

Developing integration: the value of networking

1. Integ.r.a. project in the European and Italian context.	5
1.1 European policies against discrimination: the EU Programme EQUAL.	5
1.2 European policies in the field of the right of asylum: the process of harmonization.	6
1.3 The Integ.r.a. project	9
2. A model of co-ordination: National Thematic Steering Groups and Local Steering Groups for inclusion	12
2.1. Starting up Local Steering Groups for inclusion: process, actors, framework	15
2.1.1 Actions at the local level	17
3. The Integ.r.a. project in the Italian housing framework	21
3.1 Living in dignity: a general problem concerning also refugees and asylum seekers	21
3.1.1. Integ.r.a in the complex housing framework of the different local communities	23
3.1.2. Integ.r.a. dealing with three hosting levels: emergency, temporary and permanent housing needs	24
3.2. Tools to enforce housing policies	27
3.2.1 Models, experiences and guidelines to outline effective policies	27
3.2.2 A Hypothesis of “Housing Agency”	28
3.3 “Housing Agency”: the chance to outline a path with different stages	31
3.3.1 First stage: intermediation and support measures:	31
3.3.2 Second stage: management and lease of lodgings belonging to third parties	31
3.3.3 Third <i>stage</i>	31
3.4. Experiences carried out by the local Integ.r.a. project	32
3.4.1 Projects developed at local level: possible solutions and potentialities	32

3.5	Reccomendations	33
3.5.1	Housing policies in Italy	33
3.5.2	Role and tools of the institutions: EU, State, Regions and Local Governments	34
3.5.3	European level	34
3.5.4	National level	36
3.5.5	Regional level	38
3.5.6	Local level	39
4.	The Integ.r.a. project in the Italian labour and vocational training framework	42
4.1	The Integ.r.a. project in the Italian labour market	42
4.2	The opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to access the Italian labour market	43
4.3	The Integ.r.a. actions for the social and professional inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers	47
4.3.1	The Thematic Commissions	48
4.3.2	Short description of the tools and initiatives carried out by <i>Integ.r.a.</i>	49
4.4	Projects developed at local level: impact and critical points	54
4.5	Administrative decentralization, labour market and vocational training	57
4.5.1	The labour market actors and needs	57
4.5.2	Labour policies and social policies: the need for integration	60
4.6	Recommendations	61
4.6.1	Local level	62
4.6.2	Regional level	62
4.6.3	Provincial and Municipal level	63
4.7	National Level	65
4.8	European Level	66
5.	Conclusion	68

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Introduction

1. Integ.r.a. project in the European and Italian context

1.1 European policies against discrimination: the EU Programme EQUAL.

The Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the European Union have been expressing their will to outline tools for the fight against xenophobia and racism since 1990¹.

In 1997 the *European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia* was set up. Its main task was the study of the scale and the evolution of racism in Europe and the analysis of its effects and consequences. In the same year, the *Treaty of Amsterdam* listed among the fundamental principles of the European Union, the “*respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms*”. It was an extremely important innovation because it bound the action and the policy of the European Union to the respect of the “human rights”. Moreover, article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam introduced a general “*non discrimination principle*” providing European institutions with the basis to adopt “*necessary actions to fight discriminations based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religious or personal beliefs, disabilities, age and sexual orientation*”. The fight to discrimination and unequal treatment in the labour market represented

¹ In the Resolution dating back to 29th May 1990, the Heads of State and Government of the Member States urged National Governments to adopt proper measures to fight racism spreading all over Europe.

The conclusions drafted by the *European Council* held at Corfù (24th-25th June 1994) condemned “*the ongoing acts of intolerance, racism and xenophobia*”. They also stated “*the determination to strengthen the fight against them*”. During that meeting the *Consultative Commission against Racism and Xenophobia* was started.

Member states in the Common Action adopted by the Council on 15th July 1996 (96/443/GAI) committed themselves to mutual co-operation in several fields (judicial, police, etc.) in order to prevent and stop acts of xenophobia in Europe.

In the Resolution drafted on 23rd July 1996 the “*European Year Against Racism*” was instituted.

On 26th May 1999, the European Commission started the “*Community Action Programme to fight discrimination 2001-2006*”

one of the main objectives of the community action in the last years. Following the provisions outlined in the Treaty of Amsterdam, the first summit on Employment (1997) led to the adoption of the European Employment Strategy (EES), based on four pillars: Employability, Entrepreneurship, Adaptability and Equal Opportunities. In the framework of the EES, the community action Equal represents another tool for the Member States to experience new enforcement methods of the European priority policies, to be added to the previous programmes – *Adapt and Employment*. The Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as the Authority managing the National Employment Plan of Action and the National Inclusion Plan greatly oriented their action towards Equal and its relevant innovative perspectives. Through its strategy, it was possible to test several actions in order to outline new inclusion pathways in two fundamental areas: work and social inclusion. Equal added to the four pillars listed in the EES, an other priority: **measure 5.1 – Asylum seekers**, having as main objective their social inclusion through an improvement of the quality of the hosting system and the promotion of new training approaches

1.2 European policies in the field of the right of asylum: the process of harmonization

In 1948, with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*², the international community recognizes the right of asylum as belonging to the family of human rights. Even if this is a considerable result, it only represents an “orientation” for the states more than a rule to respect. After 3 years the Geneva Convention³ was drawn up: this

² Art. 14 Paragraph 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “*Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution*”

³ At Paragraph 2 of Art. 1 point A of the Geneva Convention a definition of the “refugee” term is given, applying to those who “*as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.*”

is still the main tool in the field of refugees and asylum seekers and benchmark in the international protection of refugees. In spite of the importance of the Convention, we must underline its spatial, temporal and interpretation limits leading to an evident discretionary power of each state granting the status of refugees.

These shortcomings are globally tackled by the *New York Protocol* (1967) and the *OAU Convention*⁴ (1969): the latter has only a regional perspective and it applies to African states belonging to OAU only.

In The European Union, the rules governing the right of asylum are not harmonized, nor shared by all Member States.

In 1986, the *Single European Act* outlined the creation of an area without internal frontiers for the free circulation of goods, services, capitals and persons within the Community territory. This Act marks the starting point towards a common policy on asylum – though restrictive. In 1990, two important acts are signed: the *Dublin Convention* and the *Schengen Convention*. After the enforcement of the Dublin Convention, it was possible to determine the state responsible to take into consideration the request of asylum and avoid the forward of applications to other states; at the same time the Schengen Convention – enforced in 1985 – speeded up the process for the construction of an area of co-operation and without frontiers among the EU states.

In 1992, ten EEC states signed up the Treaty on European Union, known as *Maastricht Treaty* that though was mainly oriented to economic and monetary features, it included a *Declaration on Asylum* reasserting the need to harmonize the immigration and asylum policies among member states. With a view to make the free circula-

⁴ With the OAU Convention “*The term “refugee” shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality*”.

tion of people effective, the third pillar of the construction of the EU – *matters of common interest* – includes the right of asylum, immigration policy and the rules governing the crossing by persons of the external borders of the Member States.

The revision process of the *Maastricht Treaty* passes through the following fundamental acts in the field of asylum policy: the adoption of the *London Resolutions* introducing the concept of “safe third country” and “safe country of origin” in 1992; the adoption by the European Council of the *Resolution on minimum guarantees for asylum procedures* in 1995; the adoption of a *Joint Position on the harmonized application of the definition of the term ‘refugee’ in Article 1 of the Geneva Convention* in 1996. All these acts had no legally binding effects towards Member States.

In 1997, this revision process ends with the *Amsterdam Treaty* that gives the competencies on asylum to the EU according to the “Geneva Convention rules” (Article 63, Title IV). Enforced in 1999, the Treaty forecast the creation of an actual area of *freedom, justice and security* within a period of 5 years, thanks to the adoption of measures meant to guarantee the free movement of persons in the EU territory. The year 2004 was fixed as the deadline for Member States to strengthen a common policy in asylum matters. With the Amsterdam Treaty, immigration and asylum issues move from the Third to the First Pillar – Community dimension – that opens the possibility to adopt legally binding rules for the Member States of the European Union (Regulations and Directives). Again in 1999, EU Heads of States and Governments gathered in the summit of Tampere, in Finland, and decided the priorities for the harmonization of the European policies; among these, the agreement in the field of asylum through the start of a European common system.

On the basis of the indications outlined in Tampere, the European Commission drafted a *scoreboard* establishing the actions to be started and their timing. The main actions carried out in the next years were the outline and adoption of Regulations and

European Directives⁵ in the field of asylum as well as the adoption of practical measures meant to support Member States in the creation of common policies.

In the year 2000, the ERF - European Refugee Fund was established meant to finance programmes of reception, integration and voluntary repatriation as defined in the single States. In the same years, other initiatives, programmes and European financial instruments are implemented in the field of refugees and asylum seekers such as the Community Initiative Equal. Between June and July 2003, the European Commission endorsed the project of a draft treaty establishing a constitution for Europe. This project was introduced during the Intergovernmental Conference on the 18th June 2004; it ended up with the final endorsement of the *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe* by the Heads of State and Government of the 25 Member States on the 29th October 2004 in Rome. The policies in the field of asylum are outlined in Article III-265/266, Part III, Chapter IV, Section 2, *Policies on Border Checks, Asylum and Immigration*. They are defined as Common Policies of the Union, regulated by the principles of solidarity and equal share of responsibilities among Member States.

1.3 The Integ.r.a. project

In the year 2000, as said above, the Commission endorsed the Community Initiative Equal and ensure funds to all those activities meant to build new integration pathways in relation to work and social inclusion.

⁵ Directive 2001/55/CE – On minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons, Directive 2003/9/CE – Minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers in the Member States; Regulation n. 343/2003 CE (Dublin II) – establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national; Directive 2004/83/CE – on minimum standards for the qualifications and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted. Within 2005 the Directive on minimum standards for the qualifications and status of third country nationals as refugees will be endorsed.

In the field of the fight against discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, a specific relevance is given to the problem of social inclusion of the asylum seekers. Though the dimension of the problem varies according to the different Member States, the main common feature is represented by the restrictive conditions and obstacles to access labour market faced by asylum seekers.

Through the Integ.r.a. project – framed in Measure 5.1 - Asylum seekers -, the aim to improve the quality of reception and to promote new training methods for refugees and asylum seekers was developed.

The Integ.r.a. project explicitly continues a process started few years ago⁶. It includes some of the responsible bodies for the asylum policies in Italy. They are working on the creation of a co-ordinated national system enabling central institutions, local governments and social private organisations to co-operate and work together while sharing the same objective: the socio economical inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in Italy.

The experiences carried out, the juridical developments and the typology of entries at the Italian borders caused a growing involvement and commitment towards the problem of the asylum by the local governments.

If the experience of the National Plans of Action (PNA) started a dialogue with Municipalities concerning the management of hosting

⁶ In Italy, the creation of a system for asylum from reception to inclusion was started by the project “Azione Comune” carried out with the support of the European Union and the Ministry of the Interior in favour of the Kosovo refugees in 1999. This project aimed at facing this emergency creating a proper hosting service network for the first time in Italy. This should have been integrated and disseminated all over the National territory through the co-operation of the Italian municipalities co-ordinated by ANCI. In 2003, was formally instituted the Central Service of Information, Promotion, Consultancy, Monitoring and Technical Support as operational body of the System of Protection for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (SPRAR) – former law 189/02 – that endorse the experience of the national Plan of Action (PNA)

centres and reception services, Integ.r.a. aims at driving the asylum seekers, the services offered to them and the hosting culture behind it, out of the hosting centres to the entire areas of the Municipalities through a process of integration forecasting housing and professional inclusion models.

Integ.r.a. experienced a scheme of inclusion that give the chance to drop emergency and charitable policies through the creation of services and integrated schemes merging training, professional and housing inclusion devoted to refugees and asylum seekers.

The project was carried out in 7 Italian towns by 25 partners that include associations working in the social field and active at national level, academic institutions dealing with human rights, employer associations, temporary work agencies, trade unions etc...

The actions carried out by the project led to a definition of a scheme to be applied at local level for refugees and asylum seekers. This will be tested, multiplied and disseminated at National level through the new project financed in the framework of Equal – Phase II: the IntegRARsi project.

2. A model of co-ordination: National Thematic Steering Groups and Local Steering Groups for inclusion

The development of the project at territorial level, needed the outline of an organizational scheme to gather information and good practices at local level, that afterwards were structured at national level in order to draw a transferable model to propose to other territorial frameworks. This separation of the two levels has guaranteed a clear distribution of tasks and at the same time favoured a wide communication flow among the partners and between the two levels. The innovative feature of Integ.r.a. found a confirmation in the active involvement of different actors starting a **decentralized national system acting on a multilevel and networking basis**.

The philosophy of the project forecast the test of an alternative model to the classic basic bottom-up or top-down approaches. We realised that not the bottom-up process, nor the obligation from above of a top-down one were enough helpful to develop a plan of active policies leading to those integrated actions needed for the management of social and migration facts that include the asylum as well.

The local level being mainly committed in emergency and concrete actions is limited if a regular planning in a medium-long term strategy does not support it and proper resources granted according to a local perspective do not assist it. At the same time, a general frustration of real needs and expectations comes up, when the central level drafts laws or delivers declarations of principle without a previous consultation with the operational and management system at local level.

A third way that could harmonize the two operational models was searched and adopted. The term that describes this style of management is "*middle-up-down*"⁷. This model tries to combine the advantages of the other two, creating a repetitive continuous process following a spiral shape.

⁷ Source: Nonaka, Takeuchi, 1997.

To outline this model of co-ordination, two tools were started: two **National Thematic Steering Groups** dealing with co-ordination – the **Housing Steering Group** and the **Work and Vocational Training Steering Group** -, and seven **Local Steering Groups for Inclusion**. This strategy represented the organizational framework that, through the co-ordination and the integrated approach enhanced the involvement of all the resources at local level and opened a communication channel among public bodies, third sector organisations and other local actors in order to compare their experiences and competencies and to create opportunities and tools able to:

- transfer and disseminate the best practices, through a permanent exchange from the central level to the outskirts and vice versa.
- give an organic framework to the actions carried out and greater effectiveness to the outline and strengthen of innovative practices and policies, avoiding the rhapsodic, incoherent and ineffective ones;
- direct more financial resources and support services on the actions performed at local level;
- define and apply schemes to assess and compare the results of each stage of the whole project in order to highlight the innovative elements and the critical points reported.

The key feature of this model is the **network**, not only meant as a combination of functions and services delivered at local level to implement the different actions, but also as a true **planner body**, able to establish a permanent workshop and a landmark for refugees, asylum seekers and all citizens. This network model had a positive impact not only on the direct beneficiaries of the services but also on the entire community because it opened a channel of communication and related “common” resources, promoting the so called “active citizenship” while researching articulate solutions for the inclusion and its consequent security and civil common living.

The action of co-ordination enabled the analysis of those themes of common interest, favouring a shared assessment of the experiences carried out at local level and the common outline of methodologies needed for the start up of a support action in the planning and socio-professional inclusion of the beneficiaries of Integ.r.a.

At local level, the Municipalities played a primary role: they were promoters, co-ordinators and managers of the Local Steering Groups and the local territorial projects on the basis of the guidelines drafted by the National Steering Groups.

The Local Steering Groups for Inclusion could count on a wide range of organisations, including not only the partners who subscribed the project, but also actively interested local bodies who had a complementary role.

From one side, this strategy combined all the available experiences, energies and skills helping those involved to improve their competencies and providing for them new experiences, but on the other, it did not always give the opportunity to fully develop those potentially feasible actions.

We cannot deny that we registered processes of extension or shortening of the forecast spiral model.

In plain terms, the communication flow and the exchange of information between Local and National Steering Groups was not always permanently performed.

In some periods, the project was affected by a lack of co-ordination between these two levels that produced confusions towards the timing and the methods of the actions.

We need to take into accounts the different frameworks where the organisations involved on the two levels operated: while those who work at local level are directly in contact with the beneficiaries and those who delivery the services, those involved at the National level has the duty to assess strategies, experiences and action models on the whole national territory and beyond.

Although this model of co-ordination is extremely ambitious and difficult to manage – from the national to the local level, from the insti-

tutional to the associative level - , we believe that it is the only and the best one to follow, in order to achieve the aim of the management of facts that need to be tackled with different strategies like those related to immigration and social issues: among these, of course, the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers.

2.1. Starting up Local Steering Groups for inclusion: process, actors, framework.

On the basis of the guidelines drafted at central level, the framework where the single municipalities outlined local projects was identified. This was possible thanks to the creation of *ad hoc* tools such as **Local Integ.r.a. Offices** and **Local Steering Groups for Inclusion**.

Local Steering Groups for Inclusion drafted projects to be carried out in the concerned areas, on the basis of the guidelines and indications drew up by the Thematic National Steering Groups. To achieve this aim, Local Steering Groups involved the partners at national level and several local actors with different skills and backgrounds. Local Steering Groups represented open spaces for reflection, close examination, analysis and development of ideas and needs while giving the chance to identify, share and assess the problematic to tackle and to solve through an overall planning of specific actions.

The variety and the different dimensions of the organisations involved in the steering groups, their different socio-economical backgrounds as well as the range of issues linked to the specific areas and to their skills and competencies, led Municipalities to find specific solutions. As the Municipalities that joined Integ.r.a faced very different local situations, they managed to customize the guidelines and the indications received by the central level, merging the objective of the social inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers with the specificities, resources and potentialities of the different areas.

Those bodies that are active in the main thematic fields of the project started local Networks: housing, work and training thanks to support, guidance and assistance actions.

The sharing of the objectives of Integ.r.a. and its consequent take in charge of the responsibilities by the partners, allowed the development of an active co-operation from the initial planning of the actions to their final development in active policies to be carried out in the areas concerned, this being the final aim of the Integ.r.a. project.

Municipalities fully played their role of territorial policy-makers, taking in charge the management of the Integ.r.a. local offices (located in the premises of the Municipalities) and the co-ordination of the Local Steering Groups. They have always promoted the dialogue and the sharing of the responsibilities, skills and resources as the only method able to guarantee a system of actions based on the mutually recognised roles.

Local Governments fully took this opportunity driving their attention to the wide range of organisations active at local level. Local Steering Groups included all the representatives of the social and the sector categories, voluntary service and third sector organisations working at grass-root level, and the local representatives of the State, Regions, Provinces and other bodies working in the area. Local projects could profit of the range of the organisations working at local level in order to achieve the main aim of the Integ.r.a. project: *the starting of actions created thanks to the integration of the services already delivered and the specific ones started by the project* in order to give proper answers to the needs of the beneficiaries. This wide participation to the Local Steering Groups achieved another important objective: a better dissemination of the features and problematic linked to refugees and asylum seekers.

The population is poorly informed on this theme and the organisations of the civil society and the institutions at all levels have a scarce knowledge of the problems affecting refugees and asylum seekers. Some organisations had the chance to widen up their range of activities in a network perspective and improve with new

activities the quality of their grass-root level action. They developed for the first time or simply reinforced their relationship with the Local Government and other institutional bodies.

Integ.r.a. developed a model that assigns to the Local Administration a role of co-ordination and to the network of organisations active at local level a role of outlining and planning of actions. The latter also has the key role of innovation and testing requested by the project. This model opens two reflections: a) the local level is the best one for the starting of integrated actions and the testing of good practices; b) actions carried out at local level are so flexible and adaptable that they can be transferred and reproduced in other frameworks drafting a “model” to suggest for the development of active and regular policies at national level.

Integ.r.a. became a tool for the local administrators who need to give answers to refugees and asylum seekers and the other social categories that need to achieve full autonomy through a job and the access to a proper lodging solution. Finally Integ.r.a. also “managed” actors, resources and actions previously not co-ordinated and thus poorly effective.

2.1.1. Actions at the local level.

The activities carried out at local level mainly concerned the following actions:

Area Training/Work

- Selection of the beneficiaries and their inclusion in the project;
- Draft of the skill assessment papers of the beneficiaries;
- Editing of guides of services supplied at local level in the better mastered languages by the beneficiaries;
- Training and guidance to self entrepreneurship;
- Agreements with training institutions active at local level;
- Literacy courses on Italian language, training and job-seeking guidance;

- Training apprenticeship periods, tutoring and support in the context of the firms hosting them;
- Actions of social guidance directed to the local labour market;
- Privileged contact with firms interested in supporting the professional inclusion of refugees and their research of a house.

Area housing

- analysis of housing needs and resources available at local level;
- starting up of structures devoted to the hosting of refugees during their training and apprenticeship periods;
- pathways of guidance that facilitate the access to housing both on the private and public housing market also through the performance of raising awareness actions at local level and the support to access house renting;
- contributions to lodging expenses and funding for related costs;
- finding of flats for the reception, to be rented or used for a determined period;
- starting of housing ad hoc working groups leading to the creation of a legally recognised body for the management and development of the housing policies devoted to refugees, asylum seekers and other categories in need.

Members of the Local Steering Groups are mainly organised in working groups in order to guarantee the smoothest management of the actions to carry out giving a special attention to share resources and activities in a network. An internal co-ordination board of the single working groups that took in charge the concrete management of the groups and ensure the co-operation with the co-ordinator of the project guaranteed this last action. The networking actions of information and communication with the other steering groups were very important. They resulted essential to create tools for exchanging data and information between the central and the local level and among the different areas of development of the project. The creation of a data bank of the beneficiaries and the services centrally managed by the Integ.r.a. project on the basis of

the data given by the local offices had a key role for the dissemination of qualitative and quantitative data that supported the communication and the interaction but also the analysis and the research during the whole project.

Also the web site and mainly its forum devoted to Municipalities were important to overtake the problems related to the mutual distances and the different territorial situations giving them the chance of a permanent exchange.

It is necessary to highlight that the Local Steering Groups for Inclusion had to work in a framework with the following difficult features:

- poor knowledge and recognition by the civil society of the facts related to refugees and asylum seekers;
- weak institutional framework featured by an inadequate planning of the actions to carry out and by poor skills in this field;
- difficult permanent professional inclusion, reduced housing possibilities, odd in the most of the cases:

At the beginning, there were some obstacles to overtake related to the distribution of tasks to the single partners and the draft of the actions to perform. These difficulties were caused by the great differences in terms of activities already carried out in favour of the target categories of Integ.r.a. among the different partners, but also by the unbalanced number of organisations belonging to some categories over others.

Concerning the housing sector, the difficulties were mainly linked to objective factors such as the internal complexity of the problematic and the widespread insufficient housing availability more than the relationship between partners and municipalities.

In the field of vocational training and professional inclusion, the main registered problems were the lack of a legislation dealing with our target group and a poor background experience in the co-operation between private and public institutions at administrative and political level in this field.

In the first stages of the project, some municipalities have highlighted several risks: an excess of surveys, researches and

preparatory studies to outline the local project, a training strategy not relevant to the specific aims of Integ.r.a. and a steering group divided into two halves, the operative and the consultative one. These concerns were suddenly overcome by an exchange of information among the responsible persons of the local projects, Municipalities concerned, the National Co-ordinator and the National Thematic Steering Groups.

The National Co-ordination had to intervene at local level to explain the great opportunities offered by the project. The training delivered to the civil servants of the municipalities represented one of the most effective channels to show the most relevant features of the project with specific reference to its sustainability.

3. The Integ.r.a. project in the Italian housing framework

3.1 Living in dignity: a general problem concerning also refugees and asylum seekers

This section of the document is devoted to analyse those actions meant to tackle the problems of housing faced by refugees. We will consider those policies developed by the Local Governments that joined the project and by the Central Office meant to give refugees their full housing autonomy in the shortest delay of time, making use of all the available resources in the considered areas.

The experience gained in the field of local housing systems thanks to the Integ.r.a. project, allowed to outline and strengthen the good practices and finally assessing the possibilities to turn them into sustainable models to transfer in different contexts.

The success of the projects finalised to the social inclusion of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrant citizens mainly depends by their opportunity to get an accommodation meant as a private space, where it is possible to draw up a life project beyond the mere survival.

The opportunity to have a decent space for the daily life has always been the first concern of migrant citizens and even more so of refugees and asylum seekers because of their specific and more difficult situation. The fulfilment of this need and that of a permanent employment are the key elements for their inclusion in the society hosting them.

Refugees face the same housing conditions of many migrants: the lack of available public housing and the difficulties to access the free real estate market at reasonable prices. These features represent an obstacle to an effective turnover in the hosting centres and in those lodgings assigned to the asylum seekers on a transitory basis.

Living conditions are often featured by situations of overcrowdings, difficult life in common and extreme precariousness. Generally speaking not only asylum seekers and their families are excluded

by the access to proper housing but also refugees are, in spite of their positive inclusion in the labour market.

We often register situations of flats let without contracts and charged with higher rents when compared to prices applied to Italians, one-roomed flats inhabited by 3 or 4 persons, spoiled lodgings or at least not responding to basic hygiene and safety rules but still expensive. These forced sorts of cohabitation might turn out to be even dangerous, especially when underage subjects are involved.

The need of a decent lodging for refugees is framed in a reality of great demand of flats to be rented. This demand comes from several factors: the needs of immigrants (increased by the fast growing process of family rejoining started in the past years), the social trend of fragmentation of family units, a greater mobility for work reasons and an increase of new forms of poverty and marginalization.

These circumstances cause a grow up of low income family units, composed of Italians, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers: all looking for an accommodation at reasonable prices, and unfortunately the Italian context doesn't help. In fact the latter presents very different features when compared to that of other European countries. Considering the number of private and public lodging to be let out (about 24%), only the 5% of these buildings belong to public housing.

The general objectives of the law on lease contracts (n. 431/98 – Rules on lease and let out of real estate assets devoted to living use) were meant to favour the number of available units to be let out in the housing market, through the establishment of a market “regulated” by a system of rules contracted by the interested parties. This law aimed at decreasing the costs of rents (on average 15-20% less) and make the fight to tax evasion more effective favouring the registration of the lease contracts: unfortunately these objectives were only partially achieved.

This law could not find its full enforcement so far, in spite of its positive features: for the contracts drafted according to the rules of this

law, some incentives are forecast for the house owners regarding the application of local taxation of the house itself (ICI), income taxes (IRPEF) and registration fees; economic assistance to poor families is forecast together with the establishment of a dedicated National Fund. Unfortunately the results achieved so far are not those expected because the Fund was assigned insufficient resources, decreasing every year despite the growing demand, but also because rent fees indiscriminately increased.

Moreover, the housing demand advanced by refugees and asylum seekers did not find any relevant response in the framework of the enforcement of the Law 431/98, because it is a kind of demand that needs a set of offers widely specialised in order to be catered. These offers must consider the whole hosting process and it must necessarily include, temporary hosting structures organised in various ways, cheap autonomous lodgings and those to be assigned on a permanent basis.

3.1.1. Integ.r.a in the complex housing framework of the different local communities

The project was implemented through the start up of a National Thematic Steering Group aimed at co-ordinating and analysing the multifaceted housing problems and giving local steering groups guidelines to manage their activities. The National Housing Steering Group aimed at developing models favouring refugees in their access to housing. In the future, these schemes should be effective for all those who face housing difficulties, such as the impossibility to find a house or living in indecent conditions.

11 members of the “Partnership for development”⁸ were invited to join the National Thematic Steering Group. The steering group has been starting its work since March 2003. These are its most relevant actions:

⁸ The eleven members are: Formautonomie, ICS, Sunia, Acli, Caritas, Ancab, Coop Nuovo Villaggio, Auser, Cir, Arci, Casa Diritti Sociali

1. Analysis of schemes and good practices in housing issues to cater the needs of the disadvantaged categories, with special reference to the innovative experiences.
2. Development of a strategy to record the existing real property and to assess the local needs and housing potentialities.
3. Training of co-ordinators of local steering groups and civil servants of the municipalities who work in the territorial planning and in the management of the Integ.r.a. offices in charge of the housing access for their beneficiaries.
4. Draft of the contents for the training programmes
5. Guidance and support to planning at local level in the municipalities which are partners of the project performed by experts
6. Draft of the guidelines of the project that outline short, medium and long term objectives in the starting of an innovative body to be named “House Agency” able to cater the needs of refugees and other disadvantaged categories with a view to the potentialities and available resources at local level.

Co-ordinators of the National Steering Group were asked to pass on to their local partners all the indications coming from their actual experiences (and at the same time to listen to theirs) in order to favour the activity of planning of the local steering groups to give solutions to refugees housing problems at the best of their possibilities.

3.1.2 Integ.r.a. dealing with three hosting levels: emergency, temporary and permanent housing needs

At a local community level, different needs are found together with several human and financial resources able to give responses that are often partial, incomplete or irregular even if correct in themselves.

The start up of a system is crucial: a network favouring an integrated action, run by services and bodies able to co-ordinate social, cultural and economical resources at local and regional level with the opportunities offered at the national and European one.

To be effective, such a networking action must be promoted by a strong and precise political will and supported by the professional guidance of the workers of the social services involved.

In this framework, at local level the Integ.r.a. project was opened with a first collection of data records gathering information from the municipalities involved in the project and those located in the same provinces. This preliminary action is necessary to research the potentialities of the interested areas and consequently of the models to be applied to the Integ.r.a. local projects.

This collection was performed in two stages and with two different methods: a) through a questionnaire; b) through meetings in the municipalities with civil servants and managers of the departments of immigration and asylum related affairs.

This data collection quite clearly displayed the common challenging features but also those specific to the involved areas. The major critical points registered were:

1. the inadequacy of public housing towards the ever-growing demand.
2. too high rent fees of private lodgings for low income workers;
3. spoiled public and private lodging, impossible to lease;
4. an extended area affected by disadvantage and social exclusion.

In the recent past, the administrative actions were carried out by the single municipalities, in many cases without any form of co-operation. These actions sometimes were limited to cope with emergency situation or to hand over services to voluntarism. But they also started positive experiences and somehow innovative, especially where the social private and public sector managed to co-operate.

The started policies outlined three areas of actions:

1. first area dealing with a prompt reception;
2. intermediate area dealing with temporary hosting in “social” lodgings.
3. definitive area dealing with the research of permanent and regular lodgings.

It was clear that when the three areas are not totally covered, people mobility is hampered and all the lodging possibilities get full soon regardless their features.

Concerning the first two areas, some interesting actions were started that registered a correct and effective close co-operation between Local Governments and third sector organisations by drafting the guidelines out of the experiences already carried out in the past years.⁹

The core feature of the second area is the availability of lodgings to assign on a temporary basis, while waiting for a permanent one.

Concerning the third area, it must be highlighted the impossibility for asylum seekers to access public housing ruled by the current laws. This is why those policies meant to favour and support the start up of no profit “Social Housing Agencies” are very important: these include associations, foundations, voluntary service organisations together with Municipalities, Provincial Governments, Consortia and networks of Municipalities. This support was offered through a direct participation of the local governments in the start up and management of the “Agencies” but also through the grant of contributions under the forms of funding or assignment of real estate portions to “Agencies”, thus giving them the chance to lease the lodgings and balance their budgets with the collection of fees. During the 90’s a self-selection among these no profit organisations was operated and only those that found the best conditions to develop remained.

It was also useful and important the assignment of contributions in capital account or as grants by some Regional Governments to Local Governments or other public and private bodies for hygienic restorations of their lodgings. These must have been owned for at

⁹ See as an example the experience of PNA (National Hosting Plan) and the Protection System for the Refugees and Asylum Seekers, together with the law 286/98 that gives local governments the task to outline criteria for the hosting policies and the research of social lodgings for migrants.

least ten years and be available for temporary hosting of refugees, asylum seekers, regular immigrant workers and Italians in difficult situations, for at least the same number of years. Municipalities outline the criteria of assignment of the lodgings.

Thanks to the collected information, analysed by the National Housing Steering Group, a training scheme for municipality workers was outlined, in order to pass them on operational guidelines to tackle the housing issues related to refugees and asylum seekers.

3.2 Tools to enforce housing policies

3.2.1 Models, experiences and guidelines to outline effective policies

The National Steering Group delivered to the Local Steering Groups of the municipalities involved in the project a working paper as a contribution to local planning in the field of housing issues. This paper includes a list of models and experiences performed at local level and some guidelines for the starting of “Housing Agencies” to be founded on a no profit public/private basis.

The first step to outline the proper tool to start the training process has been the study of the actions meant to support a “social” housing development and services for the reception and the inclusion of the most disadvantaged categories, namely the migrants, which surely include refugees and asylum seekers.

On the basis of the collected experiences, the most common juridical forms involved to outline working tools in this sector were:

- associations and onlus (no profit organisations for social help)
- co-operatives
- organisations founded with a specific social purpose
- foundations
- consortia

In the proposed classification a positive assessment, closely linked with the general aims of the project, was given to the ability and reputation of the single bodies involved to promote in their local com-

munities a culture and a system of relationship based on the principles of solidarity, mutual co-operation, sharing, self management, democracy, participation, social accounting of the activities developed and so on, as they do in their own daily management.

In a general framework of acknowledgement of a variety of possible tools to achieve the different aims, a certain degree of attention for the co-operative model was highlighted.

As a matter of fact, this is potentially the best tool to achieve the aims of the project, as it is the only model in the Italian juridical framework of “social enterprise”. This is able to pursue public oriented objectives thanks to its structure, management, aims and ethical behaviour, but at the same time, it works according private criteria meant to rationalise costs and benefits.

3.2.2 A Hypothesis of “Housing Agency”

The research of a global strategy to solve inclusion and housing problems of disadvantaged categories not only focus on policies but also on the tools to enforce them. These should be able to give definitive and permanent answers in order to tackle the overall path of socio-economic and cultural reception, inclusion and integration of those categories excluded by a proper housing solution.

No private or public body alone can offer and guarantee the large-scale action needed to optimise the use of the real property, in many cases already sufficient but not fully employed. As these actions need a broad consensus, it is necessary to start a cultural process of information and raising awareness in order to gain a general trust and overcome conflicts, prejudices as well as direct and indirect social costs (actual problems more complex than the simple label “racism” can suggest) in these areas.

The experience of the Integ.r.a. project, led to the idea that is time to start **a new active body** that we named **“Agenzia Casa” (Housing Agency)**. At local level, this body will be able to manage the whole process between reception and definitive and permanent lodging (whether in ownership or on lease, brand new or restored).

It will co-ordinate public and private efforts, in order to gather different actions, actors and involved interests in a certain area as an important and qualified feature of a new social housing.

There is the need of 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 and financial management of the demand and supply of lodging in order to delivery the proper support measures with a specific reference to the new citizens, refugees, asylum seekers or migrants in general.

The *Housing Agency* 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 legal or as a matter of facts – and a non-commercial status. This is important because of the kind of *governance* that is meant to promote and because of its service oriented structure that represents the reasons of its start up, management and desirable institutional acknowledgement. Moreover it will have the possibility to get tax concessions and will ensure a proper and effective participation to the management and control by all the local actors (and the interests they represent) that should be involved on a permanent check based on mutual trust.

It is crucial for The “Housing Agency” to be able to

1. attract resources (public and private);
2. be a direct partner of the Public Administration (almost its executive arm);
3. 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;
4. have an organisational and operational flexibility in order to start permanent forms of inclusion or limited to specific projects according to needs and opportunities;
5. disseminate innovation and testing actions in the field of immigration and mobility in general;

6. 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;
7. manage the real property belonging to other bodies;
8. monitor those actions and policies developed for the reception and inclusion of disadvantaged categories of workers;
9. have private basis and way of working, but with public interests and aims;

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:

1. 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;
2. former IACP – institutions managing public housing (today turned into firms playing different roles according to their local context);
3. companies that employ immigrants or other kind of categories experiencing mobility and their professional organisations if interested in agreements at trade union level;
4. 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;
5. voluntary service organisations willing to share the management or simply check its transparency and its correctness;
6. 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;

3.3 “Housing Agency”: the chance to outline a path with different stages

The outline of a strategy towards the start of a Housing Agency should be structured in stages according to the areas involved and the bodies able to test the first experiences of shared management. Some of the experiences started and grown up (i.e.: in Bergamo: “Casa Amica”; in Padova: “Fondazione La Casa Onlus” and “Coop Nuovo Villaggio”; in Milan: Coop DAR; in Udine: Vicini di Casa, and so on), show that these kind of operative bodies represent more than a hypothesis: it is an achievable objective that needs to be structured in stages.

Thus, the choice to start a pathway leading to the start of such agencies appears widely sustainable and even more so, if this clearly complex objective is marked by intermediate stages, not necessarily of a temporary nature.

It is important to always keep in mind the needs to cater and the different potentialities of the interested areas, because these are the key structural features that show a general coherence regardless to the aims to be achieved.

3.3.1 First stage: intermediation and support measures: this stage can be quickly achieved as it only regards actions of intermediation and support.

3.3.2 Second stage: management and lease of lodgings belonging to third parties: this intermediate option relates to a body that not only develops the first level actions as described above, but also manages and leases lodgements entrusted by third parties.

3.3.3 Third stage: this is properly the new body to be named “*Housing Agency*” that at local level will be able to manage the whole process between emergency reception and assignment of a permanent accommodation trying to co-ordinate “private and public sector”, and the various actions and stakeholders for new policies of social housing.

3.4 experiences carried out by the local Integ.r.a projects

3.4.1 Projects developed at local level: possible solutions and potentialities.

The analysis of the running of the local projects that was performed thanks to the information advanced by those municipalities belonging to the project (responsible persons of local projects, local development partnership, local governments) made possible the outline of the following assessments concerning:

1. the number and the quality of the solutions given to the housing problems of the beneficiaries;
2. the level of advancement of the networking process of the different services including the access to housing.
3. sustainability and transferability of the drafted models.

The difficulties met at local level during the planning of Integ.r.a. are those always faced by the municipalities and the third sector when tackling the difficult issues related to accommodation for the disadvantaged categories.

If from one side, the objective that Integ.r.a. fixed in quantitative numbers was only partially achieved in spite of the relevant number of beneficiaries concerned, from the other it was possible to acknowledge many potentialities that unfortunately did not have the desired concrete developments while the project was running. We refer to the missed passage of good practices to sustainable models transferable to other social categories in the same way affected by housing problems.

Concerning the access of refugees and other disadvantaged categories to lodgings Integ.r.a gave an important contribution to:

1. the start of networking service models including those related to lodgings and their improvement where they were already started;
2. widen and improve the support measures especially in the fields of intercultural mediation and conflicts management and prevention.
3. facilitate, in a relevant way, the start of "Housing Agencies" with an innovative nature ready to face the variety of the demand.

Generally speaking, the municipalities that joined the project tackled the needs of the beneficiaries according to the policies and actions of the housing emergency, but at the same time trying to look forward to wider solutions.

Finally, regarding the experiences of the municipalities and for a better understanding of the actions developed in the different local frameworks, it is necessary to point out that in many of these contexts, policies in favour of refugees and asylum seekers were started right by the Integ.r.a. project as well as the outline of objectives like those displayed by the project. Also the networking action to support the research of a lodging did not exist or it was operating only thanks to the good will of the single workers. Now, thanks to Integ.r.a., there has been a general improvement of the quality of the services offered to refugees and asylum seekers, starting more effective practices and lasting systems.

3.5 Recommendations

3.5.1 Housing policies in Italy

As already clearly stated, the urge and emergency of the housing needs does not concern only refugees and asylum seekers but also the other disadvantaged categories of foreigners and Italians that are dramatically growing up. We are currently facing a situation of lack of public policies and a poor supply of lodgings leased at reasonable fees both by the private sector and the public housing managed by the concerned institutions.

Italy could have the same offer of social housing as the other European countries if it would orientate its action not only towards direct investments, but also to the creation of the necessary conditions to favour the synergy between private resources and management abilities and the start of public policies in the field of public housing.

In general, at European level there has been an important involvement of companies and non-profit organisations such as associations of consumers, trade unions, professional organisations, pension

funds, insurance companies etc. These bodies competed in the process of development and re-qualification of the real property to be leased to those disadvantaged social categories, which are still viable.

3.5.2 Role and tools of the institutions: EU, State, Regions and Local Governments

The great importance of this theme and its complexity require a strong commitment at all levels: European, national, regional and local.

The search of lasting answers to the problems of refugees also includes, among the others, that of a permanent or long term housing solution in the country that granted the asylum or in another EU country. This action together with the others that involve the EU on the ground of the fundamental rights points out the need to promote policies and proper tools for the most disadvantaged categories.

After the experience of the transfer of all competencies on housing to the Regional and Local governments, it is important to draft again a national policy concerning housing issues even if different from the past one.

We refer to a policy able to adopt a framework of general rules to favour innovation and to draft national ways and outlines leading to a generalised search of resources.

At the same time, in order to start new tools or to turn good practices into permanent models according to the orientation stated above, the merging of political wills at all levels is necessary. Starting from the involvement of all local actors, it must be possible to develop co-ordination but also combined actions, especially in the field of searching of resources and synergies. Several local contexts are already experienced: in the most of the cases, it is important to start from the current positive experiences.

3.5.3. European level

The European experiences resulted by the policies on refugees and asylum seekers on housing issues are different as much as their national context, unfortunately the Italian one has a particularly dif-

difficult housing situation, as already described. It would be then desirable that the European directives on asylum could tackle this specific issue.

It would be appropriate to support the bottom-up policy outlined in these pages and tested by the Integ.r.a. project with a top-down action promoted by the European institutions such as the Parliament that could propose specific actions to link, for example, the one off initiatives of the structural funds with political and strategic objectives in this field.

Thus we introduce below a series of recommendations meant to develop and further clarify our introduction.

1. Draft a clear statement of concrete commitment by the EU for the recognition of the right to a proper accommodation at reasonable fees for the disadvantaged categories in general with a specific reference to refugees and asylum seekers through grants devoted to sustainable lodging solutions.
2. Devote sufficient resources to make the right to access a proper lodging solution at reasonable fees effective to all disadvantaged categories and among these, in first place, refugees and asylum seekers. We recommend the promotion of projects dealing with the role of housing in the social inclusion and territorial integration processes.
3. Promote and support with proper grants specific “Housing Agencies” able to:
 - Favour refugees and asylum seekers with the access to the private lease market of lodgings at reasonable fees through proper estate intermediation services and intercultural support measures, extending accessibility to other social categories facing the same problems of exclusion by finding proper lodging solutions.
 - Involve employers in the search of lodging solutions;
 - Manage necessary resources to start direct support measures through the grant of first support contributions. These measures include: “one off” contributions to support the purchase of

furniture; contributions towards the expenses related to the lodgings; contributions to the leave of the deposit or initial support to the rent fees due for the first months; incentive payments for the renovation, restoration and building up of lodgings in favour of the beneficiaries themselves or to devote to social use.

4. Clarify the Community meaning of the concept of private and public body in order not to incur in discriminating actions in the tenders for the assignments of services, in relation to the current EU rules on transparency and national grants.
5. Support the lobby campaign run by Cecodhas in co-operation with other networks (especially EAPN, Social Platform, European Housing Forum) towards the European Commission, through the submissions of common statements for the reorganization and reduction of the VAT on lodgings.
6. Support the activities of those organisations and companies that work on social development and social housing policy and favour the permanent exchange of ideas and experiences among the members also by delivering a regular information service.
7. Finally we underline the need of statistic indicators in the housing field and the draft of an overall picture of the funding possibilities at European level.

3.5.4 National level

1. Start a “National Trust” for the residential housing able to ensure a moderator role of the State in the framework of a housing policy that guarantees a general fairness among all the Regions while considering their different needs.
2. Favour and support the active participation of the institutions at different levels in order to take socially relevant investment decisions in the building of structures devoted to hosting and leasing (in the perspective of a definitive purchase) for the disadvantaged categories (Italians’ and migrants’) and in the delivery of services of cultural mediation and support in the inclusion process.

3. Tackle some critical issues displayed by the current rules framework: for example the legislation on rents does not forecast the juridical status of centres of “advanced hosting” (seconda accoglienza)¹⁰. Moreover those non-profit organisations working in the estate sector are not recognised: this represents an obstacle to their activities because it does not allow the access to facilitations forecast for non-profit organisations and because it is a limitation of the applicable juridical models.
4. Improve and adapt to the current needs the law on housing lease n. 431/98. Unfortunately this law displays some tricks that obstacle any innovative approach to the relationship linking housing and work. After this law, the temporary lease is poorly practiced because of the rules and conditions affecting those who lease or manage lodgings for third parties. Some changes are needed in order to let “non-profit” organisations manage lodgings with the same tools granted to the local governments and namely:
 - Apply flexible and innovative tools in fields dealing with work mobility and the relationship between housing and work, trying to favour the temporary lease.
 - Outline easier and faster rules concerning eviction orders for a better protection of householders, together with a parallel increase of the supply of lodgings to lease at social and reasonable fees by the Local Governments;
 - Apply a different taxation on lease in order to favour the market of the lease lodgings and promote the lease contracts drafted by intermediate organisations through a further de-rating.

¹⁰ With advanced hosting centres (centri di seconda accoglienza) we mean those intermediate structures between the first emergency reception and permanent housing solutions (such as pensions, social private lodgings or temporary assignments in dormitories and other temporary structures for singles or families waiting for a permanent lodging etc.)

It is finally necessary to forecast national funds to support new and innovative actions on social housing in order to match the European standards. The aim is to outline several possibilities to get out of the first emergency hosting actions and to start a regular housing process, a sort of permanent scheme for the housing inclusion developed according to the different needs, situations and final objectives expressed by the beneficiaries.

This is the pathway to rationally manage the housing inclusion process of the beneficiaries from the first reception phase (free food and accommodation donated in a first relief perspective) to the second one as outlined above (supply of food and accommodation in the framework of an inclusion process, where the beneficiaries contribute towards their own expenses, in any case for a limited period of time) ending to a permanent housing solution out of the protected assistance structures network.

Permanent and proper housing solutions are the main premises to the inclusion of single persons or families, either Italians or foreigners, refugees or not, in the daily social life of the local community.

3.5.5 Regional level

Regional governments, more than local ones, have all the necessary powers to outline the needed housing policies. Regions must be strongly asked to favour the leasing of lodgings at ceiled fees. To achieve this aim, contributions meant to raise down the building costs of lodgings must be granted.

It is not necessary that public resources will totally grant the enforcement of this policy to achieve this aim (as in the past with housing subsidies). It is enough a partial contribution able to raise down the rent fees. The specific role played by the Regional Governments should:

1. Favour the renewal of the idle public property through the grant of contributions for hygienic clearance of available lodgings. This kind of grants can be particularly effective to start projects aiming at exploiting the available real property with light, low-priced

and fast actions. Another option could be the draft of agreements with private estate owners. These should outline the minimum conditions to lease their lodgings to disadvantaged categories, including refugees, for a fixed number of years and at ceiled and reasonable fees.

2. Facilitate the inclusion of the involved parties through tenders for the renewal of idle areas and real property. These actions could have the form of micro-projects mixing social inclusion and profit making needs: the latter possibly financing the first one (structured as a sort of “project financing” action with its management limited in time) and assessment tools not only based on the financial capacities but on a full and detailed analysis costs/benefits for the community and the quality standards of the common living.
3. Promote the process of social inclusion with a set of rules drafted in favour of determined bodies on a permanent basis and facilitating a planning framework with calls for full and integrated projects (in terms of actions oriented not only to erect walls but also able to consider the actual life to be carried on within them). This will require at institutional level the co-operation of several departments of the Local and Regional Governments and proper budget lines.
4. Promote overall “City planning arguments” at territorial level – in co-ordination with the provinces – to avoid unfairness and give clear frameworks and joined decisions to carry on in a shared way.

3.5.6 Local level

Provinces have an important role of co-ordination; they can promote and support housing policies with overall and integrated actions. In this framework, we ask Provinces to make available their possible idle properties for social housing at ceiled fees and to run an awareness action towards Municipalities inducing them to perform the following actions: include in their city plans idle areas and buildings to devote to disadvantaged categories, support the starting up of “Housing Agencies” on a non-profit and public/private

basis also in co-operation with neighbouring municipalities and facilitate the matching of demand and supply. The latter point should be managed through the launch of guarantee funds and soft financing in favour of those owners who will make available lodgings at agreed and ceiled fees for disadvantaged categories and supporting specific support and guidance to housing actions.

Municipalities represent the main actors of the housing inclusion policies: they are fully in charge of the local housing policy, as in general they manage quite good resources. They potentially have relevant tasks for the planning and co-ordination of the local actions, the start up of “Housing Agencies” and local networks. The role of the Municipalities therefore should include the following actions:

- Start a strategy in the housing sector, planning and experiencing new models with more effective forms of involvement of third sector organisations and co-operatives in the planning, carrying out and management of the actions and an overall approach to the housing issues based on peer and shared partnerships.
- Facilitate the networking of the cross disciplinary skills among those bodies that work in the social field, in the management of the real property and possibly in the credit area, merging and integrating experiences, inclinations and approaches of the different organisations in order to draft a facilitated pathway to housing responding to the needs of the beneficiaries.
- Favour the setting up of a wide range of services that could be started at fixed costs purpose, if Regions and Provinces could allocate long-term investments in this direction.
- Outline action models able to properly support the costs of the rent fees at a level that would allow a balance of the accounts in spite of the decrease of the public resources.
- Consider the difficult moment of the public expenditure and devote a specific attention to those tools/actions not affecting the budget deficit when additional public resources are missing.

We refer to those tools that can be developed through planning actions and more generally to a “public-private” negotiation,

- Promote city-planning policies agreed with the bodies dealing with social housing. Single municipalities or networks must be committed in finding areas and buildings to renovate and devote to specific initiatives of social housing at ceiled rent fees.
- Favour the access to lodgings rent market. This lead to focus the attention to the management of lodgings and look for those bodies which can better fulfil this task or start them up if they do not exist in the concerned areas. We should not under evaluate the importance of this action, especially considering that part of the beneficiaries needs a support period and in some cases a mediation action among all the subjects involved (tenants, owners, neighbours, the district etc.)
- Plan the possible common actions among the Municipalities and building strategies that could serve areas also beyond the administrative borders in order to increase the number of the potential beneficiaries. The choice of the correct dimensions of the area where the actions will be carried out is generated by the geography of the processes that cause a specific housing demand (for example the needs of the work commuters).
- Adopt a “multidisciplinary” and “multi-objective” approach to the new social housing policies overtaking the traditional work “for sectorial competencies” (at centralised or local level) and with lack of communication among the different departments involved.

It is true that, given to their local government nature, municipalities are the first bodies affected by the problems of categories such as refugees and asylum seekers, and therefore they are obliged to find proper solutions. But it is also true that if housing issues do not become a priority at all institutional levels, the local action will be forced to focus only on a first emergency perspective.

4. The integ.r.a. project in the Italian labour and vocational training framework

4.1 The Integ.r.a. project in the Italian labour market.

The final objective of Integ.r.a. is to favour the social, professional and housing inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers through the start up of integrated services in order to give them full autonomy in the shortest delay of time.

The way to achieve this aim is full of obstacles. One of the major problems is represented by the condition of long-lasting forced idleness experienced by asylum seekers who are not allowed to perform any regular job while waiting for their application of asylum to be considered.

In this section we will display all the started actions to test the access to training and to the labour market of refugees and asylum seekers and suggest possible inclusion solutions within a regulated system that have faults in accessibility and equal opportunities terms.

In Italy, generally speaking and according to the main features of the different geographic areas, factors such as the territorial dimensions, the production sectors, the level of technological specialisation reached and the trend of the local, regional and national markets affect the labour demand.

The forecast requirements of new labour force, annually drafted by *Unioncamere* through the *Excelsior* system show the increasing employment of foreign workers especially in those sectors that require a low professional qualification.

Moreover, *Excelsior* data highlight a great availability of foreign workers (more than one half of the recruitments) in the sectors of health and medical assistance, charge and discharge of goods, metal fusion facilities, and cleaning services.

In spite of this, *Isfol* lately registered that many working places remain vacant for a lack of specialised labour force and at the same time, in several environments, there is a high number of people who can't find a job in line with their expectations and skills.

The dangers of this trend are now evident in the field of the ever-growing foreign labour force employed in the Italian labour market. On one side, this is the result of the progressive decrease of the active population, while on the other it is an effect of the selective qualified priorities of the Italian workers.

These are poorly adaptable to the labour demand in full contrast with the general flexibility of migrants to raise down their professional expectations in order to match them with realistic outcomes. Ethnicity issues do not only concern the demand side, but they also regard the insertion strategies of the labour supply offered by foreigners end up to bound and direct the professional opportunities within those environments somehow managed by a certain ethnic group. It is clear that this condition involuntarily feeds the risks of discrimination at the entry in Italy and towards the development of professional careers of immigrant workers.

4.2 The opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to access the Italian labour market

In the analysis of the features of the labour market, the **part-time** form starts to have a relevant role as to be considered a factor of employment growth, not only in Italy. In Europe, such a development is featured by diversities caused by refugees and asylum seekers registered at local level in the past two years:

- the differences in the structures of labour markets;
- the structures of the economic systems;
- the rules of social protection governing different welfare policies;
- the relevance and historical background of the Trade Unions;
- the public policies regulating and encouraging part-time jobs;
- the general social and cultural features.

In Italy, the Law 863/94 that drafted the first rules to enforce this contract typology regulated the part-time form. Its first objective was the increase and support of the internal employment levels. In the year 2000, with the Legislative Decree n° 61, Italy endorses the European Directive 97/81/CE establishing that in the framework of

the subordinate employment, labour contracts could have a full or a part-time basis, the latter not being considered as an atypical form of labour anymore.

Basically this Legislative Decree acknowledged:

- the principle of non discrimination: the part-time worker must receive the same treatment as someone employed on a full-time basis;
- the rule of proportioning: the adjustment of the wages to the inferior amount of working hours, while during the initial trial period and the maternity leave, workers enjoy the same treatment;
- the characteristic of free choice of the part-time solution by the workers;
- the possibility for the employer to ask for extraordinary work or change the agreed turns only with the consensus of the concerned workers and after previous notice.

To conclude, we must say that the part-time form strongly affects the opening of new employment opportunities especially in the tertiary sector. This employment form represents an opportunity also for the access to labour market of the beneficiaries of Integ.r.a.

After the analysis carried out in the framework of the Integ.r.a. project concerning the specificities of the Italian labour market, we highlight the following three main features:

- a strong request of labour force with a low professional qualification (with reference to the research carried out in the area of Forlì by C.N.A.- National Federation of Artisans);
- a concentration of new employment opportunities in the sector of the services (tertiary), especially under the form of part-time employment;
- the identification of employment opportunities especially in the medium and small enterprises;

Since work is given also a socialising value, the restriction to its access affecting asylum seekers represents a real obstacle to their social inclusion, on the long run.

In other words, if asylum seekers cannot work, what are their alternative ways to concretely and profitably build a future? What are the activities that facilitate their process of inclusion in the society? Which of those do favour socialisation pathways such as the acquaintance with the local environment and the literacy on Italian culture and language?

A first step to a harmonic social inclusion process for asylum seekers can be identified in the possibility to find a job while waiting for the recognition of their status.

Article 2 of the Consolidated Act on Immigration and Asylum, as modified by the Law 189/02, establishes that foreigners standing at the border offices or on the State territory are recognised the fundamental rights of the human being as forecast by the current rules of the internal jurisprudence, the international conventions and the principles of the International Law generally recognised.

If the category of foreigners also includes refugees and asylum seekers, we ask ourselves whether the right to work is one of those fundamental rights recognised to all human beings. In Italy, this problem has not an easy solution.

Of course, Asylum seekers are not hosted in our country because of work reasons and as such according to the Consolidated Act they should stay out of the labour world. In short, can asylum seekers work at all?

The overcoming of the interpretative matters, mentioned above, as well as an answer to our question can be found in the **Enabling Act n° 30/03** (better known as Biagi Law) and its related Enforcement Decrees n° 276/03 and 251/04.

This law forecast new flexible forms of work and can be considered as the reference set of rules displaying useful indications for the social inclusion of asylum seekers.

Concerning the contract typologies to apply in order to test employment opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers, the new law forecast a sort of periodical work contract. This is quoted in art. 33 and subsequent articles of the Legislative Decree 276/03:

this contract can be applied to carry out professional services on a temporary or intermittent basis according to the provisions included in the collective agreements or endorsed by the Ministry of Labour. Going further with the analysis of the Legislative Decree, Item II is titled: “protection of the labour market and special provisions regarding disadvantaged workers”; the concept of protection of the workers mainly includes the respect of their privacy, the prohibition to perform investigations or discriminatory treatment, the forecast of inclusion or re-inclusion in the labour market. The category of **disadvantaged workers** also includes the asylum seeker; in fact a disadvantaged worker is defined as “any person belonging to a category that face difficulties in entering the labour market” (Art. 2, Letter K of the Legislative Decree 276/03).

In the framework of the enlargement of the “possible works” that the Law 30/2003 forecast, we highlight the need of support and guidance actions in favour of refugees and asylum seekers.

In other words, the **training factor** is necessary to favour their autonomy and take in charge of their responsibilities.

This factor must be considered as the best tool both for their inclusion process and for their learning development of new skills or the re-qualification of those already gained.

Also in the case of missing recognition of their status, we believe that through vocational training, asylum seekers can get specific skills and abilities that can be spent in their countries of origin after their repatriation.

The start up of vocational training pathways gives to refugees and asylum seekers, psychological balance and satisfaction together with long-lasting positive results. As a matter of facts, when asylum seekers obtain their status, their professional inclusion is easier, either because they have acquired new skills or competencies or because they can perform the same activities carried out in their countries of origin or finally because they showed their skills to be spent in their new environment as the results of the Integ.r.a. project will show ahead.

4.3. The Integ.r.a. actions for the social and professional inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers.

Integ.r.a. tested inclusion pathways in order to draft innovative action models possibly applicable to different territorial frameworks leading to overcome the obstacles to social inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers, as said above.

To achieve this aim, an operative structure was started supported by the institution of two co-ordination National Thematic Steering Groups: one of them dealt with vocational training and professional inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers. In this section we will shortly describe the organizing strategies adopted in order to reach the objectives of the Steering Group – and consequently of the whole project – and then we will focus our attention on the results achieved by the Local Steering Groups started in the Municipalities that joined the project.

In the start up phase of the project, the members of the Development Partnership were selected among those with previous experiences in the field of employment and training (vocational or not). Afterwards a Thematic Steering Group on Labour and Vocational Training was started. It included 21 members of the Partnership of Development and it began its activities on February 2003.

Among the others, the Thematic Steering Group carried out two activities towards the partner Municipalities of the project: the advice and support to local projects planning in order to favour their actions to include refugees and asylum seekers.

Moreover, the Steering Group provided guidance on the training programmes devoted to the civil servants of the involved Municipalities to give them the proper management tools for the direction of the local Integ.r.a. offices, for the identification of the competencies and professional skills of refugees and asylum seekers and finally to carry out the analysis of the concerned territorial areas and to draft a survey of the needs and potentialities of the local productive context.

All the members of the Thematic Steering Group had the task to support the start up of the local steering groups through their own partners, providing them with operative indications to carry out training and professional refreshment actions in favour of refugees and asylum seekers together with their inclusion in the labour market. The members of the National Steering Group had the chance to transmit to Local Steering Groups – through their own partners – experiences carried out in the field of training and professional inclusion in order to contribute to the identification of the best approaches to overcome the difficulties in the outline of the local planning.

4.3.1. The Thematic Commissions

The high number of members belonging to the Thematic Steering Group was an obstacle to its management especially in the decision making process. It was agreed to divide it into two thematic Commissions: “*Vocational Training*” and “*Professional Inclusion*”. This further organisation of its operative management give the Steering Group the chance to assign its members to the closer thematic areas to their actual experience.

In this way, each partner was put in the conditions to offer its best contribution to its respective Commission and consequently to the whole project.

With this operating procedures we tried to facilitate the contacts between members and their local partners, by marking their areas of action off.

Among the activities carried out by the Commissions, we can list:

- the contribution to the draft of the guidelines for the partner Municipalities and for the future Local Steering Groups;
- the selection and analysis of good practices for the professional inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers registered at local level in the past two years;
- the guidance action to the public training possibilities for refugees and asylum seekers;

- the selection and analysis of good practices regarding training apprenticeship available for refugees and asylum seekers registered at local level in the past two years;
- the development of contacts with expert jurists for the analysis of the Law 30 and its possible enforcement to refugees and asylum seekers;
- the identification of model schemes in the field of vocational training for refugees and asylum seekers (training apprenticeship periods, training opportunities in the different Regions, training schools, etc.)
- the adaptation of the contents of the training booklet for the certification of skills to the target group of the Integ.r.a. project;
- the contributions to the guidebook drafted by the “Vocational Training – Professional Inclusion” Steering Group¹¹.

4.3.2 Short description of the tools and initiatives carried out by *Integ.r.a.*

The Integ.r.a. project tried to outline a pathway that through its steps, tools and actors could lead refugees or asylum seekers towards full autonomy.

As a matter of facts, the effective and constructive integration of refugees and asylum seekers needs to include those tools necessary to carry out a personalised and aware inclusion process in the hosting society. These tools can be outlined according to a process passing through different stages.

Each stage gives a new more key to understand the current reality in order to enter a closed world. Refugees and asylum seekers should choose according to their own inclinations, the starting stages, those to avoid and the others to follow. This process should be followed with the awareness that stages are all linked up. In

¹¹ Re “Formare, inserire, integrare Percorsi formativi e occupazionali per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati” (Outline, Include, Integrate Training and Professional Schemes for Refugees and Asylum Seekers), Integ.r.a. project, June 2004.

order to achieve this aim, refugees and asylum seekers need to be guided and supported by those institutional social, private and public actors working in the field of work and training.

In the framework of the tested schemes and through the National and Local Steering Groups, Integ.r.a. started several initiatives and tools for the professional inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers, to be read as stages of a pathway. These are the most important:

- *Courses of Italian language*: the mastery of our language is an essential skill to share the social life of our country. The lack of knowledge of the Italian language and the difficulties in finding a support network by their communities lead refugees and asylum seekers to a situation of helplessness, marginalization and precariousness in their self-determination process. Partner Municipalities of the Integ.r.a. project forecast the inclusion of their beneficiaries in Italian language course in order to favour their professional inclusion.
- *Territorial Permanent Centres¹² (CTP)*: they were selected by the Integ.r.a. project as the needed public bodies delivering training and adult literacy to refugees and asylum seekers. CTPs are located in all Italian provinces: they offer a range of activities that includes literacy course of Italian language and vocational training courses. They also release a certification of acquired skills and recognised diplomas. Also from a social inclusion point of view, CTPs represent an important resource, as they are “open” places attended by different categories of people. Thus, they facilitate the exchange and the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers with other Italian or foreigner students attending the courses. The flexibility of their educational planning enables the arrangement of courses and activities

¹² CTP were introduced by the O.M. n° 455/1997. They depend on the MIUR (Ministry of Education, University and Research)

together with the Local Governments. The Integ.r.a. project facilitates and supports a wider attendance of CTPs by refugees and asylum seekers. This action must be enhanced by a wider dissemination of information about this institution.

- *Recognition of educational qualifications*: refugees face particular difficulties in seeing their educational qualifications recognised,¹³ as in general they have no certification of their educational curriculum. Moreover they cannot ask for it to the Consulate or Embassy of their country of origin because of their specific status. In the framework of the Integ.r.a. project, the National Steering Group on Training and Work and the municipalities analysed the issue of the recognition of the educational qualifications in order to start the research of possible solutions in a framework of a poor legislation in this field.
- *Skill Assessment*: this action is useful to acknowledge and analyse capacities, skills and educational background of refugees and asylum seekers. It is a tool to extend the CV of the asylum seeker to those uncertified skills and competencies. Besides the deep analysis of the educational background and the related skills developed by the beneficiaries, the skill assessment action highlights their training and professional needs. Integ.r.a. recognised it as one of the best tools for inclusion and it turned out to be useful both as guidance for the refugees and asylum seekers and for the planning of the training and professional inclusion actions to develop for them. Integ.r.a. partnered Municipalities, adopted the skill assessment procedure that was performed through individual meetings with an appointed social worker who previously attended a specific training course.

¹³ The Lisbon Convention endorsed on 11th April 1997 rules at European Level the recognition of qualifications. Italy ratified the Convention with the Law 148/2000, but we still miss proper tools and procedures for its enforcement.

- *Certification of skills*: with this procedure, an external certifier body acknowledges to a person, the mastery of specific skills, competencies and qualifications. The Integ.r.a. project tested an *ad hoc training booklet*, adapted to this specific target group and the needs of the project as an essential tool in the certification process in favour of refugees and asylum seekers. More than anyone else, the latter need a formal support to submit their developed skills and past experiences to the labour world.
- *Vocational training and re-qualification*: these are two appropriate tools to favour the professional inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers and to learn new skills and competencies. In principle, the participation of asylum seekers to public vocational training courses is not excluded by the law, but unfortunately, it is as a matter of facts because of the impossibility to satisfy the requisites for the admission. This is why the municipalities belonging to the Integ.r.a. project developed “negotiation” actions with the training centres and some Provincial and Regional Governments in order to draft together, where possible, the access criteria to vocational training of asylum seekers. It is important to highlight that thanks to the lobby work of the Local Governments, at least two Italian Regions (Emilia Romagna and Friuli Venezia Giulia) enforced rules ensuring access of asylum seekers to vocational training.
- Moreover, we believe that also the action of Integ.r.a. and its mainstreaming and dissemination of information activities to the relevant Ministry led to include in the Regulation enforcing the Bossi-Fini law a special provision on this issue. This provision states that asylum seekers are allowed to take part to vocational training courses if they did not get an answer about their status within six months. (Bossi Fini law L.D. 303/04).
- *Training apprenticeship periods*: they represent an extremely important tool for the vocational training of the asylum seekers,

as they are able to start their gradual and supported inclusion in the labour market. Training apprenticeship prepares asylum seekers to an independent management of their inclusion pathway in the labour market. All the municipalities belonging to Integ.r.a. started apprenticeship periods for their beneficiaries. The latter were delivered their training directly in a firm: they got a reimbursement of their expenses and a final certification of the activities performed by the professional organisations that promoted the apprenticeship period. Moreover, these activities were certified on the CV of the beneficiaries to facilitate their future job seeking.

- *Access to labour market:* the new provisions on the labour market introduced by the Law 30/03 (named after Mr Biagi) and its related Legislative Decree 276/03 can offer positive chances for the professional inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers. This law forecast flexible and short-term forms of labour, easily adaptable to the timing obligations of the permits of stay released to asylum seekers and consequently favouring their access to the labour market. Among the different forms forecast, we find temporary jobs, shared forms of jobs or periodical jobs. Through these temporary forms of jobs, asylum seekers could access the labour market while afterwards, should their request of the status of refugee be granted, their temporary contracts could turn into permanent or more stable forms. In the framework of the Integ.r.a. project a group of Experts of Law 30 was appointed. They put forward innovative proposals in this field in order to extend the fundamental right to work to asylum seekers, fully respecting the current rules regulating immigration and asylum.
- *Support action:* This is extremely important in order to start a process of inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees and come out of the first reception stage. Through these support measures, refugees and asylum seekers access useful tools to act

autonomously with the perspective to become active and aware citizens, able to make their own choices. The support should be structured and organised in the areas concerned in order to provide information on the training opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers who could be guided and supported in the building of an autonomous and individual training and professional pathway afterwards. The Integ.r.a. project carried out several support measures to start inclusion processes, fully respecting skills and wishes of each individual. Among the support measures, we must include also those carried out by the actors of the project towards those institutions not belonging to the Development Partnership, such as Provinces, Regions, Training Organisations, Trade Unions as well as Prefectures and Police Headquarters to promote and support the social inclusion pathway of refugees and asylum seekers.

4.4. Projects developed at local level: impact and critical points

As already mentioned, the Integ.r.a. project was developed on two levels, a central and a local one: they are closely integrated and the communication flow is ensured in both directions.

The local projects are carried out on the basis of guidelines mainly drafted by the Steering Group and forecasting the tools mentioned in section 2 and giving an indication of the main common activities that the Municipalities should have performed according to the specific features of their areas.

Integ.r.a. identified the possible stages of an inclusion pathway for refugees and asylum seekers thanks to the local planning and the analysis of the National Steering Group on Training and Work. These stages were structured in a scheme to be proposed to other areas as well.

This process implied that all the Municipalities could test the same actions and the same tools, even if in different ways according to the opportunities and potentialities expressed by their areas.

All the projects started the selection of those beneficiaries with the necessary requisites to be assisted by the project (for example, the project in Rome decided to include only the asylum seekers that have been living in the area for at least 6 months and with a basic mastery of the Italian language).

The selected participants were interviewed in order to draft the skill assessment papers as the basis for the construction of customized socio-economic inclusion pathways of the individual beneficiaries. In general, all the Municipalities carried out guidance courses to the labour market, language and vocational training courses. Obviously the latter were designed according to the opportunities expressed by the areas concerned and by the local labour market. All the Municipalities tested the organisation of apprenticeship training periods for asylum seekers, in a more or less structured way and according to their possibilities. These activities were set up after an analysis on these tools and their applicability to asylum seekers carried out at central level. The analysis was based on the successful experiences already performed by the Municipalities belonging to the Protection System and by private training organisations that already worked with this specific category of citizens. The above mentioned actions were constantly scheduled and carried out by the Local Steering Groups structured in steering sub-groups on Housing, Work and Training reflecting the same composition of the central level. The Local Steering Group also forecast an action of common work and exchange of information to perform together with the more “technical” permanent activities of support to refugees and asylum seekers. The support measures were mainly carried out by the organisations dealing with protection and the third sector. They started several actions dealing with social guidance, legal assistance, psychological support and services delivered at local level. Some Municipalities carried out specific actions such as a baby-sitting service to give mothers the chance to attend language and training courses or apprenticeship periods, the inclusion of children in the activities organised after school time and in

the summer play-schemes in order to let parents have more autonomy to carry on their inclusion process. These activities also facilitated a better social inclusion of their children.

The support measures were mainly carried out by third sector organisations represented not only by the organisations acting at local level partnered with the national members, but also by other bodies that developed with the single Municipalities a relationship based on mutual trust and fruitful co-operation. In fact, it is true that the Integ.r.a. project gave the involved Local Governments the chance to develop relationships with new bodies – first of all enriching their partnership – but at the same time the choice to continue the previous relationship with their well-known organisations was rightly claimed by the Local Governments. As a matter of facts, these organisations facilitated the co-ordination action of the Municipalities, the aims of the project and the links between new partners and the concerned area of development of the activities.

In some cases, this mediation also facilitated the mutual acquaintance among the members of the Local Steering Group that followed quite a long process. Before starting the planning of the activities, members devoted some time to the acquaintance of the mutual skills and methods of action in order to arrive to a shared adoption of a common strategy to achieve the aims determined by the Steering Group.

This effort represented the premise of the outline of the actual network and the start up of integrated services aimed at developing the socio-economic inclusion process identified on each area. This stage needed a longer period in order to let the network, the actions performed and the services delivered arrive to such an effective working point that they were considered as granted in the concerned areas. In this way the project should have involved more beneficiaries during its development than in its initial test phase. Unfortunately the timing of the project did not allow us to reach this goal.

The first objective of the Integ.r.a. project was the creation of a *local network to support the start up of new services and the integration of those already delivered in order to outline a process of socio-*

economic inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers, adaptable both to the opportunities of the concerned areas and to the needs of the beneficiaries, with a view to the constitution of a flexible model transferable on other situations and designed on their needs. The efforts of the Municipalities and other partners focused exactly on this action through the activities performed at local level. Its impact was relevant because of the construction of a network never experienced before or with a limited profile and thanks to the testing of innovative tools for the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers.

4.5. Administrative decentralization, labour market and vocational training

The administrative decentralization that has been implemented in Italy in the last 10 years, has progressively shifted a wide number of competences, functions and responsibilities from the central towards the local level.

The 2001 Constitution reform outlined a new institutional and constitutional order in Italy, giving Regions, Provinces and Municipalities a new legal status and more power.

The last steps of this process clearly lead to the definition of stronger roles and responsibilities played by the Local Authorities, whilst the central Authority maintains the responsibilities in terms of general trends, policies and ethics on issues that have to be ruled, planned and implemented by Regions, Provinces and Municipalities.

As for the labour market, in order to identify both the needs and the possible means to fulfil them, we have to analyze the competences and the roles which are now peculiar to each institution and to the different actors.

4.5.1. The labour market actors and needs

As for the housing problems, the difficulties connected with the inclusion in the labour market do not concern the refugees only, but also other weak workers including an increasing number of foreigner and Italian workers.

In fact, considering the potentialities and the limits of labour market with special reference to refugees and asylum seekers, but also to many other citizens, the need exists to focus all the possible interactions among the various actors that participate to the labour market dynamics, in order to single out the aims and the possible areas of action.

The main aim that Integ.r.a. had, was to indicate innovative means that could generate a positive co-operation among the actors involved in the labour market, in order to create a supportive network for asylum seekers and refugees.

In order to highlight the activities and the measures that can fulfil the needs of the labour market, a clear separation of the main actors of the demand and supply of work and their respective needs is necessary.

Just as in example, with reference to the *supply of work* (those who seek for a job), the main needs for refugees and asylum seekers, are the request for proper and easily accessible services, the request for services aiming at the social inclusion and cohesion, and, in particular, the need to benefit of proper guidance and training.

All these needs clearly show that the requests are addressed to the institutional level which is closer to the citizens. The Central State, in fact, could not give an immediate feed back to these requests, whilst they could be satisfied by properly structured local services. The main support and the most useful means to positively respond to these needs have to be searched for mainly at the local level.

Some of the means we can list are: a territorial mapping of the actors that provide services for the local labour market. The analysis of the local market is essential to provide information and guidance to the work suppliers, in particular to the categories that have more problems, such as low educated people, and, even more, to asylum seekers and refugees that are a particularly disadvantaged group of foreigners, as in the area there are no communities of compatriots they can refer to.

In fact, they have strong needs connected with the situation of exclusion they face. An urgent request from their side is for social

services, such as housing, public refectories, transport services to reach the working place, school, learning the language, training and guidance to the different services available in the area.

It is exactly in these fields that refugees, asylum seekers and other disadvantaged people not properly included in the labour market find more problems and obstacles in the areas where a proper integration and coordination between labour and social policies, aiming at facilitating the socio-economical cohesion for them, is not enough developed.

As for the *demand of work* (employers), which is strictly connected with the specific territory, the main needs are the request of information, of pre-selection and selection of personnel, counselling and orientation support, and the need of specific and properly trained professionals, etc..

It is clear that the convergence elements between the needs on the supply and on the demand of work sides, mainly concern the information/orientation field and that of training, meaning with that training the person for the specific labour market sector where s/he is to be introduced.

This is exactly when and where the so call labour market *intermediaries* have a role. Integ.r.a. tried to address the intermediaries and to involve as many as possible of them both at national and local level. In fact, the intermediaries are public or private bodies that play an active role in the implementation of the policies and of the strategies aiming at increasing employment in the territory with the support of tools that are specific of the social action.

The public intermediaries are:

- The Regions: through the Regional Agencies for employment and for the competences they have of ruling and planning in the field of workfare;
- The Provinces: mainly through the “Provincial Centres for Employment” (CPI);
- Public vocational training institutions;

- Permanent Territorial Centres;
- Trade Unions;
- Schools and Universities.

Among the private intermediaries of the labour market we can list:

- training centres;
- professional organizations;
- social co-operatives;
- companies in charge of intermediation between demand and supply of work (authorized by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies);
- Agencies for the research and selection of personnel;
- Temporary working agencies (authorized by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies);
- Agencies supporting the professional outplacement (authorized by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies).

Lots of bodies belonging to above mentioned categories are involved in the Integ.r.a. project in order to operate in their territories as intermediaries for the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in the labour market.

In fact, most of the above mentioned private bodies, as well as some of the public bodies, mainly the Provincial Centres for Employment, the public training centres, the Permanent Territorial Centres, the trade unions and the Universities, participated to Integ.r.a..

4.5.2 Labour policies and social policies: the need for integration

The needs expressed by the most affected categories in terms of training and inclusion in the labour market are particularly complex. The needs are, in fact, strongly linked to other social needs, and, moreover, they can hardly express specific needs, being confused and badly informed (in particular the asylum seeker, as their juridical status is temporary and precarious). They need, more than oth-

ers, to be constantly guided by the different bodies, even by the ones that are not directly dealing with labour or training, but that can respond in a better way to the need of social inclusion and support expressed by the disadvantaged categories.

This is the reason why protection and local bodies are so much involved in Integ.r.a.. Municipalities, for example, can integrate their services in order to fulfill the request that come from the most disadvantaged categories such as refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, lone women and youth. Integ.r.a. tried to involve other local institutions as Provinces and Regions for the specific competencies, functions and roles they have in the creation of an integrated system of services for the inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees.

In this perspective Integ.r.a. involved all the labour market actors that deal with asylum seekers and refugees for the first time, but that, on the other hand, have the knowledge, the skills and the tools to provide them with proper vocational training for the inclusion in the labour market. Protection organisations and Municipalities lack the mentioned expertise and competences, but can provide the actors of the labour market with their knowledge and tools in the social field.

The obvious conclusion is that only an effective connection among all the public and private bodies aiming at providing proper responses can help refugees and asylum seekers to interact and develop their capacities, potentialities and competences.

4.6 Recommendations

The experience gained by Integ.r.a. project proves that the necessary synergy among the Regions and local bodies and the actors of the public and private sectors in the labour market can be endorsed with a limited effort, as their tasks are part of their formal competences. No extra tasks or burdens need to be put on their shoulders, no extra human or financial resources are needed; all that is needed is an effort in the activities planning and in the implementa-

tion of a set of rules that can lead to common guidelines for governance and intervention, agreed upon by all the institution at local, national and European level.

4.6.1. Local level

The main task at this level is to promote the coordination and the cooperation in the activities planning among the three basic local levels: Regions, Provinces and Municipalities.

4.6.2 Regional level

At this institutional level, a sector planning should be endorsed through:

- a) the use of available European Funds such as structural funds and ESF;
- b) the implementation and structuring of discussion with Provinces and Municipalities;
- d) the implementation of specific means, as data bases, to facilitate supply/demand matching, and the implementation of local mapping about needs and actors.

Furthermore, the need exists to:

- reduce or eliminate all the obstacles that stop the forecast total transferring of competences from the regional to the local government on the basis of the principle of equal dignity, co-operation, subsidiarity and responsibility;
- continue the process of defining Regions and Local bodies tasks and functions, both in relation to their ruling power and to the administrative tasks in the fields of labour and training;
- develop mechanisms of cooperation and decision making between Regions and Local bodies in the areas of professional training and inclusion in the labour market, with specific reference to asylum seekers and refugees, even through rules and operative protocols between Regions and local bodies as it happened in Emilia-Romagna. ("Protocol of agreement concerning

asylum seekers and refugees” between Emilia Romagna Region and Local bodies);

- implement the fiscal federalism even in the fields of training and labour, providing the local bodies involved with administrative functions and with enough funding to develop actions in this sector;
- develop and co-ordinate ordinary labour policies with social actions aiming at facilitating the socio-economical cohesion of refugees and asylum seekers.

The Conference of the Presidents of the Regions and of Autonomous Provinces could represent another institutional place where administrative and legislative measures in favour of refugees and asylum seekers could be discussed and agreed upon. The Province of Bolzano, for example, has developed very interesting rules and practices in the field of integration of refugees and asylum seekers which could be adopted by other areas.

4.6.3 Provincial and Municipal level

If the main law assigns the ruling to the Regions and the specific addressing and planning functions to the Provinces, then the co-ordinating functions and powers, the management and the local administration should be a task of the Municipalities.

In this perspective the Provinces should:

- Exercise their role of wide co-ordination and *trait d'union* between the different experiences of the Municipalities and the ruling and planning power of the Regions, even in the field of asylum seekers and refugees interaction;
- Plan interventions which can improve, integrate and strengthen the relation between the different labour market actors, in order to understand each other's needs and the needs of potential work suppliers such as refugees and asylum seekers, and get organized in order to cancel the relational deficit in this area;
- Forecast incentives for companies in terms of investing resources addressed to the organization of training and to the

co-planning of training programs, together with the Provincial Centers for Employment, partnership of categories, co-operatives, public training centers and all the other actors responsible for providing the services;

- raise awareness, among the Municipalities of the area, so that they would take up actions in the field of integration of refugees and asylum seekers;
- increase the co-ordination between the Provincial Centers for Employment and train their personnel on the issue of asylum and on the differences between asylum seekers, refugees and humanitarian protégées.

Municipalities, instead, should:

- develop a network between private and public actors, involving: Permanent Territorial Centres, Training bodies, Companies, NGO for guidance and support, schools, temporary working agencies, municipality services (and different departments), COL, Provincial Employment Centers, Police-headquarters, Prefectures and all the other actors that can play an active role in the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers and in developing social cohesion in the area;
- develop services that support the process of inclusion of disadvantaged categories in the labour market: refugees, asylum seekers, foreigners, women, young people, disable people, etc.;
- experiment tools, such as skills auditing and certification, training courses, writing c.v. following the European standard, etc., which can facilitate the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in the labour market;
- develop a specific guidance service for asylum seekers, in order to fill the initial gap that asylum seekers and refugees have in their inclusion programme;
- promote the use of training courses addressed to refugees and asylum seekers, through the implementation of conventions among Municipalities, Provincial Centers for Employment and employers;

- multiply the agreements, protocols and conventions between local bodies and Permanent Territorial Centers in the whole area, in order to promote the literacy and the learning of Italian as second language in a structured and professional way.

The private actors of the local labour market should increase the use of the available public tools in the fields of inclusion in the labour market and training, keeping themselves updated with the local planning decided by the Municipality, the co-ordinating activity of the Province and the role of addressing and giving input to the Region.

4.7. National level

As mentioned above, Italy is still lacking on the issue of asylum seekers. The reform of the labour market, as well as the implementation of the devolution, have not been completed yet. Therefore, the need exists of:

- An outline act on asylum, which includes the definition of workfare for the socio-economical inclusion through a clear definition of refugees and asylum seekers' rights and duties;
- specify in the outline act a definite timing for the refugee status recognition;
- include *ad hoc* funding for inclusion;
- start up a harmonizing process of all the existing dispositions and resources on the issue;
- fully implement Lisbon Convention as far as the recognition of the educational level, so that the Italian labour market can benefit of all the skills held by refugees;
- give space to a common discussion on the complex system of integrated social services working in the area, in order to launch *local welfare* policies. The implementation is needed of planning guidelines that aim at creating an integrated system of social and employment services and actions. The local bodies can play a specific role and contribute to the discussion highlighting the implementation tools as well as the financial resources needed

- to define, along with the other actors of the area, the strategic aims which lead to active policies of *welfare*;
- carry out the division of competences, defined by the constitutional law, in the field of education, vocational training and labour, aiming at realizing a system of services which can facilitate the access to work and guide even refugees and asylum seekers during their working life;
 - implement local and national informatics system which can facilitate the supply/demand of work matching;
 - analyze, with the support of experts, the possibilities offered by the so called “Biagi law”, to develop and materialize the new possibilities of inclusion in the labour market of refugees and asylum seekers;

4.8. European Level

Europe should continue pointing out that asylum policies and the development of employment strategies should be harmonized. In this perspective Europe should:

- forecast funding addressed to the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in the European programs funded by the European Structural Fund or by the ESF;
- pay more attention, in the programs funded by structural funds or by ESF, to this particularly disadvantaged category in the labour market;
- promote a body that could observe, monitor, evaluate the European experiences in the field of inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers. The aim is to organize an ongoing and structured exchange of information and data, a task that nowadays is accomplished by limited networks created among the States, which spread out information and good practices;
- grant the refugees and asylum seekers the access to language training in all the member states, maximizing the use of existing public education structures;

- develop a certification process concerning the hosting country language knowledge, and promote the official recognition of this qualification along with the education institution of the countries (on the bases of the “Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching and evaluating”, of the Council of Europe, modern languages unit);
- create a clear link among language and vocational training in the perspective of professional inclusion or of the return to the country of origin of refugees and asylum seekers;
- grant the refugees and asylum seekers the access, in all member states, to training courses in the existing public institutions;
- develop a national and European certificate of refugees and asylum seekers’ skills and experiences;
- develop a system of recognition of the profession asylum seekers and refugees were carrying out in their countries;
- grant the asylum seekers the access to the labour market, in a specific time-length and with due protection, avoiding ambiguous and vague situations as the one included in the Directive on the Minimum Hosting Standard.

The experience acquired with Integ.r.a. project highlights that a general commitment is needed to make headway in the field of the right of asylum in Italy, as well as in the process of inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in the society, thus developing social cohesion and a fruitful exchange: institutions, labour organisations, actors of the labour market, training and education, as well as the third sector have to be involved.

5. Conclusions

In Italy, the level of protection of refugees and asylum seekers is still unsatisfactory in spite of the efforts done both at the institutional level and by the third sector organisations dealing with their protection. Starting from 1998, when the requests of asylum dramatically increased, all the efforts focused on the creation of a National Hosting System, designated as an absolute priority for our country: as a consequence refugees and asylum seekers were still excluded by the processes of socio-professional inclusion. As a matter of facts, while the quality of the hosting and care services devoted to refugees and asylum seekers within the protection system (former Art. 32, Law 189/02) is achieving high quality levels, the co-operation with the social inclusion and territorial integration networks and with other public and private bodies is still missing, being the latter generally quite far away from the asylum system.

The main obstacles to an effective social inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers are the following:

- *Lack of an organic law on asylum* that would contemplate their rights and duties. This lack currently affects the planning of any structured action by the competent institutions because there are no clear indications on the possible actions to carry out.
- *A limited interest showed by the central and local institutions to this problematic* because of the scarce quantitative relevance of this issue, its delicacy and the difficulties of the problems raised up by the inclusion process of this category of foreign citizens and finally because this theme has a very poor importance from the political and electoral point of view.
- *The inadequacy of most of the services supplied at local level*, because they are non-specific, weak, underdeveloped and scarcely integrated among them, rarely belonging to networks and managed by unskilled or inadequately trained workers. As a matter of facts, services already offered at local level are not enough exploited and never framed in an integrated system meant to create a network to support refugees and asylum seek-

ers as well as those who work in this sector in order to facilitate a plan of action by the relevant institutions.

- *Limited financial resources available to Municipalities* to tackle the problem because of a general reduction of investments on the welfare state as a consequence of the allocation of the public resources to cover other items considered as a priority.
- *Poor knowledge of the theme by the central Institutions and the public opinion*, this is due to the lack of available data, a poor qualitative analysis on skills and competencies held by refugees and asylum seekers, for the lack of co-ordination and an inadequate dissemination of information by the concerned institutions.

Integ.r.a. developed actions meant to remove or minimize the obstacles analysed above in order to facilitate, support and strengthen the possibilities of a full and aware inclusion in the labour market of refugees and asylum seekers.

The activities developed to tackle the mentioned problems were:

- in relation to *the lack of an organic law on asylum*: the project implemented strong mainstreaming actions, raising awareness at national and local level activities and the dissemination of data on the possibilities to start professional inclusion pathways for refugees and asylum seekers. Through these activities, the project tried to lobby on those policy makers involved in the re-organisation and outline of new rules in this sector. The project and its partners developed a co-ordinated action to influence the current draft of acts (the Regulation enforcing the law 189/02, the Regulation enforcing the European Directive on minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers, and the draft of the law on right of asylum) with the request of provisions that would take into account the needs of the sector in the field of inclusion and meant to support the full enforcement of the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.
- in relation to the *limited interest showed by the central and local institutions to this problematic*, the project wanted to identify and understand this theme both in quantitative terms and in socio-

political process terms through institutional meetings and technical publications devoted to a variety of stakeholders (such as Municipalities belonging to the Protection System, the Italian Members of Parliament or those who work on these issues at local level), in order to raise a full and correct awareness of the problem among local and central institutions and finally suggesting some operative possibilities that turned to be successful during the development of the Integ.r.a. project.

- in relation to the *inadequacy of most of the services supplied at local level*: there is an evident need to strengthen, specialise and integrate the services supplied at local level to answer to those needs expressed by refugees and asylum seekers through actions performed at different levels. The project aimed at delivering proper training to the public civil servants in order to: a) improve the skills of the single civil servants, b) give them the tools to plan networking strategies of local development c) give them indications on the best tools to contact the organisations and the services delivered at local level that could help them to outline tools and actions meant to cater the needs of the target group of the project. Substantially, a support to a networking action was provided.
- The *Limited financial resources available to Municipalities* to start effective actions in the field represent a clear fact. This is why, technical assistance was offered to public administrations on possible institutional fund raising activities that could ensure regular funds for the development of the actions instead of extraordinary allocations of funds that often represents a limitation of the autonomy and potentialities of the Local Governments. There has been a lobby action towards central institutions, through targeted mainstreaming activities (publications, conferences, meetings with representatives of institutions), in order to advocate a proper allocation of ordinary financial resources to start active policies for the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers such as enlarging the capacity of the

National Fund for Policies and Services for Asylum, that could adequately cover these features of the future law on asylum.

- *The poor knowledge of the theme causes difficulties in targeting the actions and leads to false opinions and dangerous prejudices*: we tried to disseminate information and raise awareness on this theme, targeting those people who are normally not interested in these matters, through the planning of specific actions performed by some of our specialised partners throughout the whole project.

All the processes mentioned above, started from the concept of *the central position of the individual*, refugee or asylum seeker, and aimed at outlining with them the best solutions to support their pathway of inclusion in the Italian society. To achieve these aims, several tools were selected and tested such as the skill assessment and its certification, training apprenticeship periods, the draft of the CVs as well as the support in finding an independent accommodation, contributions for lodging expenses and the financial supports while attending the courses. During each stage, beneficiaries were guided and made aware of their skills and professional wishes, but they were also affected by the surrounding lack of rules and limited civilisation level that still slow down the efforts towards a full capacity of inclusion.

The other pillar of the action of Integ.r.a. was the *start up of the network*. A network that involves several bodies at all levels, from the central co-ordination to the grass-root level and vice versa, developing the co-operation between the public and the private sector in order to exchange information, skills and experiences carried out. Among the other tasks, the network merges roles, functions and powers in order to start a structured system of integrated services, of a public nature but supported by the private sector in order to give better chances of sustainability to both of them, when the project will end up.

The efforts of the project and of the EU initiative EQUAL should mostly be taken in charge by the whole civil society. In order to

“fight the social exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers supporting their professional inclusion and satisfying their housing needs”, the following objectives and actions shall be pursued:

1. an improvement of the quality of the complementary services related to reception that in our country must be enlarged and consolidate according to the European Directives to be enforced.
2. our Government then, must necessarily increase the resources to support the National Protection System and give it the chance to work properly. These funding should be also allocated to actions to support the socio-economical inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers.
3. the promotion of innovative strategies that favours the access to information for refugees and asylum seekers through a networking action and the co-ordination of already existing organisations, tools and resources.
4. the adaptation of services for professional inclusion to the needs and specificities of refugees and asylum seekers: they should be more and more integrated with support social services and those taking care of individuals and their needs.
5. the development of a thorough analysis leading to redraft and encourage housing policies in order to provide the necessary tools at all levels in the medium and long term.
6. the outline of active policies at national and local level for the socio economical inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers able to identify all the key elements (recognition of educational qualifications, access to linguistic and vocational training, access to the labour market and professional rolls, access to housing, etc.).
7. the dissemination of good practices and innovative tools such as the skill assessment and its certification successfully tested on refugees and asylum seekers by the Integ.r.a. for the first time in Italy

8. the standardization and organization of the experiences carried out, skills and resources at local level with a view to their transferability at national and trans-national level.
9. the commitment and the co-operation among Regional Governments and Local Governments (Provinces, Municipalities) meant to start a decentralized and networked action system planning the regular policies of this sector: each body will act according to its competencies, functions, roles and powers held.
10. the development of a link between the systems of services delivered at local level and wider national network of integrated services in favour of disadvantaged categories of citizens.

Anci is among the partners of the project submitted to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies in the framework of phase II of the EU Initiative EQUAL. The project is titled IntegRARsi and will gather the experiences carried out and the results achieved by Integ.r.a. trying to speed up the processes described above and all those that were identified but not tackled by Integ.r.a. during this first test phase.

Partners of Integ.r.a. Project:

ANCI

CENSIS

UNHCR

Municipalities: Ancona, Bergamo, Bitonto, Catania, Forlì, Genova, Roma.

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