

DELIVERABLE D.T1.1.2

In depth study of refugee policies and
practices of the five cities involved - Bologna

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1. Overview of national asylum policies

1.1 Introduction: Asylum policy and politics

Although the 1948 Constitution recognizes the right of asylum¹, international protection played a minor role within the Italian legislative context for a long time. After decades of inaction, some marginal policy changes were enacted in the 2000s, foremost upon the input of the European Union (EU). Three EU Directives concerning the reception of asylum-seekers and the conditions for granting international protection were indeed transposed into national laws in the 2005-2008 period.² For instance, the ‘typical’ refugee status – shaped on the 1951 Geneva Convention – was deemed insufficient to ensure sanctuary to all individuals fleeing wars and persecutions. Subsidiary and humanitarian protection were then introduced as additional forms of asylum. As for integration policies, the SPRAR (*Sistema di Protezione Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati* – Protection System for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees) was first enacted in 2002,³ but on a very limited scale (Campomori 2019: 11-2). Within this rudimentary framework, undocumented immigrants often opted to settle by ‘overstaying’ and waiting for mass amnesties, rather than seeking asylum.

However, following the political upheavals that erupted in Northern Africa and the Middle East in late 2010 (the ‘Arab Spring’), vast numbers of migrants landed in Europe or lost their lives trying to. Italy received 646,117 migrants between 2014 and 2018 (*Figure 1*). International protection thus gained importance as a potential door to entry and the administrative system in place rapidly showed its deficiencies (Caponio & Cappiali 2018). Yet, in February 2017, Libya’s Government of National Accord and the Italian executive, in cooperation with the EU, signed deals to externalise immigration control outside the continent. The sea route from Libya to Italy has been gradually closed since then.

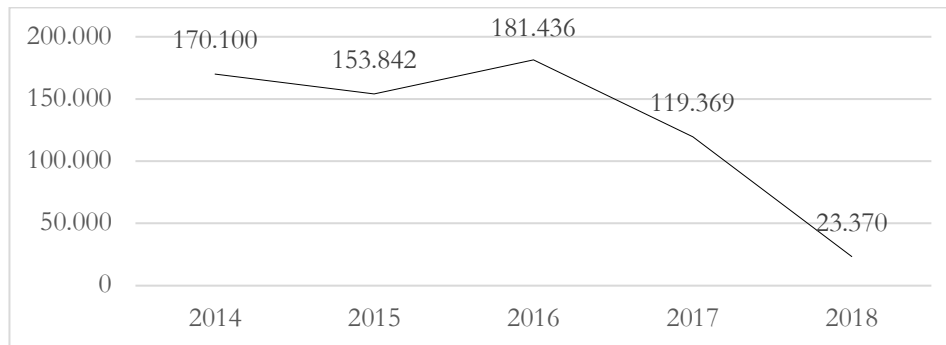
¹ Article 10.3.

² Directive 2003/9/EC transposed into Decree Law no. 140/2005; Directive 2004/83/EC, transposed into Decree Law 251/2007; Directive 2005/85/EC, transposed into Decree Law 24/2008.

³ Law 189/2002.



Figure 1. Number of migrants arriving in Italy by sea, 2014–18.



Source: UNHCR, ‘*Refugee situations*’. Available online at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>

Overall, the ‘refugee crisis’ resulted in humanitarian emergencies and fragmented patterns of settlement across the continent. Drawing on the thesis popularized by Castles (2004), the responses enacted by the EU and its Member States can be regarded as ‘policy failures’. Among the most problematic aspects of the EU Common European Asylum System is the Dublin Regulation. It establishes that asylum-seekers should submit their protection request in the first country of arrival, which is then responsible for the procedure. Aimed at preventing applications in multiple jurisdictions, the rule eventually resulted in social unrest in South European ‘frontline’ states, where migrants have been forced to request sanctuary (Campomori 2018: 430). Rising levels of policing at the borders of neighbouring countries – especially Germany, Austria, France, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark – further exacerbated this scenario and *de facto* nullified the principle of free movement within the Schengen area (Scipioni 2018: 1368). In 2015 the EU launched a relocation mechanism to resettle migrants across member states and uncork the legislative bottleneck, yet this achieved negligible results in terms of implementation (European Commission 2018).

In face of these dynamics, the politicization of immigration skyrocketed in Italy (Castelli Gattinara 2017b). The central government, while being led by centre-left coalitions in the 2013-18 period, embraced a restrictive discourse on asylum. With far-right forces on the rise, national incumbents partly conformed to the security-oriented discourse of their opponents as a defensive strategy. This is well-epitomized by their approach to search-and-rescue (SaR) operations in the Central Mediterranean. In 2014, *Mare Nostrum* (Our Sea) – a large-scale operation with both humanitarian and military purposes led by the Italian Navy – was dismissed and replaced by *Triton*, conducted by the EU agency Frontex. *Triton* had a more limited budget and a mandate focused on border control rather than rescue (Caponio & Cappiali 2018: 118-9). Assorted NGOs then began to enact SaR operations so as to fill in for this policy void, but their agency has been increasingly



obstructed. The Minister of Interior Marco Minniti (2017-18) introduced a controversial Code of Conduct that imposed highly restrictive conditions on NGOs' humanitarian action.⁴ This was justified on the ground of a Frontex's document⁵ asserting that SaR operations allegedly work as a pull factor for those fleeing Libya (Campomori 2018: 433).

Anti-immigration politics reached a new peak with the 2018 general elections, which gave rise to the Cabinet Conte I (2018-19), supported by a coalition between the ideologically eclectic Five Star Movement and the far-right League. As newly appointed Minister of Interior, Matteo Salvini enacted a hard-line policy agenda, especially by adopting the 'Security Decree' and the 'Security Decree II',⁶ in fact aimed at restricting asylum rights and criminalizing migrants and their supporters—as the next sections will show in greater detail.

1.2 Forms and procedures of international protections

Italian law provides three forms of international protection, namely the *refugee status* (five years), *subsidiary protection* (five years), and *special protection* (one year). The latter was introduced by the 'Security Decree' in late 2018 as a replacement of *humanitarian protection* and marked a significant tightening of asylum rights. While humanitarian protection guaranteed a longer residence permit (two years) and covered a broad range of cases, the new form of protection is granted on the grounds of extremely specific conditions—including the urgent need of medical treatments, the accomplishment of acts of exceptional civil values, and risks related to natural disasters. Moreover, while allowing to access the labour market, the special protection status cannot be converted into a work-related residence permit, with major implications in terms of integration prospects.

Approximately 70,000 migrants are expected to be illegalized by 2020 as a direct consequence of the 'Security Decree'.⁷ The relative majority of 'successful' asylum applicants were indeed entitled with a humanitarian permit (e.g. ~25% in 2017)—a figure that is going to decrease drastically due to the more restrictive criteria of the newly-introduced special protection. Also, already issued humanitarian permits cannot be renovated.

⁴ 'Codice di condotta per le ONG impegnate nelle operazioni di salvataggio dei migranti in mare', see: http://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/codice_condotta_ong.pdf

⁵ See https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/risk_Analysis/Annual_risk_Analysis_2017.pdf

⁶ Decree-Law 113/2018 and Decree-Law 53/2019.

⁷ See <https://twitter.com/emmevilla/status/1067143398589702144> and <https://twitter.com/emmevilla/status/1183775766179385346>.



Other significant flaws in the Italian asylum governance are related to the evaluation of asylum applications. As reported by Campomori (2018: 430-2), the verdict on asylum requests takes 307 days on average, with additional ten months in the case an appeal is filed. The main authorities in charge of these procedures – the *Commissioni territoriali per il riconoscimento della protezione internazionale* (Territorial Commissions for the Recognition of International Protection) – are chronically overloaded due to their limited administrative capacities. This is testified, for instance, by the difference between the annual number of asylum requests and the annual number of decisions. 105,571 applications were indeed pending the end of 2018 (see the statistical section). The saturation of *Commissioni* is also due to the establishment of the EU Hotspot System in 2015, as migrants can more hardly reach their preferred destinations in northern Europe before submitting their asylum requests.

In February 2017, as alleged remedy to these lacunae, the left-leaning Cabinet Gentiloni adopted the so-called ‘Orlando-Minniti’ Decree,⁸ which reduced the rooms for filing an appeal and thus the workload of convening authorities. It should be noted that the number of ‘bogus’ asylum-seekers is much lower than rejection rates would suggest. For instance, in 2016, roughly half of rejected asylum-seekers that filed an appeal succeed in having their verdict overturned (cf. SPRAR 2016). This means that the ‘Orlando-Minniti’ Decree, by making asylum procedures more efficient, *de facto* denied the right of international protection to numerous eligible applicants.

1.3 Asylum reception and integration

In the 2014-15 period, spurred by the rising number of asylum-seekers reaching South European shores, Italian authorities made some steps toward a stable and far-reaching reception system (Campomori 2019: 12-3). This reform process culminated with the so-called ‘Reception Decree’,⁹ crafted on the basis of a previous agreement between national, regional, and local authorities,¹⁰ as well as asylum-related EU Directives.¹¹ The new law clarified the jurisdictional ecology of asylum-seekers reception, i.e. by allocating competencies to different actors and levels of government (see the next section) and dividing the reception process into three stages:

⁸ Converted into Law 46/2017.

⁹ Decree Law no. 142/2015.

¹⁰ Conferenza Unificata, July 10, 2014, see: http://www.prefettura.it/venezia/contenuti/Intesa_tra_stato_regioni_ed_enti_locali_territoriali_10.7.2014-156822.htm

¹¹ Directives 2013/32/EU and 2013/33/EU.



1. *First aid and assistance.* These operations concern the access to the national territory and are normally carried out where disembarkations occur. The main facilities in charge of these tasks are the CPSA (*Centri di Primo Soccorso e Accoglienza* – First Aid and Reception Centres), which also execute identification procedures by formally working as EU ‘Hotspots’. As reported by the AIDA report (2019: 93), four CPSA were operational at the end of 2018, all located in southern Italy (Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Messina, and Taranto). Asylum-seekers normally stay in such centres for several days or weeks before moving to the second stage of reception.
2. *First reception.* This stage is managed by national authorities through three kinds of facilities, namely the CARA (*Centri di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo* – Reception Centres for Asylum-Seekers), the CDA (*Centri di Accoglienza* – Reception Centres), and the CAS (*Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria* – Emergency Accommodation Centres). The latter were supposed to work as an exceptional, short-term solution to complement the ordinary system in cases of its temporary saturation. However, they have eventually covered the lion’s share of migrant reception. This ‘ad hoc’ measure shows shortcomings concerning the quality of reception. CAS centres are often large-sized, hosting hundreds of guests, and located in urban outskirts or other peripheral areas. Beside basic provisions, more sophisticated services are largely absent.¹² As repeatedly reported by civil society organisations (e.g. Cittadinanza Attiva 2016; MEDU 2016), the CAS model is characterized by several pitfalls, including low standards of service provision, scarce transparency in decisional procedures, and persistent criminal infiltrations.
3. *Second-line reception.* As mentioned above, the ordinary instrument for integration is the SPRAR. These facilities – normally small-scale reception centres tied to local communities – provide a holistic set of services for tackling multiple vulnerabilities. In addition to the immediate needs to be met, the SPRAR aims at individual empowerment in the longer-term through ‘Individualised Training Programmes’. For such reasons, it is widely recognised as a valuable policy instrument.

¹² For more details on employment-related services, see AIDA (2019: 102-3).



Table 1 displays the number of asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection settled in each kind of reception facility at the end of 2018.

Table 1. Number of asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in reception centres, 2018

Hotspots	First reception centres	CAS	SIPROIMI (ex-SPRAR)	Total
453 (0.03%)	8,990 (5.18%)	138,503 (79.78%)	25,657 (14.78%)	173,603 (100%)

Source: La Voce, 'Ecco le cifre dell'accoglienza in Italia', January 29, 2019. Available online at: <https://www.lavoce.info/archives/57325/ecco-le-cifre-dellaccoglienza-in-italia/>

Although characterized by major lacunae, the 2015 'Reception Decree' marked a significant improvement for asylum governance in Italy, considering that policy provisions were virtually non-existing beforehand. In 2018, however, the 'Security Decree' dismantled many of these governance arrangements. Except for unaccompanied minors, only successful asylum applicants can now access the SPRAR system – then renamed SIPROIMI¹³ – meaning that the second-line reception of asylum-seekers has been cancelled. By drawing a line of demarcation between asylum-seekers with pending applications and beneficiaries of international protection, first-line and second-line reception *de facto* became two parallel, unconnected reception systems. Relatedly, as only a minority of asylum applications are successful (e.g. the rejection rate was 68% in 2018, see the statistical section), the 'Security Decree' drastically curtailed the most 'virtuous' component of the Italian asylum system—the SPRAR.

In addition, the 'Security Decree' further deteriorated the already deficient quality standards of the first reception system. Following the introduction of new tender specifications (*capitolato d'appalto*), the financial resources allocated per each asylum-seeker were drastically curtailed (from €35 to €21). This forced providers to opt for large-scale reception facilities and diminish the range of available services (AIDA 2019: 84-5). As compared to the 2017 *capitolato*, services related to the orientation to local services, Italian language courses, professional training, leisure, psychological assistance,¹⁴ and support for vulnerable individuals became non-eligible costs. Also, resources devoted to legal support and cultural mediation were reduced and the opportunity of engaging in voluntary activities in favour of local communities was eliminated. In sum, the

¹³ *Sistema di Protezione per Titolari di Protezione Internazionale e Minori Stranieri Non Accompagnati* - Protection System for Beneficiaries of International Protection and Unaccompanied Foreign Minors.

¹⁴ Psychological services are now operative in detention centres (CPR) and Hotspots only.



‘Security Decree’ enacted a ‘minimalistic’ and emergency-driven conception of international protection, ultimately shrinking the rights of asylum-seekers as well as their integration prospects.

1.4 The multi-level governance of asylum

By dividing the reception system into three stages, the 2015 ‘Reception Decree’ also attributed different competencies to institutional actors at different levels of governance:

- The first two stages of reception (*first aid and assistance* and *first reception*) are under the jurisdiction of the central government. The Ministry of Interior and its local branches, the prefectures (*prefettura*), manage implementation centrally and then outsource services to private actors, usually NGOs and hotels. The role of local institutions is thus very limited.
- Differently, *second-line reception* – basically consisting of the SPRAR/SIPROIMI system – is enacted by local governments, which design and realize integration programs in cooperation with civil society organisations. The main flaw of this governance arrangement is its voluntary implementation mechanism. Municipalities may decide whether to apply for the Ministry of the Interior’s public calls. This encourages free-riding by reluctant mayors and an uneven settlement of migrants across the country. Although the Italian government allocated growing financial resources to second-line reception in the 2015-17 period, only 1,200 municipalities (out of almost 8,000) joined the scheme (Campomori 2018: 432-3).

There is an additional aspect to be considered, however. The municipalities that refrained from joining the SPRAR/SIPROIMI system can still be involved in asylum reception, insofar as central authorities might locate a CAS centre on their territory without their consent.¹⁵ This resulted in several cases of inter-institutional conflicts.

As the 2018 ‘Security Decree’ significantly narrowed the scope of the SPRAR/SIPROIMI system, the role of local governments in asylum governance has been limited too. All asylum-seekers – except for unaccompanied minors – are indeed hosted in centrally-managed reception centres. Paradoxically, however, local governments now shoulder a greater burden of migrant integration. As both the quality and the variety of services for asylum-seekers was lowered, local governments are often forced to respond to social needs of which they are neither competent nor

¹⁵ The 2018 ‘Security Decree’, however, provided that CAS centres can be opened only once local authorities are consulted.



funded for. The same holds for undocumented migrants, whose number is expected to significantly increase due to the more restrictive criteria of special protection as compared to humanitarian one. Finally, as the ‘Security Decree’ prohibited the registration of asylum-seekers in the municipal census (*registrazione anagrafica*), the identification of competent municipalities in the realm of welfare services is now more complicated (Campomori 2019: 18-9). All these aspects are breeding further conflicts among institutions and levels of government—as the case of ‘rebel mayors’ in January 2019 clearly illustrated.¹⁶

As the multi-level governance concept entails both vertical and horizontal dimensions (Bache & Flinders 2004), the role of non-state actors in asylum policies has to be also considered. First, reception and integration services are normally contracted-out to both for-profit and non-profit organisations. The latter also intervene at the stage of policy formulation in the case of the SPRAR/SIPROIMI system (see above). Moreover, amid growing local contestation over asylum issues, social initiatives *by, in solidarity with, and against* migrants proliferated in recent years. Pro-migrant actors often engage in both social volunteering and political activism, meaning that welfare services are both provided and advocated by civil society organizations—either in cooperation with or on behalf of the state. Non-state actors, in fact, enact practices of ‘welfare from below’ as a response to state failures or tightening policies (Bazurli 2019; Zamponi 2017). Anti-immigrant groups also staged intense mobilisations, for instance in order to prevent the placement of reception centres (Castelli Gattinara 2017a). The relationship of local governments with such groups ranged from cooperation to obstruction, also depending on ideological considerations. The ‘battleground’ metaphor well-depicts multi-level governance of asylum as a site of contrasting forces that seek to either expand or restrict the rights of forced migrants (Ambrosini 2018).

In sum, Italy experienced major societal transformation during the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ of the 2010s, with almost 700,000 migrants reaching its southern shores in the last five years. Humanitarian emergencies thus mushroomed in the country as a consequence of poor and restrictive asylum governance at EU and national level. In the 2014-15 period, Italian authorities responded by enacting important – albeit insufficient – reforms. Asylum reception was organized in three main stages and relevant rooms for autonomy were granted to local governments in the realm of integration policies. With the rise of anti-immigrant forces and sentiments, however,

¹⁶ See <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lesterfeder/sanctuary-city-movement-europe-italy-salvini-immigrants> and <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lesterfeder/italy-regions-anti-immigrant-salvini-constituional-court>.



policymakers pushed for an increasingly restrictive approach to international protection. This trend culminated with the appointment of Matteo Salvini as Minister of Interior in June 2018. The ‘Security Decree’ – one of his flagship initiatives – dismantled relevant components of the governance arrangements built over the previous years, while sensibly compressing the rights of forced migrants. The Decree indeed restricted the criteria for accessing international protection and lowered the quality standards of integration provisions. Consequently, local governments now have to cope with the needs of a highly precarious population while having shrinking resources at their disposal to do so.

2. Origin, development and consolidation of refugee policy-making at regional/local level

2.1. The regional level

The Italian system of refugee policy-making doesn’t include regions among actors that can legislate about this topic. Although regions have a specific domain in promulgating norms about several subjects strictly connected with refugees, such as education or health, they have no voice in the field of immigration.

Following data collected in the report of Idos¹⁷, at the 1st December 2017 there were 13.990 asylum seekers and refugees hosted in Emilia Romagna region: 12.193 in CAS, 1.367 in SPRAR and 430 in first reception centres.

At the end of December 2017¹⁸, Emilia Romagna could count 1.539 places in SPRAR projects, widespread in all provinces, even though there were big differences about numbers: Bologna had 600 places, Parma had 206 places, Ferrara had 177 places, Modena 175, Ravenna and Rimini, both had 102 places, Forli-Cesena had 81 places, Reggio Emilia 75 and Piacenza 21 places.

The ten nationalities more represented were: Nigeria (382 people), Gambia (326 people), Pakistan, Somalia, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Afghanistan, Ivory Coast and Ghana. Refugees were mostly men (89%), while unaccompanied minors were 11,2%, in constant growth from 2014¹⁹.

¹⁷ <https://www.dossierimmigrazione.it/>

¹⁸ 31.12.2017

¹⁹ Emilia Romagna Region data. <https://sociale.regione.emilia-romagna.it/immigrati-e-stranieri/temi/richiedenti-asilo-e-rifugiati-1>

2.2. The local (city) level

The Municipality of Bologna, and its metropolitan hinterland, has a long tradition related to hospitality. In fact, since the 1990s, several services have been created for immigration, based on the criterion of the double access channel, therefore diversified between Italian and foreign citizens, in order to respond to the specific needs of the latter (which are certainly different from both a cultural and legal point of view as compared to the resident population). Over the years, on the other hand, the Municipality has opted for the creation of a unified access channel: the competences of the previous services connected to immigration have been therefore acquired by the standard municipal services, with the support of linguistic and cultural mediators.

More recently, targeted territorial actions were organized to address the issue of managing asylum seekers contextually with the Balkan migration crisis, and to cope with the 2012 North Africa emergency. In particular, negotiation tables were set up to involve technicians and politicians at the metropolitan level. In these occasions, a "widespread reception model" had started to be privileged, based on the idea that a form of reception in small facilities scattered throughout the province had to be adopted, rather than opting for the concentration of people in large reception centers.

Over the last few decades, therefore, the role of local authorities on the subject of initial reception and integration has been progressively strengthened. The Municipalities of the metropolitan area have in fact began to deal in an increasingly structural way to address the problems relating to the reception and inclusion of foreign adults and unaccompanied minors, including applicants and holders of international protection. In particular, since 2004, the Municipality of Bologna has joined the SPRAR network. Since then its projects have seen, over the years, the adhesion of the other Municipalities of the metropolitan area. This way, the activation of SPRAR reception facilities on the territories of these Municipalities has been possible, with the latter that started to collaborate in defining and implementing inclusion paths for accepted refugees and applicants for international protection.



Table 2. Number of permits for asylum applicants, refugee conventional protection and other types of protection in Bologna

Permits for applicants in 2017	Permits for Refugee status	Permits for Subsidiary protection	Permits for Humanitarian protection	Tot
2.811	503	1.108	760	5.182

Source: Emilia-Romagna Region <https://sociale.regione.emilia-romagna.it/immigrati-e-stranieri/temi/richiedenti-asilo-e-rifugiati-1#manitaria-in-emilia-rom>

Table 3. Ten main nationalities in the permits for asylum applicants, refugee conventional protection and other types of protection in Emilia-Romagna Region

	Permits for applicants in 2017	Permits for Refugee status	Permits for Subsidiary protection	Permits for Humanitarian protection
1	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria
2	Pakistan	Pakistan	Afghanistan	Gambia
3	Bangladesh	Eritrea	Pakistan	Mali
4	Gambia	Syria	Somalia	Pakistan
5	Ivory Coast	Somalia	Mali	Senegal
6	Senegal	Afghanistan	Eritrea	Ukraine
7	Mali	Iran	Ukraine	Bangladesh
8	Guinea	Cameroon	Ivory Coast	Ghana
9	Ghana	Serbia	Kosovo	Ivory Coast
10	Ukraine	Ivory Coast	Ghana	Guinea

Source: Emilia-Romagna Region <https://sociale.regione.emilia-romagna.it/immigrati-e-stranieri/temi/richiedenti-asilo-e-rifugiati-1#manitaria-in-emilia-rom>

All of these actions, implemented from the Nineties to the middle of this decade, have led the way to the creation and consolidation of a new and peculiar reception system that sets the Bolognese case apart not from the rest of the Italian context, but also from the more general European panorama. Its originality is linked to the implementation of a SPRAR model managed at the metropolitan city's level instead of by single municipalities, along with the CAS transformation into SPRAR. This metropolitan SPRAR project was proposed by the Municipality of Bologna and then joined by 43 Municipalities of the metropolitan area, 23 of which through the Unions of Municipalities to which they belonged. These various local bodies «agreed to address the reception of applicants for international protection in their own territory in programmatic terms and to overcome the phase of emergency reception, supporting the development of a widespread system of integration actions, closely linked to territorial communities». Contextually to the signing of the agreement, in the first half of 2017, there has also been an increase of places up to 1350 for



"ordinary reception" (i.e. the reception of applicants / holders of international protection or humanitarian permit) and 350 for the reception of foreign adults and unaccompanied minors.

2.3. Discussion

The analysis of the origin, development and consolidation of refugee policy-making in Bologna has provided useful information to better understand the role of the different levels of government involved in the management of refugee policy at the local level. In fact, both the long tradition of strong and stable inter-institutional collaboration and the great sensitivity and attention shown to the issue by civil society have made the most general dysfunctionality deriving from governmental interventions both at the net of the same national asylum policy framework in recent years described in the previous paragraph.

In fact, starting from the beginning of this decade, a metropolitan-based SPRAR system began to be designed, creating a widespread reception model that pivoted on a regional hub based in Bologna as a place for the first landing. At the same time, the idea of a reception spread in the whole territory (metropolitan area) in flats and small spaces where migrants could better integrate with local communities was implemented.

Furthermore, compared to the national context, another peculiarity of the Bolognese model has been the attempt to standardize the CAS reception model to make it as similar as possible to the SPRAR. This process has come to a standstill with the Salvini Decree, since asylum seekers cannot be welcomed in SPRAR anymore. Currently, 1,000 places are present in SPRAR, and around 800 in CAS (before the Decree 300/400 more CAS places were present, which were planned to become SPRAR). As emerged during the field research, the current project is to transform the CAS into SPRAR with the aim of "dismantling" the CAS system (which is based on "emergency").



3. The multi-level dimension of refugee policy-making

3.1. The levels of government

The transition from a local SPRAR managed solely by the Municipality of Bologna to a metropolitan SPRAR model happened in 2017. There is a complex governance which is stated in the Agreement for the functioning of SPRAR Metropolitano: the Azienda per i Servizi alla Persona (ASP) has the main responsibility in the relation with the Enti Gestori (third sector organizations which implement the activities of the SPRAR), but also the Unions of Municipalities, the District and the single Municipalities have specific commitments stated in the Agreement.

There is, of course, a set of super-orderly entities with which the metropolitan SPRAR system interacts, and to which it refers. The main one is the Central Service of the Ministry of the Interior which provides general guidelines and manages the requests for transferring subjects. The Central Office then has a regional structure - which is the proximity reference for ASP - with a referent with functions of both control and support. In particular, this regional structure makes it possible to carry out inspections on the structures and on the actual implementation of the projects developed (in qualitative terms as well). It also performs support functions in the event of doubts about the interpretation of a new ministerial rule/circular, rather than of the reporting manuals.

In regard to the internal governance of the project, it is possible to identify a series of institutional actors ranging from the Municipality of Bologna to the peripheral administrations, which are responsible for it. Each of them has well-defined tasks, as established in the Agreement (called, in Italian “Accordo Operativo per la gestione del Progetto SPRAR Metropolitano di Bologna”).

As the body responsible for the project, the Welfare and Promotion of Community Welfare Area of the Bologna Municipality presents the applications for funding under the National Fund for asylum policies and services. Being responsible to the central service of the Ministry of the Interior, it also maintains functions of programming, monitoring and control. Furthermore, it carries out an institutional liaison function with the Prefecture of Bologna and with the other participating local bodies, to allow a shared monitoring of the progress of the entire project.



ASP Bologna is the subject delegated by the Municipality of Bologna for the implementation of some aspects of the SPRAR projects. Among these, the major ones concern: the information and the service of social responsibility of people and groups in particular social fragility; the preparation of deeds and procedures for the identification of one or more implementing bodies; and, the overall coordination of the management of the actions of the implementing bodies.

The municipalities and the Municipal Unions of the metropolitan area collaborate in the realization of the project, by assuming an active role in identifying and activating the reception facilities and in making available to the territorial services useful to accompany the inclusion paths addressed to the beneficiary citizens of the SPRAR that take advantage of the reception in the respective territories.

A fundamental role is played by the “Ufficio di Piano” (Plan Office), the juncture of the municipalities, the Municipal Union(s) and ASP City of Bologna. A Plan Office is therefore the junction for the programming and the analysis of the needs, as well as the answers and the actions that are taken. It can be defined as the technical structure of the local political administrators. In detail, the Plan Office performs tasks defined by the regional law on social and social-health planning. The programming is enucleated in the area plan for social well-being (lasting three years and annually reviewed). This is a shared programming to be achieved:

Our programming collects the needs through the community method, therefore, we do not only collect statistical data, but we work with stakeholders and citizens as well. This method involves collecting data, [...], and simultaneously giving solutions. They do innovative programming and design. So, the most innovative projects, the first experiments, are done at the Plan Office's level. Then, when they are fully operational, they arrive to the managing bodies. Among these experiments there was the reception of refugees as well.

Furthermore, the Plan Office supports the activities of the District Committee, which is responsible for the governance of the District Program. In detail, the district's scope is defined by the Region and is recognized as the optimal area for the joint exercise of several municipal functions. The District Committee is the place where the verification of the implementation of the Project in the territory is carried out.



A further body linking the various actors involved is the Territorial, Social and Health Conference (CTSS), which connects USL companies and political representatives of the various local authorities for the definition of social and health services (at least one mayor or a councillor for each territorial area). This is the body close to operations, being involved in monitoring and accompanying the projects. The USL company manages the FAMI projects as well, which are aimed at asylum seekers in vulnerable conditions.

The last level of government involved, and in which the various inter-institutional relations are concretized, is represented by the so-called “Working Group” consisting of the Plan Office and the ASP Città di Bologna and coordinated by the Municipality of Bologna. It is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring the technical-operational connection useful for the management of the Project, as well as for the planning, monitoring and verification of the activities.

3.2. The public and private actors

There is no doubt that the real pivot of the system is represented by the third sector and the Bolognese voluntary sector, which has also made it possible to cushion the consequences of the restrictive turn of the Salvini Decree. These actors operate on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity. As pointed out by an interviewed politician, in fact:

The presence of the third sector, both secular and Catholic, and of an inter-institutional collaboration has enabled an integrated phenomenon to be faced that has many aspects: initial reception, a health-related aspect, language teaching, job placement, social aspects. It was a positive experience; of course a debate took place, as the opposition had its ideas, but we didn't have episodes of manifest intolerance even in the worst moments of the 2014-2015 crisis. I believe that the presence of the branched associations has made Bologna's welcoming and supportive spirit prevail, even though there were concerns in Bologna and even outside it.

Added to this, there also is the vast world of the private social, voluntary and civil society. On the whole, these actors have been very active in recent years and, in addition to participating in wider contexts of reflection and in various technical rounds, have also given rise to mobilisation efforts. Emblematic in this regard was the closure and evacuation, in July 2019,



of the so-called Hub Mattei, by the Prefecture, which triggered a very strong mobilization from civil society:

The closure of the Mattei was a good time for citizenship, there were principles and there was a bit of civil society, which could not be seen. Our only allies, even at the political level, are in the Church. The Church is doing so much. Caritas and other associations connected to the Catholic world are very active.

This last extract highlights once again the important role played by the Catholic Church (and the network of associations that rotate around it) within the governance system in Bologna. In particular, the Caritas Diocesana began to deal with refugees from the beginning of 2000, starting a fruitful collaboration with the FIC for the opening of a specialized department for refugees of the Municipality of Bologna, which had not existed until then. This was followed by a collaboration with the initial reception facility in the San Donato district, which later became the first SPRAR in Bologna. Due to two major internal re-organisations that took place in the late 2000s, Caritas stopped carrying out the reception activities it had implemented up to that point for a period of time, and then started to work in a more structured and specialized manner starting from the end of 2015. The opportunity to do so came after the launch, by Pope Francis, of the “A Casa Mia Project” that encouraged a move by religious institutes towards hospitality. After three years of implementation of the project, around 132 people were received in Bologna: an ad hoc integration path for each of them was created, identifying a reference family as a privileged place for refugees to start cultivating human, social and professional relations, that might endure even after the project is completed. Each family welcomes a refugee to their home or tutors him. The average stay time of a refugee within the “A Casa Mia Project” is 6 months. In general, these are well-defined choices with their own ratio, which can be better understood starting from the words of an interviewee:

Another main aspect is that reception must be completely free. When it comes to the duration, given that it is believed that these people have lost a considerable amount of time in their lives, they must do useful things in their lives, without wasting time (e.g. no Italian courses) wake up at 12). Their role is therefore to become interpreters of a very complicated reality. Given these



considerations, the time of the “Rifugiato a Casa Mia” project is 6 months (occasionally extending from 1 to 3 months to establish new relationships and make new choices, such as going abroad for example). It wants to be a bridge that leads the person to a point where he is able to understand which way to go, what he really wants.

And more:

We do not want to replace the institutions, and for this reason we have chosen to do a project like the Rifugiato a Casa Mia one, which is part of the post reception of SPRAR and / or CAS. We select the person for the project, but we also have the task of making the monthly verification, both with those who are welcomed and with those who welcome, to see how it is going (verification means listening, understanding how things are going, eventual life projects, problems with family tutors and family reception, administrative tasks that need to be done - we try to understand the present problems with the person accepted - we also give suggestions to tutor families).

3.3. The benefits of the system

The governance system previously defined presents a set of benefits, of different nature, which will be explained in this paragraph.

The main strength of the system is linked to the fact that there is a widespread connection between all the Municipalities. Thus organized, in fact, the governance system presents a decision-making chain that involves all the main public entities of the territory: «this articulation connects the most decentralized or smaller municipalities to all the others». To this is added, therefore, the great participation of the actors in the co-construction of policies as well, as there is a great sharing of responsibilities and roles.

Their involvement, however, is not only at the decision-making level, but also at the implementation level. The principle of widespread reception, in fact, allows even smaller and administratively weaker municipalities to join the SPRAR network. This is due to the fact that these municipalities are supported, from the administrative point of view, by the Metropolitan City of Bologna, and in particular by ASP. The central coordination role played by these bodies,



in fact, «has made it possible to expand the network and unload the municipalities from considerable administrative weight». Furthermore, as pointed out by an institutional actor interviewed, the capacity to develop widespread reception is not only functional from an administrative point of view. In fact, from a qualitative point of view, it would also improve the entire system of good reception, for the benefit of the people who use these services.

3.4. The disadvantages of the system

Net of the benefits outlined above, the governance system discussed so far certainly presents risks linked to the real ability and willingness of the actors to be fully involved, both in the decision-making and implementation phases, within the entire architecture of the metropolitan SPRAR.

As evidenced by a practitioner interviewed, for example:

The fact that the decision-making is decentralized can create a certain disengagement, or a not strong will to get involved by the municipalities». A councilor of a peripheral municipality also complained of «no longer feeling an active part» within the system, beyond «involvement in the projects that the managing bodies put in place.

What would often be missing is the complete flow of information on the various steps that make up the integration process, starting from the taking over of migrants. Moreover, in virtue of the equal relationship between all the levels involved that a similar system of governance would foresee, it is always required a constant technical training to all the operators who work in the peripheral administrations (whether they be social assistants or technical-administrative), in order to better dialogue with the super-ordered administrations, primarily with ASP. Emblematic, in this regard, the testimony of a social worker interviewed:

The problem is the immense fragmentation, which is suffered by us who work ... it becomes dispersive, and cascading falls on the guests... because it confuses them even guests who stop trusting the system... You cannot trust a system that one day says one thing, and the following one says the opposite, etc. And in our work as social workers, trust is fundamental... It is the system that gives this look, but we do as well, because the operators embody the system, so it is normal that people do not even trust us anymore.



It is a cascade of problems that often affect the citizens/final users. In this regard, a stakeholder interviewed has provocatively talked about “user infantilization” as a consequence of the disadvantage caused by the governance system described above:

In our opinion, operators are sometimes very young and very inexperienced, and sometimes there is a tendency towards user infantilization, as if refugees do not know how to do anything just because they have instruments different from ours and need to be accompanied to do some things, but not everything. With respects to their autonomy, to get back on track, we do not know if these attitudes are helpful. It seems to us that it is important to give tools to decipher the reality that they live (appropriate behavior patterns, learn Italian or recognize the ways to move independently).

3.5. Discussion

Net of the benefits and disadvantages of the multi-level governance system described in this paragraph, in the final discussion it is necessary to point out that the capillary articulation of the reception system in the metropolitan territory of Bologna implies the need for constant mediation between all the Municipalities, to reach a common ground. In this context, moreover, it is necessary to underline that, even in presence of a formalized agreement, the municipalities could also decide to not put into practice what was previously decided, since their commitment is merely political, and not legally binding. Some people interviewed also wanted to emphasize the worsening or, better, cooling of relations with the prefecture after the Salvini Decree, and in particular after the eviction of Mattei. On the other hand, what has been highlighted the most throughout the interviews is the relevance of the role assumed by the civil society, which urged an action of the institutions to try to face the negative effects of the most recent governmental reforms on several occasions. By way of example, after the entry into force of the Salvini Decree, the "Bologna Accoglie" network was born (see the following paragraphs for more details) and several technical tables were created to deal with the new socio-political climate and the new difficulties that migrants had to face.



4. Current and future pathways on refugees' integration

4.1. The effects of refugee policy-making on labour market integration

To better understand the effects of refugee policy-making on labor market, the results of the recent annual report “Attività Servizio Trasversale Formazione e Lavoro Adulti SPRAR - 2018” will be present. The report takes into account the actions carried out in the year 2018 as part of the orientation and support to the work of the guests of the Ordinary SPRAR adult structures. The Transversal Training and Adult Work Service of the Ordinary SPRAR project is managed, under the coordination of the ASP Città di Bologna, by two temporary associations of companies. The Service provides beneficiaries with various active labor policy tools (e.g., training courses, internships, active job search, etc.) and constant monitoring by specialized personnel in job orientation. The ultimate objective of the Service is to accompany individual beneficiaries in a process of acquiring skills that can make people able to orient themselves independently in the labor market.

In general, the accompaniment to work of asylum seekers shows elements of strong criticalities. Among the beneficiaries in charge of the Service there is a very high percentage of people with frailties, often multiple, such as the condition of asylum seeker, young age, family burden, mental and physical problems, and socio-relational fragility, low level of education and learning difficulties. A further element of difficulty in accompanying work was represented by the long periods in which asylum seekers were in possession of an expired residence permit without the possibility of requesting a renewal in a short time. The residence permit that is issued to them has a duration of 6 months, each time renewable, for an unlimited number of times, up to the conclusion of the application procedure. These residence permits must be renewed at the “Questura Immigration Office” whose waiting lists for appointments did not coincide with the need for renewal.

The report shows that over the course of 2018, 576 people were followed in work-accompanying paths, about half of the beneficiaries accepted in the SPRAR Ordinary project. Out of 576 beneficiaries of the SPRAR Ordinary project, 411 have benefited from at least one of the routes available (that are the 71% of the total). As can be seen from the numbers of beneficiaries who have carried out the individual training courses (266), training (246), active research (134) and support for self-enterprise (1), many beneficiaries have benefited from multiple types of path during the year. Of particular interest is also the analysis of data on labor contracts. Out of a total of 138 beneficiaries who have entered into a work contract at least once a year, the total number of



contracts stipulated is 555, of which only 13 are permanent contracts and 542 are temporary contracts. From these data it is clear the dynamics of precariousness of the labor market on which the beneficiaries overlook and in which it becomes very complex to achieve sufficient stability to become autonomous.

In addition to the difficulties in learning the Italian language which constitute a significant obstacle in the pathways to work, there is, for the majority of beneficiaries in charge, the presence of intersectional fragility that outline more or less transient vulnerability profiles. The frailties that are registered most are socio-relational fragility (15%), often linked to other types of fragility (see trafficking and exploitation risk, learning fragility, psychosocial fragility, young age); the family burden (14%), which is characterized as an important obstacle in accompanying work integration; the young age (13%), which almost always denotes a departure from the country of origin during childhood or early adolescence, in most cases it concerns unaccompanied minors to whom the parental figures and reference; learning fragility (11%), often linked to the above with respect to the low starting level of education, or to traumas suffered during migration.

4.2. The effects of refugee policy-making on social integration

The field analysis suggests the presence of positive effects as concerned the social integration. Many initiatives have in fact been carried out over the years, both by public institutions and the third sector. This allowed the start of refugee integration processes into Bologna and its metropolitan area's social fabric. Although, net of good social integration, some interviewees highlighted the fact that they still suffer from various forms of prejudice.

As concerned the actions implemented by public entities, we noted, in particular, the events organized by ASP within the SPRAR structures «to bring the community into dialogue with the hosting realities». In the same direction there are also the numerous and varied initiatives carried out by the wide world of the third sector discussed above, such as, for example, the organisation of the Ramadan party, involving the local community, as well as a wide range of recreational activities that include, among others, the party of the good neighbour, the party of the condominium, the sharing of the kitchen, and the cultural exchanges.

Nevertheless, net of good social integration, the need to overcome some barriers was emphasized, specially of those linked to social prejudice, which continue to make a total and complete integration of refugees in the local context difficult. As pointed out by an interviewee, in fact:



Our territory has always been welcoming, even if the problem of diversity is a widespread and difficult to eradicate problem. There has been social integration, but only partially and there is still a lot to do. Meanwhile, what we have done in the programming is not considering migrants as a target, and the Region has supported us in this regard, as there are some sectors and thematic areas that we do not consider separated between those for immigrants and those for the local community. This is already a factor of inclusion: we allocate the services not based on the country of origin of the user but based on his needs. Even in small mountain hamlets, parents did not even greet each other before, then "breakfast in the morning" has been started, and this helped. Our fellow citizens consider all foreigners evil except for their neighbours because, that is, they know them.

In order to reach social integration, the age-old issue relating to those who should guarantee this, and therefore to the actors and the social workers who should support the strengthening of such integration, has been emphasized. As suggested by an interviewee, this should concern a shared strategic vision, which can implement more and more system actions, with the strengthening of the quantitative and qualitative role of the operators. Such actions should not be totally delegated to volunteering:

These small daily actions require people, professionals and hours of time. We need social workers and mediators who should implement them and who cannot rely solely on volunteering. A strategic political thought that has already existed but then to translate it so widely into the communities, many people need to take care of it. More resources would therefore be needed for community actions. They shouldn't be allocated to large services or large facilities, they are needed to give continuity to many, many small community actions.

4.3. The effects of refugee policy-making on housing integration

While it has been possible to find positive effects both in the integration of the labour market and in the social one, housing integration remains the most critical issue in Bologna. This problem clashes with a structural problem of the entire Bolognese hinterland, linked to the fact that more and more apartments are used for tourism purposes, rather than for medium / long term rentals. More in



general, the lack of a series and structured municipal housing policies was underlined, to which the continuing social prejudice mentioned in the previous paragraph is added:

The big black hole is the home issue. It is a problem in Bologna in general. Finding a home is difficult because the owners give priority to tourist rentals. Being black by itself creates a problem, you can't even go and visit the house, and even if you speak Italian very well, when they see you, they end up telling you that it has just been rented out. It is a huge problem which needs to be solved, because even the best post-reception paths will end up nowhere if the person does not have a home to return to in the evening.

In this regard, the world of the third sector and the Bolognese cooperatives in recent years has initiated numerous actions to raise awareness in the territory and among the local communities, in particular addressed to those who own buildings and those who are particularly close to the Christian and Catholic world. The Bishop of the Bologna diocese was involved as well to offer these people the increasingly high economic guarantees requested by landlords. Similarly to this support and awareness action, several proposals, more or less formalized and more or less structured, have been advanced by the third sector. Among these, the one that seemed the most convincing is that of co-housing (e.g. between refugees and university students of the Alma Mater University of Bologna). This is a particularly sensitive issue among the Bolognese population, which has not been followed by a political line from the municipal administration defined yet, due to the different economic interests at stake.

4.4. Discussion

The analysis of the effects of the refugee policy on labour, social and housing integration has shown a clearly positive picture, although some issues still remain, which need be tackled in the coming years and on which the SiforREF project must seek to engrave as much as possible. First of all, under the integration in the labour market's aspect, the analysis has shown that the tool of the internship is undoubtedly one of the strengths of the whole system, since it facilitates integration. Nevertheless, there is always the risk of abuse of this instrument. Moreover, there is a very high percentage of people with frailties, often multiple. Housing integration, on the other hand, is still the most critical aspects and it will be necessary to work on it in the coming years. There are some ideas / proposals coming from civil society on how to tackle this problem, even if a structured municipal housing policy in this regard is still absent.



5. Assessment / positions on/of local policies

5.1. The role of pre-existing local policies and administrative structures on refugee policy-making

In the case study of Bologna, the role of the pre-existing local policies and administrative structures on refugee policy-making was almost absent. As underlined by a practitioner interviewed, in fact, «these are two different levels, which do not overlap». This is also due to the fact that, as highlighted in paragraph 2 of this report, in this city there has been great continuity in migration policies over the years.

5.2. The effects of welfare and social local policies on refugee policy-making

In virtue of what has been presented in the previous section 5.1, the effect of welfare and social policies on refugee policy-making has been minimal, if we exclude the aspect of health planning (in particular, that of mental health, in order to facilitate the access and taking charge of this category of patients). This obviously derives from the nature of the issues related to mental health, as well explained by a subject interviewed:

[...] the greatest impact has been on Mental Health Services (e.g. a migrant who has been victim of torture or harassment carries more trauma than a migrant simply fleeing from poverty). Since this sector is very bureaucratic, they have certainly struggled more than the other patients. In fact, for any other step, be it a job or any other, it is necessary to consider the history and the experiences of the person. Because of this, ad hoc paths for migrants, with their specificities, have been made.

More in detail, «specific projects were created to favour access, to support the taking charge and to facilitate the interpretation of symptoms, the diagnostic hypotheses that a psychiatrist with a sort of “western orientation” was struggling to de-codify». More recently, a greater emphasis has been placed on the topic of ethno-psychiatry, with the aim of better understanding the psychological and psychiatric difficulties of people with different backgrounds. This is an ambitious project, which stems from the need to have to support the processes of taking charge also under this aspect:

[...] We know very well that the clinical path is not enough if it is not supported by activities and networks, and we have thought about this project with them to try to create a network of volunteers



that follow some paths of some beneficiaries taken over by the association. The association will be a bit of a match between asylum seekers and volunteers, there will be a training course for the volunteers, there will be supervision, and then you will see... It ranges from taking a coffee together to playing sports together etc.

Furthermore, following the issuance of the Security Decree, further difficulties have emerged as concerned to health with only domicile. To this end, the USL has created a pool of experts to deal with the most complicated cases of health registry. Furthermore, within the scope of the SPRAR, a legal advice desk has been created for applicants for international protection.

5.3. Critical aspects of refugee policy-making

The main negative aspects of the refugee policy in Bologna seem to depend mainly on issues related to national politics, rather than on internal dysfunctions of the local administrative system. This emerges clearly and decisively in the words of an interviewee:

At the local level we suffer years of national management of totally negative flows for our cities and for our society. Lately with a security logic and rhyme with a non-programming logic, we have never decided to really manage the flows and the type of immigration towards our country. At the moment we are dealing with a significant number of people who are difficult to integrate in our country due to the skills they have, the linguistic barriers and schooling levels. We never really questioned the management of the migration policy that had a foresight and a different nature of approach.

A further critical aspect of the national and international context of reference that affects the management system at the local level has been indicated by all the stakeholders interviewed as the distortion of the right to asylum. Net of a widespread opinion about the need to think of new ways to guarantee regular entry into our country, it was highlighted how this creates an increase of bureaucracy. The lack of technical support in this regard would be a boulder not so much for the Municipality of Bologna as for the smaller territorial realities belonging to the Bolognese hinterland.



You cannot expect such a small municipality to possess the appropriate technical structure to stay within the demands of the SPRAR design... But such an experience must be supported, because it is good for your country, I mean nation. There are thousands of countries that are dying because their citizens are leaving, and these new people is are lifeblood for those places... It doesn't have the technical structure to report... And you have... You have to help them.

Finally, the Salvini Decree would be creating further problems in the initial reception phase, in reference to the quality standards required for the facilities. It is consequential that the competitions to assign their managements begin to go deserted, since now «the managers are asked to provide food and lodging, and little else». Emblematic in this regard is the closure of the aforementioned Hub Mattei, which was hosting migrants with shelters that were already well underway, and which were then moved to other territories (the Bologna regional hub).

5.4. Discussion

Following the assessment on / of local policies it was possible to identify some of the most critical aspects of the refugee policy. Net of the more general problems highlighted related to the right to migrate and the legal status of refugees in Italy, it is possible to identify, some critical aspects on which there is the interest (and the possibility) on the part of local actors to intervene in the coming years. The first aspect concerns health planning. The political changes and the long waits that have to wait asylum seekers about their status has increased the psychiatric disorder situations. Up until recently, the applicants were able to cope with the stress deriving from uncertainty with adequate psychological support, while today the incidence of discomfort is increasing. The second problem to face, in the future, concerns the extreme vulnerability (and therefore low-threshold interventions) of the immigrants. Linked to this, a third aspect concerns the ever-increasing need to tackle the social needs that the new legislation has ceased to contemplate, such as vulnerable people and asylum seekers in the CAS (in addition to the fact that the new legislation allows access to the SPRAR only to people who have already been recognized a form of international protection). In some cases, asylum seekers with physical disorders and / or disabilities may reside in the facilities, but there are no specific funds or projects to meet their specific needs. In recent years, the bureaucrats of the municipality of Bologna found themselves planning extra support activities for these people (e.g. through participation in FAMI tenders).



6. The implementation of refugee policies: Practices and perspectives on local politics

6.1. The political debate on refugees

The political debate on refugees mainly concerned the aspect of integration, in continuity with what has happened in this city for decades. On the subject of security, vice versa, there has not been great political debate, except for the presence of several important junctions in the city in which people of Gambian and Nigerian nationality, similar to people received in the SPRAR, were engaged in drug dealing.

The great tradition of hospitality present in Bologna since the 1990s has therefore been able to neutralize the possible negative influence deriving from the heated national debate, in particular following the introduction of the more restrictive policies outlined at the beginning of this report. This was only partially possible, as underlined by the fact that the climate of distrust has only been exacerbated in the last year and a half, when in reality the changes have diminished by a lot and the most restrictive policies were put into force, while during the peak of arrivals no particular problems were registered.

The introduction of restrictive policies at the national level, by virtue of their not always easy capacity to guarantee widespread popular consent, seem to have also influenced the more general interest on the part of the local administration towards the issue of refugees, further alleviating the political debate on the theme. Emblematic, in this regard, were the words of a practitioner interviewed, who remarked on the strongly fluctuating nature of the debate, from peaks of interest towards the topic, up to a total abandonment of the political debate due to the lack of remuneration in terms of consensus:

Politics has been fluctuating a lot: in 2014 they were all very pro refugees. Even in the local administration (here there has always been the PD, which is not the League), there was a certain tolerance and understanding and a high-level technical dialogue (e.g. ASP manager who manages the metropolitan SPRAR, thinking about this thing that was a big step). This [happened] in 2016. Last year, from Minniti onwards, this kind of discourse was abandoned. First there was a very thorough project and then at some point - especially in some municipalities - this discourse was abandoned because it probably didn't bring enough votes. In many municipalities there was this conversation, driven by national themes, and there was a blockade. Now, after the elections, there is no interest in talking about this topic, it has become a difficult subject. There is no discourse different from that of the right. There are some politicians and councillors who are more inclined



towards reception, but find it difficult to expose themselves. We are a bit abandoned by politics, those who do this work are a bit abandoned by politics. On the one hand they had all invested in this project of the Metropolitan SPRAR, but now the managers have not seen their contracts renewed... We are a bit left alone, fearing next year's elections since the League is going strong. Politics is absent at this time.

6.2. The position of the city mayor and his cabinet on refugees' integration

Virginio Merola started his second mandate, as City Mayor of Bologna, in 2016. The Democratic Party is his political party, that currently has the higher number of seats in the city council, and it is the main party of the current municipal governing coalition. The results of previous and last municipal elections are summarized in the following tables:

Results of last municipal elections (Year: 2016)					
Political parties that have obtained at least one seat in the city council	English translation	Ideology	Share of vote (%)	Number of seats	Is the party in the governing coalition?
Partito Democratico	Democratic Party	Mainstream left	35.44%	21	Yes
Città Comune con Amelia	A City in Common with Amelia	Mainstream left	2.90%	1	Yes
Lega	League	Far right	10.25%	4	
Forza Italia	Go Italy	Mainstream right	8.26%	2	
Movimento 5 Stelle	Five Star Movement	Center	16.59%	4	
Insieme Bologna	Bologna Together	Center	9.94%	2	
Coalizione Civica	Civic Coalition	Far left	7.09%	2	

Data source: Ministry of Interior of Italy

Results of previous municipal elections (Year: 2011)					
Political parties that have obtained at least one seat in the city council	English translation	Ideology	Share of vote (%)	Number of seats	Is the party in the governing coalition?
Partito Democratico	Democratic Party	Mainstream left	38.28%	17	Yes
Sinistra Ecologia Libertà	Left, Ecology, Freedom	Far left	10.24%	4	Yes
Italia dei Valori	Italy of Values	Mainstream left	3.70%	1	Yes
Il Popolo della Libertà	The People of Freedom	Mainstream right	16.60%	6	
Lega Nord	Northern League	Far right	10.75%	3	
Movimento 5 Stelle	Five Star Movement	Center	9.38%	2	

Data source: Ministry of Interior of Italy

Despite never having implemented any explicit action of "disobedience" towards the recent restrictive measures, over the last few years the mayor of the Municipality of Bologna has worked diligently to address some of the critical issues of the Decree, which are mentioned in the introductory paragraph. This has concerned, in particular, the question related to the registration to the registry office, since asylum seekers cannot have residency. Following an appeal to the administrative court by a group of Bolognese lawyers (the so-called "Avvocati di Strada"), the mayor has, for example, begun to recognize residency for asylum seekers as well. While emphasizing the fact a strong position has never been taken by



the local administration, several practitioners and stakeholders interviewed have also stressed that the mayor of the city of Bologna has on several occasions spent on the dissemination and consolidation of a reception model that will lead towards a deeper integration. This also concerned the mayors of the various Municipalities in the metropolitan area. Where there has been a change in the municipal council from the center-left to the center-right, instead, there has been a drastic change in the reception model, going to disintegrate what has been done up to that point. This was, for example, the case of the Municipality of San Giovanni in Persiceto (that has about 30,000 inhabitants), in which there were negative repercussions not only for the final beneficiaries, but also for the same municipal officials who in a short time had to revise the administrative practices adopted up to that point in terms of integration.

6.3. The actions of the city government for implementing its agenda on refugee-related issues

Several actions have been taken over the years by the city government to implement its own agenda on the refugee issue. In addition to supporting the transition from CAS to SPRAR, the Municipality has in particular created an ad hoc “international protection door” at the municipal level. Specific communication campaigns have also been launched. In detail, online campaigns have been realized, through the creation of a site in which it was decided to convey all the data present and processed on a monthly and quarterly level, as well as advertising positive reception stories. Furthermore, a proximity campaign followed, with meetings and discussions with the peripheral administrations, including at the neighborhood level. An example of this proximity communication campaign is the case of the municipality of San Lazzaro, in the Bologna hinterland:

Some refugees helped setting up the stands of the San Lazzaro fair and repainted the municipal stadium. Community parties were held, and soccer tournaments were organized. There were not activities that emphasized diversity but rather activities that emphasized their belonging to the community. And then there is the theater laboratory that involves refugees, immigrants for study or economic purposes and Italian reasons who every year give back to the citizens the paths taken.

6.4. The political and social actors supporting the refugees' integration in the City

The refugees' integration has been supported by a plurality of political and social actors. First at all, cultural and sports associations have been a positive driver for integration campaigns. In addition to



these associations, a fundamental role has also been played by those linked to the social private sector and the world of Bolognese voluntary work. However, the Church, and the more general world of Catholic associations behind it, has undoubtedly been the main actor who supported the integration of refugees in the city.

The various actors linked to the Bolognese Catholic, social, cultural and sporting world mentioned above, however, did not act singularly or in compartments. In fact, their actions often overlapped, and in any case were complementary to each other. Emblematic are above all the structured protests against the closure of the Mattei Hub, with the creation of garrisons by all the forces previously listed. The group “Bologna Accoglie”, composed of a plurality of actors linked to the world of Catholic associations, CGIL, UIL, welcoming families of Bologna, Libera and Emergency was also created. This coalition has made specific requests to the local administration, aimed in particular at ensuring the consolidation of a more stable and cohesive partnership for strategic political choices at the metropolitan level, as well as the creation of thematic technical tables for the development of alternative strategies shared by all the actors in the game (such as the registration to the registry office previously mentioned).

6.5. The political and social actors opposing the refugees' integration in the City

The main forms of opposition came from some of the right-wing parties, primarily the League. However, only institutional actions have been put forward by these political forces, through debates and questions in the municipal council, without ever proceeding with occupations, demonstrations and/or public protests. Similarly, the episodes of stigmatization that took place have been isolated and on individual local cases, often on social media, but without the presence of a structured protest group:

Surely there have been many situations of neighborhood revolting if you need to open a CAS or a SPRAR or an apartment in that area. But I must say that there has been nothing more than what you can experience in the general Italian context.

6.6. Discussion

In this paragraph, the perspectives on local politics had been discussed. The analysis has shown that the political debate in Bologna, and in its hinterland, continues to be mainly based on the integration issue, due to the great tradition of hospitality present in this metropolitan area since the 1990s. All



the actions of the city government for implementing its agenda on refugee-related issues, therefore, were mainly related to this issue. Nevertheless, the social integration issue continues to be predominant from the perspective of both the city mayor (and his cabinet), and the political and social actors supporting the refugees' integration in the City. As concerned the role of the latter, moreover, this case study has shown the strategic role that the civil society can play in contributing to the full integration of refugees on society and labour market. It was also realized thanks to the great collaboration the Municipality of Bologna and the Metropolitan Council was able to establish during the last years. As concerned the political and social actors opposing the refugees' integration, instead, field analysis has shown that the biggest problems of intolerance were in the small municipalities of the metropolitan area more than in the municipality of Bologna. In fact, in some cases the citizens of these municipalities have done barricades for the opening of some SPRARs, worried about possible violence against teenage daughters,



7. Conclusion and Debate

As the report has highlighted, in Italy there's a trend towards more restrictive integration measures for refugees', but the city of Bologna, and its metropolitan area, is trying to continue the implementation of welcome policies. Although recent policies seem weaker, than the past ones, the will of the city government to follow refugees' integration and inclusion processes is clear. The system in this city is characterized by a strong collaboration between public and private actors, that had facilitated the implementation of social innovative practices, and from which the next activities of the SiforREF project have to start. In general, the long tradition of strong and stable inter-institutional collaboration, on one hand, and the great sensitivity and attention shown to the issue by civil society, on the other hand, have made the most general dysfunctionality deriving from the most recent governmental interventions. They were also able to mitigate the possible dysfunctions of the Bologna governance system, that represent an "unicum" in the national and European panorama. As discussed in this report, in fact, the originality of this system concerns the establishment, starting from the beginning of this decade, of a metropolitan-based SPRAR system based on the idea of a reception spread in the whole territory (metropolitan area) in flats and small spaces where migrants could better integrate with local communities. At the net of good practices until now implemented in this City, and taking into account the good social and political fabric present, there are a set of critical aspects that have to be taken into account in the following years. SiforREF will help policy-makers and practitioners to do it, since today there is not a clear political vision about how to solve these criticalities, but only some ideas/proposals coming from civil society on how to tackle these problems. The main problems are related to the health planning, and the issue of extreme vulnerability. The analysis of the effect of the refugee policy in labor, social and housing integration, instead, has shown that some issues still remain unsolved. The most important concerns the housing integration issue, due to the impossibility to guarantee a full integration of the refugees in society and labor market without a strong and structured municipal housing policy (that continues to be still absent). As concerned the labor market integration, instead, the report has shown that among the beneficiaries there is a very high percentage of people with frailties, often multiple. Moreover, a further element of difficulty continues to be represented by the long periods in which asylum seekers are in possession of an expired residence permit without the possibility of requesting a renewal in a short time.

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