



The role of the social economy in active inclusion policies: Bologna study visit



14 -16 May 2012

Summary report

Cities for Active Inclusion

CITIES FOR ACTIVE INCLUSION

EUROCITIES Cities for Active Inclusion is a partnership of nine European cities - Birmingham, Bologna, Brno, Copenhagen, Krakow, Lille Metropole-Roubaix, Rotterdam, Sofia and Stockholm - each with a Local Authority Observatory (LAO) within its administration. They share information, promote mutual learning and carry out research on the implementation of active inclusion strategies at the local level.

The observatories are coordinated by EUROCITIES, the network of major cities in Europe, and supported through our partnership with the European Commission's DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Cities for Active Inclusion⁷ organised a study visit to Bologna on 14-16 May 2012, promoting mutual learning amongst its partners.

The social economy (see Box 1) and the role of social cooperatives and local associations in delivering active inclusion policies in Bologna make up a specific model of intervention that has evolved and consolidated. The study visit allowed the partners to understand and assess this model, especially the extent to which it contributes to inclusive, independent living for city residents.



Box 1 - the social economy

The social economy refers to the third sector, or community, voluntary and not-for-profit activities. In some countries it also includes social enterprises whose profits are reinvested in the business or the community, such as cooperatives, building societies, development trusts and credit unions.

The social economy is important as it is proven² to create jobs for people at risk of social exclusion or with low chances of employment. It can provide social services that respond to the real needs of people and it promotes growth, with figures³ showing that 1 in 10 European businesses are now social economy enterprises, employing over 11 million paid employees.

The Bologna study visit was an opportunity for the participants to learn from their peers. Policy officers and local decision makers visited examples of social economy projects and discussed their own active inclusion policies.

The city of Bologna was chosen to host the study visit after a selection process held at the beginning of 2012. The topic was the role of the social economy and local associations, and their relationship with municipal institutions in implementing active inclusion policies. Bologna has more than 2000 social economy organisations of which at least 500 are working with the municipality⁴.

The projects visited in Bologna show how the social economy can play a positive role in a city's active inclusion policy and in providing services to disadvantaged people. Three target groups were selected by Bologna for the participants to visit:

- physically and mentally disabled people
- migrants and ethnic minorities, including young people with a migrant background and second generation migrants
- homeless people.

Participants were briefed on the background of each of the projects before visiting them.

⁷ Further information can be found at www.eurocities-nlao.eu and on the EUROCITIES website, www.eurocities.eu.

² <http://bit.ly/1C2Lux> (European Commission small and medium-sized enterprises webpage)

³ Idem.

⁴ Cities for Active Inclusion, Quality of Social Services and the social economy: Key lessons from cities: 2010.

Overall, the study visit gave the partners:

- in-depth knowledge about the local active inclusion practices
- mutual learning opportunities on how to implement active inclusion solutions
- on-site visits to see policies in action and witness their benefits
- the chance to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the practices
- the opportunity to provide feedback and comments to the host city.

This report examines the role of the social economy in Bologna by analysing the legal framework and the associations that work within it. It concludes with the key findings and points from the visit.

2. BOLOGNA IN CONTEXT

Bologna is one of the most important cities in northern Italy. It has many employment, living, shopping and leisure options with good transport links. The city has a population of 382 220 with a rising number of immigrants (10% of the population) and elderly people (20% of the population), especially women. Employment is mainly in the services sector as many mechanical, electronic and food companies are based there. The industrial and agricultural sectors also play an important role.

The main challenges facing Bologna are:

- the foreseen decrease in public financial resources
- significant demographic change, with an increasing number of migrants and elderly people as well as changes in family structures
- the likely increase in the number of people depending on social benefits due to the economic crisis.

Since the 1990s, the role of the social economy has grown in Bologna and the Emilia-Romagna region. This can be seen in terms of revenue, the quality of delivered services, the number of employees and members of cooperatives⁵.

The social economy in Bologna is mainly used for the social integration of:

- disadvantaged people
- physically and mentally disabled people
- people recently released from prison
- drug and alcohol addicts
- immigrants, and
- homeless people.

⁵ Cities for Active Inclusion, Social Economy in Cities: Bologna: 2010.

The welfare system

The Italian welfare system is quite fragmented, with different benefit entitlements for each population group. Regions have been responsible for ensuring that social services are available since 2001⁶. However it is the municipalities that actually manage and provide the services or outsource them to third parties. However, cash subsidies, the national health services and the role of the family in providing assistance and care for vulnerable members, are more prevalent than these direct social services.

Bologna began a system of decentralisation in 2006 and the nine city districts now implement their own social and educational policies through their 'Social Helpdesks'. They work with all citizens in need or who are looking for information on social services. The helpdesk staff:

- arrange meetings with social workers
- give information on accessing financial support
- start procedures to access benefits and services.

Social economy

In Italy, the social economy is backed up by legislation. For example: the law on public procurement allows for the introduction of social clauses. These clauses require suppliers of certain services to deliver social benefits and outcomes as part of their contracts. Italian public authorities have increasingly made use of this legislation when buying services through procurement tenders (i.e. giving more points to those tender applicants who, for example, employ long-term unemployed people).

Bologna's citizens can directly support the social economy by giving a small percentage of their income taxation (5x1000, or 0.5%) to an NGO of their choice. Box 2 provides a summary of how the social economy is supported financially.

The city of Bologna introduced some specific provisions in the municipality's regulations for public procurement. The municipality can now:

- directly award contracts for social services to accredited type B cooperatives (See Box 3 for more information on the types of cooperatives)
- sign agreements with social cooperatives to implement specific activities or to co-manage pilot projects or programmes
- consult social economy organisations to co-plan interventions related to social issues.

The social economy's development is facilitated and supported by the flexibility of the regulations and the municipality's direct cooperation with the third sector, especially when providing social services.

⁶ Constitutional Law no 3.

Box 2 - funding social economy: the '5x1000' initiative

The 5x1000 initiative was established to allow people to direct a percentage (0.5%) of their income tax to not-for-profit organisations. Introduced in 2006, 5x1000 is estimated to give €270 million annually to social initiatives and organisations. Almost 40000 organisations participate in the scheme, which covers voluntary, scientific research, health, religious, sports and social activities across 8 103 city municipalities.

This initiative does not affect the pre-existing 8x1000 initiative under which taxpayers can give a proportion of their income tax to one of the six main religious denominations, or to social and welfare activities run by the state.

For details of all the participating organisations see www.il5xmille.it.

The role of the social economy in Bologna

The social economy provides an added value in supporting disadvantaged people. Its organisations provide social services such as training, health, education as well as employment opportunities for those with special needs and facing multiple disadvantages (see Box 3 for the important role of social cooperatives, which is particular to Italy).

Social economy associations can provide flexible, innovative and creative approaches to social integration. They often better respond to the needs of people with complex disadvantages than local authorities. Municipalities can make significant financial savings by taking advantage of the social economy, as people in employment depend less on welfare benefits.

Box 3 - the Italian approach: social cooperatives

Cooperatives have a central role in the country's economy, undertaking essential social services activities.

In Italy, there are two types of cooperatives: type A and type B. Type A deliver social, health and education services, usually on the basis of legal contracts (i.e. public procurement, commissioning) with public administrations. It is estimated that some 70% of social cooperatives are of this kind.

Type B cooperatives offer disabled or disadvantaged people the possibility of employment. They work in different fields such as agriculture, services, maintenance, waste recycling, crafts, food, etc. What sets them aside is that at least 30% of the cooperative's employees must be from a disadvantaged background.

Some cooperatives combine both types. They have their own special status. Cooperatives like this are a means of meeting social needs as well as being an affordable way of delivering better social care.

There are many private social enterprises in the Bologna metropolitan area. These include voluntary organisations, social cooperatives, social enterprises, NGOs and foundations. It is estimated that some 500 work with the municipality to deliver services which target disadvantaged people, increasing awareness on the social economy. See Box 4 for an example of how awareness is raised on the sector.

Box 4 - example of the increasing awareness of the social economy: a regional observatory on the social economy

To increase the awareness of the potential of the third sector, the Emilia-Romagna regional Association of Chambers of Commerce signed an agreement with the regional third sector forum to create a regional observatory on the social economy. It will help to improve the understanding of the characteristics and potential of the third sector.

As the service users' have multiple disadvantages, it makes it difficult to precisely categorise the target groups addressed: i.e. they are both immigrants and unemployed, or homeless people with alcohol dependence issues etc. Social economy organisations that value and develop independence are better able to respond to the real needs of people and actively include them into society.

3. THE SITE VISITS

The organisations that participated in the study visit all work to include those people furthest away from the labour market and each have demonstrated support for at least one of the pillars of the EU active inclusion strategy⁷ through the social economy.

The site visits can be divided in three main themes, based on their target group:

- physically and mentally disabled people, with visits to Selleri Battaglia and CoPAPS
- homeless people and Piazza Grande and
- migrants, through the Villagio dei Fanciullo and the M. Zonarelli Intercultural centre.

The active inclusion of physically and mentally disabled people

*Site visit 1: Centro residenziale socio riabilitativo Selleri Battaglia (the Selleri Battaglia rehabilitation centre providing residential support and social services for physically and mentally disabled people)*⁸

The Selleri Battaglia residential home is for people with multiple physical and mental disabilities. Each client receives an individualised plan to help them become as independent as possible. The core staff of 30-35 people is supplemented by the client's family members who are involved in planning and implementing these personalised services. The service also relies on volunteers.

The centre also acts as the 'first and temporary point of care' for mentally and physically disabled people while they are waiting to be referred to more permanent social services and do not have a family or support network to care for them. For example, if the police find a disabled homeless person in need of care, they will call the Selleri Battaglia centre while social workers assess the type of more permanent care the person needs. This care is available 365 days a year, 24 hours a day through a call-centre.

⁷ You can read more about the EU Active Inclusion strategy at: www.europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/social_inclusion_fight_against_poverty/em0009_en.htm. The pillars are: sufficient income support; inclusive labour markets; and access to quality services.

⁸ Further information: www.aiasbo.it/servizi/adulti/residenziale.html.

Selleri Battaglia is run and managed by three cooperatives that joined their efforts in a bid to be accredited by the Municipality of Bologna for the delivery of services.

Active inclusion in action

The three cooperatives are able to provide flexible and tailored solutions to the specific needs of the users. Involving family members and volunteers allows for greater flexibility compared to institutional services, in delivering care and through the 24 hour coverage.

The centre works in partnership with other social, health and public services. It also ensures that the people who come to the centre are referred to the relevant social service.

*Site visit 2: CoPAPS (Social Farm)*⁹



Established in 1979, CoPAPS is a social farm, employing people with mental disabilities. In 2002, CoPAPS combined both type A and B cooperatives, delivering specific public services (type A) and providing pathways to labour integration (type B). See Box 3 for further information. The farm trains people with mental disabilities to work in the agricultural and horticultural sectors, including in the preparation of food (for example, making fresh pasta) and preserves (for example making jam with locally grown fruits).

The cooperative also won a contract with the municipality to look after the green areas of the city. CoPAPS helps people with mental disabilities to find jobs and gain valuable work experience.

Active inclusion in action

This cooperative is able to respond to the multiple needs of people with mental disabilities, including creating job opportunities. This example shows how type A + B cooperatives can contribute to the socio-economic integration and empowerment of people with disabilities.

The active inclusion of homeless people

*Site visit 3: Associazione Amici di Piazza Grande (The Association of Friends of Piazza Grande)*¹⁰

The Associazione Amici di Piazza Grande was established in 1994 by a group of volunteers, to tackle the social exclusion of homeless people. They founded a monthly street magazine written, produced and distributed by homeless people. The magazine covers stories on homelessness, poverty and social exclusion. Homeless people write the articles and earn a living selling it.

⁹ Further information: www.copaps.it.

¹⁰ Further information: www.piazzagrande.it.

The success of the magazine led to the association finding other employment opportunities for homeless people, helping them engage with their surroundings and become pro-active. Homeless people are trained to manage the shelter where they live, thus not only looking after themselves but a wider group of people.



The association also offers many other activities supporting the social inclusion of homeless people:

- distributing food, drink, clothes and other basic necessities
- managing a homeless shelter
- operating an outreach support service
- helping the homeless access services
- managing a bicycle repair shop (see Box 5)
- organising several online training courses addressed to different audiences (disadvantaged women, trade union representatives).

Box 5 - bicycle repair shop (Bici Centro)

A bicycle repair shop was established as part of the Associazione Amici di Piazza Grande's activities. This shop trains homeless people to repair and assemble bicycles, giving them skills to access the labour market.

People working in the shop collect abandoned or donated bicycles and repair them for resale. The employees are former homeless people, former drug addicts or ex-offenders. During the training period, the employees receive a training allowance from the municipality.

This allows people with a very low employability profile to gain skills that can be used in the labour market.

Related to the work of Piazza Grande, and established within it, the association of street lawyers (Avvocati di Strada¹¹) defends homeless people's rights. Homeless people receive free legal counselling. The lawyers have treated over 2000 cases since the service was set up in 2000. This initiative has proved so successful that it has now been rolled out in another 26 Italian cities. The association is independent of the municipality in order to ensure that it is completely impartial when actions have to be taken against public authorities.

Active inclusion in action

The activities of Piazza Grande support homeless people to become more integrated into society and the labour market.

The association of street lawyers helps homeless people to exercise their rights. The fact the homeless people are treated in the same way as paying clients gives them an added sense of respect.

¹¹ Further information: www.avvocatodistrada.it.

The active inclusion of migrants

Site visit 4: Villaggio del Fanciullo (the integration of young migrants)

Villaggio del Fanciullo¹² is a non-profit association which shelters and promotes the self-development of unaccompanied foreign minors¹³. The majority of these young people come from Morocco, Algeria and Albania. The municipality, which is under legal obligation to look after unaccompanied foreign minors, has outsourced this service to Villaggio del Fanciullo. The Villaggio del Fanciullo is responsible for:

- providing accommodation
- providing a family environment (not institutional care)
- educational activities, including sport
- health and psychological well being, especially for those young people who have been through a traumatic experience
- training and inclusion into the labour market
- accompanying the minors, once they turn 18, with the transition from the centre into society (this is done as part of a project, Stargate, which provides extra financial resources).

Villaggio del Fanciullo provides highly individualised plans to help young people become independent and develop the skills they need to integrate into society. Particular attention is given to the transition from school to the labour market, through involving the business sector, which provides on-the-job training opportunities, work placements and eventually job offers.

The Villaggio del Fanciullo also helps young people adapt from living within the associations' premises to living in rented accommodation. This is done by providing temporary accommodation in shared rented flats. The young people are coached and supervised while settling into their new autonomous life (such as how to manage money, how to keep the flat clean, how to respect the rules of the building, etc.).

Active inclusion in action

The association offers services that are both flexible and adaptable to young people's needs. It gives individualised solutions and accompanies them to full independence. The association uses a preventative approach, avoiding the risk that the young migrants might fall into the trap of poverty and social exclusion. The preventative and tailored approach offered here is key, as the number of unemployed young people in Bologna is on the rise, making it increasingly difficult for those young people to integrate into the labour market and thus access social benefits.

¹² Further information: www.villagio.dehoniani.it.

¹³ Young people (under the age of 18 years) that arrive in Italy from non-EU countries without their parents and do not have the support of any other family members.

*Site visit 5: The M Zonarelli intercultural centre*¹⁴

Providing recreational and cultural facilities for migrants and ethnic minorities is an important dimension of active inclusion. These facilities allow their users to have a place to interact with members of their own nationality, other ethnic groups and the local population, as well as to celebrate their traditions, culture, history and background. These are very important aspects of social integration as they enable minority groups to become more visible in mainstream city life, to engage with the local population in their activities and have a space for discussion and debate on the issues that are important to them.

Bologna set up an intercultural centre to meet these needs. Its role and mission are to support, promote and multiply the opportunities for meeting, exchange and intercultural dialogue. The centre is managed by the municipality and hosts many of Bologna's immigrant associations with some 120 member associations committed to cultural and social integration activities.

Active inclusion in action

The intercultural centre focuses on the cultural integration of migrants. This element is fundamental to including migrant communities into society. Cultural integration of migrants needs to be fully considered and established to support strategies for labour market and economic integration.

4. KEY POINTS OF THE FEEDBACK SESSION

The study visit feedback session allowed the participating cities to give their feedback on what they had seen and learned.

The peer cities were very clear on the role of the social economy in Bologna. Participants agreed that social enterprises are important. Some of the cities stated that they are in a different phase: in some cases there is no legal definition of social economy (Sofia), in another case they are still building the infrastructure to establish a social economy (Krakow).

The relationships between stakeholders, social economy associations and municipalities are also well defined and work well (legislation is clear and supportive of social economy). This allows both parties to understand their roles and responsibilities. This is not the case in other countries (Lille Metropole Roubaix).

Bologna has an integrated approach and local stakeholders can work together. In other countries social services are often more centralised (Sofia).

A number of the partners pointed out that in their local context it is difficult to support the social economy through tenders (Stockholm). Some of the partners were interested in understanding further how the process and financing of tenders is managed. Budget cuts and the economic crisis will make it difficult for municipalities to continue funding social services.

¹⁴ Further information: www.zonagidue.it.

5. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE STUDY VISIT

The study visit held in Bologna was a mutual learning opportunity for the partners, allowing them to see the important role of the social economy and local associations, and their relationship with municipal institutions in implementing active inclusion policies.

The social economy is well developed in Bologna for several reasons:

- supportive legislation (social clauses, specific procurement rules)
- the existence of cooperatives and associations with social purposes, and
- a high level of political and institutional acceptance that social services are delivered through social economy associations.

The site visits allowed participants to see how social economy associations work for the active inclusion of three different target groups (mentally and physically disabled people, homeless people and migrants). These associations offer flexible approaches to service provision adapting them to the users' needs. The visits have also shown that the target groups in most cases face multiple disadvantages, making a coordinated and preventative approach essential.



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