



Cities for Active Inclusion

Social Economy in Cities: Bologna

**EUROCITIES NETWORK
OF LOCAL AUTHORITY
OBSERVATORIES ON
ACTIVE INCLUSION**

EUROCITIES-NLAO

The EUROCIITIES Network of Local Authority Observatories on Active Inclusion (EUROCITIES-NLAO) is a dynamic network of ten European cities - Barcelona, Birmingham, Bologna, Brno, Copenhagen, Cracow, Lille Métropole - Roubaix, Rotterdam, Sofia and Stockholm - each with a Local Authority Observatory (LAO) within its administration. Their aim is to share information, promote mutual learning and carry out research on the implementation of the active inclusion strategies at the local level.

The ten observatories are coordinated by EUROCIITIES, the network of major cities in Europe, and supported through Inclusive Cities for Europe, a partnership between the European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) and EUROCIITIES.

EUROCITIES-NLAO website: www.eurocities-nlao.eu

1. Introduction: social inclusion policy at city level

1.1. City context

The city of Bologna is located in a strategic position in the heart of Italy. Its University is the oldest in the world (founded in the year 1089) and is attended by over 87,000 students. Alongside its cultural tradition, Bologna is one of the most important business cities in Northern Italy, mainly because it is a crossroads of goods and people, thanks to its role as a mobility hub. The significant number of associations in the city testifies to the strong, effective and active participation by citizens (1,400 associations: 400 are related to social and health issues). They are directly and indirectly supported by the Municipality and represent a major resource for social policies. The Bologna economy is dominated by the service sector, but agriculture and industry are also widely represented (in 'packaging valley' and several other industrial districts).

According to 2009 data¹, Bologna has some 377,220 inhabitants, including a steadily growing number of legally resident people born outside Italy² (43,664; + 16% on 2008), who now represent more than 10% of the population. There is also an increasing number of elderly people (26% of the population), more than half of whom are female, giving rise to a growth in single person households. Despite population expansion, Bologna has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Italy (2009: 3.4%) and one of the highest per capita GDPs in Europe (€35,156). Over the last ten years, the business base has grown by 83% and the number of employees by 33% and it remains the Italian town with the highest rate of female employment (65% of women). Education levels have reached significant figures both as a percentage of total citizens with school graduation (60%), and university degree (26.2%). According to the 2009 *European Regional Economic Growth Index* (E-REGI), Bologna in 2008 was the fastest growing Italian city.

Nevertheless, over the last year the employment rate has fallen (-1.2%), with a strong increase in the proportion of people aged 45-54 years (+6,4%) and over 55 years (+44,2%) unemployed, alongside those with low educational attainments (37%). Being the capital city of the Emilia-Romagna Region, Bologna naturally attracts those in disadvantaged situations seeking employment or social assistance: the latter is evidenced by the increase in the numbers of disadvantaged people being assisted by the Public Housing System (ERP is the Italian acronym).

1.2. Organisation of social inclusion policies in Bologna

Bologna is currently going through a process of significant change. This started at the end of 2006 and involves a process of decentralisation and subsidiarity. Districts are acquiring more and more functional autonomy, having set up specific functions for social and educational services within the framework of regulations approved by the Municipal Council.

These functions are performed by Social Offices spread across the 9 Bologna Districts and in operation since October 2008. These Offices are designed to assist all citizens in need of help or who simply want to receive information on social service provision. Their role is to:

- facilitate meetings with professional social workers;
- provide information regarding requirements for financial support;
- start the procedures needed to obtain services.

¹ www.iperbole.bologna.it/iperbole/piancont/index.html.

² Including other parts of Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Australia.

In the Emilia Romagna region there are three Public Agencies for social services (ASP is the Italian acronym) that provide social and education services to adults, minors, disabled people and older people identified by District Social Offices as those who can receive these services. In addition, the District Committee has been strengthened to support further political cooperation; and the Planning Office's role has been reinforced to encourage further cooperation between politicians and those responsible for implementing policies.

Following an agreement between the Municipality of Bologna and the Province of Bologna, Employment Offices have been established in three out of the nine districts in the region, with the aim of being closer to the people. These local offices are linked to the Public Employment Services network, and are designed to facilitate demand-supply matching in the labour market, to support people in finding a job, and to provide individualised consultancy for vocational training.

In June 2007, the Don Paolo Serra Zanetti institute for social and community inclusion was created, thanks to a financial donation from Don Paolo Serra Zanetti, in support of the city's drive for improvements to the organisation and delivery of social services in Bologna. The primary purpose of the institute is to reinforce social capital and social cohesion in the city. This includes analysing, addressing and reducing the factors causing social exclusion, and working on policies and strategies that promote the rights of citizens to be socially included.

The institute's activities and interventions are grouped into four areas:

- **Observation:** connecting with existing research organisations in order to collect data and information on poverty and disadvantaged situations.
- **Policy definition:** helping to define local policy by hosting workshops and conferences to share social inclusion practices and experiences; and by working with Universities and other Research Institutes on new forms of poverty.
- **Innovation:** supporting innovation in social intervention, by conducting experimental and pilot projects, and by assessing the transferability of national and international best practice.
- **Communication:** using different types of communication (website, radio, free press etc.) to encourage interaction across all stakeholders: municipal sectors and departments, districts, social economy and third sector organizations and citizens.

In terms of organisation and governance, the Regions have exclusive institutional competences in the field of social services (Constitutional Law n° 3). The function of managing and providing social services is the prime responsibility of the municipalities. They may either manage and provide services directly or delegate this to other organisations such as the public agencies for social services (ASPs), foundations, cooperatives and community associations. Even where services are managed and provided through other organisations, the municipalities retain effective ownership and responsibility for the effectiveness of the services provided.

The funds that the municipalities have at their disposal for social services are provided by the national fund for social policies, even if, technically, they are sourced via the regional fund for social intervention which manages the region's share of national funding. The municipalities are in charge of the administrative functions that control the provision of services, expenditure and relationships with citizens. The role of the municipalities includes:

- Planning, designing and implementing their local integrated social services system.
- Allocating services and financial support.

- Authorising and supervising social services and residential and day care structures;
- Identifying, together with the regions, the territorial areas for the zone plans.
- Defining the assessment criteria allowing citizens to access services.
- Assessing service efficiency and efficacy in order to plan programmes; and guaranteeing the ability of citizens to assess service quality.

1.3 The main policy priorities for social inclusion

The global economic crisis is having strong social repercussions in Bologna, with increasing levels of social-economic distress and new groups of disadvantaged people: the so-called new poverty.

Population groups hitherto untouched by the problems of social exclusion are now experiencing severe discomfort, provoked by job loss and the consequent difficulty in maintaining their accommodation. As the crisis has diminished so many people's earning capacity, families that were previously on the borderline of survival are becoming seriously affected by poverty. It has therefore become imperative to promote social intervention programmes to support families threatened by loss of jobs and homes, who would otherwise be reduced to a state of extreme need, at high social cost to the general population.

In addition, the traditional at-risk population categories are now being extended through new groups such as single elderly persons, single-parent families, unaccompanied foreign minors and single women of working age, who are also often immigrants.

On the increase, too, are individuals facing a series of other challenges giving rise to social exclusion. Today, for instance, many males aged over 45 are excluded from the labour market. These are mainly workers with low qualifications and very specific skills obtained in the course of many years' work in the same company. Given that these skills may have little relevance in other employment areas, once the workers have lost their job they find it very difficult to find another.

At the same time, there is also another emerging group of socially excluded people: men who are separated from their partner and family. They may have lost their home (which is usually assigned to the ex-wife and children) and their resources (set aside for child maintenance), and find themselves facing serious economic circumstances. The lack of structures to deal with such situations is often the catalyst for additional problems, such as social withdrawal, depression or alcoholism. The multi-dimensional aspects of these problems of social exclusion increasingly require highly personalised interventions, and collaboration between the various social services.

Ultimately, the labour market is becoming increasingly selective in terms of work duties and tasks on offer. Jobs requiring no qualifications (such as, for example, making photocopies or operating a telephone switchboard) are becoming increasingly rare. So a fundamental requirement is to provide opportunities for skills development and lifelong learning, enabling workers to acquire new knowledge throughout their lives, in order to minimise the risk of future descent into poverty.

However, specific target groups require protected inclusion programmes and the integration of several services if they are to achieve effective employment and social inclusion. In this area, the role of social cooperatives is fundamental. For example, they often employ individuals with complex problems, thus getting them back into the labour market. Today more than ever, there is the need to strengthen and develop the role of such organisations.

1.4 The importance of the social economy for active inclusion of people at risk of poverty

The social economy is well embedded in the Bologna metropolitan area with a large number of private organisations established for social purpose. These include voluntary organisations, social cooperatives, social enterprises, NGOs and foundations. In addition to the scale of the city's social economy, it is worth underlining the vital role that these organisations play in the delivery of services, intervention and specific projects that are all aimed at the active inclusion of the disadvantaged. (For specific data on the scale of the social economy in Bologna please refer to section 2.2.)

2. Arrangements and trends in social economy

Italy has a large social cooperative sector involving three main types of social cooperative: Type A (providing social, health or educational services), Type B (covering different sectors and employing disabled and disadvantaged workers who may have difficulties in being accepted in the private labour market), and mixed (A+B). These social cooperatives are all part of Italy's social economy. In Bologna, of the many social cooperatives that deliver social services, the roles of the two main types are as follows:

- **Type A social cooperatives:** These deliver social services such as recreation centres for older people, rehabilitation centres for mentally disabled people and foster homes; health services such as health care and health-related care interventions; long term care services for those who are no longer able to perform the activities of everyday life without assistance, because of old age, chronic illness or disabilities; and education services such as recreation and education centres for young people, games rooms etc.. Most of these services are usually delivered on the basis of covenants with local government organisations.
- **Type B social cooperatives:** These offer effective practical opportunities for disabled people and disadvantaged people to integrate into the labour market. They work in a variety of sectors, including agriculture, cleaning services, maintenance, waste recycling, other environmental services, crafts and food. Under national law 381 (1991) which regulates social cooperatives, at least 30% of those employed by this type of cooperative must comprise people who are disadvantaged (disabled people, people with mental health problems, ex-prisoners, adults with social problems, and people recovering from alcoholism and drug addiction).

Italy's government circular 1533 (1996) only permits a social cooperative to offer both type A and type B services if integrated type A+B activities can be shown to be the most effective way to achieve the social cooperative's aims. For these social cooperatives with multiple aims A+B, the connection between the type A and type B activities has to be identified in the cooperative's social legal documents and in addition, the financial management of the type A and type B activities must be kept separate.

National law 381 (1991) also makes it possible to create a Consortium operating as a social cooperative, as long as the social cooperative role makes up at least 70% of the Consortium activities.

Even where social cooperatives manage and deliver social, health and education services, these are still the overall responsibility of Bologna's family services department. The family services department includes a Health and Care Coordination Sector, an Education Sector, a Housing Sector and the Institute for Social Inclusion "Don Paolo Serra Zanetti"; the Districts to which services have been delegated; and the three Public Agencies for social services (ASPs) in Bologna which are in charge of services. In particular, ASPs are responsible for allocating social services contracts to social economy organisations, through direct appointment or via public tenders. For more details, please see the LAO Bologna reports on housing and employment.

One way of supporting the growth of Bologna's social economy would be to issue tenders with a social clause: for example, 'this tender is open only to social cooperatives of type B which involve socially disadvantaged persons in the course of their activities'. Another option, which has been requested by many social economy organisations, would be to assign 5% of the total annual municipal funding on social services to type B social cooperatives.

Finally, another way to support the social economy, albeit indirectly, would be to involve social economy organisations earlier on in the planning process, for example in the early stages of drafting the Welfare Zone plan. Currently, social economy organisations are starting to participate in welfare consultations and are contributing to several thematic advisory groups.

2.2. The scale of the social economy in Bologna

The following data provides the national and regional context for the social economy ³:

- In Italy there are 220,000 associations, foundations, social cooperatives and religious organisations, which employ more than 500,000 people and 3,000,000 volunteers.
- There are a total of 5195 cooperatives in the Emilia Romagna region: these account for 8.5% of the region's turnover.
- There are 672 social cooperatives in Emilia Romagna with a total of 80,864 members and 43,518 employees including 3,000 disadvantaged people: total turnover during 2009 was €1,435,389,499.

The Social Economy in BOLOGNA⁴

The following organisations are working in Bologna:

- 1880 associations in total (Bologna Register of Associations).
- 570 associations in the social, health cultural and environment sectors (Provincial voluntary Associations Register).
- 306 voluntary associations in the social health cultural and environment sectors (Provincial Voluntary Associations Register).
- 88 social cooperatives of type A, type B and type A+B (Regional Social Cooperative register).
- 63 foundations (Regional dataset on foundations).
- 14 NGOs.

It is estimated that some 500 of the organisations above are working with Bologna municipal services, given the following information:

- A total of 642 associations appear in the three sections of the Bologna Municipality Associations Register that are related to welfare issues.
- 206 of the associations are involved in social and health care.
- 198 of the voluntary associations are involved in social and health care.
- All 88 social cooperatives are involved in social welfare by definition.
- 31 of the foundations are involved in social care, health care and education.

The table below shows the financial resources that Bologna spends on the city's welfare system⁵. This represents spending on a very broad range of services, including services in social care, health care, education, culture, sport, activities for young people, employment, housing and security.

In 2009, the city spent over €255million on welfare services, which represents 46% of the city's total budget. The largest proportion was spent on Bologna's education sector

³ Data Legacoop, and Confcoop Agci year 2008.

⁴ Data presented by the Family Services Department of the Municipality of Bologna during the Welfare Consultation held in Bologna, 21 September 2010.

⁵ Data presented by the Family Services Department of the Municipality of Bologna during the Welfare Consultation held in Bologna, 21 September 2010.

(€132.7m), followed by the social and health care sector (€68.5m), and the cultural sector (€35.4m).

The following table analyses Bologna's social and health sector spending by type of service and specific target group (2004 to 2009):

	Overall cost 2004 (€)	Overall cost 2005 (€)	Overall cost 2006 (€)	Overall cost 2007 (€)	Overall cost 2008 (€)	Overall cost 2009(€)
Social and health care interventions	61,193,026	64,573,237	65,472,368	67,538,121	67,212,689	68,511,309
Interventions for older people	28,337,907	29,654,261	29,372,826	28,545,604	28,291,884	29,817,869
Interventions for families and children	11,935,647	11,898,773	12,090,444	13,772,178	14,401,996	16,267,821
Interventions for adults	6.406.200	6.962.529	6.220.402	6.300.580	6.698.237	6.612.640
Interventions for disabled people	10,525,808	10,016,944	12,169,863	12,664,383	11,584,916	11,357,526
Interventions for migrants, nomads and refugees	4,707,465	6,040,730	5,168,832	6,255,377	6,235,656	4,455,454

Source: Municipality of Bologna, Budget data 2009 - Programming Department - Statistic Sector

There is currently no information available on the share of social services commissioned to social economy organisations in Bologna, or on the number of clients being provided with services delivered by social economy organisations.

2.3 Added value of promoting active inclusion through the social economy

As described earlier and indicated in the tables above social economy organisations in Bologna play an important role in the promotion of active inclusion among disadvantaged people. This is true both through their role as service deliverers, and also due to the specific characteristics of social economy organisations, in particular the social cooperatives.

For example, unlike other organisations, social cooperatives, especially type B, can really contribute to the active inclusion of disadvantaged people through employment.

Social cooperatives are able to pay particular attention to the entire process of providing disadvantaged people with employment. For example, they can focus on social relationship aspects, preferred ways of working and flexible working hours; and they can take into consideration all the possible difficulties that disadvantaged people, often with multiple disadvantages, may have in a work context. Social cooperatives can put the person at the centre of the employment process, in order to help them develop their capabilities, become more independent, and achieve social inclusion, and reduce their dependency on the social welfare system.

2.4 Trends in the promotion of active inclusion through the social economy

Since the 1990s, the social economy both in Bologna and in the whole Emilia Romagna region has grown significantly, as shown by the growth in revenue, the increased number of social cooperatives, the growing numbers of employees, improved social worker professionalism, and improved service quality⁶. However, due to the current socio-economic crisis, type B social cooperatives in particular seem to be⁷ experiencing more extensive difficulties, although the number of type B cooperatives is still currently stable. These difficulties are due to several factors, including the crisis in the private sector with which many social cooperatives have supply contracts; the shrinking of public resources devoted to services delivered by social cooperatives; and by the lack of medium to long term planning for social services.

Many social cooperative consortia have been established in recent years, in some cases these have been set up by associations working together. Through the creation of a consortium, organisations benefit from a common front: they can share resources, networking contacts and experience, in order to overcome the difficulties stemming from reduced funding. They can also work together in a commercial partnership or a project partnership to tender for public contracts.

The social economy in Bologna is mainly focused on the social integration of disadvantaged people, including people with a physical or mental disability, ex-offenders, people with drug or alcohol addictions, immigrants and homeless people. However, the high presence of multiple-disadvantage often makes it difficult to categorise groups of beneficiaries in a precise way. Most social economy organisation clients are in more than one category: for example, both immigrants who are unemployed and homeless, or homeless people who are also alcohol dependent. This emphasises the fact that the needs of disadvantaged people are often multiple and complex. In Bologna, social economy organisations are often much better placed in paying attention to individual circumstances and needs, and in developing independence, thereby promoting active inclusion among the disadvantaged.

2.5 Ensuring and monitoring quality in the social economy

According to the service contract drawn up between the Municipality of Bologna and the public agencies for social services (ASPs)⁸, each ASP undertakes to adopt an agreed quality management system within 24 months of signing the contract. This quality system must provide various tools and criteria for assessment in order to monitor the planning and delivery of services and ensure continual improvement (Article6).

These service contracts with the ASPs were only signed in mid-2009, so some aspects of the quality management systems are still being developed. However, two of the three ASPs have already certified their services in line with ISO 9000⁹, and in addition a certain level of quality assurance was already been in place prior to 2009. The ASPs and most of all the others organisations delivering social services and health services had already adopted a services charter which involves the continuous monitoring of various indicators; those delivering more structured services run an annual customer satisfaction survey to obtain users' views and check for continuous improvements; and one of the ASPs has already set up a consultation committee composed of user representative and civic representatives.

⁶ Ricerca "Cooperazione sociale Legacoop in Emilia Romagna. Il posizionamento attuale e le prospettive future" Legacoop 2009.

⁷ Osservatorio Isnet sull'impresa sociale terza edizione - Estratto per "Colloquio scientifico annuale sull'impresa sociale" Iris Network con il supporto scientifico di AICCON - Giugno 2009.

⁸ In 2009, the Municipality of Bologna has stipulated a 9-year service contract with the ASPs which lays down the service operator's competences and responsibilities. For more details on it and on the decentralization process of social services in the city of Bologna, please refer to LAO Bologna National Study on Housing and on Training and Employment, 2009. Both reports can be downloaded from the EUROCITIES-NLAO website at: www.eurocities.eu/Minisites/NLAO/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=70 and www.eurocities.eu/Minisites/NLAO/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=16.

⁹ A system of international consensus on good quality management practices.

3. The main challenges

In September 2010, the Municipality of Bologna held a public consultation on social welfare to help ensure the active participation and consultation of citizens. An overview document¹⁰ identified the three main challenges for the Municipality of Bologna that have already emerged and are likely to increase in the next few years.

These three main social welfare challenges are:

- **Reduced funding:** Fewer financial resources will be available to the city over the next few years, and the financial cuts may affect the city welfare system that underpins the social cohesion of the entire community. Discussions will be needed to identify ways of tackling this problem, such as different ways of allocating resources, prioritising services, and prioritising target groups.
- **Demographic change:** Like many other cities in Italy and across Europe, Bologna is facing significant changes in its demographics. Not only is there likely to be increased immigration and increasing numbers of elderly people reaching very advanced age, but with the change in family networks and more people living alone, there is also the breakdown of informal family and community networks to consider, reducing the natural cooperation and solidarity that has traditionally supported social welfare, especially in Italy.
- **Socio-economic change:** The worsening socio-economic situation means that several already disadvantaged groups are increasingly at risk of further disadvantage. For example, the rise in unemployment will bring an increase in the numbers of people relying solely on social benefits and the number of families exposed to new forms of poverty.

As a result of the public consultation on social welfare, which included the involvement of key representatives of the social economy, some very practical ideas and proposals have already been generated to help tackle these challenges. The public consultation raised awareness of the reality of the changes Bologna will face in the coming years, and the absolute necessity of re-thinking of Bologna's welfare system. People are also more aware that the social economy can play an important role in finding solutions, by increasing the involvement of all the local stakeholders, by reconsidering the role of public and private organisations, and by increasing the participation of citizens early on in the planning phase. Some proposals suggest increasing public and private partnerships, as a model for integrating resources and social needs with the social entrepreneurial mindsets that are typical of the social economy.

There is also a growing recognition of the benefits of making service users co-responsible for service delivery and also that there should be a re-assessment of the service access criteria. As resources are cut, stakeholders will need to prioritise the services and decide which groups should have more rights to services. In addition, there is the idea that citizens with sufficient funds should share the cost of the services they receive.

¹⁰ www.comune.bologna.it/istruttoriawelfare/pagine/110:5911/.

4. Good lessons

4.1 COPAPS social cooperative

Among the many examples of success ¹¹ in achieving social inclusion through the social economy, the activities of the COPAPS social cooperative are particularly representative.

COPAPS was established in 1979 as an agricultural company with social aims: it provides training courses and employment pathways, both inside and outside the company, for people with mental disabilities, to help them integrate into the labour market. In 2002, COPAPS became a type A+B social cooperative. The organisation is involved in a variety of activities related to the agricultural sector including: the cultivation of flowers and vegetables; parks and gardens maintenance and cleaning; and waste management services. COPAPS also has its own agritourism restaurant, where people can eat the products produced by the farm, as well as a shop selling the farm produce.

All the activities are run by people with mental disabilities, who are employed by the cooperative. People with mental disabilities are also involved in what are known as green laboratories, where they are trained to become farm workers. Those who are sufficiently independent to work effectively on the farm then use the laboratory experience as a pathway to employment: either within the COPAPS farm, or in other farms or similar organisations such as garden centres. For those who are not sufficiently independent, COPAPS' green laboratories provide a form of work experience that is focused on social recovery rather than involving any obligation for the cooperative to employ the person. COPAPS has also started environmental education pathways for children of school age.

The success and innovation of the COPAPS social cooperative is mainly related to the way it has opened its activities to the wider community: through the restaurant, the shop, and in particular through the environmental education pathways. In this way disabled people and people without disabilities, including children, can interact with each other, work together, and learn from each other to fight against stereotypes and prejudices. The involvement of disabled people in all the activities of the cooperative, rather than in activities that are dedicated to them, is important in achieving real social inclusion.

4.2 Solidarity house

To help address the consequences of the socio-economic changes in the structure of the Bologna population and the emerging new forms of poverty, a new type of short-term social housing has been opened by one of Bologna's ASP (the ASP for social inclusion and new poverty). Known as Solidarity House, it provides six flats. These are assigned to people who can no longer pay their rent or mortgage, and who face great economic disadvantage due to job loss or other factors, but who are not yet technically classified as poor by the authorities.

People will be able to live in Solidarity House for a limited time, during which they must actively search for a job or make other improvements to their circumstances, in order to become independent once more. In addition to providing the six flats, the house also provides:

- a social information point that offers vocational and job guidance;
- free grocery shopping;

¹¹ Other projects Fiches can be downloaded from the EUROCITIES-NLAO website at the following address: www.eurocities.eu/Minisites/NLAO/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=75&Itemid=78.

- a microcredit service offering a maximum of €3000 to help residents through this short-term emergency period;
- a free (ethical) bank account;
- coaching support.

In January 2011, the contract to manage the house will be awarded through a public tender.

4.3 Contracts and tenders regulations

In 2006, in its Legislative Decree 12 April 2006 n° 163, Italy introduced the concept of including social clauses in public tenders and these can have a higher priority than low cost. This is in line with the European Directives 2004/17/CE and 2004/18/CE, which are aimed at supporting the awarding of public tenders contracts to achieve social aims.

Following on from this, in 2007 the city of Bologna introduced specific guidelines within its own contracts and tenders regulations¹², to help to promote the growth of the social economy. In these regulations, the section on agreements and forms of collaboration with non profit organisations (Article 51) gives guidance on how the city can work with the social economy:

- The Municipality can award contracts and services to social cooperatives that are on an approved register.
- The Municipality can sign agreements for the delivery of specific services and for the management or co-management of specific projects, including the right to use public spaces.
- The Municipality can consult social economy organisations and co-plan services and activities related to social issues; and for experimental or pilot interventions, the Municipality can define specific ways of collaborating on these.

¹² www.comune.bologna.it/media/files/regolamento_dei_contratti.pdf.

5. Future plans for promoting active inclusion through the social economy

The public consultation on welfare held by the Municipality of Bologna in September 2010 provided a good opportunity to gather together all the stakeholders operating within the municipal welfare system and to discuss the issues. Many proposals emerged from this consultation, especially on encouraging and supporting active inclusion through social economy initiatives. In particular, type B social cooperatives, that employ disadvantaged people who will never get a job with the private sector, have been highlighted as providing the most effective way to guarantee employment for disadvantage people.

To further support the growth of the social economy, an agreement was signed in 2009 between the Emilia-Romagna's regional Association of the Chambers of Commerce and the region's Third Sector forum. The forum is the first of its kind in Europe. It provides an official communication channel between all the different organisations in the third sector: associations, social cooperatives, voluntary organisations, mutual societies, charities and foundations. It is divided into 16 regional forums and several provincial and local forums.

The agreement between the Chambers of Commerce and the third sector is in line with the European Resolution 199 (2009) which emphasises the importance of having the right to political and legal conditions to support the growth of the social economy. The agreement also envisages the implementation of a regional observatory to conduct research on the social economy of the Emilia-Romagna region. Due to be established in the near future, this research unit will lead to a better understanding of the characteristics and future potential of the social economy both in the Emilia-Romagna region and in the city of Bologna.



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