level in co-operation with private organisations of the labour market and the third sector.

The project was started by Anci, Acnur and Censis and carried out in seven Italian Municipalities: Bergamo, Forlì, Genova, Ancona, Roma, Bitonto (BA) and Catania. The project involved Employers' Associations, Trade Unions, Professional Organisations and other key actors at local level and the main stakeholders at national level such as international organisations, bodies belonging to the third sector dealing with the rights' protection, research institutes, voluntary service organisations and several private social oriented associations.

The wide partnership of the Integ.r.a. project includes: Acli, Abita, Formautonomie, Ancst/LegaCoop, Arci, Anpas, Auser, Caritas Roma, Cds, Cies, Cir, Cna, Cnca, Cooperativa Nuovo Villaggio, Consorzio Drom, Ial/Cisl, Ics, MedFilm Festival, Obiettivo Lavoro, Oim, Sunia, Teatro di Nascosto, UniTS, Department of "Teoria dello Stato" and Department of "Sociologia e Comunicazione" of the University "La Sapienza" in Rome.

The structure of this report aims at identifying the role of the Integ.r.a. project in the framework of the policies on asylum adopted in Italy so far and the developments that this project carried out in the assessment of possible inclusion schemes. The first section

describes the legislative and institutional framework built around the theme of asylum so far and the organizational methodology of the actions developed by the project at local level. These features do not represent so much a mere outline of the general operative picture but they are the keynotes (co-ordination and consultative role) of a central structure holding the tasks to manage and co-ordinate the actions developed at local level (Central Office, Thematic Steering Groups, Data Bank of Services and Beneficiaries).

The second section draws the outline of the projects carried out at local level for the actions of inclusion and delivery of services to the beneficiaries of the project. Thanks to this action, the testing phase progressively shaped models to develop and to transfer also to other contexts. During this stage, the Municipalities acquired new skills and tested new procedures to manage in an effective way those inclusion actions devoted to refugees and asylum seekers.

The project forecast a series of qualitative and quantitative analyses and investigations on refugees and asylum seekers in order to have a better awareness and acquaintance of the situations and problems affecting the beneficiaries of the project: the third section displays the results of this research. This section outlines the profiles of the beneficiaries of the project as drew up by the Integ.r.a. Data bank and includes the results of two researches dealing with territorial mobility and familiar rejoining carried out at a grass-root level.

The fourth section focuses on the activities carried out in the framework of the transnational partnership with special reference to a comparative assessment of solutions and actions started in the other partner countries of this project (France, Germany and the U.K.) in the field of *welfare benefits* and supplements to the income forecast for refugees and asylum seekers.

Finally, we summarized some recommendations and suggestions drafted by the results of this project with a view to contribute to the ongoing debate on the construction of a system of policies on asylum in Italy.

1. THE ROLE OF THE INTEG.R.A. PROJECT IN THE FRAMEWORK OF POLICIES ON ASYLUM IN ITALY.

In Italy, the number of refugees was quite small by the end of the eighties (at 31st December 1989, 11.500 refugees resident in Italy were registered, including those under UNHCR, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and it remained among the lowest in Europe throughout the second half of the nineties.

After the heavy conflicts of 1991, the year of the Albanian collapse, a relevant increase of the requests for asylum was registered (with more than 23.000 requests) as well as between 1998 and 2000 partly due to the great incoming flow caused by the war in the Balkans and the crisis in Kosovo. In 1998, 1999 and 2000, the requests for asylum remarkably increased (respectively 11.120, 33.360 and 15.560) but the corresponding number of recognitions was still quite low (between 10 and 22%)

These facts did not affect our country that much: in fact Italy hosted as few as 12.500 refugees out of 2.2 millions who were present in Europe at the end of 2002 (this data do not include those who were granted a humanitarian protection status), against 130.000 hosted in France, 148.000 in the U. K., 156.000 in the Netherlands and more than 900.000 in Germany. Concerning the requests for asylum, more than 456.000 applications were submitted in Europe in 2002, but only 7.281 of them were forwarded to our country: almost ten times less than the 71.000 submitted in Germany and less than one half of the 18.000 that regarded Belgium.

How the reception was organised? Which assistance measures were adopted to face the “forced migration” to Italy until the end of the last decade? It must be pointed out that the reception was mainly operated by the third sector until the end of the nineties. The approach was mainly oriented to solidarity than to specific agreed measures of protection. Starting from the eighties, on the other hand, the juridical and legislative conditions of our country such as the long wait for the examination of the asylum requests and the lack of a clear definition of the right of asylum and the related host-

ing policies discouraged the potential refugees. As a matter of facts, they mainly considered Italy as a transit passage to Northern Europe countries. Throughout the eighties, nevertheless, the lay and religious world of voluntary service was committed in the setting up of solidarity camps and promoting raising awareness initiatives as a reaction to the first relevant facts of economic migrations towards our country: we just want to remind the initiatives of solidarity, the commitment of the churches, associations and trade unions to support immigrant seasonal workers engaged in the tomatoes picking during the mid-eighties.

Also in the next decade, then, the pressure of the nearby war and the need to manage the emergency alongside the reception of “economic migrants” started many spontaneous initiatives often unplanned, not co-ordinated among them, promoted and managed by associations, consortia of solidarity and other expressions of the civil society. This multifarious world of the third sector tried to respond to the pressure of the hosting demands and to that of the asylum seekers, mainly focusing the efforts on the areas of arrival of the migrants and on the bigger towns.

1.1. The strengthening process of the reception policies.

Among the main stages of the strengthening process of the hosting policies, we need to remind the start up of the “Azione Comune” (Common Action) programme launched by the E.U. and supported by our Ministry of the Interior in July 1999. This programme financed assistance and hosting projects devoted to those Kosovar exiles, beneficiaries of temporary humanitarian protection in the E.U. countries. This action represented the first attempt to tackle the emergency through the creation of a widespread network of hosting services devoted to asylum seekers.

The Ministry of the Interior, as co-financing body, contributed with the 40% of the funds through its D.G. “Servizi Civili” (Civilian Services) whilst the management was entrusted to the Consiglio Italiano per i Rifiugati (CIR – Italian Council for Refugees) as a co-

ordinator of a wide network of associations, trade unions and organisations of the religious world. The project was carried out in 10 Italian regions and forecast the arrangement of hosting facilities for the Kosovar exiles in 34 towns for a total number of 1293 lodgings. This project involved medium or small sized towns in order to facilitate a quicker inclusion and the first testing activities of a “multi dimensional” hosting action: beyond an emergency assistance then, forecasting the start up of cross-services dealing with medical and psychological support, social counselling, familiar rejoining, legal aid, interpreting and cultural mediation services, addressing a special attention to weaker categories such as single women with children, unaccompanied children, victims of torture and ill people. In 2000 this project was extended to all the other nationalities of exiles. It proposed a new model based on the quality of the hosting services and on their placement in small and medium sized towns all over the national territory. It aimed to tackle specific needs such as those of the unaccompanied children hosted in specifically devoted structures and more generally to support individuals in a continuous process – though relative – overcoming the emergency condition and arriving to the acquaintance with tools for a full socialisation and familiarity within the local context. The Italian consortium of Solidarity in Trieste managed a data bank for the placement of individuals in the different structures thanks to the gathered information on lodgings availability and specific needs of the beneficiaries.

This framework clearly outlines the decisive role of Local Governments especially in the northern and central regions of our country: “Azione Comune” managed to involve 31 Municipalities in the 10 Regions concerned. This action represented the first attempt to create an integrated hosting system in favour of refugees and asylum seekers based on a network of services and bodies co-ordinated at local level. Besides, this project outlined a decisive stage in the direction of a “quality” hosting that could guarantee not only dignity and security but also help in carrying out actual life projects, whether finalized to repatriation or to the inclusion in Italy.

Of course, some difficulties were registered during the project, as this was a first experience that started the co-operation at local level of several bodies with different backgrounds. These problems highlighted the need of a tight co-ordination and the importance of a training action towards those who worked in this field. In the course of the project, thanks to the setting up of a co-ordinating action, some common criteria and minimum standards were agreed with a wider view to follow a direction facilitating the building up of a quality hosting system in Italy. Thanks to the good level of co-operation achieved among the partners and all the subjects involved at the territorial level for the management of the local hosting centres, the project took an essential step forward in the creation of a platform including non governmental and institutional Italian organisations working in the field of asylum, starting an actual co-operation among subjects holding different identities and backgrounds but working in the same field.

In September 2000, the Council of the European Union created the European Refugee Fund (ERF), to support the Member States of the European Union in the reception, inclusion and assisted repatriation of refugees and asylum seekers. In October 2000, in order to achieve these aims, our Ministry of the Interior, UNHCR and ANCI signed up an agreement protocol to start a National Programme for Asylum (Programma Nazionale Asilo – PNA) based on the experience gained in the past years with Azione Comune in Italy. This Programme aims at creating a national hosting and protection system to support the inclusion process of refugees and individuals holding a permit of stay for humanitarian reasons. Besides, the Programme is finalised to the development of projects dealing with voluntary repatriation and resettlement in the countries of origin.

The PNA represented the first organic attempt to structure the hosting actions for refugees, asylum seekers and foreigners who were granted humanitarian protection started throughout the nineties. The guidelines of the programme forecast several essential servic-

es to guarantee a hosting action: literacy on Italian language, enrolment in the National Health Scheme and educational inclusion for underage children. The tested model followed a vertical and horizontal trend because at the same time it involved the central State through the Ministry of the Interior, an international organisation such as the UNHCR, the Local Governments gathered in the Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani (National Association of Italian Municipalities) as well as several third sector organisations. The three levels – local, national and international – were co-ordinated among them with the results of an effective inter-institutional relationship definitely oriented to enhance the role of Local Governments in the hosting action. The Programme involved 150 Municipalities and 226 hosting structures. The Central Secretariat of the PNA had the specific task to co-ordinate a true “city-network” based on the shared financial resources of the concerned Municipalities. In this framework, Municipalities are the point of reference and co-ordination of the public and private actors, committed with asylum issues at local level, and those that promote co-ordinated actions in favour of their respective areas as much as the overall national hosting system.

Each single project was developed within the PNA framework according to the drafted guidelines and it was not limited to the supply of food and lodgement but it delivered the necessary services for an inclusion process. These services ranged from the information action on the procedures to start asylum requests to the guidance to their correct bureaucratic application; from the literacy courses to the facilitated access to vocational training: in general – and taking into account also the specific activities devoted to “special” categories such as disabled or victims of torture – the whole of the guaranteed services in the framework of the Programme raised up the quality of protection of the beneficiaries. These services improved their conditions during their waiting time favouring the capacity of initiative of the Local Governments that experienced in a co-ordinated way the start up of new services at local level. From

July 2001 to the end of December 2002, the structures of the network hosted 3.056 individuals: 2.030 men and 1.026 women, whereas 890 of them were underage children.

Besides, thanks to the start up of a Data Bank able to monitor the trend of the Programme at a national level, it was possible to check the effective development of the inclusion schemes of the beneficiaries: as a matter of facts, the PNA allowed the professional and housing inclusion of 808 individuals while 209 more were supported in their repatriation to their countries of origin.

Throughout the years, then, the PNA network carried out a strengthening process leading to its public acknowledgement: so much that Article 32 of the Law 189/2002 “so called Bossi-Fini” drafted relevant modifications in this field to the Law 39/1990. The new Law institutes a “Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers” also devoted to the foreigners who were granted other forms of humanitarian protection. Within the Protection System, a great relevance is assigned to ANCI that manages the “Central Service of Information, Promotion, Consultancy, Monitoring and Technical Support” through a specific agreement signed up with the Ministry of the Interior. Also in this case, the principle of an active co-operation between the central and local level is pursued: thanks to the establishment, for the first time in Italy, of a specific Fund devoted to policies and services for asylum, as forecast by Article 32 of the Bossi-Fini Law, the State contributes to the expenses incurred by the Local Governments while delivering services for the reception of asylum seekers, the protection of refugees and beneficiaries of humanitarian protection. The Central Service has the task to monitor the presence of refugees and asylum seekers also through the start up of a Data Bank able to register all the actions carried out at local level. Besides, the Service offers technical assistance to the Local Governments; it promotes communication and information activities and develops programmes of assisted voluntary repatriation through the IOM.

In this case as well, the Local Governments are the backbone of the System, based on the decentralized management of the hosting and protection services in a dynamic of close co-operation between the centre (the Central Service) and the territorial projects developed throughout the country. Local Governments can ask the support of non-governmental organisations and associations with a relevant experience in the fields of hosting and inclusion, in order to carry out the local projects.

It should also be a matter of further reflections, the important feature of a decentralised and qualified action targeted on the characteristics of the concerned areas: specific programmes were carried out in the areas usually affected by the entry of foreigners such as the border areas of Trieste, Gorizia, Ragusa, Agrigento and Bari that started services of legal advice and support. Specific actions were also developed in big urban areas such as Roma or Milano: to manage the big number of asylum seekers, the widest co-operation with associations and organisations in the field of inclusion activities was sought. The main activities carried out were those devoted to cater the basic hosting needs and of emergency support such as the specialized health and social assistance and the linguistic mediation while multicultural activities and support actions to professional and housing inclusion amount to the 20% of the delivered services.

Nevertheless, the very question of the strategies to face the whole of their social inclusion needs inspires one of the main trends – together with some relevant European Directives - of the European planning in the field of asylum: the Community Initiative *Equal*. The priority objective of this initiative is the fight to all forms of discrimination and inequality: it also forecasts specific actions to favour the fight to discrimination in the labour market towards refugees and asylum seekers. In this European framework and after the experience carried out in Italy through the system actions in the hosting field, the need to carry on this process in the direction of inclusion came up: this is why the Integ.r.a. project was started up in 2002. It

was promoted by ANCI, Censis and UNHCR and supported by a wide partnership of organisations involved in the field of labour, housing, training, hosting and social inclusion. It developed in the areas of seven Italian Municipalities that were very different in terms of dimensions, social, economic and identity features.

1.2. From reception to inclusion. The Integ.r.a. project as a test of a social, professional and housing inclusion model.

The E.U. area is the region of destination and reception of hundreds of thousands of individuals seeking for asylum. It offers a varied landscape both in terms of arrival flows and in the differences of legislative provisions and their enforcements within the single Member States. The *Equal* Development Partnerships that start innovative actions offer an effective contribution to the objective of the E.U. meant to define common procedures for asylum and the same status in all the Community territories through the progressive harmonization of the policies on asylum and immigration as established in the European Council of Tampere held in October 1999. In Italy, following the philosophy of the National Programme for Asylum and of the System of Protection for Refugees and Asylum Seekers and in the framework of *Equal*, the Integ.r.a. project was started with the specific aim to start up integrated services of training and social, professional, and housing inclusion in favour of refugees, asylum seekers and individuals holding a humanitarian permit of stay. Integ.r.a. carries out its action when refugees and asylum seekers leave the hosting centres through the outline of effective inclusion schemes meant to give them full autonomy in the shortest delay of time. The surveys and studies devoted to the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers show that the two key factors of their missed integration in the hosting countries are represented by the difficulties to access the labour market together with those related to the search of an autonomous lodging for the individual and its family.

With ANCI as co-ordinator, the project developed that cross-action and horizontal management already quoted above. The project aimed at developing an effective and sustainable model to be transferred wherever needed in Italy, thanks to its strong partnership including seven Municipalities - Ancona, Bitonto, Bergamo, Catania, Forlì, Genova and Roma – and 25 among associations working in the social private area and active at national level and academic institutions dealing with human rights issues. Also in this case, the operative model of the project was structured in a central level represented by a central co-ordination office (Central Integ.r.a. Office) that worked in co-operation with the local dimension of the territorial projects. At turn, these were represented by the Local Integ.r.a. Offices often operating in the premises of the Local Governments and that worked with a high degree of autonomy in the direction of the two main shared key elements: the actions to favour the social and professional inclusion and the resolution of housing problems faced by refugees and asylum seekers. The seven Municipalities that joined the project started and managed the Local Inclusion Steering Groups, true workshops to experience inclusion schemes and synergies among local resources.

If the Programme first and the System afterwards addressed their actions to the development of a quality hosting supply outlined on the basis of the new European Directives, the Integ.r.a. project tested innovative actions specifically meant to the identification/definition of the Italian model of socio-economic inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers.

The keynote of this model is the network, meant not only as the whole of services and functions started at local level to implement the different actions, but also as a true planner body able to set up a permanent workshop and a fixed point of reference for the direct beneficiaries and for all the citizens. On the other hand, it must be highlighted that the involvement, networking and co-ordinating actions towards different actors of the civil society such as associations, public services, hosting structures, training and employers

organisations have a positive effect on the direct beneficiaries of the services as well as on the whole community. In fact, these actions co-ordinate “common” resources and promote the so-called “active citizenship” while searching articulated solutions for inclusion and then secure and civil common living.

Right to this end, in the framework of this project and considering its complexity, it is important to guarantee a strong function of central co-ordination able to link the different levels and organisations involved in the project. The Integ.r.a. Central Office had the task to support the Municipalities and the other partners in planning and implementing the activities to carry out. They offered a specific advice on the themes and the methodology of the territorial actions to perform. They also dealt with the training of the social workers involved at local level.

An important field of action performed under the responsibility of the Integ.r.a. Central Office is represented by the activities of the two National Thematic Steering Groups on Housing and Training/Work. They were started to address and outline the strategies to carry out the project through activities of communication and exchange with the local dimension where the action actually takes place.

Municipalities acknowledged the indications of the National Steering Groups and afterwards they freely promoted, co-ordinated and managed the local projects according to the vocations, potentialities and needs of the concerned areas. The different territorial situations developed the guidelines of the project harmonizing the aim of inclusion with the local features and opportunities. As said above, the activities carried out by the Integ.r.a. project focused on training and professional inclusion and aimed at starting up tools to outline organic solutions to the lodging problems in order to favour the leaving of the hosting structures for good. Once identified and involved, the beneficiaries were delivered services of counselling and advise on the set of rules related to the labour market and its dynamics, the local production context, the opportunities to access

employment services, their rights and duties in the fields of labour and housing and on the other services offered at local level.

Besides, all the Municipalities started schemes of vocational training in order to create or re-qualify skilled workers and tested the scheme of apprenticeship training periods in firms that add a practical support to the training received in the classroom. This tool was started thanks to specific agreements drafted with the firms and it was particularly effective because gave asylum seekers – who are not allowed to work until they are granted the “refugee” status - the chance to legally approach the labour market and the actual opportunity to abandon their passive condition of inactive waiting. In this scheme of professional inclusion, the other tool introduced – also in line with the actions forecast by the Reform of Employment Services – was the skill assessment certification as a shared tool to reconstruct the story behind the asylum seekers, their skills and aspirations and preparatory to the draft of an articulated CV and to the outline of a future life project.

The issue of housing was tackled with the awareness of the structural difficulties relating to the search of lodging solutions. The National Steering Group on Housing drafted useful indications to start up “Housing Agencies” and to drive Municipalities towards a new social housing policy.

At local level, researches of autonomous housing solutions were carried out in co-operation with specialized organisations negotiating rent fees at ceiled prices and guiding the beneficiaries towards possible facilitations. In several cases the project involved some organisations already successfully working in social housing initiatives thanks to the methodical co-ordination of different actions – support to individuals, contributions to rent fees, housing mediation, involvement of possible non-profit financial bodies – in order to favour the access to lodgings of disadvantaged categories.

Also the Data Bank – managed by the Central Integ.r.a. Office – turned out to be an essential tool to monitor and support the development of the actions devoted to the solution of housing problems and profes-

sional inclusion. The data processing was operated by the employees of the local projects; these data outlined the frame for the actions of training, professional inclusion and individual support carried out by the seven Municipalities that joined the project and recorded the profiles and the pathways of the involved beneficiaries. According to the data bank, more than 400 beneficiaries - considering the amount of services delivered by the Municipalities – were permanently involved in vocational training and professional inclusion schemes. But the Data Bank was also activated to record the overall number of beneficiaries who were delivered different services by the inclusion help-desk (Local Integ.r.a. Office). The project wanted to account of the inclusion schemes carried out through the monitoring both of the actions explicitly forecast by the project, and of those services and activities favouring socialisation processes and the access to educational, sanitary and recreational services.

Altogether Integ.r.a. assisted 891 beneficiaries: 80% of them were asylum seekers, 10% refugees and the last 10% individuals under humanitarian protection.

In the framework of the European policies for inclusion and equal opportunities, Integ.r.a. showed that it is possible to start up inclusion schemes also for those who are in a waiting position, holding temporary residence permits, but who are at the same time in the condition to work, learn and consequently abandon their idle status, as the widespread experience of PNA proved with its progressive development of a “quality” hosting.

One of the suggested recommendations after the experience of Integ.r.a. was the outline of local policies in the field of vocational training and consultations among employers’ organisations, undertaking an autonomous management of the resources devoted to social inclusion. But beyond the single experiences and indications useful to readdress shared policies for the social and professional inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers, the Integ.r.a. project pointed out that only through the establishment of a multilevel governance of these issues, it is possible to perform their effective and agreed management. The horizontally local network developed by

the work of the Local Steering Groups will necessarily need to be supported by the start up of a vertical network involving the concerned institutions implying the share of responsibilities among the different actors according to their specific competences.

The case of Integ.r.a. highlights the opportunity to export, extend and formalize the organizational model of PNA and the Protection System, in other words the pattern of a multilevel and co-ordinated *governance* also in other fields of the policies on immigration such as that of inclusion. We should not forget that the inclusion process mostly develops at local level: as a matter of facts this was the model with the best guarantees of success. The promotion of synergies among the actors working at local level in the fields of immigration and asylum and their related issues (housing, labour market etc.) will create a fruitful background for the development and strengthening of positive inclusion processes of foreign citizens in the hosting society.

2. THE PROJECT AT LOCAL LEVEL: THE LEADERSHIP OF THE MUNICIPALITIES AND THE VALUE OF THE LOCAL NETWORK

Each local project created a *local development partnership* involving the competent organisations in these fields. The varied range of the actors that joined the partnership includes: associations working on the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, employment resource centres, training organizations, temporary work agencies and professional associations.

Two major groups formally compose each partnership: the direct local partners of the national members (with the task to follow the indications that the central level passed on to the territorial one) and other local organisations that were involved in the network because of their experience in the themes of the project. The network has both common and different features in each area and it represents in a complex and varied way the richness and the energy of the local resources.

The start up of the Local Steering Groups for Inclusion co-ordinated by the Local Governments outlined effective venues working as spaces for analysis, development of the project actions, sharing of the problems and monitoring of the activities. The participation to the steering groups facilitated the networking action and the dialogue among holders of different competencies together with the creation and strengthening of co-operation relationships. This process also registered some conflicts that led the different actors to a clear definition of roles and responsibilities, as a preliminary stage to the outline of a common pathway that could fill the gaps of a missing planning of the actions. The network brought an undeniable added value in terms of skills, involvement of the local level and raising awareness towards all the actors, in all the Municipalities.

This is why it represents one of the main features of strength and innovation of the project: it is essential for the creation of a decentralized and sustainable system that could tackle the problems of the concerned areas taking on board the different needs and points of view. In the start up stage of the Integ.r.a. project, almost all the involved Municipalities – with the possible exception of Bitonto – based their work on the *services for migrants* previously established within the local administrations. The functions and services delivered by these structures have been developing for the past fifteen years after the ever-growing migration facts. These actions often represented a “borderline” experience especially for the Local Governments that committed themselves in enhancing and developing the resources of the local level. The involved Municipalities displayed different features in terms of economic trends and power of “reception” of the new foreign citizens: Ancona has been managing emergency situations since the huge incoming flows of refugees from the Balkan wars, while Bergamo and Forlì are strengthening the structures and the services for the inclusion of foreigners as a consequence of the energy of the local economic dynamics and its related call for labour force. Roma represents a specific case, turning more and more into a big multi-ethnic town and final destination of

entire communities that merge with the productive, social, cultural and identity context of the town, whereas Bitonto, belonging to the Province of Bari, started the development and testing of services for migrants and asylum seekers in a difficult framework for the legal professional inclusion and lodging situation such as the one faced by the Puglia Region.

Besides the presence in almost all the Integ.r.a. Municipalities of an office dealing with immigration, their previous participation to the network of the former P.N.A. (with the only exception of Bergamo and Ancona, even if the latter lately entered the System of Protection) also played a positive role for the development of local projects. This allowed the start up of inclusion processes of refugees and asylum seekers based on the previous *System of Services for the First Reception* already well established both for the relationships at local level (police headquarters, health local agencies, prefectures, employment centres, social co-operatives and hosting structures) and for the methodology and the adopted tools (help-desk for refugees and asylum seekers, methodology developed in the data collection of the beneficiaries). The networking action towards the resources gave Integ.r.a. the chance to use at its best a system of relationships already started and to intensely test actions and work on the specific themes of inclusion.

2.1 The availability of data and information at the central and local level.

The project forecast the introduction of a system for the collection of data in each concerned area; the collected and properly processed data drew up the picture of the actions carried out in the field of training, professional inclusion and individual support together with the inclusion schemes applied to the involved beneficiaries in the seven Municipalities that joined the project. The employees of the local projects performed the data processing while the Central office monitored it. Thanks to the data bank, uniform and comparable information were always available about the

development of the planning, the services, courses and agreements started and the involved organisations. At the same time it was possible to monitor the pathways of the beneficiaries, their distribution according to sex, age, nationality as well as their level of mastery of the language, their developed professional skills and the hard professional inclusion scheme followed through apprenticeship training and professional counselling. Also in the field of lodging it was possible to supervise the housing scheme applied to the individuals especially in those Municipalities that did not join the Protection System. The monitoring action ranged from the first reception to situation of semi-autonomy including the more difficult conditions such as those faced by asylum seekers without fixed abode. Such an analysis turned out to be very important for the project, especially in relation to the implications that may come out in the field of the loss of refugees and asylum seekers and to the chance to gather information about the dynamics addressing mobility on the whole national territory.

Finally the data bank of the Integ.r.a. project has been linked with the one managed by the Protection System and this already allowed and will do in the future to follow the pathway of any individual from its arrival and the whole of enjoyed services while moving from reception to inclusion. The opportunity to read and compare uniform and standardised data on the testing action carried out by the seven Municipalities let the collection of such information, experiences and practices to support in the best way the analysis of the schemes followed by the beneficiaries and the problems faced at local level together with the chance to progressively develop and improve the model for the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers.

The project essentially dealt with the outline of different typologies of services that when adopted by each Municipality represented the “work package” of the actions carried out at local level. Table 1 lists the main figures of these actions.

891 refugees and asylum seekers were involved in the seven Municipalities belonging to the Integ.r.a. project. The 60,3 % of them

– corresponding to 537 units – benefited by the actions carried out by the Municipality of Rome, while the remaining 40% enjoyed the service forecast by the other Municipalities. Each Municipality drew up a set of actions generally structured according to five different areas:

- individual support (subdivided into other typologies of service such as social guidance, legal help, cultural and linguistic mediation, health assistance, etc.);
- services for the housing inclusion;
- services for the professional inclusion (skill assessment, stage/ apprenticeship training, job counselling);
- organisation of training courses (courses of Italian language, vocational training);
- supply of lodgings and beds.

All Municipalities then developed several actions according to their resources. They involved at different levels a variable number of beneficiaries starting a process of individual support to refugees and asylum seekers, considered the complexity of needs that these people express.

Table 1 – Distribution of the beneficiaries involved by each municipality of the Integ.r.a. project: the first figure relates to those who enjoyed full services (Total beneficiaries) while the second excludes those who only use counselling help-desk services (Full beneficiaries).
- absolute value, % -

	Total Beneficiaries		Full Beneficiaries		Full/Total (%)
	a.v.	%	a.v.	%	
Ancona	26	2,9	26	5,3	100,0
Bergamo	68	7,6	68	14,0	100,0
Bitonto	74	8,3	74	15,2	100,0
Catania	67	7,5	67	13,8	100,0
Forlì	53	5,9	53	10,9	100,0
Genova	66	7,4	66	13,6	100,0
Roma	537	60,4	134	27,2	25,0
Total	891	100	488	100,0	54,8

Source: Censis on Integ.r.a. data bank, 2005

Box n. 1 –Apprenticeship Training as a tool for the professional inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers

Apprenticeship training represents an important tool for the vocational training of asylum seekers. This tool is able to support their progressive inclusion in the labour market.

According to Art. 1, 2° co. D.M.142/98 apprenticeship and counselling training does not shape an employer-employee relationship allowing asylum seekers to approach the labour market in a protected way and in the full respect of legality. It also gives asylum seekers the opportunity to make an experience that prepare them to get out of the hosting network and start an autonomous self-management of their inclusion process.

Concerning the size of an apprenticeship, the law does not forecast a minimum period but only fix a maximum length ranging from 4 to 12 months. This gives the chance to plan a 3-month apprenticeship training just before the expiration of the permit of stay for request of asylum and ask for an extension of the permit for the period of the apprenticeship, wherever possible. Thanks to further extensions, it is possible to arrive to 12 months that is the maximum length of apprenticeship training periods and at the same time the average waiting time for the recognition of the status of refugee.

The inclusion of asylum seekers in apprenticeship training generally starts few months after their arrival when they have at least a basic mastery of the Italian language and the date of the interview with the Central Commission get closer. Once they got the recognition of their status, they also obtain a permit of stay that allows them to work and that they can better exploit thanks to the experience gained in the training apprenticeship periods. The apprenticeship represents a great advantage for the potential employer as well. In this phase he has the opportunity to appreciate and get well acquainted with the skills of the asylum seeker.

In many areas, the start up of apprenticeship training led to the construction of positive processes developed at local level such as the constitution of networks and partnerships among institutions, training organisations, associations dealing with reception, enterprises and professional associations. This facilitated the achievement of broader aims than the simple start up of apprenticeship training, thanks to a wider planning of reception and inclusion at local level. These are very interesting dynamics that should inspire a serious political reflection, also in relation with the potentialities of the apprenticeship training to fight illegal work.

All the Municipalities of the Integ.r.a. project started apprenticeship training for a variable number of beneficiaries who were delivered their training directly in the firms of the concerned areas. In this case, there were several promoters: professional associations, co-operatives and training institutions. The activities carried out were certified by the relevant professional organisations and finally included in the CV of the beneficiaries to facilitate their future search of a job.

Apprenticeship training was started in different and articulated professional sectors: in Ancona and Genova, shipyards and hotel services represented the most important hosts; in Roma with the sponsorship of the Municipality, apprenticeship dealt with mediation at local level, computer literacy, and care services to the person. In Catania the maintenance of green areas was the privileged sector, while in Forlì welding, building, mechanical and textile sectors were the most involved.

2.2 The availability of lodgings

90,6% of the beneficiaries of the Integ.r.a.project solved their housing problems (more than 800 individuals). In the Municipalities of Roma and Bergamo this success covers the total number of the beneficiaries. Ancona (88,5%), Bitonto (87,8%) and Forlì (84,9%) are slightly under the average.

In the case of Roma, the lodgings problem was tackled not only in favour of those beneficiaries included in integrated schemes of individual support, but also for those who simply contacted the Integ.r.a. project in the area of Roma.

In all, the project started 20 lodging units: 8 in the area of Ancona, 4 in Bergamo, 3 in Catania, 2 in Roma and Bitonto and one in Forlì. These lodging units were mainly composed by flats and hosting centres mainly owned by privates (14 units) whereas the management was mainly directed by non profit organisations linked to the local network developed by the project. In eleven cases, the lodgings hosted male beneficiaries only.

Another interesting feature to consider in the framework of the delivery of this service was the length of permanence of refugees and asylum seekers in the 20 lodging units. One month after the end of the project, 126 beneficiaries were hosted in these lodgings for an average stay of 102 days. The average permanence is longer in Forlì (230 days) while Bergamo, Roma and Genova are on the average. Shorter is the average period of permanence in the units located in Ancona (87 days), Bitonto (50 days) and Catania (54 days).

Box n. 2 –Housing inclusion and the hypothesis of a social housing agency.

Our starting criteria resided in the acknowledgement of the complex features linked to the concept of housing and living in a house itself.

After the experiences of the past years, it is necessary to outline an innovative tool able to create the best synergies between the public and the private sector in order to let the local level (Municipalities or Provinces) manage the whole process ranging from first reception to the assignment of a permanent lodging to foreigners and Italians. This body should be able to gather and co-ordinate different actions/actors and stakeholders as an important and qualifying element of a new policy of social housing at local level.

A working body that include among its members skills and experiences in the field of building, administration, running of own patrimony or on behalf of a third party in order to deliver the proper support measures with a specific reference to the new citizens, refugees, asylum seekers or migrants in general meant to favour the match between landlords and potential tenants. This subject should have a private status in order to guarantee a better management, an easier turn over of the partners to involve, a greater ability to attract assets and properties of different nature and sources and at the same time it should have a no profit basis, -either legally recognized or as a matter of facts - because of the aims that represents the reasons of its start up, management and desirable institutional acknowledgement.

A strategy for the problems of housing of the disadvantaged categories is needed. This must include the issues related to the reception/inclusion of foreign citizens not so much in the direction of an administrative and bureaucratic approach, but strongly oriented to the enhancement of all the available resources at local level (financial, human, planning, professional but also the amount of relationship and experiences already carried out, etc.). This will be able to guarantee operating flexibility, capacity to merge entrepreneurship skills and social action and able to overcome the dialectic between the State and the Market.

As a consequence the choice turned to the non-profit world see as a guarantee of the potential and actual agreements and relationship started by its members. This choice does not want to deny the profit but forecast its limitation to the need of the conservation of the real value of the resources invested by the partners and/or of the internal properties of the agency.

This body should be the result of the merging of institutions and organisation with different backgrounds and must be started according to rules and previously agreed covenants. More than a generic form of co-ordination is needed, in order to better guarantee the necessary transparency of the management, the correct finalization of the actions and resources allocated and to avoid the abuse of some stakeholders over others. The absolute priority is the attention to the kind of governance agreed, in order to facilitate the opportunity to participation and co-management by all the potential stakeholders that are needed for the solutions of problems in the framework of the best possible social justice.

This subject must be able to:

- attract resources (public and private);
- be a direct partner of the Public Administration (almost its executive arm);
- have roots at a territorial level and within the local community;

- plan, carry out and manage overall actions (housing, social and cultural), co-ordinating different skills and abilities of the actors already involved and those that must be involved;
- have an organisational and operational flexibility in order to start permanent forms of inclusion or limited to specific projects according to needs and opportunities;
- play the role of mediator towards the traditional real estate market (especially on the lease side) and for the transactions of restoration, lease, exchange of real property and guarantees when needed;
- manage the real property belonging to other bodies;
- monitor those actions and policies developed for the reception and inclusion of disadvantaged categories of workers;
- have private basis and way of working, but with public interests and aims.

This union can be realized also on (integrated) projects, but on a medium and long term, the idea is to work on the capacities of common management among different subjects: each one “bring” and “take” something (according to previously agreed rules) in order to better guarantee the necessary transparency of the management, the correct finalization of the actions and resources allocated and to avoid the abuse of some stakeholders over others.

Concerning the “pool” of bodies to involve, apart from the interested Local Governments and other financing organisations (or able to lease buildings and/or areas), the following should be included:

- co-operatives dealing with building or other activities, whether with a social orientation or not. These will be able to bring in specific planning, resources and know how in the following fields: relationship building, executive and financial management, delivery of training and services leading to a new entrepreneurship culture and a mindset oriented to social and profit aims;
- former IACP – institutions managing public housing (today turned into firms playing different roles according to their local context);
- companies that employ immigrants or other kind of categories experiencing mobility and their professional organisations if interested in agreements at trade union level;
- bank foundations, the Church, and other public bodies and institutions able to lease at various titles buildings, building areas or lodgings to be restored on a temporary or permanent basis;
- voluntary service organisations willing to share the management or simply check its transparency and its correctness;
- those credit institutions with a social orientation, like “Banca Etica” or co-operative credit banks (not necessarily limited to these examples): they are necessary for the management of credit and the grant of financial and mortgage loans;

To start new tools and to turn the good practices into models, it is necessary to involve all the local actors, developing a co-ordination and a true planning action especially for the identification of resources and synergies. In many local contexts a lot of work was done so it is needed in the most of the cases to follow up the positive experiences already carried out.

The final aim is that the outlined “operating subject” could become – thanks to the experiences, know-how, started internal partnership, networking action at local level – the

guide tool to a local plan of action dealing with social/public housing that could be networked at least at regional level. The Integ.r.a. project tried to outline a possible model of “social housing” through the organisation of several actions – individual support, contributions for rent fees, real estate intermediation, involvement of non profit funders – in order to favour the access to housing to the most disadvantaged categories. The outlined model allows different articulations and levels of applicability; it is a flexible model that can be also used partially and adaptable to the different contexts.

All the Municipalities that joined Integ.r.a. started an information service to provide indications of the available lodgings at local level and on the possible inclusion schemes. Besides, five Municipalities out of seven granted contributions to support lodging fees and two of them assigned public housing lodgings to families. The seven Municipalities also guaranteed semi-autonomous lodgings to a relevant number of beneficiaries

Four Municipalities concretely started the process for the foundation of the above-mentioned subject through the start up of ad hoc steering groups including different departments or different organisations of the public and private sector.

3. THE SOCIAL PROFILE OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

The Integ.r.a. project focused on the improvement of the framework of the hosting policies of refugees and asylum seekers and on the whole of the necessary services to carry out a true and effective inclusion action catering their needs. To achieve this aim, it was necessary a deep analysis of the services to delivery and their related actions (the “set of services” to carry out at local level by the Municipalities involved in the project) but also a better definition of the demands through a clearer identification of the future expectations, current opinions and behaviours of the refugees in order to adjust the action and reduce the risk of gaps between demand and supply.

From this point of view, the profile of the individuals included in the Integ.r.a. programme was progressively monitored and completed through the use of a data bank of the beneficiaries (of course linked to the data bank of local projects and services delivered by the Municipalities) that drew up a quantitative picture of the individuals involved in the project and that also gave a substantial qualitative image of important elements for the effectiveness of the actions and for a better future capacity to meet the need at local and national level.

This is why together with a description of structural, qualitative and quantitative features outlined according to the information of the data bank (of course in the full respect of the privacy in the treatment of these information), the project carried out two surveys: the first one through the submission of a questionnaire to a non representative sample of 150 refugees and asylum seekers living in Italy, the other through the collection of the life stories of 41 individuals who were interviewed on their trip, arrival and permanence in Italy. The first survey tackled the theme of the mobility of refugees, seen as an element that causes uncertainties in the designing of services because it might generate a too dynamic demand not meeting the set of services (or the whole local project) that Municipalities plan to carry out.

The second one faced the theme of familiar rejoining, connected to the potential stability that can be achieved thorough its application: not only for reducing the mobility of the refugees, but also with a view to a greater motivation towards inclusion that refugees may express after the reconstruction of their families.

After a cross reading of these sources, it is possible to better outline the whole of features and facts that drive choices and decisions of refugees and asylum seekers, also enlarging the knowledge of a social category really complex for characteristics and experiences faced.

3.1. The profile of the beneficiaries of the project according to the Integ.r.a. Data Bank.

Maintaining the double level of analysis, dealing with the beneficiaries that enjoyed all the range of services (total beneficiaries) and the number of beneficiaries that fully followed the complex inclusion pathway (full beneficiaries, excluding the 403 individuals that contacted the Municipality of Rome for the project but only for the primary stage of counselling), it was possible to reconstruct the profile of the refugees and asylum seekers thanks to the analysis of some structural variables (age, sex, country of origin etc.) and get some indications relating to the modalities of their entries in Italy.

On the total number of beneficiaries, the distribution according to the age points out a major concentration of individuals aged between 26 and 30 (31,5%) while among the full beneficiaries we register a slight reduction of this amount even if, in general, the difference between total and full beneficiaries does not affect the age distribution of the two groups.

In any case, more than the 60% of the beneficiaries are youth aged 30 or less. The gender distribution displays an evident majority of men, exceeding the 80% of the total

It is interesting the analysis of the beneficiaries according to their citizenship for two reasons: firstly, we notice a majority of refugees and asylum seekers coming from Eastern Africa and especially

from Eritrea (27,9% of the total beneficiaries and 15,8% of the full beneficiaries), Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia. Secondly, different approaches among the individuals coming from the above mentioned countries are displayed: the proportion between full and total beneficiaries is quite reduced for the first three countries (in order Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan not exceeding the 30%) whereas for the others the proportion is always over the 60% witnessing a longer permanence and a greater involvement in the project.

Other important data relate to the permanence in Italy. The 42% of the 800 beneficiaries claimed a permanence between one and two years long whereas for the 24% of the sample this permanence goes over two years. If we consider the full beneficiaries, this figure reaches the 32%, whilst those with a claimed permanence inferior to one year do not exceed a 20% of the total.

Among the other variables considered in the analysis, we specifically highlighted the modalities of entry in Italy, the typologies of permits released and those related to the stay.

Concerning the first aspect, about the 20% of refugees and asylum seekers involved in the project declared that they entered our country through the arrival on the national shores and then illegally. This percentage goes beyond the 36% in the case of the full beneficiaries. At the same time, more than 72% of the total beneficiaries declared to hold their first residence permit, whilst the remaining 27,7% has already obtained its extension. The typology of the current stay of refugees and asylum seekers displays a large number of individuals waiting for the recognition of their status (54,9% among the total beneficiaries and 45,5% among the full), followed by those who have the “cedolino” a temporary legal document released while waiting for the issue of a residence permit (12,1% among the total and 13,1% among the full beneficiaries) and those who were granted humanitarian protection (11,7% on the total, 17,6% among the full). Refugees amount to the 10,5% of the total beneficiaries and among the full ones, this figure raises up to 15,4%. A few of them asked for the familiar rejoining (less than 1%).

Concerning this last issue, the potential request of familiar rejoining should involve a further 10,9% of the full beneficiaries, while other declarations collected among the refugees and asylum seekers of the project identify a limited intention to remain in Italy (17,8%), against the number of the enrolments to the National Health Services amounting to about a quarter of the full beneficiaries.

The educational qualifications represent an element of specific importance not only for the definition of the profiles involved in the project, but also for the possible implications within their own lives, on the professional level and with a view to the opportunities to make use of their skills. Comparing the educational qualification declared by the full beneficiaries in Italy and the one held in their countries of origin, we notice a striking incoherence: the holders of a higher educational qualification in their countries of origin amounts to the 36,7% of the total, while those who declared an equivalent qualification in Italy raise down to the 17,4%. This gap is even more remarkable if we consider the declarations on the total lack of a qualification: 20,5% against 64,1%.

4. INTEG.R.A. IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE TRANSNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Integ.r.a. probably represents the most articulate and complex reaction to the EU Initiative Equal launched in 2001. This Initiative aims at fighting against all forms of discrimination in the labour market through the start of a permanent integration process of the social and labour policies that could lead to a development of the employment. This initiative is framed in the wider European Employment Strategy (EES) that includes among its main principles the *welfare to work* that forecast the addressing of the social welfare through a specific policy for the employment.

With the endorsement of measure 5.1 that aims at “improving the quality of reception and the promotion of new training approaches for asylum seekers”, Equal is not only framed in the EES but also

creates an operative link with the strategy of harmonization of the European policies started after the Council of Tampere in 1999. This Council also gave clear indications in the field of the fight against racism and xenophobia. After Tampere, some technical tools were outlined in order to build a common policy among the Member States. The main tool is the European Refugee Fund flanked through Equal by another operative tool: the European Social Fund that finances the initiative.

Equal mainly aims at giving the member States the tools to outline specific action models with a bottom-top approach that could multiply their effectiveness with actions of dissemination of information and raising awareness among the members of the partnership and the political and institutional bodies at local, national and European level. In fact, the transnational aspects are essential in the projects financed in the framework of Equal because, as said above, one of the aims of the programme is to disseminate information, knowledge and good practices and concretely carry out a common strategy of fight to discrimination in the labour market at European level. Unfortunately both time and resources that can be devoted to these features by the single national projects often do not meet the expressed needs. It is undeniable that the priority is given to the national planning and to the construction of a national partnership to great prejudice of the transnational side merely felt as a simple appendix to the national activity.

In the field of the active policies of social inclusion of the asylum seekers, it is essential as well as inevitable to constantly refer to the evolutions of the European framework of rules.

Both trends affected the transnational partnership “DASRIE” – Developing Asylum Seeker and refugee integration into Europe: the one giving the priority to the national planning over the transnational but also the other that taking the chance to interact with other Member States offered by Equal tried to create a European partnership with countries that could transfer their knowledge but also

exchange information on the actions, policies and cultural features of the different inclusion strategies.

Integ.r.a. built its partnership together with the U.K., France and Germany and specifically with these four projects: Cimade, Euraccueil: Accueil et formation des demandeurs d'asile (Paris); Forum réfugiés, Accelair: Plate-forme pour l'insertion des réfugiés statutaires de la région lyonnaise (Lyon); Gate, Qualifizierungsoffensive für AsylbewerberInnen und Flüchtlinge in Hamburg (Hamburg); Lasar DP, Asylum Seeker and Refugee Development Partnership (Liverpool).

These five projects are different in terms of structure and contents but of course they have the same objective: testing innovative tools for the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in each country and more so in each local context. The orientation to the local level linked all the projects with the possible exception of the one carried out in Paris that focusing on the teaching of the French language as a first tool for social inclusion, it was not so much connected with the local context. This confirms that the fundamental idea of the Integ.r.a. project is commonly shared: the active policies for this target group must be outlined at local level even where the State already centrally structured the hosting actions and the management of the Asylum System.

Each of the other projects acted in only one town context: Lyon, Hamburg and Liverpool. They were more similar to the single projects developed in the seven Integ.r.a. Municipalities than to the whole project in its complexity.

An assessment of the situation in 11 European towns – 7 in Italy and 4 in other European countries – led to a quite deep mutual acquaintance and to the general considerations that Italy does not face bigger difficulties than the other countries. As a matter of facts, it is true that the lack of an organic law and the late building of a Hosting System put us in a situation of heavy delay but it is also true that the opportunities of inclusion face the same difficulties everywhere. In Italy, some sets of rules (Law on CTP –Territorial Permanent Centres – forecasting the free of charge option to

include refugees and asylum seekers in the literacy and language courses) and the lack or vagueness of precise laws can offer more opportunities with respect to other countries where the laws prevent the access to some services helping an inclusion process.

4.1. A shared knowledge of the current rules and practices followed in Europe.

The Transnational Co-operation Partnership DASRIE was based on the common interest in analysing both the general and specific features of the inclusion process of refugees and asylum seekers in the society.

The common aim of the five partnership addressed the inclusion process of refugees and asylum seekers in the urban areas through the development of several activities such as: reception and social counselling, linguistic and vocational training, support to professional self-development, legal aid, training and networking towards key-actors, training for trainers and teachers, support to the research of lodgings. In order to achieve the above aim, partners worked in close co-operation with different actors such as Local Governments, training organisations and institutions, health and immigration services, social and employment services, associations supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

The common specific objectives of the DASRIE partnership addressed:

- the development of tools for the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe: the five partnership co-operated in order to outline and carry out actions for the reception and vocational training of the beneficiaries of the EQUAL programme, to adapt the already working structures and programmes and to improve the current schemes in the four countries involved. Among these activities, the construction of new networking actions among the public and private key-actors of the partners must be included;

- the sharing among the five partnership of legislative rule frames on inclusion: the transnational co-operation forecast the analysis and comparison of the legislative rule frames in the four involved countries, the minimum requirements to access linguistic and vocational training, the warrants forecast by the national laws, the list of the key-organisations delivering specific training, the available resources in the four countries, the different ways to certify skills, the exchange of good practices and solutions developed in the framework of EQUAL in order to overcome the obstacles of each national legislation;
- the identification and development of innovative good practices regarding the co-operation and the supply of services at local level: in two of the projects carried out within DASRIE, good practices were developed and tested in the field of housing, linguistic and vocational training, counselling, and networking co-operation;

In order to effectively achieve the objectives mentioned above, the five partnership worked together to improve the skills of their personnel and the key-actors of each project through raising awareness among employers organisations developing advanced methodologies of networking co-operation, drafting documents on the forms of co-operation and the supply of services and producing a final report addressing European and national policy-makers with recommendations for the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. The general strategy followed by the transnational partnership was supported by a series of workshops and exchange of employees working on this project. Besides some common materials were drafted as a supplement of the recommendations developed by the work that each partnership carried out at local level.

Among the raising awareness activities, we highlight the draft of a web page of the transnational partnership DASRIE hosted by the Integ.r.a. website at the address http://www.integra-anci.it/ita/transnational_partnership_dasrie.html including general information on the structure, the activities and the aims of the partnership together with the calendar of the scheduled events and the draft of a raising awareness poster mainly devoted to employers in English, French and Italian.

4.2. The DASRIE matrix

One of the main products of the transnational action is the outline of a comparison survey among Italy, France, Germany and the U.K. on the policies devoted to refugees and asylum seekers.

The chosen areas of analysis regarded:

- the quantification of the categories of refugees and asylum seekers at national level;
- the reconstruction of the procedures for the recognition of the status of refugee;
- the description of the modalities to access the programmes of support and individual financial assistance;
- the analysis of the modalities to access training, work legal help and health assistance.

The full document was included in the Report of the transnational action: here we display a short synthesis mainly focusing on the areas of the quantification and modalities to access the programmes of support and individual financial assistance devoted to refugees and asylum seekers in the four countries.

Concerning the first area, a strong difference between Italy and the other three countries comes out: Italy managed the requests of little more than 11.000 individuals (2003). In the U.K. the number of requests amounted to 100.000 in 2002 and was reduced to 50.000 in 2003: anyway five times as much. There is an even more marked difference with Germany as every year this country counts 90.000 requests of asylum. In France instead there were 80.000 requests in 2003.

In the U.K. asylum seekers receive support benefits amounting to 70% of those received by the British themselves, whereas refugees are levelled to the nationals. More or less, also in France the same conditions apply to French citizens and refugees in the field of housing access and minimum inclusion benefits. In Germany the same treatment reserved to nationals applies to asylum seekers after three years of permanence in the country.

4.3. The recommendations of the International Partnership

The activities of the transnational partnership DASRIE ended with the final conference held on February the 4th 2005 in Paris that introduced the recommendations commonly drafted by the DASRIE partnership in the fields of housing, vocational and linguistic training and networking co-operation.

Concerning the area of housing, these are the recommendations forwarded to policy makers:

- guarantee the access to housing to all refugees and asylum seekers;
- develop strategies ranging from the first reception to the lodging autonomy (not influenced by the actual circumstances);
- guarantee safe, healthy and permanent lodgings;
- offer a permanent individual support, according to the needs of the beneficiaries, to all refugees and asylum seekers who enter a new lodging.

For the area of training and counselling, these are the identified priorities:

- guarantee the access to linguistic training to all refugees and asylum seekers, making use of the current public structures;
- develop specific forms of counselling to match the condition of disadvantage faced by refugees and asylum seekers;
- develop the possibilities of certification of the level of proficiency of the language spoken in the hosting country and promote an official endorsement process of this certification by the official educational structures of each hosting country (as recommended by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment*, Council of Europe, Modern Languages Division Strasbourg, CUP);
- develop combinations of linguistic and vocational training in order to prepare a professional inclusion process or the repatriation in the country of origin.

In the area of vocational training, the following themes were highlighted:

- guarantee the access to vocational training to all refugees and asylum seekers, making use of the current public structures and keeping into consideration the specific needs of this category of beneficiaries (for example, the need to access linguistic training before or in combination with vocational training);
- develop a system of certification of competences and skills as well as a modular system of accreditation of vocational training outlined at national and European level;
- guarantee the access of refugees and asylum seekers to the labour market.

Concerning the models of co-operation, the recommendations focused on the following themes:

- the work in partnership is essential to ensure that all the involved public or private structures co-operate, especially those organisations dealing with refugees and asylum seekers for the first time;
- the right space to the mutual acquaintance of the partners must be provided. The mutual acquaintance and understanding guarantee the cohesion of the group;
- partners must be necessarily involved in the outline of the project from the very beginning in order to reach a true sharing of its meanings and objectives;
- each partner must take on board its responsibilities in the running of the project and it is besides necessary that the due attention is paid to the active participation of the final beneficiaries, in order to guarantee the dynamism of the project.

The five partnerships jointly drafted the above recommendations on the basis of the work carried out at local level in the past three years of transnational co-operation. As such they were introduced and displayed to the representatives of the national and European institutions invited to the DASRIE final conference.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Integ.r.a. project carried out in the framework of the European policies on development and employment and against any form of discrimination, showed that it is possible to identify and start inclusion schemes also in favour of those who are under a waiting status with a temporary permit, but anyway in the conditions to work, learn and overcome the passive state of inactive guest.

Asylum seekers represent an “island of regularity” in the “sea of irregularities” surrounding them. We should take advantage of this regularity in order to build a future for the individual; in the case of the permanence of a recognised refugee or holder of a humanitarian permit, this future should be even more linked to the local area of its development.

As already seen, the Integ.r.a. project is framed not only in a European context but also in an Italian picture that quickly develops in the field of asylum. The actions and structures created to finally outline a System for Asylum in Italy facilitated the testing activities of Integ.r.a. These were based on a model structured in decentralized and multilevel actions of governance that gives its best results when it is integrated in the cultural, political and administrative context of our country.

On the other hand, Integ.r.a. brought innovations in contents, processes and tools that represent a new challenge that the main actors involved in the project working in the fields of asylum, labour market and housing in Italy decide to take on board.

This extremely complex challenge was tackled and overcome in three main fields: a) the structural organisation of the project; b) in relation to the objectives to achieve; c) in relation to the financial and accounting management of the actions to carry out.

a) the structural challenge was tackled by building a wide partnership among very different bodies such as Public Administrations, third sector organisations, Universities, employers associations, trade unions, co-operatives, agencies of temporary work, theatre academies etc. For the first time, all these actors sat around the

same table to achieve common objectives without a previous acquaintance or reciprocal interest.

This meeting led to a first result of great importance both in relation to the aims to achieve and to the action methodologies to follow. As a matter of facts, this wide and varied partnership made the involvement of new actors both at the central and local level possible: they were requested to contribute to the construction of an asylum system ranging from the reception to inclusion. It must be said that from one side, the need to get mutually acquainted and understand everyone's potentialities and skills before drafting common actions caused some delays in the start up phase of the project, but on the other side this process of progressive approach and acquaintance led to a mutual and extremely fruitful "contamination". Especially at local level, the all over Europe practice well known as *cross-fertilization* was experienced; this forecasts the exchange of skills among the actors of a process in order to develop a structured, mature and complete strategy.

- b) The second challenge regarded the aims to achieve. In other words, Integ.r.a. proposed the *creation of an Italian model of inclusion scheme for refugees and asylum seekers* that could be recognised and endorsed through the national legislation as an Italian system for the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers. A standard scheme structured in well outlined stages and actions, experienced in some areas but repeatable and transferable all over the Italian territory. This scheme left the chance to each local context to adapt its actions on the basis of the specific features and needs expressed at territorial level (by the local labour market, the demand and supply of the labour force and the real estate market, by the possibilities of the Local Government to work in these fields and by the level of development of general background in the field of reception and inclusion of foreign citizens of that specific area, etc.)

The Integ.r.a. project experienced a "*model of local inclusion*" based on the creation of local networks for the development of

integrated actions performed by different organisations co-ordinated by the Local Government. The latter played its role of manager of the territorial policies through an ordinary planning of the activities more than an emergency one. According to this model, the key-actors are co-ordinated and develop synergies able to identify, test and enhance a local action of inclusion that merges the needs of the individuals and those of the concerned areas. Truly, the complex needs expressed by refugees and asylum seekers deserve as many articulated answers that cannot be given only by the Local Government nor by the third sector or the labour and housing market alone: such actions have no social implication when carried out separately.

The seven Municipalities of Integ.r.a. followed the guidelines of the project and started the Local Steering Groups for inclusion that gathered all the actors mentioned above. They developed articulated projects that took care and gave full support to the individuals, trying to cater all their needs such as those related to their permanence, linguistic and vocational training and the start of a process leading to full autonomy through the assignment of a permanent lodging solution.

- c) The third challenge concerned the financial management of the project that obviously had an inevitable and prompt influence on the operative side of the project. Of course, the difficulties in the financial management of a project affect the opportunities to carry out certain practical actions or not. As already said, Integ.r.a. is developed in the framework of the Community Initiative Equal financed by the European Social Fund that is mainly used by the Member States for actions in the field of training or professional re-qualification of their citizens or immigrants at the most. As a matter of fact, the Vademecum on the correct management of the ESF funds does not take into any consideration the category of asylum seekers who were the target of measure 5.1 of Equal and to which all resources were devoted. Besides Integ.r.a. forecast also actions in favour of the

professional inclusion of asylum seekers, who cannot work according to great majority of the legislation of the Member States.

This led the Municipal Administrations to an effort of investigation and establishment of relationships both within their internal structures and with other Local Governments such as Regions and Provinces but also with the Ministry of the Interior in order to collect that information missing both in the Vademecum and in the set of rules of the Public Administration: it was necessary to have certain indications for example on the entities of possible reimbursements or attendance pays (changing according to the different Regions), on the possibility to distribute luncheon vouchers or contributions to lodging and so on. Finally, whenever it was not possible to arrive to clear indications on the modalities of the financial management, it was necessary to submit a request of authorization to the concerned Ministry. Requests of authorization to start certain needed activities for this project of inclusion were forwarded to the Management Authority, namely the Ministry of Labour. These requests regarded the direct or indirect grant of funds to the beneficiaries in order to let them take part to the forecast activities of training, apprenticeship, support to individual autonomy etc., but they also concerned those eligible categories such as refugees and those holding a humanitarian permit who are allowed to work according to the Italian laws. This implied longer periods to define the possibility to carry out certain actions and consequent delays in the start-up phase of the local projects.

The experiences carried out by the project and the Municipalities also in this field, will be retained for the next Equal project that Anci and the Municipalities submitted in the second phase of the Community Initiative. From the very beginning, a dialogue will be started with the Ministry and its Technical Assistance Office in order to clarify all the issues relating to the accounting and financial procedures and possibly modify and include clear indications in the

Vademecum for the financial management of the projects carried out in the framework of measure 5.1. It is desirable that both the Community Initiative and the set of rules of the management of Italian Public Administrations will consider the specificity of the projects developed in favour of this particular category of beneficiaries that cannot be compared to Italians nor to Immigrants, according to the current Italian legislation.

It resulted extremely important to tackle these three challenges in order to highlight all the potentialities to structure an inclusion system for refugees and asylum seekers outlined as an integrated and multilevel management model in our country, but also to identify and solve the possible management and bureaucratic problems that affect the activity of the public administration while carrying out European projects.

Integ.r.a. confirmed what the PNA first and the System of Protection afterwards clearly pointed out and namely:

1. that the most effective model in our country to tackle this kind of issues forecasts *decentralized and networking actions* where each development is tackled at the most appropriate level. We have been following this certitude for years and now it is endorsed by the words of the Report of the European Parliament on the Communication from the Commission on Immigration, Integration and Employment stating that “as the integration is mainly achieved at local level, the participation of the local actors, including the towns, must be strengthen”;
2. that each institutional actor must play its role in the construction of a full System for the reception and inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers on the basis of the tasks assigned by our Constitution and the Laws of our Republic. In fact, if the central State has the task to draft a structured law on asylum, Provinces and Regions cannot only stand and watch. Especially regarding the inclusion of these people, both of them hold specific competencies that enable them to start targeted actions. Concerning vocational training, Regions have compe-

tencies in the field of planning that must take into account also the needs of this category as much as Provinces that are the privileged point of reference in the field of employment for the Municipalities and all those who are interested in professional inclusion actions.

Only by sharing resources and responsibilities among all the institutional actors, a true structured system can be carried out. This will not work on the basis of a direct delegation of power to the Municipalities and the third sector but thanks to planned actions that could develop ordinary policies in the field of asylum.

All this could be achieved with a minimum effort as these responsibilities already belong to the above-mentioned actors. There should not be any further task nor burden on the side of needed human and financial resources. It would only be a matter of developing synergies and links among Local Governments at different levels and perform a joint effort of planning the actions and set up rules at local level in this field (as some Regions are doing or already did together with Provinces and Municipalities).

As a conclusion, the general recommendations as set out by the two and a half years experience of the Integ.r.a. project can be summarized as follows:

- It is necessary to continue to identify and **test models** both to confirm their transferability and repeatability all over the country and to take the opportunity to disseminate information, skills and tested and validated tools with a view to their **institutionalisation**;
- it is necessary to support **the development of local networks involving all the key actors at local level** in the field of reception and social inclusion of the weaker categories in the labour market, the real estate market and the hosting society such as refugees and asylum seekers;
- it is also necessary to build a System of asylum according to the features of the political and administrative structures of our country where a **devolution process** is clearly more and more

developing and where the **local powers are requested to outline planning and rule drafting actions** in several fields including immigration. The latter also deals with the category of refugees and asylum seekers, so its specificities in relation to the macro-category of immigration must be taken into consideration;

- it is necessary to start a serious dialogue among all the institutional levels to achieve the draft of a **systematic law in the field of asylum** that forecast among the other provisions, the outline of active policies to facilitate the inclusion process of refugees and asylum seekers.

Together with these recommendations of principle, it is possible to identify other operative proposals for the construction of a functional system of asylum, such as:

- clearly outline the conditions for the categories of refugees, asylum seekers and individuals under humanitarian protection to **access the actions carried out in the field of policy of labour**. It is essential to extend training opportunities to individuals waiting or already holding the status of refugee. This would imply an automatic commitment of the social energies active at local level, avoiding possible doubts on the eligibility of the concerned individuals;
- promote **local networks of services for inclusion** managed by the Public Administrations in co-operation with the civil society organizations properly supported by national resources. Community resources have an extraordinary nature and depend on project, temporal and financial rules that do not match with the development of ordinary policies;
- enhance and experience tools already tested at national level such as the skill assessment and certification extended to asylum seekers for the first time, through the **allocation of specific resources for inclusion** in the framework of the National Fund for Policies and Services in the field of Labour to support the Protection System, ex Art. 32 – sexies of Law 189/02;

- **promote national and local policies on housing** that could favour the synergy among citizens, public bodies and social private organisations, in order to enlarge the access to housing by the disadvantaged categories of the society and fight the exclusion of specific social groups of communities of foreigners;
- **train the employees of the Local Governments** and the other territorial institutions according to their competences, in order to respond to the needs of foreign citizens and of the areas where they live at the best.

