DELIVERABLE D.T1.1.2

In depth study of refugee policies and practices of the five cities involved – Parma

06 2019

Summary

1. Overview of national asylum policies

1.1 Introduction: Asylum policy and politics

Although the 1948 Constitution recognizes the right of asylum[1], 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.

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[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.
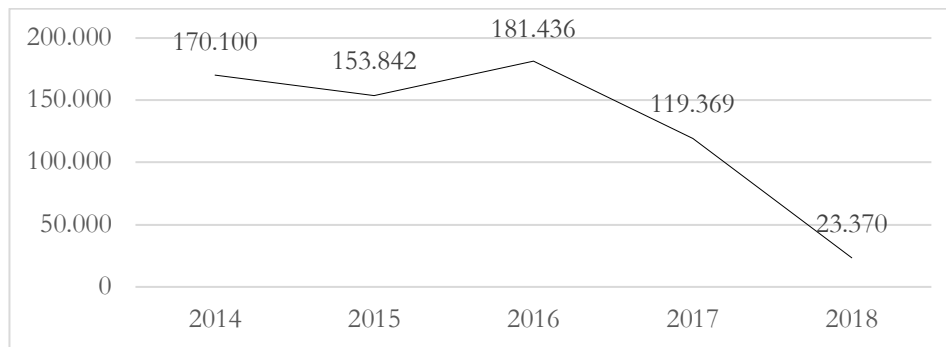
[3] Law 189/2002.

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 document[5] 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.

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[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:

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[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.

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[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.

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%)*

Table 1. Number of asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in reception centres, 2018
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 SIPROIMI[13] – 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

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[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 (*prefetture*), 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

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[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,

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[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-constiutional-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 Idos[17], 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 2017[18], Emilia Romagna could count 1.539 places in SPRAR projects, widespread in all provinces, even tough 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, Forlì-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 2014[19].

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[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 city of Parma counts 196.518 inhabitants[20] and is the second largest city (after Bologna) in Emilia Romagna Region. Parma has a long tradition related to refugees' issues, as it started to develop projects to host refugees which escaped from Balkan conflicts in the '90.

The institution of the SPRAR project in the city of Parma represented a consequent step of the prior work implemented and the Province of Parma played a fundamental role coordinating all actors, public and private, involved in this issue. The changes in the functions of Italian provinces, ruled by the introduction of national laws, modified the competences of the Parma Province related to refugees as well and the coordination role among public and private actors in refugees' topics was assumed by the municipality of Parma, even though it did not benefit of the same legitimation at provincial level that the province had.

Since 2014, year of its stabilization, the hosting system for asylum seekers and refugees implemented in the city of Parma foresees the adoption of best practices, a wide connection between public and private actors which drew up protocols to give efficacy to their net including all institutional actors (welfare system, health system, legal system etc.). The system aims at offering at asylum seekers and refugees host either in SPRAR or in Cas the same services (Italian classes, professional trainings, health support etc.), in order to facilitate their integration process. Moreover, the municipality enlarged the number of SPRAR hosting facilities (apartments in the city) in order to give continuity to the path of asylum seekers present in the province of Parma, who obtain the permit.

About the numbers of asylum seekers and refugees in the municipality of Parma, the following grids can give evidence of that.

- Number of permits for asylum applicants, refugee conventional protection and other types of protection in Parma

Permits for applicants in 2017	Permits for Refugee status	Permits for Subsidiary protection	Permits for Humanitarian protection	Tot
2.370	63	133	260	2.826

Source: Immigration Office - Questura di Parma

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[20] https://www.tuttitalia.it/emilia-romagna/89-comuni/popolazione/

Permits for applicants in 2018	Permits for Refugee status	Permits for Subsidiary protection	Permits for Humanitarian protection + Special protection (following new law)	Tot
1.563	101	98	326	2.088

Source: Immigration Office - Questura di Parma

Data shows a decrease of permit for asylum seekers, which reflects the national tendency caused by restrictive norms on international protection introduced.

2.3. Discussion

The municipality of Parma and its integration system for asylum seekers and refugees, represents a benchmark in the Italian panorama. Its experience and the connection implemented between public and private actors constitute a far-sighted approach which many other municipalities in the country tried to emulate.

The implementation of restrictive laws at national level affected also Parma's territory, as data about the permits for applicants show.

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

In the realm of migration policy, the multi-level structure of governance is particularly evident as pointed out in the first chapter. Several public and private actors with different functions contribute to the implementation of refugees' hosting path.

3.1. The levels of government

The Central Government and in particular the Ministry of Interior is the institutional body in charge of managing the asylum seekers and refugees' reception. At local level, the branches of the Ministry of Interior, the prefectures (*prefetture*), manage the reception of asylum seekers basically outsourcing services to private actors, usually NGOs and hotels. This system creates differences between territories, as prefectures have a provincial competence and each prefecture can require different services for the reception of asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers, who obtained international protection, are transferred to a SPRAR/SIPROIMI project. Municipalities are the body, that can manage a SPRAR/SIPROIMI

project, they can voluntarily adhere at the SPRAR/SIPROIMI system, in order to assure integration paths to refugees. Usually municipalities give to private actors, mainly NGOs, the concrete management of services to support refugees' integration.

In the reception system Regions do not cover any role and the lack of a regional level of refugees' policies emerged as a crucial point during interviews:

«This is not insignificant, because the regional jurisdiction on education, training, health, is very important. All this prejudiced the services for integration and has condemned the services for refugees to an eccentric position compared to the other welfare services, because it took them away from the other types of programming that pass from the Ministry, to the Region, to the Zone plans and then to municipal implementation.» (Stakeholder 1)

The lack of a regional level in the governance of refugees' issues is considered method-less, as it deprives the system of a body which has jurisdiction in many fields and could play an important mediator role connecting specificity of its territory with specificity of national level.

Another aspect underlined during interviews related to the levels of government is the lack of a Common European Asylum System, which could provide same permits and same services in all European countries.

"I think that in Italy we spend the same amount of money as in France, Germany, but the services are different, Abroad, if someone has the papers, he doesn't sleep on the streets; here, personally, I slept in the open as well. I saw a lot of people who got the papers here and then left Italy. If someone is forced to sleep in the open, this is the government's fault; the services need to be improved" (Stakeholder 3)

The need of a European reception system is considered important also from a stakeholder who works with Nigerian girls, victims of trafficking, that entered Italy and apply for international protection.

"… if a girl enters Italy and then is brought to Germany… What they do is that they see that the fingerprinting was done in Italy and they send her back, but she has to start all over again. In the end the girls who go there, they do so because the madams

are there… Now there is an exodus, everyone goes to Germany or Austria, but some
of them have been brought back or sent back to Nigeria.” (Stakeholder 4)

The overcoming of Dublin rules and the implementation of a European reception system focused on the integration process of refugees represent an ambition that drives the work of many stakeholders, as well as the need of free movement that refugees explicit.

3.2. The public and private actors

In Italy, migration policies and governance are fields where multiple actors take part. In addition to the public actors, whose responsibilities have been outlined in the previous sections, third sector organisations (NGOs, associations, interest groups etc.) play an important role. Third sector organisations are the actors in charge of the concrete reception, as prefecture or municipalities outsource these kinds of services. Many NGOs or associations have a great experience in working with migrants and their mission is focused on the process of generating integration for more inclusive societies, while other private actors arose with the refugee crisis and their goals are not so transparent, services for asylum seekers and refugees are considered more a business than a mission and their quality reflect this view.

This aspect was underlined during interviews:

“… what I see is that people who work in certain places don't have the responsibility, but they don't work as they should… The police headquarters should go question, should investigate and verify, there should be more control, there should be more integration for the newcomers, more support, and the work should be improved. If you take someone from the beginning, and explain him the rules clearly, it's easy for that person to get on the right path; but if you take an asylum seeker, you throw him there and don't monitor him… Once the reception is over, he doesn't have anything...… There is the need for more control than the one exerted now” (Stakeholder 3)

Stakeholders, who work in the field since many years affirmed their frustration in observing inadequate services and actors dealing with the refugees' issues considered just a business. Since each Prefecture rules the reception of asylum seekers there can be very differences between territories about services implemented and financial statements to prove them.

3.3. The benefits of the system

The structure of the system presents several fragilities: on one hand weaknesses are considered from interviewees a crucial problem, as the lack of a structured system impede a clear and standardized path for asylum seekers and refugees; on the other hand a minority part of respondents affirmed that the absence of a rigid system offers the opportunity of creating projects or activities that overlap strictly imposition of the system.

In any case, it appears with strength that the system is considered inefficient:

"The organization of the reception system is wrong" (Stakeholder 3)

3.4. The disadvantages of the system

Policy makers and stakeholders agree in considering that the multi-level governance creates a fragmented hosting system.

The municipality of Parma played an important role, trying to give coherence to the system, looking for a collaboration with Prefecture, in charge of outsourcing services for asylum seekers, requiring high levels of services, including trainings, professional paths and internships. The municipality considered important to ask for high standard services to CAS, since asylum seekers, once obtained the permit, could find the same services in the following hosting centre -SPRAR-. One fundamental point is the territorial continuity, which could promote the integration path of each person, for this reason the municipality, going beyond its institutional tasks, decided to support CAS, which promoted trainings and professional paths. Unfortunately, the multi-level governance and recent norms have broken up into small pieces that organization and wasted important connection and results. Asylum seekers, once obtained the permit, can be transferred to other cities or Regions, therefore their integration process can be really compromised, considering the importance and difficulties of building new significative networks, which can promote their inclusion.

"In the territory is missing an integration coherence ...it exists different ways of implementing integration, between CAS and SPRAR. The municipality of Parma required that specific integration paths had to be implemented in CAS as well...it was the municipality that insist on this issue because even the collaboration with the Prefecture has not been spontaneous" (Policy maker 4)

"I see more disadvantages than benefits, because in the asylum system, even back then when it needed to be reformed, it was so because of the lack of regional level [in refugee policies]."(Stakeholder 1)

3.5. Discussion

In the past years, the municipality of Parma implemented several actions to promote the integration and inclusion of refugees in its territory, achieving high levels of social cohesion and becoming a national benchmark. Despite its efforts, the introduction of national laws, in particular the Salvini Decree, which restricted the criteria for accessing international protection and lowered the quality standards of integration provisions, have condemned the municipality to deal with the needs of a highly precarious population while having limited resources at its disposal to do it.

"...now I see many elements of criticality, there will be many people who could not work in this territory, who could not access to services for poverty, because of their irregular status and at the same time the municipality has not tools to face this urban decline" (Policy maker 4)

In conclusion, we can affirm that the multi-level governance of the refugee policies creates a fragmentation, since a real structured system, which involves all institutional levels of governments, is missing. It appears that disadvantages are enormously superior, than benefits. Since the national level of government centralize decisions, without considering each regional/local specificity and best practices or strategies implemented, several remarkable experiences will disappear. Moreover, municipalities will be left "alone" to manage social crisis without enough resources to face them.

4. Current and future pathways on refugees' integration

The municipality of Parma in collaboration with NGOs and associations working in its territory developed strategies and processes of integration and inclusion considered innovative and far-sighted at national level.

The participation in the SPRAR/SIPROIMI project represents the main path for the integration of refugees, nevertheless the municipality is always eager to take part or develop projects to enhance the inclusion of migrants.

Unfortunately, the change of the national government, the introduction of restrictive provisions for refugees and migrants and the use of a public discourse, which envisages international migration as a crucial problem for security reasons have had consequences also in the Parma area.

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

The labour integration of asylum seekers and refugees is related to the opportunities of attending professional trainings, in order to "learn a job". Refugees with high level of education need at least two years to convert their academic title in a title recognized from Italian Government and for this reason the majority of them prefer to start a professional activity which can assure an economic autonomy. SPRAR/Siproimi projects have specific budget for supporting refugees in professional trainings and when they finished the possibilities of finding job are greater. Before the approval of Salvini Decree also CAS projects have some resources to foresee professional trainings, but after the introduction of the law budget were reduced and the possibilities of developing trainings removed. A stakeholder commented with satisfaction results obtained before the introduction of Salvini Decree.

"At the end of these training courses there is a traineeship in local businesses, and XXX take charge for everything, for the first three months (indemnity of attendance). We've seen amazing results. If we paid for 60 months of traineeships, the businesses paid for 95 of them. Since 2015 we discharged 99 people who were economically independent... we think we spent well the reception funding." *(Stakeholder 2)*

Nevertheless, labour integration paths are not so spontaneous and easy for all refugees. A stakeholder, who arrived in Italy as refugee, affirmed:

"Then I came to Parma to look for a job, I enrolled into a social secretariat's course... Working is a bit hard if you don't speak the language. The policies for refugees do not facilitate the integration into the workforce, for what I've seen they don't make it any easier... Like, once the stay permit for a foreigner would allow you to do everything (apply for residency, register into the NHS, sign a work contract). I

see people who went to the police headquarters to ask for a stay permit and have to wait over a year to get it… What can they do?! And also, the professionals are not updated. There are a lot of guys who come to the desk with an expired stay permit, and asked for renewal… The employer asks for a valid stay permit and the police headquarters tell them to wait.” (Stakeholder 3)

The achievement of labour integration is a complex process, which requires to refugees, as first step, the knowledge of Italian language and the possibility of attending a professional training with an internship. If these conditions are not fulfilled or if the bureaucracy slows down the process, the real possibility of entering the labour force can be very harsh.

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

The collaboration between the municipality of Parma and NGOs and associations working with refugees have created paths and activated processes which promote substantially social integration of refugees. During interviews, policy makers emphasized a project, promoted by the Municipality, called “Mi impegno a Parma”[21], which involved asylum seekers in social activities, such as: accompanying guys with disabilities to and back from school or asylum seekers working as crossing guards for children etc. The goal was to connect refugees with the territory and communicate to citizens their integration desire. Policy makers appear satisfied by results as the local community getting in touch with asylum seekers and refugees reduced the level of prejudice:

“We encountered more positive elements, then negative. For example, families with disabled children affirmed their attitude with migrants changed a lot. Once got in touch with refugees, people forgive the abstracted definition of refugee developed by media and understood they are just people coming from another country. I believe in a firm position by the municipality on this issue and the need that institutions support communities in overcoming prejudice and fear” (Policy maker 4).

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[21] “I’m committed with Parma” (Our translation)

Nevertheless, these activities were considered not sufficient to generate a real change in the society and other kinds of actions to promote refugees' integration were developed. For instance, CIAC implemented:

- The territorial tutor for integration: "*by appealing to civil society, the parish community, formal and informal groups. We asked these social actors to adopt a person in their path of social integration by making their social connections available to this person. We have seen that these protective build networks capable of dealing with insecurity, with the seasonal nature of the jobs, and it doesn't leave you to try looking for accommodation and finding guarantees. We've seen this leading to a 77% of positive outcomes after 12 months.*"

- The special domicile, in collaboration with the municipality: "*to apply for asylum you need a domicile. What happens usually is that the migrant person goes on the black market of fake domiciles, which in Parma costs 300/500€. Through a free service of «special domicile», the person can immediately apply for asylum*".

- Language tandem, where Italian students can share their knowledge of Italian with Anglophone o Francophone refugees and at the same time learn or improve a foreign language.

Also, other stakeholders considered language skills crucial and for this reason offered to asylum seekers intensive classes with expert teachers, in order to facilitate the learning of Italian and the social integration as well.

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

Housing integration represents the main problem for refugees in Parma. Stakeholders stressed the difficulties faced by migrants when looking for a house.

"*For a foreigner, finding a house is really hard, no one trusts you, agencies ask for guarantees (job contract, pay checks, references, bank guarantees). I struggled a lot as well… I needed a reference on the job. In order to find a place, I had to call over 100 people, some of them scheduled an appointment and once I told them I am from XXX, they would not call again. Now I see the guys and it's really hard, they have to find a contact person, otherwise it's really hard.*" (Stakeholder 3)

"...it's hard to find a house and a job. Nobody ever gives an apartment to these girls (Nigerian), so the girls look for a room and the municipality supports them, but it is really hard" (Stakeholder 4)

Nowadays the house integration constitutes the biggest problem for refugees, since private landlords prefer to leave apartments empty, than rent it to migrants, real estate agencies ask for guarantees (permanent contract, advanced payment of three monthly rent, Italian references), very difficult to provide for a refugee and public houses are not available, as the requests are greater than the offering. The municipality of Parma in collaboration with NGOs and associations tried to develop strategies to promote house integration, but results are insufficient.

4.4. Discussion

The Parma's experience represents a benchmark in terms of efforts and strategies developed for promoting refuges' integration. Activities implemented by the municipality and the work done by stakeholders show the will of creating inclusive paths, which allow cohesion in the society. The lack of specific strategies for house integration constitutes a hole in the system, which needs more efforts to be solved.

The introduction of restrictive norms at national level could undermine best practices adopted in this territory. Interviewees expressed their concern about this issue and one stakeholder affirmed that in their organisation some staff was already been fired and it will be impossible to maintain all integration activities implemented in the past.

The sole solution that the municipality and NGOs can envisage is to look for financial resources, in order to continue the promotion of integration activities and paths for refugees and not lose achievements and experiences gathered in the last years.

5. Assessment / positions on/of local policies

As report shows the integration processes mainly depended on public and private actors that have been committed with migrants' and refugees' issues at local level. In this sense the municipality has always payed attention to emerging needs.

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

During interviews, policy makers stressed the important role of the municipality in finding solutions:

The welfare system is changed, because we, the municipality introduced offices and services addressing newcomers' needs» (Policy maker1)

For instance, the office for unaccompanied minors has been established and the project "Oltre la strada"[22] for victims of trafficking started. In general, local public policies and welfare services experienced changes because of the modification of population, in particular interviewees affirmed that has been necessary to:

- increase the number of cultural mediators working in school and public offices;
- create "punti di comunità"[23], where migrants could find orientation to welfare services (civil registry, kindergarten or school inscription, health services etc.);
- open help desks to facilitate access to local provisions related to house, school etc.

In general, it is possible to affirm that the long tradition in dealing with refugees' issues has allowed an organization of local polices and services which satisfied migrants needs.

"Parma always had asylum desks, shelters, and such. It has always been an asylum land. With the Emergenza Nord Africa we never felt unprepared, because reception is in our DNA, we just had to strengthen it." (Stakeholder 2)

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

The long tradition of the city of Parma in dealing with refugees' and migrants' issues seems to face a slowing down phase.

"...a profound restructuring of welfare has been underway in our city for many years. Welfare services were widespread and structured. For years, also due to the exposure

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[22] "Beyond the street" (Our translation)
[23] Community point

to debt of the previous councils, the local welfare has had dwindling performances and interventions. A welfare model more linked to private or participated rather than public management has been affirmed, forging services capable of responding to the needs when they emerge but, contrary to the past, they are no longer able to prevent or re-balance liveability, wealth and wellbeing levels" (Stakeholder 1)

Despite the introduction of incisive welfare services and provisions refugee oriented in the past, some stakeholders stress the changes the municipality is undertaking. The economic and social crisis effects risk to undermine the far-sighted of Parma's welfare policies related to refugees. In this sense policy makers and stakeholders' views don't coincide, as stakeholders consider that solving problems when they emerged is not sufficient. The goal should be the implementation of strategies that anticipate difficulties, in order to avoid them.

5.3. Critical aspects of refugee policy-making

At local level the biggest problem related to policy-making is the lack of specific provisions to promote house integration.

"...The most critical aspect are the housing policies: even when foreigners have the money, they can't get a house. A big project should be thought, maybe FAMI[24]. There is work to do. The municipality and the province (when present) did all they could, such as paying three months of deposit to the landlady, being ready to guarantee a certain number of months of rent, provide funding". (Stakeholder 2)

The local administrations tried to think about solutions to solve housing difficulties for migrants and refugees, but they were not enough. A structural and wide plan should be implemented, in order to create durable measures.

Other difficulties are related to the complexity of Italian bureaucracy:

"...there should be more integration for the newcomers, more support...every day I see bureaucracy problems... I've seen a Ukrainian woman who brought her

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[24] Fondo Asilo Migrazione e Integrazione – Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

mother here and asked for a stay permit for her mother; it's been a year and it's still ongoing because there was a mistake in an identifying data and the police headquarters and the municipality can't find an agreement on how to rectify this thing" (Stakeholder 3)

The experiences of social workers, who meet refugees or migrants daily, highlight that bureaucracy difficulties related to banal mistakes are very frequent. Such problems can really compromise the integration process of people, who are forced to live in a sort of limbo until institutions provide them of a solution.

5.4. Discussion

Parma has a long tradition and experience in introducing refugee integration policies, but the cut of resources ruled at national level undermines its purposes.

A way to overcome this kind of problems has been proposed by a stakeholder during the interview:

"...What is missing now is the opportunity to think of society in terms of new citizenship ... a great chance of renewal, in order to make things more dynamic and address the problems that our society has, independently from the numbers and quality of the migrants' presence".

Changing the point of view, problems can become opportunities for the entire society.

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

6.1. The political debate on refugees

The public discourse on immigration dominates the Italian political scene, in particular the rise of anti-immigrant rhetoric characterizes the debate. Over the years, the securitarian dimension of migration control has prevailed and influenced the population.

"The politics ... nowadays, it brings the country to a very nasty vision, always putting Italian people against foreigners...I'm sorry for all this, and it creates problems between Italian citizens and foreigners, unfortunately politics to very bad things." (Stakeholder 3)

Also, in the city of Parma some echo of the national debate took roots, as affirmed by a stakeholder:

"The main problem is the amount of arrivals and repatriations compared with those of the other provinces; I mean, Parma always received well and in big numbers. The debates, over the years, always focused on the fact that some municipalities don't receive at all, while Parma is receiving 100 people more than it should. Even the newspapers and the national television always bound asylum seekers to the theme of "security", when if you check carefully, the cases of people in reception facilities or into projects, or even asylum seekers who were already in Italy as illegal migrants are scarce. So, the main themes are that every municipality has to have its own (asylum seekers) and security. I'd like to say that at its peak Parma's province, on a total of 440.000 citizens, was receiving 1800 asylum seekers on the province's territory. If we reasoned based on the importance, is 1800 people scattered in the whole province that big of a problem? We wasted too much time on the political debate, it's time to focus on something different." (Stakeholder 2)

The rhetoric that represents the arrival of asylum seekers as an invasion is easily deconstructed by data on the phenomena. Unfortunately, many Italians are fomented by fear and prejudices, instead of real statistics.

During interviews policy makers affirmed that the municipality of Parma has always contrasted the securitarian discourse through constant contacts with NGOs and associations, which deal with migrants and refugees, and through the realization of public events where showing the results of the political choices based on integration processes. Probably, for these reasons the no-immigrants rhetoric had a minor impact in the city of Parma. Nevertheless, some changes have occurred in the last months:

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"The interpretation that the Municipality gives of the current political situation ... the choice of reducing the SPRAR spots that we so hardly managed to increase through the reception network of organizations ... interrupting this project, or limiting it, and interrupting these policies in order to take time and avoid a democratic conflict with the protection bodies, that doesn't sit that well with me. This is the moment to keep the principles firm." (Stakeholder 1)

The concern expressed by Stakeholder 1 is related to the influence that the national anti-immigrants' debate have had at local level, and in particular to some municipality's choices, while a firm position to defend Parma's virtuous historical approach to migrants is considered fundamental, especially in this phase.

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

The mayor of Parma, Federico Pizzarotti, started his second mandate in 2017. During previous election in 2012 he represented the Five Star Movement (Movimento Cinque Stelle), while in 2017 he competed with an independent list called "Effetto Parma"[25].

Results of last municipal elections (Year: 2017)					
Political parties that have obtain at least one seat in the city council	English translation	Ideology	Share of vote (%)	Number of seats	Is the party in the governing coalition?
Effetto Parma	Parma Effect	Mainstream left	34,58%	20	Yes
Partito Democratico	Democratic Party	Mainstream left	14,84%	4	
Parma Protagonista	Protagonist Parma	Mainstream left	13,71%	3	
Parma Unita	Parma United	Center	4,22%	1	
Lega	League	Far right	12,05%	4	

Data source: Ministry of Interior of Italy

Results of previous municipal elections (Year: 2012)					
Political parties that have obtain at least one seat in the city council	English translation	Ideology	Share of vote (%)	Number of seats	Is the party in the governing coalition?
Movimento 5 Stelle	Five Star Movement	Center	19,90%	20	Yes
Partito Democratico	Democratic Party	Mainstream left	25,16%	6	
Comunisti Italiani	Italian Communists	Far left	5,84%	1	
Altra Politica (Maria Teresa Guarnieri)	Other Politics	Mainstream left	4,97%	1	
Unione di Centro	Centrist Union	Center	5,97%	2	
Parma Unita	Parma United	Center	8,56%	1	
Il Popolo della Libertà	The People of Freedom	Mainstream right	4,72%	1	

Data source: Ministry of Interior of Italy

Interviewees agree that the mayor and his cabinet support refugees and migrants and promote their integration in the territory. The mayor takes part very often to events organized by foreigners and expresses constantly his will to build an inclusive city.

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[25] In 2016 the mayor left the Five Star Movement.

"I think Parma went to the polls to renew Pizzarotti and it was the time when there were a lot of arrivals. The newspapers used to say that Parma's municipality was the most receiving one. It has been asked to the mayor why, and he answered that 100 is not a big deal, the important thing is how we receive, what these people do… I saw openness. Same goes for the councillor Laura Rossi, who always had an inclusive vision for everybody (elderly, handicapped, minors, …)" (Stakeholder 2).

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

The city government implemented several actions to promote refugees' inclusion. For instance, it collaborated with ANCI (Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani)[26] for the realization of three videos about SPRAR and promoting the project in those municipalities that haven't a SPRAR yet.

Several public conferences have been organized to talk about the issue of refugees and migrants and to show the results of inclusion's processes.

The city government promoted public campaigns to awaken citizenship about refugees' issues, moreover it organizes sport and cultural events with the same goal.

The active connection with NGOs and associations, which deal with refugees and migrants, as well as the involvement of all religious leaders in public event constitute a routine for the mayor and his cabinet.

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

As previously highlighted in the report, the political and social actors supporting refugees' integration in the city of Parma are several and the network is very wide.

Parma has a long tradition of reception, for this reason institutional bodies (city government, welfare offices, local health system, permanent centres for education of adults, police, prefecture etc.) and private organizations (NGOS, associations, religious communities, citizens, catholic associations etc.) have created a structured system of procedures and practices, which characterize an efficient reception system.

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[26] National Association of Italian Municipalities (Our translation)

Common citizens are also spontaneously involved in this process:

"There is a project in families, for example… When a refugee obtains a form of protection and needs guidance… When someone still needs to be accompanied, I've seen families supporting refugees" (Stakeholder 3)

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

Despite the general atmosphere that support the integration of refugees in the city of Parma, some opposers showed their disagreement through multiple actions.

At the city government level some small groups representing the far right disagreed, using violent speech, with some policies implemented by the local administration.

"There are some local far right movements that show their disagreement through different actions, but they do not have a shared strategy, they are focused on single actions… sometimes they act individually" (Policy Maker 4)

Opposers' actions have begun after the opening of large centres, as they represented a new fact for the province of Parma, moreover *the private management of services gave way to arbitrariness (Stakeholder 1)* and population reacted not just with symbolic actions, but also with violent ones.

"No one wants the refugees…. Indifference reigns, except when it's time to say that those welcoming asylum seekers are thieves, and such. Asylum seekers are a hot topic … our headquarters are situated in the historical city centre, and above us there are some of the apartments where we receive unaccompanied minors as well. Don't think that the people who surround us, love us…a bomb was thrown against our headquarters at the very beginning, while the slashed tires date back to 2016" (Stakeholder 2)

The bomb and the tire slashing have constituted the most violent demonstrations of opposition in the city of Parma. These kinds of episodes were isolated and didn't occur again, but they prove the level of tensions that the topic generate.

6.6. Discussion

As this chapter has pointed out, the implementation of refugee policies found in the city of Parma a strong connection between the city government and the private actors involved in promoting refugees' integration.

If a local level practices and procedures work fine, decisions take at national level[27] have repercussion that can create tensions in the population.

A wider availability of funds to promote integration and a real involvement of local public and private actors in the definition of national policies could mitigate violent forms of opposition.

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 Parma 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 strong collaboration between public and private actors characterize the Parma's system and its strength is based on this assumption. Weakening this benchmark could represent a collapse for the entire system. The Parma's integration and inclusion strategy can be summarized with the words of a stakeholder:

> *"Integration ... is a two-way mutual process between the person and the social context. We have a model in mind that reverses the point of view on integration. This model doesn't tell us that integration starts from having a home, health and education, but tells us that these are indicators of an integration that doesn't happen if some steps are not done, the first of which are rights and citizenship. I'll tell you more, if there are rights and citizenship, we have another step: knowledge and openness to the cultural system. If these two facilitating steps are done, then there is the third level: the social connections, social bridges, meaningful connection and social bonds." (Stakeholder 1)*

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[27] For instance the decision of opening big centers without the direct involvemnet of municipalities.

In sum, the key elements to promote refugees' integration are rights and citizenship. These lay the foundations for an inclusion process characterize by mutual respect and social cohesion.

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