CHAPTER II. GOOD PRACTICES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF REFUGEE AND ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN AT SCHOOL: EVALUATION AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
INTRODUCTION

The present report aims to discuss the applicability and effectiveness of evaluations and social impact assessments (SIA) in the process of identification, implementation and transferring of best practices in the area of educational integration of refugee and asylum seeking children throughout the EU. The discussion on these two methodological instruments will be based on the analysis of one core analytical exercise conducted in the framework of the INTEGRACE project. That analytical exercise aimed to assess the transferability of two specific best practices into two different national contexts. It involved the conduct of three best practices evaluations in Austria, Italy and Sweden and two social impact assessments of two of the evaluated practices in Bulgaria and Slovenia. The report will provide an analytical summary of the technology adopted in the application of the evaluation and social impact assessment methodology. In addition, a comparative analysis of the five different contexts will be conducted with the aim to answer the question how their similarities and divergences impact and are being impacted by the best practices under study. Finally, the report will offer analysis of the factors and preconditions allowing for the transferability of best practices in different national contexts throughout the EU.

1. EVALUATIONS AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS AS A KEY STEP IN THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFICATION AND PROMOTION OF BEST PRACTICES

The study of best practices as a tool in improving existing policies and programs in a given social field is usually restricted to identification and description of interventions that proved effective and successful in particular national contexts. While many best practices compendiums in the area of migrant and refugee integration have been collected, little work is done to test and assess the transferability of those practices in different contexts. Integration of refugees is associated with common issues and problems across the EU, the national contexts of integration however, being very different. Thus the effectiveness of best practices as a tool for improvement of policies and programs in the area of educational integration of RASC, remains questionable if not tested, prior to application, through relevant analytical instruments. The search for relevant and effective policy and program decisions calls for a more complex approach to ground the selection of best practices on careful investigation of the relationship between identified problems, different contexts and successful interventions at hand. In the framework of the INTEGRACE project the methods of evaluation and social impact assessment were tested with regard to the potential they bear for providing a link between best practices identification and best practices implementation in different national contexts. The method was applied...
to identify the most appropriate analytical tools as well as relevant transferability parameters to allow the use of best practices as a realistic and effective tool in search of relevant policy decisions in the area of educational integration of RASC.

The methodology for evaluation and social impact assessment proposed in the framework of the INTEGRACE project aimed to enhance the effectiveness of policies and programs for the integration of refugee and asylum seeking children in the EU and to develop analytical tools for the evaluation and impact assessment of programs and policies for the integration of refugee children at schools. In the context of the European Union it aimed to contribute to a process of adaptive management in countries with modest experience in refugee integration, drawing on the experience accumulated in countries with long established refugee management regimes. The conducted evaluation and social impact assessment exercise aimed at informed transfer of know how from old to new EU member states by testing best practices as a way to inform the design and operation of needed interventions.

2. THE EVALUATION AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AS A PROCESS

Social impact assessment research is being used as guidance in the management of social change since the 1970s. It was initially applied in the realm of environmental policy change to predict the social effects of related interventions (Burdge-Vanclay 1996: 60-62). Since then the use of the method has been widened to various intervention fields such as industry, development, tourism as well as social policy. The evaluation and social impact assessment exercise conducted in the framework of the INTEGRACE project aimed to investigate the social effects in advance of the implementation of two best practices in the realm of educational integration of RASC. The analytical exercise aimed to contribute to a transfer of best practices planning process involving alternative implementation scenarios so that positive social effects are maximized while potential negative effects are minimized.

The social impact assessment exercise involved a multi-step process along which matching between areas in need of improvement in new EU member states (Slovenia and Bulgaria) and existing best practices in old EU member states (Austria, Italy and Sweden) was undertaken to be followed by assessment of the applicability of selected best practices. The first step of the exercise involved the conduct of national studies of the systems of educational integration of RASC in all EU member states as well as in the states of the Western Balkans. The studies established a European wide picture of the educational integration of RASC, providing analysis of the policies, strategies and practices at place and identifying best practices and areas in need of improvement at respective national levels. The second step involved review of the identified gaps in the systems of educational integration of RASC in Bulgaria and Slovenia and selection of areas considered most problematic. The selection was conducted in perspective of the achievements in the area of educational integration of RASC registered in the EU wide context. Consequently research teams in Austria, Italy and Sweden, countries with long established refugee regimes, proposed up to three specific best practices, proven successful in addressing similar needs in their own countries. In response two out of the eight proposed best practices were selected, one by the research team in Bulgaria and one by the research team in Slovenia. The choice was guided by the need to identify those interventions most relevant to address the needs of the respective national contexts in Bulgaria and Slovenia. The analytical step that followed involved twofold investigation of the selected practices. While evaluations were conducted in the contexts where respective best practices were developed (Italy and Sweden), social impact assessments were carried out in the contexts where they were to be transferred (Bulgaria and Slovenia).

The objective of the conducted evaluations and SIA was to test and recommend the most appropriate methodological steps and analytical tools for addressing the investigation of the social outcomes and impacts of selected interventions. The conducted investigations had to lead to the identification of key transferability conditions and parameters in need of analysis for advising the replication of best practices in the area of educational integration of RASC through different contexts. The three evaluations and the two
social impact assessments were based on well synchronized and complementary methodological tools reflecting qualitative methods of research. Desk research, involving collection and analysis of statistical data, related surveys, institutional reports as well as academic literature was followed by qualitative investigation based on expert interviews, focus group discussions and on-site study visits. The methodological sequence of the two types of studies included: description of the selected practice; stakeholder identification and analysis; development of indicators and specific questionnaires; data collection and assessment of outcomes, impacts and risks. The best practice description was based on analysis of the problem and the objectives of the intervention together with its historical, legal, policy and institutional context. The description also involved identification of intervention’s key parameters such as financial frameworks, time period, institutional capacities and cooperation. The stakeholder analysis involved investigation of the interests of the main institutional actors, their importance with respect to the intervention, and the impacts of the intervention on them. The studies involved the identification of four main areas of analysis that included: access and enrolment; quality of education; empowerment and participation; enhanced protection. Those areas of study guided the selection of related criteria of assessment of social impacts/ outcomes and the development of country specific qualitative questionnaires. The evaluation and social impact assessment had to aim at the identification of positive and negative social impacts of the intervention; of successful strategies for the meaningful involvement of stakeholders and interested parties as well as of relevant implementation modifications and scenarios.

3. NATIONAL CONTEXTS IN COMPARISON

The national contexts of the five countries that were included in the best practices transferability analysis display marked differences with regard to local refugee groups and trends, general refugee integration approaches and RASC educational integration mechanisms. A clear line of distinction is apparent between the countries where best practices were to be transferred. In general Austria, Italy and Sweden appear countries with high refugee inflows and decentralized systems of migrant and refugee integration that render significant authority and responsibility to the local level (municipalities and provinces). In addition, the three countries promote RASC educational integration policies that rely on the autonomy of the school in taking educational development decisions. The educational systems and programs of the three countries favor and secure an individualized and flexible approach with regard to integrating asylum seeking and refugee children into their schools. Bulgaria and Slovenia, on the other hand, develop migrant and refugee integration measures within centralized systems where municipalities have little authority and insignificant experience in this realm. Moreover, the two countries render no autonomy to their schools with RASC being expected to follow mainstream school integration paths and curricula.

3.1. Target groups: bigger versus small refugee communities

The available refugee related statistics provided by the five countries included in this study point that in 2010 Sweden hosts the largest refugee population (82,629 persons) followed by Italy (56,397 persons) and Austria (42,630 persons).

Estimates of the trends in asylum claims lodged in 44 industrialised countries during the period 2006 – 2010 point that Sweden ranks third with 15.2 claims per 1,000 inhabitants, while Austria appears 7th in the same ranking list with 7.8 claims per 1000 inhabitants. Although Italy in the same period has received an absolute number of asylum claims higher than that of Austria (80,510 claims) its claims/ inhabitants ratio is lower (1.3) to set the country 21st in the ranking list. Refugees and asylum seekers of all age groups are dispersed throughout the territory of all three countries. In 2008 for example, newly arrived (migrant and refugee) pupils in Sweden, were accepted in 269

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1 In Sweden this approach is assured through centrally approved goals of education (set up by the Swedish National Agency for Education). The means and routes for achieving these goals that set levels of knowledge for the different stages of schooling, may vary from school to school, depending on local circumstances.
out of the total 290 Swedish municipalities forming a share of 6.7 per cent of the total number of pupils in the compulsory school (906,189 students).\(^3\) Similarly, foreign pupils (migrants, refugees and asylum seekers) compose 7 per cent of Italy’s pupils with their share being as high as 10 per cent in particular areas of the country.\(^4\)

In contrast, both Slovenia and Bulgaria have faced smaller inflows of asylum seekers, who together with the recognized refugees live in particular areas, rather than across the country’s territories. Slovenia has so far attracted insignificant flow of asylum applicants, hosting refugee community of 312 persons in 2010. In the period 2006 – 2010 the country received the least number of asylum claims from all five countries (1,580) to be ranked 26\(^{th}\) from all industrialised countries (0.8 claims per 1,000 inhabitants). Between 2006 and 2010 Bulgaria accepted a total of 4,250 asylum claims, ranking 29\(^{th}\) among the industrialized countries. The overall refugee population in the country in 2010 is estimated to 5,530 persons. The small inflow of refugees and the moderate number of incoming RASC in Bulgaria has contributed to developing an integration system mostly focused on the needs of

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### Table 48. Refugee population trends\(^2\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Refugees</th>
<th>Refugees to 1,000 inhabitants</th>
<th>Rank: Refugees to 1,000 inhabitants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>42,630</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>5,530</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>56,397</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>82,629</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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### Table 49. Asylum applications by country, 2006 – 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Asylum Claims</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Total claims in 1000 inhabitants</th>
<th>Rank: total claims in 1000 inhabitants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>64,950</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>4,250</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>80,510</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>1,580</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>141,050</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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\(^2\) The table reflects the volume of refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, returnees (refugees and IDPs), stateless persons, and others of concern to UNHCR by country of asylum.

\(^3\) Evaluation Report: Sweden.

\(^4\) Country Report: Italy.
In view of the selection of best practices that involved transferability analysis from Sweden to Slovenia and from Italy to Bulgaria, it is worthwhile examining the similarities and differences between the contexts of each pair of countries. The available data on the trends in refugee migration and the size of refugee populations show significant divergences between Sweden and Slovenia and some parallels between Italy and Bulgaria. Sweden and Slovenia differ significantly with regard to the absolute number of refugees and asylum claimants as well as with regard to the share of refugees and asylum seekers from the overall population of the two countries (tiny in Slovenia and significant in Sweden). While the absolute numbers of refugees and asylum claimants in Italy and Bulgaria show marked difference (the size of that population in Italy being eightfold larger that that in Bulgaria) they display similar profile with regard to the ratio of refugees per country inhabitants. Italy and Bulgaria rank respectively 70th and 76th with regard to the share of refugees (2010) and 21st and 29th with regard to the share of asylum claims (2006 – 2010). In this respect the two countries display relative similarity in the load of their refugee populations. Another important aspect regarding the refugee population in the five countries under study involves the trend of Bulgaria and Slovenia being targeted as transit destinations while Italy, Sweden and to a great extent Austria being targeted as final destinations. Commenting on this trend, experts in Bulgaria and Slovenia report that the transit intentions of asylum seekers and refugees in the two countries impact integration strategies that are short-term oriented. In contrast, the individual integration strategies of refugees and asylum seekers in Italy and Sweden are the result of intentions for long-term stay.

3.2. Integration of refugees and RASC: centralized versus decentralized approaches

Local municipal authorities in Sweden and Italy are key player in the process of reception, integration and education of newly arrived asylum seeking and refugee children. In Austria this responsibility is taken by country’s provinces. Based on reforms enacted during the 1990s the Swedish education system operates along decentralised principle with

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Table 50. Profile of refugee applicants by country of origin (top 10 countries of origin), 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Austria</th>
<th>Bulgaria</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Slovenia</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russian Fed.</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Stateless</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Islamic Rep. of Iran</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>Islamic rep. of Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Islamic Rep. of Iran</td>
<td>Russian Fed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>Syrian Arab Republic</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Cote d’Ivoire</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Stateless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Mongolia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Syrian Arab Rep.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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6 Country Report: Austria.
municipalities being responsible to provide access of RASC to preschool, primary and secondary school equal to that of permanent residents. While the Swedish central Board of Migration is responsible for covering the costs, municipal authorities are responsible for offering education for RASC in preschool classes, compulsory school, upper secondary school, special school as well as for offering Swedish for immigrants. Italy’s decentralized approach in the integration of migrants and refugees is made possible through the Italian SPRAR public system which operates on the basis of territorial projects (funded by the centrally administered National Fund for Asylum Services and Policies – FNSPA) managed by local authorities. Important feature of the RASC educational integration approach in Sweden and Italy regards the significant decision making freedom rendered to local schools. Swedish schools have the autonomy to assess RASC knowledge of their mother tongue, Swedish language proficiency as well as other major subjects to design the most appropriate school integration paths. Similarly schools in Italy are granted significant autonomy with regard to didactic, organization, research, experimentation and development. In the realm of RASC educational integration each school develops autonomously its own activities (which are financed by public funds) based on respective ministerial guidelines. Similar to Sweden and Italy, the Austrian educational system is operating along decentralized principle with federal and provincial authorities having mixed competences in the areas of legislation and implementation. Unlike Sweden however, the Austrian educational system hardly provides specific programs, pedagogical measures or projects addressing the particular needs of RASC in schools. Targeted support programs in Austria and in Italy are in principle being undertaken by non governmental organizations which develop projects to compensate the lack of respective measures implemented within the school system (Austria) or by local service providers contracted by Municipalities (Italy). It should be noted that planning and implementation of educational integration measures for RASC in Italy, Sweden and Austria is enacted in the context of the needs of the general group of foreign migrant children.

Moreover, schools do not enjoy the autonomy to conduct knowledge assessments, to issue enrollment decisions and to design schooling schemes. Thirdly, the educational systems in both countries appear inflexible in that they do not provide targeted educational schemes, meeting the specific needs of RASC. Refugee integration measures in Slovenia are the responsibility of respective ministries (Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education and Sport). In Bulgaria they are provided centrally with services provided exclusively in the capital of Sofia – with implementation, control and supervision being the prerogative of the State Agency of Refugees (SAR). Supporting activities are being commissioned to different refugee support NGOs (operating exclusively in the capital of Sofia). Unlike Sweden, Slovenia’s education system operates under the strict jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Sport with municipalities and schools having no autonomous role in designing RASC school admission and training. Similarly the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science in Bulgaria is responsible for RASC school admission and grade allocation. Once enrolled in school, RASC pupils are trained according to mainstream programs and curricula designed for nationals. Schools have no autonomy with regard to the admission process or with regard to designing targeted support schemes for RASC. Such institutional context in the realm of the educational integration of RASC in Slovenia and Bulgaria hinders the adoption of a more flexible and individualized approach with regard to RASC educational integration that is at place in Sweden, Italy and Austria.

3.3. Problems addressed: similarities or divergences

The problems that the two selected best practices address in Italy and Sweden and those that were to be addressed by the same practices in Bulgaria and

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8 Country Report: Italy.
9 Country Report: Italy.
10 Country Report: Italy.
11 Country Report: Austria.
12 Country Report: Austria.
Slovenia will be summarized comparatively along the four major areas of analysis defined in the first stage of this exercise: Access and enrollment; Quality of education; Enhanced protection; Empowerment and participation.\textsuperscript{16}

The problems in the educational integration of RASC in Sweden, Italy, Slovenia and Bulgaria are generally similar, with the integration approaches and stakeholder frameworks in the two old and the two new Member States being different. The best practices identified in Italy and Sweden are designed to allow for the implementation of flexible and individually tailored study schemes to meet the specific educational needs of refugee and asylum seeking children. Sweden's best practice targets problems in the realm of empowerment, protection and quality of education provided to RASC. In particular it aims to overcome shortcomings in:

- including RASC in the school wide community;
- avoiding discrimination and segregation trends within the school;
- reducing school drop out rates among asylum seeking and refugee children;
- providing sufficient training to reach sufficient subject and language knowledge for RASC at pace equal with that of country nationals;
- assuring that RASC reach the national goals of schooling to overcome lower school performance on their part as compared to country nationals.

Italy's best practice targets problems in the realm of access and enrollment, empowerment and quality of education. The practice aims to:

- avoid problems in enrollment especially for RASC of older age (above fifteen years old) or those who are unaccompanied;
- overcome hindrances in the attainment of needed level of subject knowledge, including Italian language;
- avoid obstacles in the attainment of respective school diplomas on the part of RASC as a major precondition for achieving full autonomy in the Italian social context.

Austria's best practice targets problems in the realm of access, quality and empowerment such as:

- observed school drop out trend of adolescents and young adults with refugee background;
- insufficient training support for newly arrived refugee children within the regular educational system;
- a tendency of lower school performance of RASC as compared to that of nationals.

The problems identified in Slovenia regarded the spheres of access and enrolment, quality of education and empowerment. The research team working in Slovenia looked for a best practice to address problems related to:

- delays in RASC school enrolment;
- absence of systematic guidelines on pre-school assessment and individual planning for RASC;
- lack of targeted training programs for RASC in school;
- insufficient language training for RASC.

Similar were the areas in need of improvement, identified in Bulgaria:

- lack of adequate pre-enrollment knowledge assessment standards and mechanisms; systematic placements of older children in grades not corresponding to their age;
- lack of RASC-tailored training assistance programs in the public school;
- lack of efficient language training schemes in school;
- hindered communication between teachers and RASC and their parents due to lack of specific translation and mediation schemes.

4. TRANSFERABILITY OF BEST PRACTICES

In theory and in practice transferability analysis could be employed with different types of good practices. According to the Evaluation/ SIA methodology developed under the INTEGRACE project, best practices to be evaluated or subjected to SIA could involve wide array of positively evaluated measures implemented in the form of: laws and regulations; administrative measures or mechanisms, policies or

\textsuperscript{16} Methodological Guidelines for Best Practices Identification and Preparation of Country Reports, (prepared under the INTEGRACE project).
projects; methods (such as educational curricula or programs, study materials); monitoring mechanisms or funding schemes. The evaluation/ SIA exercise conducted in the framework of the INTEGRACE project involved the selection of two different types of best practices. The first one, identified in Sweden involves the successful implementation of a regulation – “General recommendations for the education of newly arrived pupils” issued by the Swedish Agency for Education and included in the Code of Statutes (SKOLFS). The second one, identified in Italy, involves a project called “Land of Asylum” which is nationally implemented in the framework of the Italian public sector system for reception of asylum seekers and refugees (SPRAR).

4.1. Spheres and Methods of Best Practices Interventions

The Swedish best practice involves the successful implementation of the “General recommendations for the education of newly arrived pupils” in the schools of two Swedish cities: Bollnäs and Överkalix. Both cities have a small number of inhabitants as opposed to the large metropolitan cities of Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö. The smaller size of the population of these cities has been assessed to have impacted positively the efficient RASC reception process. Three schools in the city of Bollnäs (a municipality with 26,000 inhabitants) – Nyhamreskolan, Gärdeskolan and Torsberg’s gymnasium have been evaluated to work effectively and satisfactorily with new arrivals (foreign children, including RASC) following adequately the general recommendations given by the National Agency for Education. The schools provide highly individualized training adequate to the individual education level of RASC. Depending on his/hers individual level of knowledge of respective subjects a RASC student could attend high level classes in Math and lower level classes in English. This approach is made possible through curricula flexibility and is supported by various training methods to include: classroom teaching; teaching in small groups; individual instruction; individual work and group work. The process is assured through mapping the reading and writing abilities of pupils to serve as basis for development of individual study plans that are periodically reviewed by way of regular structured consultations with pupils and their parents (or guardians).

The Italian best practice, the project “Land of Asylum” includes the provision of general integration services for refugees and asylum seekers including children. The project operates within a national public-sector mechanism for which the State is directly responsible, with the Interior Ministry playing a central role based on multi-level governance delivered through the decentralization of the interventions. In the realm of educational integration of RASC, the project is based on school autonomy and on flexible and highly individualized training approach. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of the project in the municipality of San Pietro Veronico, with population of less than 15,000 inhabitants, points to a successful model of RASC educational integration in local schools. Access, quality of education and empowerment of RASC within the school system is ensured through customized training services provided by the local service provider Arci, in close cooperation with local schools and RASC families. While enrolled in classes corresponding to their age, RASC pupils are entitled to an array of targeted education services such as language training, homework assistance and subject training support. These services are provided individually or in group depending on the individual profile and needs of the respective pupil. The process is being assured by way of tight and well defined cooperation between public-sector agencies (municipalities, schools), third-sector bodies (the local service provider Arci) and private-sector agencies (language training institutes).

The best practice identified in Austria, the Program “Dynamo”, offers a broad range of services to promote qualification skills and educational achievement of migrant and RASC pupils. It is aimed at facilitating their integration into the educational system and the job market of the country. The program is being implemented by a network of three partners: the Integration House Vienna and the public schools Rudolfshem and Ottakring, members of the Austrian adult education network. The program offers series of training courses and measures to support migrant and RASC pupils in preparation for: Secondary Education Courses and Graduation; obtaining Certificate of Secondary Education and
Vocational Matriculation Examination. Services and courses provided within the program include:

- alphabetization;
- language training "German as a Second Language";
- English language, computer training, teamwork skills;
- social counseling and career orientation;
- supportive psycho-social care;
- vocational guidance and traineeships.

4.2. Social impacts of best practices

The evaluation of the interventions implemented in Italy and Sweden has revealed a number of positive impacts on the target groups, the involved stakeholders as well as the host society as a whole. The major positive results regarding the educational integration of RASC registered in the Swedish towns of Bollnäs and Överkalix involve the motivation of RASC and RASC parents, the positive dynamics achieved within the heterogeneous school community and the successful school performance of RASC pupils. The evaluation conducted in the schools of Nyhamreskolan, Gärdeskolan and Torsberg points that the enacted complementary training schemes have resulted in successful and meaningful involvement of RASC pupils and their parents in the training process. They are not only well informed about the training possibilities at hand but are also regularly consulted with regard to the most appropriate training paths to be applied to pupils’ needs. The evaluations also point to a smooth involvement of RASC in the school wide community that contributes to feelings of acceptance and belonging that in turn benefit the training as well as the overall integration process they are undergoing in the country. Improvement in the school performance of RASC pupils is one of the positive results registered by the evaluation of the Italian best practice in the town of San Pietro Veronico. The intervention enacted in Italy has also contributed to lowering significantly the drop out rates especially among RASC pupils of higher age as well as among unaccompanied RASC. Upon maturity (eighteen years of age) RASC appear better prepared and empowered to enter the labor market. A marked social impact of the best practice regards the positive influence of the intervention over the local host community. It is reported that the local host community appears comprehensively involved in the overall integration and training schemes for RASC and better aware of their situation and needs. Another important social effect of the intervention implemented in Italy relates to the excellent cooperation enacted between the different stakeholders. Within the framework of the best practice, the respective strengths and assets of each stakeholder have been identified to pay effective contribution to project’s activities in a scheme with well defined terms and responsibilities.

The best practices in Sweden and Italy have been identified as bearing the potential to meet in the most effective way specific problems in the educational integration of RASC in Slovenia and Bulgarìa. The transferability analysis that was conducted in the two reception contexts involved two different approaches. While the study conducted in Bulgaria employed analysis of the potential social effects (intended and unintended/ positive and negative) to be propelled by the introduction of the Italian best practice, the study conducted in Slovenia employed a process assessment of the steps involved in the introduction of the Swedish best practice. Respectively the two studies lead to two different types of results both valuable in allowing informed decision making with regard to the transferability of the two best practices in the Slovenian and the Bulgarian context.

The social impact assessment conducted in Bulgaria points to a number of possible implementation scenarios that take into account the differences between the contexts of Italy and Bulgarìa. The study demonstrates that differences in target groups, institutional settings and stakeholder frameworks should not prevent transfer of best practices from one context to another. However, the similarities and divergences between origin and reception contexts should be carefully analyzed in order to identify the most appropriate (doable and effective) implementation approaches. The scenario approach involves the formulation of recommendations for adaptive application of the best practice that is accorded to local realities and to local capacities for innovation and reform. The social impact assessment conducted in Bulgaria outlines two alternative scenarios for the best practice implementation. These scenarios take into considerations the constraints of the local context that relate to the interests of some of the key stakeholders who
do not favor institutional decentralization and the considerable funding needed for the enactment of institutional change and capacity building training. The first scenario involves implementation of the best practice at central level, thus triggering certain degree of change and improvement while respecting existing institutional mentalities and saving considerable resources and time needed for decentralized implementation. In essence the scenario proposes the experimentation of change and the enactment of regulative reforms at central level where all refugee management expertise of the country is concentrated. The potential positive impacts by the proposed adaptive implementation could serve for advocacy of more comprehensive institutional decentralization in the long run. The second implementation scenario involves adaptive implementation directed at the public school and limited to the existing regulative and institutional settings. The SIA analysis offers a detailed examination of the potential advantages and disadvantages of the two implementations approaches and the conditions and resources required for their enactment. Consequently recommendations are drafted about the levels and forms of transferability of the best practice in the Bulgarian context. This discussion in turn is aimed at guiding experts and policy makers in choosing the most adequate and realistic decision for addressing problems in the realm of RASC educational integration.

The process assessment conducted in Slovenia provides exhaustive analysis of the technology of implementation of the Swedish best practice and the regulative, institutional and financial resources it requires. It is very useful in that it gives clear picture of the general implementation process and the resources, capacities and time it requires.

4.3. Transferability conditions and transferability parameters

The three evaluation studies conducted in Austria, Italy and Sweden, together with the social impact assessment conducted in Bulgaria and the process assessment conducted in Slovenia allow the analysis of transferability conditions for the implementation of best practices across different national contexts.

The transferability conditions identified in the context of the Swedish best practice are related to the realm of funding, organizational set up, freedom for local adaptations of centrally stipulated guidelines as well as relevant qualifications of school staff. The listed conditions include:

- close collaboration between authorities, schools and services;
- functioning organizational set up among involved school authorities, officials and school staff;
- marked degree of freedom for local adaptations of Regulations drafted at central level;
- national financial support to secure continuity in the integration work process with newly arrived children;
- relevant trainings for teachers, headmasters and education officials to assure solid knowledge of existing procedures, the opportunities they offer and the responsibilities they require.

The transferability conditions identified in the context of the Italian best practice relate to the realm of funding, organizational set up, stakeholder frameworks and professional qualifications of involved actors. The listed conditions include:

- financial resources to secure continuity of implemented activities;
- system of multilevel governance;
- implementation of services through public/private partnerships and the involvement of local areas and communities;
- stable regulatory, organizational and economic infrastructure;
- central co-ordination, training and evaluation of the local projects;
- institutional proximity to the beneficiaries of the services.

The transferability conditions identified in the context of the Austrian best practice relate to the realm of funding, professional qualifications and experience of major partner institutions, organizational set up allowing flexibility of approach and adaptability of measures, professional teams hired on permanent (as opposed to free lance) basis.

The transferability conditions, identified in view of the local contexts in the countries of transfer – Slovenia and Bulgaria to a great extent correspond to those identified in Sweden and Italy. They relate to organizational set up, local autonomy, professional training as well as funding. The conducted social
impact assessments point that the conditions in question could be enacted in the new contexts by way of certain legal and policy changes. Those changes include:

- decentralization of the general RASC integration approach and involvement of municipalities as actors;
- decentralization in the management of RASC integration funds at local level;
- rendering certain level of autonomy to public schools;
- capacity building activities and trainings for staff at local municipalities, teachers, headmasters and if necessary cultural mediators.  

While the figure of cultural mediator plays key role in the Italian best practice, it is not present in the Swedish educational system. There, the mediating function is incorporated within the school and is performed by teachers and other regular school staff.  

18 Last but not least an important condition to assure the successful implementation of the intervention involves the clear regulation of the roles and duties of all involved stakeholders to assure adequate inter-institutional cooperation.

The discussion of transferability conditions served as basis for the identification of five dominant parameters to be subjected to analysis whenever social impact assessments of interventions in the area of educational integration of RASC are being conducted. Those parameters include:

- stakeholder frameworks;
- legal frameworks;
- local target groups;
- schools;
- teacher training.

A meaningful and effective assessment of the potential social effects of a certain intervention in the area of RASC educational intervention should involve analysis of the capacities, expertise and interest of local stakeholders as well as analysis of the regulatory frameworks at place in order to verify whether laws and regulations allow or hinder implementation. The assessment of social impacts should be based on careful study of the profile and the needs of the target group, the levels of refugee community organization and the level of involvement of RASC and adult refugees and asylum seekers in the overall integration and the educational integration process. The social effects and the potential risks in the implementation of certain educational practices cannot be properly investigated without analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the management of local schools and the implementation of curricula and training programs. Last but not least adequate recommendations for the transfer of certain educational practices in new contexts could be drafted based on assessment of the experience and qualifications of teachers.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluations and social impact assessments carried out in the framework of the INTEGRACE project demonstrate that these are methodological tools highly relevant in facilitating the transfer of knowledge from Old to New Member States, allowing the latter to deal more effectively with the educational integration of their refugee and asylum seeking populations. The EU-wide study of the national systems for educational integration of RASC that was conducted in the first stage of the INTEGRACE project revealed considerable similarities with regard to the problems of RASC educational integration. While these problems appear effectively addressed in some EU countries with long refugee integration experience, they are just being identified and put under discussion in others. In such context the identification and transfer of best practices emerges as a promising exercise. However, it could be effective if only the reality of existing different national contexts in the EU is taken into analytical consideration. Best practices could serve effectively the process of improvement of the educational integration of RASC across the EU only if their potential social impacts are carefully tested in advance of their implementation. The social impact assessment exercise conducted in the framework of the INTEGRACE project identified analytical tools and technology of research implementation that conform to the specific aspects of the area under study. This in turn allows the recommendation of standardized approach in the conduct of evaluations and social impact assessments in the area of refugee educational integration. Such standardized approach should involve the careful
design of a set of analytical indicators and the selection of appropriate data collection methods. A number of recommendations should be taken into consideration upon implementation of evaluation and social impact assessment studies in the area of RASC educational integration. First, it is highly recommended that such studies put under analysis five specific parameters: stakeholder frameworks, legal frameworks, local target groups, schools and teacher training. These parameters should be investigated in the country of origin of the best practise first to guide consequent examination of the same parameters in the country of transfer. Second, the careful study of the five context parameters should be guided by the objective of identifying adaptable implementation scenarios to assure the achievement of needed positive social effects within the realistic framework of local institutional setting, regulations and capacities. Third, social impact assessments in contexts of transfer could be undertaken only after the careful evaluation of best practices in the contexts of their original implementation. Therefore the study of the transferability of best practices should be understood as a twofold analytical exercise involving evaluation and social impact assessment to be conducted based on synchronised methodological tools and indicators. A potential fault that needs to be avoided when SIA is being conducted relates to the level of difference of the studied contexts (of origin and transfer). The evaluations and social impact assessments conducted under the INTEGRACE project demonstrated that differences in target groups, institutional and stakeholder settings, even if bigger than smaller, should not be treated as a hindrance to a meaningful best practice transfer. Such differences however, need be put under careful analytical scrutiny in view of providing advice on the most relevant adaptation models. In this context the design and development of alternative implementation scenarios should be considered a core goal of the SIA exercise. Such scenarios have to be aimed at identifying doable and effective transfer solutions that take into account the constraints and the potentials for innovation of local contexts. The findings of SIA studies could not only guide a process of informed adaptive management of particular best practices in the area of RASC educational integration. They could also guide the formulation of an array of policy recommendations and initiatives to aim at meaningful and realistic reforms of the systems at place.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


INTEGRACE Country Report: Austria.


INTEGRACE Country Report: Italy.


INTEGRACE Evaluation Report: Austria.

INTEGRACE Evaluation Report: Italy.


LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARCI – Italian Non-profit Social-promotion Association
FNSPA – National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services in Italy
RASC – Refugee and asylum seeking children
SAR – State Agency for Refugees in Bulgaria
SIA – Social Impact Assessment
SPRAR – The (Italian) System of Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees
1. INTRODUCTION TO THE METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of the best practices implemented by the Terra d’Asilo (Land of Asylum) project was carried out first and foremost through the information and accounts gathered during a two-day study visit to San Pietro Vernotico, Lecce and Trepuzzi on 3 and 4 May 2011. Trepuzzi is the site of the co-ordination centre of the “ARCI Lecce” implementing agency, which manages another two System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees projects (in the municipality of Trepuzzi and in the municipality of Galatina). These other projects have elements in common with the project being evaluated in this document.

The interviews involved not only the service operators but also the local stakeholders (schools, training agencies and the Council) that form part of the network on which the service is based.

2. SELECTED EVALUATION AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORTS

2.1. EVALUATION OF THE SPRAR PROJECT “TERRA D’ASILO” IN ITALY

Anna Italia, Luigi Bellesi
CENSIS Foundation

LIST OF INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED DURING THE VISIT

- Anna Maria Caputo, manager of the projects in San Pietro Vernotico, Trepuzzi and Galatina, and president of the ARCI (Lecce province)
- Maritù, a 29-year-old refugee, mother of a girl attending primary school, on the Trepuzzi project
- Flavia, a social worker on the Trepuzzi project
- School principal and teachers of the “Ruggero De Simone” primary school in San Pietro Vernotico
- Headmaster of the “N. Valzani” institute (specialising in technical subjects and economics) in San Pietro Vernotico
- Mayor of San Pietro Vernotico
- Team of operators working on the San Pietro Vernotico project: four educators, one psychologist, one cultural mediator
- Pinuccia, literacy teacher on the CTP evening courses at the “Dante Alighieri” middle school in Lecce
- Rosanna, a teacher of literature on the CTP evening courses geared towards the attainment of the middle-school leaving certificate at the “Dante Alighieri” middle school in Lecce
- Deputy headmaster of the “Scarambone” vocational institute in Lecce
- Director and tutors of the courses at the Lecce Professional Teaching Institute geared towards attainment of the compulsory-school leaving certificate
Alongside the study of the accounts given, the documents made available to the implementing agency and the statistical data extracted from the service’s database were also analysed, with a view to defining the characteristics and extent of the supported user base, and to quantifying, where possible, the results and impact of the project from its launch onwards.

As explained in more detail below, Terra d’Asilo is a project based on the national model for the reception and integration of asylum seekers, as implemented by the SPRAR. Amongst the features of this model is the provision of funding for projects in which the number of refugees and asylum seekers is determined on the basis of the population residing in a given local area, in order to facilitate coexistence and integration. In the case of municipalities with a population of less than 15,000 inhabitants, such as San Pietro Vernotico, it is not possible to support – other than in exceptional cases – more than fifteen beneficiaries at a time. This structural characteristic has had an impact on the methodology and on the outcomes of the survey, which are very much focused on the qualitative aspects relating to the dynamics between the various stakeholders, the structuring of the network, and the capacity of the network to find solutions to the problems and responses to the needs of young refugees or asylum seekers.

### 2. BACKGROUND AND LOCAL CONTEXT

#### 2.1. The SPRAR Model

The Terra d’Asilo project owes its existence, as well as its implementation of best practices, to the fact that it is inserted within the SPRAR, the public-sector system for the reception of asylum seekers and refugees, which has been rolled out across Italy through an extensive network of local projects managed by local agencies.

In 2009, a total of 138 local agencies adhered to the SPRAR, accounting for a total of 3,000 places and 7,845 beneficiaries received; out of these beneficiaries, 320 were unaccompanied minors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>5,849</td>
<td>74.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>1,996</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,845</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age range</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>0-17</td>
<td>1,128</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>3,108</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>1,722</td>
<td>21.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>1,489</td>
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<td>41-60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,845</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 51. Socio/personal profiles of the beneficiaries of the SPRAR, 2009*
Establishment and development of the SPRAR

In 2001, the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Interior Ministry, the National Association of Italian Municipal Councils (ANCI) and the United National High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the creation of a “National Asylum Programme”. This gave rise to the first public-sector system for the reception of asylum seekers and refugees, implemented throughout the whole of Italy, with the involvement of centralised
and local institutions, and based on the sharing of responsibility between the Interior Ministry and local agencies.

Italian Law No. 189/2002 on immigration subsequently formalised these organised-reception measures, envisaging the constitution of the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services (FNPSA) and the System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR).

By means of the same legislation, the Interior Ministry instituted the system’s co-ordination infrastructure – the Central Service, dealing with the provision of information, promotion, consultancy, monitoring and technical support services to the local agencies – entrusting its management to the ANCI.

The System of Protection is supported by the National Fund through tenders issued by the Interior Ministry for the assignment of the projects. Initially, the tenders were issued on an annual basis, then, starting in 2008, they became biennial, and in 2010 they became triennial. The increasing duration of the programmes was determined by the need to give continuity and stability to the projects undertaken in the individual areas.

Yet, the FNPSA does not represent the totality of the resources intended for reception projects: alongside it, there are the funds that the local agencies set aside as co-funding (at a minimum quota of 20 per cent) and any extraordinary resources that may become available, as additional sums, throughout the year.

The intended recipients of the interventions are seekers of international protection, bearers of international protection and, subordinately, bearers of humanitarian protection. The System also encompasses specialist projects for the reception and support of people who are subject to specific vulnerabilities: disabled people or those with (physical and mental) health problems, unaccompanied minors, victims of torture, single-parent families and single pregnant women.

Admission to the System’s reception centres – until the filling up of all of the available spaces – is governed by the Central Service in response to referrals from the individual local projects or from third-party agencies (prefectures, police administration offices, and associations). Referrals are made by sending a fax to the Central Service, which deals with the implementation and management of the database of beneficiaries. The set of requests is evaluated on the basis of the availability of places and the characteristics of the individuals to whom the requests relate.

If there are places available, reception is confirmed and the Central Service deals with establishing the contacts between the referring subject and the reception project and with organising the transfer. If there are no places available, the requestor is added to a waiting list.

The waiting times vary from a few days to several months.

The duration SPRAR projects is:

- equal to the duration of the procedure of recognition + six months for requestors of international protection;
- six months for refugees, bearers of subsidiary protection and humanitarian protection;
- until reaching the age of majority and integrating into the area for unaccompanied minors.

Extensions are permitted to prolong the reception period; in any case, extensions must be requested and granted by the Central Service.

Exit from SPRAR projects can occur for various reasons:

- integration into the area
- voluntary abandonment
- expiry of terms
- turning back
- assisted repatriation.

The reason for the exit must be recorded in the central database.

At local level, the local agencies, with the valuable support of third-sector associations, guarantee interventions of “integrated reception” that go beyond the mere distribution of board and lodging, providing complementary measures of information-provision, accompaniment, support and orientation, through the construction of individual routes to socio-economic insertion.
To ensure the uniformity of the services delivered, the Ministry sets out Guidelines that accompany the tender notification for the assignment of the services, while the Operational Manual drafted by the Central Service guarantees the high quality and consistency of the services provided.

In addition, the Central Service deals with the provision of technical support to the projects, taking care of both consultancy and the training and updating of the operators. The training initiatives are divided into “basic” training, geared towards the operators of projects that are entering into the System for the first time, and special training on specific issues (administrative/financial; regulatory, psychological, etc.).

The local agencies implement the projects for which they are responsible in partnership with the third-sector associations, which play an essential role in managing the activities and supporting and accompanying the local agencies.

As such, within the context of the System, more often than not, it is to the local associations that the delicate task of implementing the content of the project is entrusted. This acknowledges the decades of experience that the associations have in providing support to the most vulnerable categories.

The relationships between the local agencies and the managing agencies take various forms, which are based on two possible models:

a) the first of these focuses on the reinforcement of the existing relationships between the local agency and the association through an agreement whereby the association manages, on behalf of the local agency, the set of reception and integration activities;
b) the second model sees the local agency entrusting only a part of the activities to the managing agency on the basis of its specific skill sets.

The partnership and management model of the project is not limited to the relationship that is established between the local agency and the managing agency/agencies; on the contrary, it can be enriched by input from new agents who may
### Figure 25. The Terra d’Asilo Logic Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs/resources</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Output for RASC</th>
<th>Short Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Intermediate Outcomes</th>
<th>Long Term Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Funding from the public-sector reception system (SPRAR)</td>
<td>Interview and signing of reception contract</td>
<td>Insertion of pre-school-age minors into nursery school (from age two)</td>
<td>• Understanding of Italian culture and the Italian language</td>
<td>• Increase awareness in relation to the needs of refugees and encourage receptiveness on the part of schools and professional training bodies</td>
<td>• Contribute towards the creation of equal opportunities for refugees when they become adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Integrated reception services: board and lodging, support on social integration, social/health support, support on learning Italian and accessing education, registering compulsory school-age minors with schools, legal support</td>
<td>• Guidance on the procedure for the acquisition of the status</td>
<td>• Insertion of minors of school age (aged six-sixteen) into the appropriate class for their age</td>
<td>• Attainment of school-leaving certificate</td>
<td>• Promote emancipation and full autonomy of minors on exiting the reception system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reception facility</td>
<td>• Verification of skills</td>
<td>• Insertion of minors aged sixteen-eighteen in schools and/or colleges</td>
<td>• Progression in studies</td>
<td>• Integration into the local community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Operators: Psychologists, educational mediators, legal consultants</td>
<td>• Insertion into the appropriate school/ professional training programme</td>
<td>• Assignment of bursaries for training placements</td>
<td>• Set beneficiaries on paths towards economic and employment autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public (Council)/ - private (implementing agency) partnerships</td>
<td>• Development of literacy</td>
<td>• Attainment of professional qualification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local networking (agreements with the Council, MOUs with schools and training agencies)</td>
<td>• Psychological support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Long Term Outcomes

- Contribute towards the creation of equal opportunities for refugees when they become adults
- Promote emancipation and full autonomy of minors on exiting the reception system

#### Short Term Outcomes

- Increase awareness in relation to the needs of refugees and encourage receptiveness on the part of schools and professional training bodies
- Integration into the local community
- Set beneficiaries on paths towards economic and employment autonomy

#### Intermediate Outcomes

- Contribute towards the creation of equal opportunities for refugees when they become adults
- Promote emancipation and full autonomy of minors on exiting the reception system

#### Short Term Outcomes

- Increase awareness in relation to the needs of refugees and encourage receptiveness on the part of schools and professional training bodies
- Integration into the local community
- Set beneficiaries on paths towards economic and employment autonomy

#### Long Term Outcomes

- Contribute towards the creation of equal opportunities for refugees when they become adults
- Promote emancipation and full autonomy of minors on exiting the reception system

**Total number of minors supported since 2004: 209**
*of which: 137: males; 72: females*

**Countries of provenance:**
- Afghanistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kurdistan, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Togo, Turkey
enter the project even once it is up and running, should it become necessary for them to do so.

Indeed, the implementation and consolidation of an integrated system of interventions through the involvement of the local agents (which deal variously with these issues) is fundamental, particularly in relation to matters of integration – i.e. making contacts with the various local institutions, with the public healthcare system, with schools and associations.

The widening-out of the local network may take as its starting point the inclusion of private-sector and public-sector subjects, not necessarily through formal partnerships. In this way, it becomes possible to exploit the potential of subjects that, thanks to their experiences and functions, are able to give a complete response to the reception and integration needs in certain key sectors, such as, for example, training, employment, health and the home.

2.2. Terra d’Asilo – origin and objectives

The entry of the Council of San Pietro Vernotico into the System of Protection occurred in 2004. From the outset, the Terra d’Asilo project’s objective was to create synergies between third-sector bodies, institutions and the world of work in San Pietro Vernotico, with a view towards not only receiving but also taking responsibility (in their totality and complexity) for a group of fifteen people, made up of asylum seekers, refugees and bearers of humanitarian protection, during their process of insertion within the social fabric of our country. A determining role in the effort to consolidate the project was played by the Lecce ARCI, an association with a strong, deep-rooted identity and long-standing experience in projects intended to benefit citizens from overseas. The relationship with the Council is governed by an agreement that has the same duration as the funding envisaged by the tender document, which in 2011 was taken to three years. Through this convention, the local agency delegates the entire implementation of the project to the managing agency, with a view to guaranteeing flexibility in the delivery and organisation of the service and correspondence with the requirements and programmes.

The principal objective of the intervention is, then, the establishment of a reception network for vulnerable individuals – with a permit to stay in Italy for humanitarian reasons or temporary protection – along with the promotion of specific measures to support interaction on social/training/school/professional/educational levels and the preparation of routes towards voluntary and assisted repatriation and reinsertion into the countries of origin.

The specific beneficiaries of the San Pietro Vernotico project are single-parent families and/or unaccompanied minors. The reception services are second-level, meaning that they are intended for subjects who have already submitted a request for protection, and who are highlighted by the Central Service and sent by the service to local projects that have places available (places that are compatible with the characteristics of the beneficiaries themselves).

In the case of single-parent families, the beneficiaries of the reception and integration project are the families, and the parent is always involved – through linguistic/cultural mediators – in the activities of school insertion/support for the children, for whom the parent remains solely responsible.

In the case of unaccompanied minors, the beneficiaries are minors for whom the managing agency assumes legal responsibility and who remain within the project at least until they reach the age of majority, and in any case until they have achieved full economic and employment autonomy.

2.3. The structure of the service

Those using the reception services at the San Pietro Vernotico facilities follow a precise procedure. The potential beneficiaries, be they single-parent families or unaccompanied minors, are:

- received with an entrance interview that is geared towards providing them with information on the objectives and methods of the reception process, and on the characteristics of the national system of which they will become part

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1 ARCI is a non-profit social-promotion association with offices throughout Italy, which for many years has been leveraging its network to promote culture, social integration and solidarity.
by adhering to the project. The operators are required to explain the rules and conditions of permanence and to present the Regulations and the Contract of Reception, which all of those undergoing reception must sign (in cases of single-parent families, the parent signs for the minor), together with the written privacy consent slip (translated into a language comprehensible to the person undergoing reception);
• subject to a preventative treatment against scabies, which they could have contracted during their voyage to Italy;
• entered into the process for the acquisition of refugee status or the status of international protection. This process requires that a request be made to the Inland Revenue for a tax code, which is necessary in order to request healthcare provision with exemption from prescription charges, and the issuing of the medical card, with consequent medical screening;
• housed in apartments scattered around the local area, which are easy to reach on public transport, in order to facilitate their mobility around the area and their access to services, as well as full participation in the social life of the area. Single-parent families are assigned independent apartments, whereas unaccompanied minors are housed in apartments with a room available to a project operator. The number and size of the rooms are proportionate to the number of children. Spaces for communal and socialisation activities are also made available, with a view to guaranteeing both privacy, on the one hand, and the possibility to meet other beneficiaries and members of the local community, on the other.

Having delivered the reception element, the service is then differentiated in terms of the methods of school insertion, depending on whether the minors are accompanied or not. In any case, all foreign minors, accompanied and unaccompanied, are guaranteed access to school (of all types and grades), regardless of the legal status they may possess.

Fluency in Italian is not a pre-requisite for admission to school.

In the case of minors belonging to single-parent families, which in general includes minors of primary and lower-secondary school age, the children are:
• promptly inserted (if possible from the day after their arrival) in the class corresponding to their age group, as per the national guidelines on foreign pupils of compulsory school age (six-sixteen), through the intervention of the cultural mediators, in partnership with the school executive. Insertion can take place at any time during the school year, and no certification is required in relation to previous education, nor is any certification of the right to remain in the country. Due to their autonomy, schools organise insertion into ordinary classes in accordance with their own procedures, providing, if necessary, specific Italian language

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**CASE STUDY: THE RUGGERO DE SIMONE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The school, in partnership with the operator of the Terra d’Asilo project (usually the cultural mediator) organises reception at the school and inserts the minor in the appropriate class for his/her age, selecting the class with the smallest number of pupils. Full-time schooling is not envisaged, so minors attend school for five hours, six days a week (thirty curriculum hours).

Since the school has no cultural mediators, peer-to-peer learning is used, pairing minor refugees with a companion to help them develop their Italian language skills.

The total of three hours of school time for integration activities are dedicated to the implementation of projects intended to assist pupils who are behind the rest of the class in certain subjects. In the case of refugee children and children under protection, these hours are focused on refining their fluency in Italian.
courses. The sitting of entrance tests is not an obligatory procedure, nor is it standardised nationally – rather, it is left to the discretion of the individual schools;

- supported in their learning, with assisted study in the afternoon thanks to cultural mediators or trainees at Lecce University, at the pupils’ homes, or in the communal areas of the Centre, if the number of children makes the at-home service impractical;

- supported, if necessary, with psychological help, which is offered if symptoms of distress become apparent. In such instances, the psychologist talks first of all to the operators and the parent; he or she then meets the minor in the presence of the parent or of an operator, and drafts a summary of the sessions, which is then given to the operators and the parent, providing indications on how to deal with the issues.

In the case of unaccompanied minors, the operators usually deal with male youths aged between sixteen and eighteen, who – on the basis of Italian regulations – are not required to attend school.

These minors are, first of all, interviewed with the support of the cultural mediator by an operator charged with the responsibility of drafting a sort of skills balance sheet, geared towards the compilation of the skills training booklet (guidance interview). The “skills balance sheet”, which is intended to feed in to the subsequent drafting of the curriculum vitae, constitutes the basic tool for career guidance and/or the advancement of study, through which the operator constructs, together with the minor, a customised path to integration. This is a structured intervention and, as such, uses specific tools and modules, such as educational profiles, self-evaluation questionnaires, the writing of personal biographies, the analysis of past experiences, tests and simulations, etc. A great deal of attention is focused on the identification and description of non-certified skills – i.e. those demonstrated or acquired outside of formal training courses or which the person involved is not aware that they possess. The recognition of qualifications attained and issued in the person’s home country (subsequent to their seeking of refuge from a situation of risk) can be carried out through a range of processes that are complex and difficult to execute. Normally, second-level scholastic institutes that are partners on the Terra d’Asilo project accept, as an exception to the national regulations, the self-certification of skills and entry into the system without proof of the first-level qualification. In parallel, minors are in any case entered into short courses for the attainment of the first-level qualification (e.g. CTP Dante Alighieri), in order to allow them to attain a qualification that is recognised in Italy and, if appropriate, to have them sit State exams for the upper-secondary school qualification.

It is often the case that the users have low levels of scholastic education and/or that they have no familiarity with the Latin alphabet. Indeed, many of the users, particularly those from African countries, are actually illiterate.

In these cases, before any initiative for scholastic or training integration can begin, rapid interventions are required to improve literacy as a whole, and not just fluency in Italian.

Two types of services are made available by the project:

- insertion into morning classes in Italian, which are provided free of charge by trainees at the Central Service facility. The courses on literacy and on the approach to studying run constantly throughout the year, in order to fill any gaps that may occur (such as when the courses provided by external agencies are temporarily suspended), and to give everyone the opportunity to understand and express themselves as soon as possible in Italian. The primary objective is to create an environment for socialisation and inclusion, in which it is also possible to develop linguistic fluency. The learning of Italian, in preparation for access to training and employment, guarantees sufficient independence in communication and promotes dialogue between the various cultures hosted at the centre;

- registration on the evening courses held at the Dante Alighieri State Middle School in Lecce (the main city in the province), which is the location of a CTP (Permanent Local Centre). The CTP offers training courses to those aged sixteen and over, including courses on Italian literacy for foreigners and courses geared towards the attainment of primary and lower-secondary qualifications.
At the same time, unaccompanied minors are shown the other opportunities available alongside literacy, which can include:

- insertion into upper-secondary (usually vocational) schools in the morning, for those who, on the basis of the initial screening carried out when drafting the training booklet, can provide evidence that they have completed a given school programme, which can also be demonstrated subsequently by a documentary investigation. Insertion is carried out on the basis of a programme agreed with the schools (here, too, there is no national regulation, and local agreements and practices are used to make decisions), in light of which the school accepts the self-certification of skills, conducts entrance tests (discretionary and different in each school) and inserts the minor in the class that corresponds to the verified skills, drafting a study plan that is compatible with the school programme already completed, which can lead the minor to sit – subsequently and as an external student – the tests of admission to the State exams for the attainment of the upper-secondary diploma. In these cases, the drop-out rate is very high, since as minors approach the age of majority (and the point of exit from the project), the search for work becomes prioritised over the aspiration to attain a high-level qualification;
- at the same time, in cases in which there is no documentation to prove that the minor has attained the lower-secondary-school qualification, he or she is registered for evening classes at the CTP Dante Alighieri for the attainment of the lower-secondary qualification;
- insertion into evening classes for the attainment of intermediate qualifications, usually corresponding to the third year of upper-secondary vocational education;
- insertion into vocational training courses with the awarding of vocational qualifications, which can perhaps (in cases where the minor does not already hold a school-leaving certificate at lower-secondary level) be combined with attendance at the evening courses delivered by the CTP.
The educational offering of the Scarambone institute can be taken as an example of the opportunities available at the upper-secondary educational level for the beneficiaries of the Terra d’Asilo project. Alongside the ordinary courses of vocational training, which last 5 years and are geared towards the attainment of the upper-secondary school diploma, the institute also delivers evening classes at which immigrants account for around 10% of the user base.

These courses are sub-divided as follows:

- courses for the attainment of the upper-secondary school diploma;
- courses with a duration of at least 600 hours for the attainment of intermediate qualifications;
- training courses for adults geared towards immigrants (in Italian, citizenship, ECDL, labour laws), of varying lengths, which are mostly funded through the European Structural Funds (FSE);
- courses lasting 300 hours for individuals aged over sixteen, who have not attained a school-leaving certificate at middle-school level, and are geared towards the attainment of the third-year secondary education vocational qualification.

For the immigrant user base, which encompasses the beneficiaries of Terra d’Asilo, courses to improve their Italian can be offered, if necessary.

For courses aimed exclusively at immigrants, registration and materials are free, but asylum seekers and refugees are also exempted from paying the registration costs for the evening classes.

Amongst the immigrants, the component of asylum seekers/refugees is that which has the lowest level of dispersion and the best scholastic performance – this is due, in part, to the constant support provided by the operators of the Service.

### Case Study: The Luigi Scarambone Upper-secondary Educational Institute in Lecce

The educational offering of the Scarambone institute can be taken as an example of the opportunities available at the upper-secondary educational level for the beneficiaries of the Terra d’Asilo project.

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### Teacher Training

The Terra d’Asilo project does not set out any dedicated training for the teachers at the schools involved, with the exception of their attendance at seminars for local awareness-raising, organised by the ARCI.

Specifically: for primary schools, initial reception of the minors is expected to take place in the presence of the operators, the school headmaster and teachers.

In general: ongoing information exchange on the progress and needs of the individuals between the cultural mediator and the teachers/trainers. This method of interaction is effective since minor-age refugees or those seeking protection are always present in the schools/training institutes in limited numbers.
Once they have acquired a familiarity with the local area and the services offered there, unaccompanied minors are spurred on, under the continuous supervision of the operators (who ensure respect for the obligations set out by the contract of residency), to emancipate themselves economically, taking account of the fact that, upon their exit from the project, they will have to be autonomous and self-sufficient. Minors are generally offered brief periods of work experience at commercial premises and/or small businesses in the area, and often these experiences then turn into permanent jobs.

2.4. Customised integration programmes

The integration programme of each beneficiary is constructed on the basis of an individual plan that respects the personal aspirations and inclinations of the beneficiaries and that makes the most of the resources, experience, skills and expertise that they have accumulated over the course of their lives, optimising the timescales for reaching tangible objectives.

After the minors who have participated in Terra d’Asilo exit the project, the operators tend to remain in contact with them, even if they decide to move to other parts of Italy.

The orientation and social insertion of the beneficiaries depend, in addition, on the possibility of ensuring that they have access to opportunities for recreation and socialisation, which are also open to the local community. To this end, regular sporting, theatre and dramatisation activities are organised, as well as themed workshops such as, for example, the Steiner cookery class held last year. These initiatives are useful not only for helping minors to integrate into the local area but also for assisting them in coming to terms with their life experience, which is often extremely difficult and traumatic.

2.5. Local awareness-raising

In parallel, the ARCI – acting on a mandate issued by the SPRAR’s Central Service – carries out awareness-raising activities, particularly in schools. In the course of these activities, the operators enter into a dialogue with the local area, explaining the specific nature of the refugees (since they are not the same as other migrants), and attempt to cultivate and capitalise on the energies and resources in the local support community, with a view to making the project work more effectively. Indeed, one of the strengths of Terra d’Asilo lies in its localisation within a small area, where there is greater probability that the citizens will become involved in social initiatives that can translate into forms of solidarity-based participation to benefit the refugees. The main occasion for the awareness-raising of the populace is 20 June – World Refugee Day – when each SPRAR project presents its initiatives and opens up to the local area.

2.6. The team of operators: roles, profiles, recruitment

The ARCI manages the project with personnel who are employed on temporary contracts for the duration of the project. The team that delivers the services within the project is composed of:

- One co-ordinator who supervises the implementation of the service and is responsible for relationships with the local area, with the Council and with the SPRAR’s Central Service;
- One administrative consultant who deals with the administrative and financial management of the project;
- One lawyer, who provides consultancy and support during the procedure for requesting asylum or international protection;
- One psychologist, who intervenes in situations of distress on the part of the minor or family unit, and who monitors the relationship dynamics amongst the components of the team;
- One linguistic mediator, who covers multiple roles and is involved both in the management of relationships with local institutions that provide services to the beneficiaries (schools, training agencies, healthcare services, etc.) and in after-school activities, from Monday to Saturday, at the beneficiaries’ homes. For this activity, the mediator may be assisted by trainees (final-year students or graduates with sociological/educational training).

In Italy, there is no certified training programme, nor is there a standard profile for the cultural mediator. In the case of San Pietro Vernotico, the
## The Costs of the Project

Overall cost (ongoing funding for 8 years):
€182,000.00 per year
of which 20% is co-funded by the Local Agency.

Breakdown of the costs:

### Personnel
- Rental of accommodation
- Utilities
- Food
- Medicines
- Clothing and footwear
- Transport costs (travel cards)
- Phone cards
- Pocket money
- Books, dictionaries and other texts
- Operation of the structure

NB: The cost of the personnel cannot exceed 40% of the total cost.

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cultural mediator is Italian, with a degree in foreign languages (excellent fluency in English, French and Spanish), and a Masters degree in intercultural linguistic mediation, immigration and asylum.

- Five operators serving as educators (four men and one woman) who are responsible for accompanying the beneficiaries along the path towards autonomy and guarantee support and supervision 24 hours a day from Monday to Saturday, on the following shift pattern:
  - Two operators working the morning shift, one of whom deals with administrative and health duties from 9am to 1pm;
  - One operator working the evening shift from 6pm to 9pm;
  - One operator, again male, who covers the night shift, sleeping in the apartment where the unaccompanied minors are living.

On Sundays, one operator is present through the day and another through the night.

The educators are young graduates in humanities with a sociological/educational background. Rather than any structured initial preparation, the educators undergo “on the job” training by shadowing expert operators. The training usually occurs through a period of placement, or by the carrying out of compulsory civil service (as an alternative to military service) working on the project. At the end of these training experiences, and sometimes after an additional period of volunteering, the aspiring operators are ready to be recruited.

Particularly for unaccompanied minors, the project represents an infrastructure within which the dynamics of family life can be reproduced. For this reason, attempts are always made to achieve the right gender balance between the operators employed in the Centre. In addition, the operators work on a rota system that is intended to prevent the formation of overly exclusive (and potentially traumatic) personal bonds.

### 2.7. Monitoring and Evaluation

The modus operandi that the Terra d’Asilo project has succeeded over time in putting in place is also the result of ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

It has proved indispensable to implement a process to supervise the work done, above all in light
of the fact that the constant interaction, on the part of the operators, with fragile individuals who have undergone challenging experiences, could be destabilising and, over the long term, could impact on the operators’ capacity to act in a professional – and, as far as possible, detached – manner.

For this reason, the Centre’s psychologist has been charged with the responsibility of organising, on a monthly basis, group meetings with all of the operators, with a view to highlighting any critical situations relating to individuals within the group, as well as limitations, objectives reached and new requirements, which can then be submitted to the project manager.

3. **IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE STAKEHOLDERS**

Terra d’Asilo is an intervention structured on the basis of a national reception and integration model for asylum seekers (the model implemented by the SPRAR). Terra d’Asilo, however, has a strong local connection deriving from the identity of the stakeholders with which the agency managing the service (ARCI Lecce) interacts.

One of the main strengths of the practice being analysed here lies in the capacity of the operators to work as part of a local network and to optimise
the opportunities and resources made available by the actions of other subjects, which are necessary to guarantee the integration into schools of minors seeking asylum. For unaccompanied minors, support is provided with a view to allowing them to achieve full emancipation in terms of social integration, training and employment, in order to make them independent when they reach the age of majority, once they have exited the protection programme.

As such, the operators of the managing agency have always focused on leveraging synergies with the local area, in order to ensure that the minors under protection do not only have their basic needs met (board and lodging, legal consultancy, basic literacy) but also that they reach standards of education and training that will enable them to progress with their studies and find suitable employment.

The first phase for the activation of the network is the stipulation of Memorandums of Understanding between the Council – in its role as the local agency associated with the SPRAR that must guarantee across the area under its own jurisdiction the implementation of interventions of “integrated reception” – the managing agency (which is responsible for the delivery of these interventions) and the schools and training institutes involved, which must ensure, in line with the current regulations, the integration of immigrant minors into education and training programmes.

The Memorandum of Understanding, which is valid for a year and renewed on a rolling basis, delineates the institutional framework within which the collaboration should take place, setting out the roles and actions of the parties.

In particular, within the protocol:

- the Council of San Pietro Vernotico commits to:
  - promote and develop stable forms of inter-institutional co-operation to guarantee an ever-larger integrated offering of services geared towards the social inclusion and integration of vulnerable groups, with particular reference to the immigrant population, creating conditions of equal opportunity for access on the part of foreign minors to the life of the community;
  - promote immigrants’ participation in social life, with a particular focus on minors and women, through associations or through new forms of unsolicited aggregation;
  - implement and/or promote programmes that facilitate the cultural and social insertion of immigrant minor citizens, promoting the co-ordination of reception policies through the various phases, ranging from initial emergence to integration, facilitating the combined leveraging of the local resources;
- the educational/training institute involved commits to:
  - implement its educational action on the principles of peace, solidarity and the full realisation of the individual;
  - promote, within its own field of competence, all possible initiatives geared towards boosting interaction with other peoples and towards making possible the full integration of all the subjects within the most vulnerable groups in society;
  - design and implement specific initiatives, including initiatives in combination with agencies and associations, targeted at the promotion of equal opportunities;
  - promote integration on the part of immigrant minors into educational programmes, in the ways and forms permitted by current legislation, also organising – wherever the conditions and the necessity exist – the insertion of cultural and linguistic mediators;
  - promote the spread of information on the legal status of foreigners within Italy and the use of those services made available by the public sector administrative agencies;
- the ARCI, as the managing agency, commits to:
  - receive, listen to, guide and provide tangible support to those in difficulty, Italians and foreigners alike, who turn to the ARCI, paying particular attention to what those people say and also to what they do not make manifest – i.e. their deeper, unexpressed needs;
  - work in synergy with the public and private-sector agencies operating in the area, through the protection of individuals to ensure that they take control of their history, which is the first step towards resolving their distress, acknowledging their dignity and sense of responsibility;
  - promote a culture of solidarity, constantly providing information to, and raising the awareness of, civil society;
promote studies, conferences, meetings and initiatives that contribute to developing the understanding of the phenomenon of migration and its characteristics, in collaboration with other public-sector agencies and associations, both nationally and internationally;

- promote the spreading of information on the legal status of foreigners in Italy and on the utilisation of the services made available by public-sector administrative bodies and the private/social voluntary sector within the area that are geared towards foreign citizens;

- promote the attendance at school of minors with a view to achieving a better evaluation of their educational history in their countries of origin and greater social integration with their peer group;

- share the best practices developed by the SPRAR in the field of networked reception, promoting the implementation of projects that support and enhance programmes of assistance, protection and integration for asylum seekers, refugees and those with humanitarian permits.

In light of all of the above, it can be stated that the implementation of learning programmes and the delivery of training activities geared towards the insertion and integration of minors are based on the full collaboration of the interested parties, each dealing with its own area of responsibility. By the same token, it can also be stated that the integration programme is implemented by the day-to-day action of the operators, whose priority is to maintain the stakeholder network, with the objective of ensuring the inclusion of the minors and the monitoring of their progress at school, whether they are accompanied or not.

The operators’ activities of mediation, listening and information-gathering are conducted day in, day out, and are based on a problem-solving approach – i.e. one that is focused on finding or developing customised solutions to deal with the specific issues affecting each case, which relate to the personal history of the individuals and to the context of their provenance, and also to the ongoing organisational, administrative, relationship-based, cognitive and other difficulties that the individuals may face.

The development of relationships, particularly those with the school-based operators, depends not only on the professional skills of the project operators but also on their sensitivity and the extent to which they become involved in the specific issues affecting each case. The empathy of the operators is, then, crucial in terms of the quality and consolidation of the relationships between the various stakeholders, impacting on the composition of the network and on the selection of possible counterparts in the educational and training fields.

Indeed, while the educational institutions are steered by the ministerial rules to receive minors into the age-appropriate class until they reach the age where there are no longer required by law to attend school, the real scholastic integration of the minors – who often do not speak Italian and have low levels of literacy – involves receiving them, inserting them into classes and taking responsibility for them via the provision of educational catch-up programmes. The constant presence and interest of the cultural mediator guarantee the creation of a virtuous circle, which:

- enables the school and the managing agency to co-operate in order to ensure ongoing support for the minor both inside and outside school;

- stimulates responsiveness and joint research into possible solutions to problems that may arise;

- impacts on the processes and approaches adopted by the educational and training institutes, bolstering their capacity to receive and manage this particular type of user base.

Although the managing agency and the educational institutions represent the key actors in the processes of educational integration for minors seeking asylum, it is also necessary to acknowledge that the role of the local agency (in this instance the Council) is an essential element in any form of partnership between them. Indeed, it is important to bear in mind that the local agency is fundamental, since it is the owner of the intervention, and, therefore, the only agency permitted to request access to funding for entry into the public-sector reception system, as envisaged by the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services, set up by the Interior Ministry and put out to tender on a triennial basis (2011 – 2013). On presentation of the request, the Council decides on the implementing agency of the intervention (in this case the ARCI Lecce) and commits to co-funding 20 per cent of the total cost of the project.
As such, the voluntary adherence of the Council of San Pietro Vernotico to the public sector reception system has created the conditions to allow the area to become a “land of asylum”, promoting interventions of reception, assistance, protection and integration for asylum seekers and refugees, for whose benefit the energies and resources available within the local community can be leveraged.

4. EVALUATION

The main impact of the practice being analysed here lies in the capacity demonstrated by the project team to leverage the local network and to make the most of the opportunities and resources made available by the work of the other subjects. The resources are necessary to support the full social, employment and training emancipation of accompanied and unaccompanied minors and their family units, with the objective of making them self-reliant upon exiting the protection programme.

This has transformed an area within the south of Italy, which is on the periphery with respect to the issues of globalisation and is relatively unaffected by migratory flows into a cutting edge region in terms of the approach taken by the local community towards the reception of immigrants.

Indeed, before launching Terra d’Asilo, San Pietro Vernotico had limited synergies between local associations and the voluntary sector, while the native populace – mostly concerned with local issues – showed little interest in emerging social issues and was not well-equipped to deal with them.

The newly launched Terra d’Asilo project immediately set itself the objective of developing a networked process based on continuous co-operation and constructive comparison between the agencies involved, geared towards involving simultaneously the third sector, institutional actors and the world of employment, with a view to promoting reception, creating processes of interaction and opportunities for integration.

In this way, after the initial steps, the project generated a great deal of interest, lively curiosity and a marked sense of solidarity on the part of the populace of this small town; these factors succeeded in overcoming attitudes of diffidence, tinged with blame and disapproval.

Regardless of the fact that the regular awareness-raising and information initiatives undertaken by the Council and by the ARCI are compulsory parts of the project, they have proved to be very useful in helping the community to understand the supportive purposes of the project.

In this context, it is worth stressing that the strategic choice made by the Central Service to distribute refugees and asylum seekers in small numbers throughout the area (numbers that would be relatively easy to absorb in physiological terms by the destination districts), combined with the local awareness-raising programmes implemented by the managing authority (ARCI), certainly reinforced the introjection at local level of the value of the reception initiative.

By operating as an effective network since 2004 the area has been able to:

- sign twenty-seven Memorandums of Understanding (examined in the previous section) with schools, healthcare services and sporting associations, which have provided the legal tools through which it has been possible to lay the groundwork and define, between the parties, the respective institutional remits, with a view to ensuring that the minors benefit from an “integrated” form of reception, in which education and training are major components;
- establish direct, durable communication channels with educational and vocational training institutes (primary schools, lower and upper secondary schools, evening courses for adults, vocational training institutes) for the rapid, effective insertion of minors;
- monitor their integration into the various educational contexts and support their learning;
- optimise or adapt the available training opportunities to match the specific requirements of the minors;
- make the minors fully autonomous, promoting their entry into the world of work at local or national level.

A fundamental aspect covered by the project has been the customisation of the programmes, which has in turn determined the constant reconfiguration of the network.
Amongst the guidelines set out by the Central Service with which the projects are expected to comply – as contained in the project-management manual – there is the requirement for the operators to draft an individual plan for each beneficiary. The plan should respect the beneficiary’s aspirations and personal inclinations and should concentrate on making the most of the resources, experiences, skills and knowledge that they have developed during their lives.

In this regard, the Terra d’Asilo project – despite the limited resources made available to it locally – has shown itself to be a valid solution, succeeding (particularly in relation to those minors closest to the age of majority) in creating the opportunity to choose from a wide range of training programmes, as described above, which respond as effectively as possible to the local demand for labour.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Terra d’Asilo operates within a national public-sector mechanism for which the State is directly responsible, with the Interior Ministry playing a central role based on multi-level governance delivered through the decentralisation of the interventions. The local agency – the policy of which is strongly characterised by its close-knit relationships with the local area, its capacity to govern on the basis of participative democracy and its marked solidaristic vocation – has become the privileged laboratory for the experimentation of interventions along the lines of the aforementioned principles.

Decentralisation has also made possible a de facto (as well as formal) assumption of responsibility by the various institutional levels, leading to the awareness of the local areas and populations being raised, to an increasing realisation of the potential of these areas and to a consequent increase in the expertise of all the agents involved in the management of the various processes implemented at local level.

Within the public-sector reception system, the element of voluntary adhesion has not only reinforced the assumption of responsibility but has also served as an antidote to social tensions and as an expression of the unsolicited sharing of the project.

Last but not least, as the main point of reference for the local project, the local agency guarantees the establishment and development of the inter-institutional relationships that are necessary in order to expand the support network for the implementation of the services intended to benefit refugees and asylum seekers. The result is the creation of an original organisational set up, in which the skill sets of the public-sector agencies, private-sector agencies and third-sector bodies are integrated across all levels.

The operational mode of the System is based on a spiral model that sees the implementation of a bottom-up/top-down process, involving numerous agents at both the local and central levels (the State, local agencies, associations, schools, services, unions, businesses, etc.), each with its own specific fields of expertise and its own remit for one or more parts of the interventions implemented.

The fundamental element of the model is the network – a veritable planning agent – which is able to represent a permanent laboratory and a stable frame of reference for the beneficiaries and for the operators involved in the management and implementation of the activities.

The logic of the network is also crucial to the relationships between the various projects encompassed by the System. Being part of the network affords the local agencies the possibility to measure themselves against each other, to find out about the best practices put into action by other projects, to access information and alter methodologies that have already been implemented, and to share commitments and responsibilities. The functionality of the network is also facilitated by the presence of a body that operates at central level – the Central Service – which deals with co-ordinating, forming and monitoring the local projects.

The integrated working model that takes in the various projects and agents proposed nationally corresponds at local level with the local networks that the individual projects are invited to establish for the implementation of the activities assigned to them – Terra d’Asilo being a case in point.
The model envisages the full involvement of the local area that plays host to the project, through the collaboration of all the public-sector and private-sector agents that are able to support the programmes of reception and integration for refugees and asylum seekers. Through the local networks, the resources are optimised: the financial resources through the integration of the available funds and services; and the human resources, in terms of the availability and development of skills and knowledge. Indeed, it is within the local networks – specifically, within the local areas in which they are located – that refugees and asylum seekers can be integrated. Rather than concentrating the beneficiaries in large groups, they are scattered across the country in relatively small clusters.

Multilevel governance, adherence to the System by the local agencies, institutional proximity to the beneficiaries of the services, public/private partnerships and the involvement of local areas and communities – these are the key components that must be present at all times to order to ensure the successful transfer of the experience accumulated during a project such as Terra d’Asilo; despite the fact that the project is implemented through local agreements, it is based on a form of institutional architecture that is relatively complex. To guarantee the success of local projects that have as their beneficiaries refugees in general, and minors in particular, it is necessary for those projects to be supported by a stable regulatory, organisational and economic infrastructure that is geared towards achieving set outcomes.

The sustainability of the practice depends, first and foremost, on the presence of a regulatory framework on immigration and on schooling, which will make it easier for minor-age refugees to attend school and thrive within the education system.

Secondly, the presence of a central agency such as the Central Service is essential to deal with the co-ordination, formation and evaluation of the projects.

Last of all, sustainability is assured by the existence and availability of the resources of the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services, put out to tender on a triennial basis. The Fund was established in 2002, and at the moment funding is in place until 2013.

At present, there is no reason to think that the funding will be curtailed, since the number of refugees in Italy is on the increase and, moreover, the SPRAR is unanimously considered to be an example of best practice at national level, as indeed is the Terra d’Asilo project at local level.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANCI</td>
<td>Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani, National Association of Italian Municipalities</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTP</td>
<td>Centro Territoriale Permanente, Permanent Territorial Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>FNSPA</td>
<td>Fondo nazionale per le politiche e i servizi d’asilo, National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPRAR</td>
<td>Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati, Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees</td>
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2.2. SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ITALIAN SPRAR PROJECT “TERRA D’ASILO” IN BULGARIA

1. METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

The present Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is based on qualitative methods of research that include semi-standardised interviews, focus group discussions and review of relevant documents. The qualitative approach of the study was shaped by the realities of the local context. Those include the small number of refugee and asylum seeking children arriving in the country, the scattered model of school enrolment with no high concentration of RASC in specific schools, and the absence of a database monitoring attendance rates and school performance of pupils from this specific group. These circumstances, combined with the fact that the expert community working in the field is small, with all stakeholders centred in the capital of Sofia has shaped a research approach fully based on assessment of qualitative data.

The SIA research was conducted between 15 May and 12 July, 2011, and involved conducting ten in-depth interviews with representatives of the main stakeholder groups and institutions and one focus group discussion with RASC teachers. These interviews were conducted following the review of pertinent legislation, strategic documents and related reports to allow the analysis of the legal and institutional framework within which the educational integration of RASC is being implemented in Bulgaria.

Following this analysis, semi-standardised interviews were conducted with the following experts:

- The Director of the Integration Centre of the State Agency for Refugees (SAR);
- An Education expert from the Integration Centre of SAR;
- The Director of the Refugee and Migration Service at the Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC);
- An Education officer at the Refugee and Migration Service at BRC;
- The Chairwoman of the Association for the Integration of Refugees and Migrants (AIRM);
- The Chairwoman of the Council of Refugee Women (CRW);
- The Director of the Education Department of Sofia Municipality;
- An Expert at the Education Department, Sofia Municipality;
- The Director of the Department of Prevention, Integration, Sport and Tourism, Sofia Municipality;
- A Refugee, parent of three children studying in Bulgarian public schools.

One focus group discussion was conducted with six teachers from the public school in Sofia which hosted the most RASC pupils in the country during the 2010 – 2011 school year – a total of eighteen children enrolled in the school throughout the school year. Five of the interviewed teachers had RASC pupils in their classes – two of them were second grade teachers, two were third grade teachers and one was a preparatory school-group teacher. The sixth participating teacher was in charge of the after-school study room which was not visited by RASC pupils during the school year.

The interviews and the focus group discussions were conducted based on the written summary of the Terra d’Asilo practice that was sent to the stakeholders prior to the meeting (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 3). In addition, a preliminary

1 Pre-school preparatory education is being offered in all public schools in Bulgaria for kids at the age of five or six but is optional.

2 After-school study rooms are available free of charge for pupils of 1st – to 3rd grade – attendance is optional.
set of questions was made available to some stakeholders upon request (i.e. the Education Department of the Sofia Municipality). While the interviews lasted for approximately 1.5 hours, the focus group discussion lasted for 2.5 hours. The interview process involved: an explanation of the overall framework of the project and the aims of the interview; an introductory discussion of questions regarding the achievements and gaps in the educational integration of RASC relevant to that area of the system that was within the scope of responsibility and implementation authority of the respective stakeholder; an oral summary of the Terra d'Asilo practice on the part of the interviewer; discussion of questions, related to the SIA exercise. The interviews and the focus group were conducted in accordance with stakeholder specific questionnaires developed following the country-specific SIA methodology.

Questionnaires (Appendix 4) were developed in line with three main criteria along which the analysis of outcomes, impacts and risks, related to the potential implementation of the Terra d’Asilo practice in Bulgaria was to be conducted. These criteria were:

- Improved inclusion of RASC children into the public school system;
- Improved quality of education for RASC;
- Empowerment of RASC (and their parents) for comprehensive educational integration.

The questionnaires were also developed in line with particular indicators specific to each of the three criteria. The indicators were designed as a potential set of positive outcomes and impacts desired in the context of Bulgaria and aimed at overcoming the existing shortcomings of the system. While the Terra d’Asilo practice was evaluated to successfully address these indicators in Italy, it was the task of Bulgarian researchers to test whether similar outcomes were to be triggered if the practice were introduced in Bulgaria.

Whether the practice is to effect improved inclusion of RASC into the public school system of Bulgaria was to be demonstrated if all or most of the following indicators were to be enacted:

- Increased share of RASC enrolled in school grades corresponding to their age;
- Increased share of RASC of older age (thirteen and above) enrolled at school;
- Diminished number of children who enter school later than three months after filing their asylum application;
- Increased school attendance.

Whether the practice is to bring about improved quality of education for RASC in Bulgaria was to be demonstrated if all or most of the following indicators were to be enacted:

- Improved Bulgarian language proficiency of RASC;
- Improved school performance of RASC (RASC exhibit educational achievement closer to those of the native students);
- Facilitation of teachers’ work with RASC;
- Improved psychological comfort of RASC in school.

Whether the practice is to effect the empowerment of RASC (and their parents) for comprehensive educational integration in Bulgaria was to be demonstrated if all or most of the following indicators were to be enacted:

- RASC children and their parents are well informed about the educational opportunities available for their children;
- RASC children and their parents have a strong voice in choosing the best educational schemes and alternatives;
- RASC children and their parents feel comfortable to voice their concerns before the relevant educational institutions;
- Children’s views have an impact upon educational services delivery.

2. BACKGROUND AND LOCAL CONTEXT

The description of the local context and the problem that the Terra d’Asilo practice addresses relies on data collected in the framework of the SIA study with some information being collected in the course of a situation analysis conducted by the CSD team during the first stage of the INTEGRACE project (between November 2010 and January 2011). That study involved analysis of the legal, institutional
and operational frameworks with regard to RASC enrolment and integration in school.

The problem that the present SIA puts under discussion regards the quality of inclusion and the quality of education provided to RASC in Bulgarian public schools. The particular legislative regulations regarding school access for RASC in Bulgaria and the procedures for school enrolment in place lead to a two-stage process of educational integration. The first involves preparation for school enrolment and the second involves schooling. At present there is a marked disparity in the existing assistance schemes provided in the two stages of RASC educational integration. All RASC-tailored assistance programmes are concentrated in the initial pre-school phase and no programmes are in place once RASC join the public school. Irrespective of the low level of knowledge of the Bulgarian language and the lack of any preparatory courses in the main subjects, once in school RASC receive no additional training or consultations tailored to their specific needs. They are expected to follow the mainstream curricula without any parallel support training programmes within or outside the school.3 The work of RASC teachers is hindered by the absence of schemes of translation and mediation between them, RASC pupils and their parents, the absence of schemes of individual pre-school assessment and profiling of the child, and the absence of formal schemes to allow them provide additional training and consultations to RASC when needed.

The local community: Between 1993 and 2010 the inflow of asylum seekers in Bulgaria was rather low, and so was the inflow of asylum seeking children. During that period a total of 18,790 asylum applicants arrived in the country, of which 3,129 were children. Eleven per cent of these children had a recognised refugee status and 28 per cent were granted humanitarian status. The top origin countries of asylum seekers and asylum seeking children were Afghanistan (30 per cent), Iraq (24 per cent), Armenia (9.6 per cent) and Iran (4.8 per cent). While the refugee inflow used to be dominated by single men, over the last few years a tendency was observed for ever more increasing shares of families and children.4 There is no systematic data however, regarding the gender and age profile of the group of asylum seeking children and respectively of children who have been included in the public school network. A rough idea of the average annual inflows of RASC in school age could be given by the data for 2010 according to which out of the total of sixty-three RASC who entered the country, thirty-eight (60 per cent) were of school age. The overwhelming majority of asylum seekers, recognised refugees and humanitarian status holders tend to stay and live in the capital of Sofia as the combination of reception and integration services is offered in the capital only.5

The small inflow of refugees and the moderate number of incoming RASC has contributed to developing an integration system mostly focused on the needs of adult refugees that only recently involved a more specific focus on the needs of RASC. It also contributed to the development of an educational integration system with the capacity of assisting moderate inflows of refugee and asylum-seeking children.

Legislative framework: The education of RASC in Bulgaria is assured by the Law on Asylum and Refugees, article 26, which stipulates that asylum seeking children have the right to education and professional training, subject to the procedures and (eligibility) conditions for Bulgarian citizens. Article 54 (4) of the same Law states that certificates for completed education are recognized and legalised following the internal laws of the country.6 Following the rules and procedures for access to school for Bulgarian nationals – RASC could be enrolled in Bulgarian public schools if they provide proof of level of completed school grade by means of a respective school certificate from their home country. The condition does not apply to RASC at the age of six or seven as this is

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3 Only one such scheme exists outside the school. A study room for assistance with homework placed at the office of the SAR Integration Centre.
4 Accumulated data on refugee inflows between 1993 and October 2010 shows a male dominated population with a 70 per cent share for men, 16.7 per cent for children and 13.5 per cent for women (SAR statistical data).
5 The National Programs for Integration of Refugees in the Republic of Bulgaria (2008 – 2010 and 2011 – 2013) which set the frame and rules for provision of integration services are operational in the capital of Sofia only.
6 Law on Asylum and Refugees. Bulgaria/Law on Asylum and Refugees (31.05.2002)/SG 54 (31.05.2002)
The age for first-graders in the country. However, children above the age of seven are requested to prove level of completed schooling in order to be placed in grades corresponding to the curricula they followed in their home countries. Since the majority of incoming asylum seeking children do not carry any school certificates upon entry into the country (in 2010 only 8 per cent of the children in school age presented school certificates before school authorities) they go through a special school enrolment test.

The educational integration of RACS thus undergoes two stages: a) preparation for school enrolment – to last from three to six months – and b) integration into the public school system. While special training and support schemes are implemented during the first stage, no such schemes are provided in the second (core) stage of the educational integration process.

**Institutional context:** At present the assistance and integration services targeting refugees and asylum seekers in Bulgaria are being provided on a centralised basis. The State Agency for Refugees, which is responsible for conducting procedures assuring the access of refugees in the country in accordance with international standards, is also the institution responsible for managing the funds and implementing the activities related to integration, including the educational integration of RASC. Those activities are implemented in accordance with the National Programs for the Integration of Refugees in the Republic of Bulgaria (2008 – 2010 and 2011 – 2013). The core of the integration activities are provided within the Integration Centre of SAR by SAR experts with supporting activities being commissioned to refugee support and human rights NGOs such as the Bulgarian Red Cross, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, the Assistance Centre for Torture Survivors, the Council of Refugee Women and some other organisations.

The process of RASC educational integration is being organised according to a centralised model as well with SAR implementing and controlling stage one and the Ministry of Education and Science being responsible for stage two of the process. SAR responsibilities with regard to the first stage of the process involve providing a three-month preparatory course in the Bulgarian language to asylum seeking children, arranging pre-enrolment tests at the Regional Inspectorate on Education, arranging the legalisation of school certificates of RASC children, providing assistance in the submission of school enrolment applications, and actual school registration of RASC. One NGO – the Bulgarian Red Cross – is assisting the process by organising a summer camp with Bulgarian language training for newly arrived RASC and providing free school appliances to RASC pupils enrolled in school. Once enrolled in school, RASC pupils are trained according to programmes and curricula for Bulgarian children. No training programmes, teaching materials or assistance schemes tailored to the specific needs of RASC pupils are available.

The Terra d’Asilo practice (Appendix 1) was selected by the CSD research team as it provides a system of educational services to RASC (upon and after their admission in schools) that could offer a solution to some of the identified gaps of the system of RASC educational integration in Bulgaria. These shortcomings will be listed along with the three criteria selected for the SIA investigation:

**RASC inclusion in the public school system**

1. There is no correspondence between the preparatory pre-enrollment course offered at SAR and the the mandatory school enrolment test given to RASC at the Regional Inspectorate on Education. While the preparatory course offers training in the Bulgarian language only, the Test Committee at the Regional Inspectorate on Education examines general subjects as well as knowledge of Bulgarian. In this context a methodology is needed to harmonise the areas and levels of knowledge required by the pre-enrolment preparatory training with those offered at the preparatory course;

2. MEYS has not developed an official school enrolment test for assessment of RASC knowledge prior to their admission in school. The tests that are currently being conducted by the Ministry are informal and do not correspond with the pre-enrolment preparatory training that RASC receive at SAR;

3. The pre-enrolment preparatory training at the Integration Centre of SAR is offered in parallel with one more training service – providing help with homework to RASC already enrolled in school. Both training services are provided by a single teacher in the same training room to a
dynamic group of RASC of different ages and different school grades;

4. The preparatory Bulgarian language course offered at the Integration Centre of SAR offers no personal textbooks and study notebooks to RASC and is not equipped with audio-visual devices highly relevant to modern standard language trainings;

The specificities of the pre-enrolment preparatory training listed in points 3 and 4 then affect the quality of training received in the preparatory phase of school enrolment which is crucial for the grade allocation of RASC.

5. The general rule is to place RASC of older ages (thirteen and above) in the first classes of schooling (1st to 3rd grade) as they usually demonstrate low results at the school enrolment test. This however, furthers a number of undesirable tendencies: it lowers significantly their motivation to attend school and their concentration in class. In addition, it poses methodological difficulties in the work of their teachers, and strains the group dynamics of the class due to the age and psychological disparities between small and older children. All these result in a high dropout rate for refugee and asylum-seeking children;

6. Schools and respectively RASC teachers receive no prior information about the RASC pupils who are enrolled in their classes as there is no system of individual profiling and (educational) needs assessment in the pre-enrolment phase.

Quality of education provided to RASC

1. The absence of translators or/ and mediators at both the SAR Integration Centre and the school has two important negative consequences:
   - hindered or no communication between RASC parents and the school;
   - hindered communication between teachers and RASC pupils especially during the first six months after school admission, which effectively slows down the training process and adds to the psychological burden of children after their introduction to the new school environment.

2. Once in school, RASC are expected to follow the mainstream curricula and receive no additional training in Bulgarian or in general subjects. The absence of additional training programmes tailored to the specific needs of RASC in school leads to two important negative outcomes:
   - RASC performance at school is lower than that of Bulgarian pupils;
   - the work of teachers is being hindered (and in fact considered by themselves sometimes ineffective) as schools have no tools and funding at their disposal to assist RASC outside of the mainstream curricula and programmes.

3. Generally RASC lack the necessary school appliances such as working notebooks, as well as basic school supplies which are not provided freely as there is no sustainable mechanism assuring their provision. Very often they are short of school supplies which also affects the level of their involvement in class work. Therefore, they are often deprived from taking part in class-work;

4. No particular trainings have so far been provided to RASC teachers in: teaching Bulgarian as a second language; intercultural education; work with traumatised and psychologically distressed children;

Empowerment of RASC and RASC parents

1. RASC and their parents are not well informed about the overall education process and about all educational opportunities available in Bulgaria's public schools;

2. The experience and opinion of RASC and RASC parents have not been systematically solicited or taken into consideration by the respective institutions in the policy making process as regards RASC education.

Similarities and differences between the contexts in Bulgaria and Italy:

RASC community: While Italy is a country characterised by significant refugee inflows (as opposed to Bulgaria), the municipality San Pietro Veronico where the Terra d'Asilo practice was evaluated has a population of 15,000 people and a small number of refugees. Integration services within Terra d'Asilo are based on customised and individualised approach with a total of fifteen beneficiaries being assisted at one time. The size of the project and its individualised approach are advantages in terms of applicability and transferability to the Bulgarian situation.

Legal framework: The educational integration of RASC in Italy (Appendix 3) is organised in one
stage – within the school with parallel supportive training activities being provided by outside organisation/s (ARCI, training institutes). No school certificates from home countries and no knowledge of Italian are required for RASC enrolment at school. RASC are placed in classes according to their age.

In Bulgaria both school certificates from home countries and a beginner’s level of knowledge of Bulgarian are required for school enrolment. For this purpose the process of RASC educational integration is organised in two stages. The first preparatory stage includes a three-month Bulgarian language course, official pre-enrolment test and school registration. The second stage of training at school is not supported by any parallel training activities neither inside nor outside school.

While public schools in Italy have significant autonomy in deciding upon grade placement of RASC pupils and the specific training paths they are to follow, public schools in Bulgaria accept RASC according to centrally issued decisions of grade placement.

General integration approach: While the integration system in Italy is based on a decentralised model, based on sharing responsibility between the Interior Ministry and local agencies (Appendix 2), in Bulgaria integration measures are centralised with services provided exclusively in the capital of Sofia – with implementation, control and supervision being the prerogative of the State Agency of Refugees.

3. STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

The provision of integration services to asylum seekers and refugees in Bulgaria has gone through two stages. From 1993 to the late 1990s refugee protection and assistance care was funded predominantly by UNHCR with activities in the realm of integration being dominated by the NGO sector. The main organisation involved in the educational integration activities for adult refugees and RASC was the Bulgarian Red Cross (an NGO).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Role and level of participation in the intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of the Interior</td>
<td>Holder of ENSPA (National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services) that assures funding for Terra d’Asilo on the basis of tenders (with a 20.0 % co-financing requirement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association of Italian Municipal Councils</td>
<td>In charge of CENTRAL SERVICE of SPAR (System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees): provides information, promotion, consultancy, monitoring and technical support to local agencies (including those working under the Terra d’Asilo project).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities</td>
<td>Act as Local Agencies responsible for SPAR implementation at local level; Apply for tenders at ENSPA, selects local implementing agency and commit to 20.0 % co-funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCI (non-profit social promotion association with offices throughout Italy)</td>
<td>Implementing agency and main service operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Schools</td>
<td>Local partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Institutes</td>
<td>Local partner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The organisation held Bulgarian language courses, out-of-school subject training for RASC, provided school materials and appliances to RASC pupils free of charge and assisted them with school registration and enrolment. Since the mid 1990s the financial involvement of the Bulgarian state gradually started increasing as it covered 25 per cent (after 1997) and later 50 per cent (after 1999) of related costs. The establishment of a Registration and Accommodation Centre and an Integration Centre for refugees in the capital of Sofia (2001) marked a significant expansion of the Bulgarian state’s responsibilities in the area of refugee access and protection. Since then, via the Integration Centre at SAR, the Bulgarian state has become ever more directly involved in the implementation of integration services for refugees. Those services are designed in accordance with the National Integration Programs for Refugees in the Republic of Bulgaria (2008 – 2010 and 2011 – 2013) which are funded by SAR. In this new context the dominating role of the NGO sector in the realm of refugee integration was gradually diminished as the Integration Centre at SAR became the leader in the field. At present the core of the integration services for asylum seekers and refugees, including those dealing with the educational integration of children, are implemented at the Integration Centre of SAR.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terra d’Asilo stakeholder in Italy</th>
<th>Direct counterpart</th>
<th>Corresponding counterpart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ministry of the Interior          | Bulgaria’s MoI operates with funds allocated to border management and administrative controls over the foreign population in the country. | According to LAR, art. 46 the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) is the state body with special competences in the field of refugee protection and integration. SAR is:  
• responsible for administering and managing the state fund for the implementation of the National Programs for the Integration of Refugees (NPIR) in Bulgaria;  
• the competent body and manager of the European Refugee Fund (ERF), LAR, art. 53 (12). (the two major funds for refugee integration services in the country) |
| National Association of Italian Municipal Councils | The National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria was never involved in the refugee reception and integration system. | SAR as the agency managing the NPIR and ERF funds provides information and monitoring to selected implementing agencies (usually NGOs). However, services such as consultancy and technical support are still to be developed by SAR. |

### Table 54. Direct counterparts and corresponding counterparts to the Terra d’Asilo stakeholders in Italy (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terra d’Asilo stakeholder in Italy</th>
<th>Direct counterpart</th>
<th>Corresponding counterpart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities</td>
<td>A total of 262 Municipalities. None of the 262 Bulgarian Municipalities, including the Sofia Municipality, have been involved in the refugee reception and integration system.</td>
<td>Integration services to asylum seekers and refugees are provided in the existing two registration and accommodation centres in the country (in Sofia and in the village of Banya) which are under the jurisdiction of SAR. The comprehensive package of integration services, however, is offered in Sofia only where the SAR Integration Centre is located.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCI</td>
<td>As ARCI is neither a governmental nor non-governmental body, there is no organisation of similar status in Bulgaria.</td>
<td>One NGO – The Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) has twenty-eight offices throughout the country and long standing experience (130 years) in humanitarian and social activities. According to LAR, BRC is a major partner institution of SAR in the implementation of social, medical and psychological services (art. 53, 4); the organisation of information activities and humanitarian campaigns (art. 53, 5); the organisation of labour activities leading to acquisition of profession (art. 56, 1). The Refugee and Migration Service at BRC, however operates in the central office in Sofia only.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Local schools                     | Public schools in Bulgaria are placed under the responsibility of two institutions:  
  - Issues of training and methodology are under the direct central jurisdiction and supervision of MEYS via the Regional Education Inspectorates (RIE).  
  - School budgets are being distributed by local Municipalities which have responsibilities only in the fields of school buildings, safety and food. | |
| Training Institutes               | There are a number of language training institutes throughout Bulgaria yet none of them has been directly involved or commissioned to implement training of refugees and asylum seekers. | The Integration Centre located at SAR provides:  
  - language courses for adult refugees;  
  - preparatory language courses for RASC;  
  - professional/vocational training for adult refugees. |

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8 A third such centre is about to be opened in the village of Pastrogor, near Svilengrad.
Relevant stakeholders in Bulgaria were identified by way of a two-step exercise. First, the direct Bulgarian counterparts of the Terra d’Asilo stakeholders were approached and their role within the RASC educational integration system in the country was assessed. The second step was undertaken if divergences were identified between the roles of direct stakeholders in Italy and in Bulgaria. In this case those institutions in Bulgaria were approached which displayed responsibilities and functions similar to those of the Terra d’Asilo institutions in Italy.

**Direct counterparts and corresponding stakeholders in Bulgaria**

The two-step stakeholder identification process is displayed in the following table. The identification exercise demonstrates that most of the direct Bulgarian counterparts do not have the mandate and experience of the analogous institutions in Italy. At the same time the corresponding Bulgarian stakeholders, while holding similar mandates and responsibilities, operate within a framework that differs from that in Italy as it is based on centralised approach to integration, dominated in terms of implementation and supervision by the State Agency for Refugees (SAR).

Based on the above identification process the following stakeholders were approached with questions regarding their opinion on the potentials of the implementation of the Terra d’Asilo practice in Bulgaria.

**State Agency for Refugees:** Displays an interest in some of the elements of the Terra d’Asilo practice. Its view is that the practice could not be implemented in full due to the legal and institutional differences in the field of RASC educational integration in Italy and in Bulgaria. The implementation of the practice in its ideal form would lead to giving up some of SAR’s integration implementation mandate to Municipalities and NGOs. It is believed that this could potentially lead to a worsening of the quality of and the control over the educational integration services which, SAR officials believe, are now guaranteed by eight years of experience and expertise accumulated at the Integration Centre of SAR.

**Sofia Municipality:** Displays weak interest in the Terra d’Asilo practice for two reasons. First, municipalities in Bulgaria have so far not been involved in refugee integration and have insignificant or no experience working with refugees or immigrants. Second, they serve as distributing and controlling agencies with regard to public school budgets but have no authority over the training process or the quality of education which is in the hands of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science. If implemented in the context of Bulgaria, the Terra d’Asilo practice would add a new segment of responsibilities to municipalities, whereas they have no trained and experienced staff in this field. The eventual inclusion of municipalities is conditional upon the introduction of respective regulations stipulating their responsibilities in this respect, available funding and training of staff.

**Public schools:** Display strong interest in the Terra d’Asilo practice as it is perceived to offer a package of services assisting the education of RASC within the school. Schools are eager to take part in such a practice as teachers and school administration will be actively assisted in their work. Especially important for the school is perceived to be the figure of the “cultural mediator” whose corresponding counterpart in Bulgaria is the so called “resource teacher.” If implemented in the context of Bulgaria, the Terra d’Asilo practice will have a strong positive influence on the work of schools, providing much needed tailored parallel support to RASC pupils and facilitating the work of teachers. The effective participation of schools in such a package of services would be conditional upon changes in the regulations of school enrolment of RASC aiming to allow schools the autonomy to decide in which grades to enrol RASC.

**Bulgarian Red Cross:** Displays strong interest in the practice and the decentralised approach in the provision of integration services to refugees. It is seen that such approach will be highly relevant in case of increase of the refugee and RASC inflow in the

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9 Resource teachers have been introduced in Bulgarian public schools in recent years. They are recruited in schools where pupils with special needs are enrolled. The main responsibility of resource teachers is to facilitate the socialisation of children in school by way of providing consultations to teachers, parents and pupils. Resource teachers are expected to collaborate with the school administration, teachers and parents, and to be actively involved in the training process by means of additional individual or group trainings, in-class support, and other relevant interventions.
social impact assessment of the potential implementation

Council of Refugee Women: As a social support organisation managed by refugee women who are in constant and direct contact with members of this group, the organisation displays interest in the Terra d’Asilo practice in that it provides a framework facilitating the initial adaptation of RASC pupils at school and facilitating ongoing contacts and communication between parents and the school. If implemented in Bulgaria, the Terra d’Asilo practice might involve recruiting CRW to select and provide training to potential cultural mediators.

RASC parents: display interest in the Terra d’Asilo practice as they consider it could facilitate the initial adaptation of their children at school and make possible their regular contact with teachers and the school administration.

4. EVALUATION/SOCIAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

The present evaluation is based on assessment of the potential impacts and risks in the implementation of the Terra d’Asilo practice in Bulgaria. Three different scenarios of implementation are offered. The potential positive and negative impacts of these three alternatives will be discussed in comparison to an ideal set of positive outcomes to emerge in case of direct transference of the practice in an ideal (best fitting) context.

This set of maximum positive outcomes includes:

Improvements in the school integration process of RASC:

By way of permanent in-school support to RASC; by mediating their needs and concerns with the school and their parents; and via ongoing monitoring of the individual situation and needs of RAS children – the following outcomes would be achieved:

- RASC would be enrolled in school grades corresponding to their age with the significant strain on them and their classmates thus being relieved;
- An increased share of RASC of older age (thirteen and above) will be better motivated to attend school;
- Children would feel supported and more secure in the school environment (i.e. RASC psychological comfort especially in the first months of schooling would be significantly improved);
- Increased attendance rates among RASC pupils in general and among older RASC pupils in particular.

Improved quality of education

By means of successful communication of RASC level of knowledge obtained in their home countries to their teachers; implementation of parallel training schemes, involving language, subject and vocational training to respond to RASC individual needs and profiles; ongoing mediation to compensate for language barriers between teachers and RASC pupils especially in the first months of schooling – the following outcomes will be achieved:

- RASC pupils would participate fully in the school training process;
- RASC’s Bulgarian language proficiency will be improved;
- RASC’s school performance and results will be improved;
- Teachers’ work with RASC would be facilitated and eased and thus would become more effective.

Empowerment of RASC (and their parents)

By means of ongoing mediation (and translation support) the following outcomes would be achieved:

- RASC and their parents will be well informed about the educational opportunities available to their children;
- RASC and their parents would have a strong voice in choosing the best educational schemes and alternatives;
- RASC and their parents would feel comfortable to voice their concerns before the relevant educational institutions;
- Children’s views would impact upon educational services delivery.

An important additional outcome would involve the provision of good quality educational integration services at the regional level.

**A: Direct replication of Terra d’Asilo – scenario 1**

Due to the divergences in the legal procedures for school enrolment of RASC in Italy and Bulgaria and the difference in the general integration approach in the two countries, the Terra d’Asilo practice could be replicated in Bulgaria in its pure form if only a number of important pre-conditions are met first. These pre-conditions include:

- legal changes with regard to RASC school enrolment regulations (abolition of requirement for proof of level of knowledge, acquired in the home country and pre-enrolment test; enrolment decisions transferred to the schools);
- introduction of regulations stipulating the involvement of municipalities as actors who manage integration funds at local level;
- transformation of the SAR Integration Centre into a body managing, supervising and consulting on the provision of integration services via the municipalities and local stakeholders;
- capacity building and training of local municipalities, starting with those municipalities that host Reception Centres (Nova Zagora and Svilengrad) and those which have larger refugee or immigrant populations;
- relevant capacity building training to the staff of the SAR Integration Centre;
- training of cultural mediators (or resource teachers).

The enactment and implementation of these pre-conditions will require political will, a preparatory period (of at least eighteen months) and the allocation of financial resources. While some of the approached NGOs expressed the opinion that an integration approach based on the network of municipalities in Bulgaria would improve the system in the long run and would assure access to services throughout the country (not only in Sofia as is the present reality), this was not the case with state institutions. An eventual readjustment of the system at place to a decentralised one based on the network of municipalities is not perceived as necessity in view of present realities by the leading state stakeholders in the field. A discussion of possible readjustment of the centralised system with regard to integration might emerge if Bulgaria were to witness much higher refugee migration pressures.

If enacted, after the outlined preconditions are met, the Terra d’Asilo practice would lead to the outcomes of the ideal scenario, including two additional ones:

- the capacity of the SAR Integration Centre as a managing and controlling body with regard to refugee integration services would be improved;
- the capacity of the Bulgarian Red Cross (if selected as an outside-to-the-school implementing agency) will be further developed and improved.

**B: Modified implementation – scenario 2**

The Terra d’Asilo practice could be integrated into the present centralised approach to refugee integration and introduced and implemented at the central level only. Such a transfer approach would not require the involvement of municipalities, while it would offer improved educational integration services in the capital where the majority of refugees and RASC are based. In such a scenario the following conditions would have to be at place:

- legal changes with regard to RASC school enrolment regulations (abolition of the requirement for proof of level of knowledge acquired in the country of origin and pre-enrolment test; enrolment decisions transferred to the schools);
- rendering autonomy to schools to decide upon the specific educational paths to be followed by RASC pupils;
- capacity building at the SAR Integration Centre;
- training of cultural mediators (or resource teachers).

The enactment of these pre-conditions would require less in terms of preparatory financial resources than would be needed in Scenario 1. Political will is required in only one sphere – that of school enrolment rules which has already been put
under discussion in Bulgaria. Most of the refugee integration NGOs voice the idea of improvement of the school enrolment rules and the abolition of the need of proof of knowledge before enrolment.

The implementation of the Terra d’Asilo activities – the orientation interview, personal inclusion project, ongoing mediation and monitoring, organisation of remedial classes, homework assistance and extra-curricular activities – could be organised in cooperation between the SAR Integration Centre, BRC and local schools in accordance with the mandates and the accumulated expertise of each institution. A possible selection of activities that could be put under discussion might involve:

- orientation interview and personal inclusion project could be organised between the SAR Integration Centre and the local school (possibly also BRC);
- supportive language training could be provided by SAR and BRC provided that advanced and intermediary groups are formed, as well as possibilities for individual consultations at school are provided;
- supportive subject training provided within the school, based on respective provisions for individual consultations (by MEYS);
- cultural mediators (to conduct ongoing mediation and monitoring) could be recruited either via the SAR Integration Centre or BRC. They could also be transformed into “resource teachers” to play the role of assistant teachers;
- extra-curricular activities could be shared by the SAR Integration Centre and BRC.

This modified form of the Terra d’Asilo practice in Bulgaria would lead to a set of positive outcomes similar to the ones identified in the ideal scenario. The major difference however, relates to the fact that implementation will be realised at the central level only. While the centralised approach to RASC educational integration will still be preserved, certain elements of decentralisation would be implemented in the capital. Those would include rendering more responsibility to local schools as well as NGOs in the decision making and service provision with regard to effective RASC school integration. This in turn would bring about two major developments at central level. First, it would serve to facilitate RASC inclusion in public schools and improved quality of training – realised by way of attending to the individual needs of children. Second, it would relieve some of the workload from the SAR Integration Centre and at the same time would also serve to confirm its role as a major expert and controlling body with regard to integration services. The role of SAR would thus remain strong with its managing and controlling responsibilities being preserved while its capacity for consultancy and technical support is enhanced. At the same time such implementation scenario will allow the empowerment of public schools in the process of educational integration of RASC.

The introduction of the Terra d’Asilo practice at the central level may serve to test the potential of this approach which, if successful, may become the pilot phase of a wider intervention to gradually involve other regions of the country and set the practice in accordance with local organisational capacities.

C: Modified implementation – scenario 3

To fit in the present legislative and institutional realities the Terra d’Asilo practice could be implemented in modified form to still address one of the major gaps of the system at present: the lack of support in the second (crucial) phase of the educational integration of RASC that takes place in public schools. A modified form of implementation would preserve the two-stage model of educational integration of RASC in Bulgaria, providing interventions in the second phase. The main Terra d’Asilo activities (orientation interview, personal inclusion project, ongoing mediation and monitoring, organisation of remedial classes and homework assistance together with extra-curricular activities) could be provided once RASC are enrolled in school, after the preparatory three-month phase is completed. Those activities could be introduced in stages with regard to the original region-wise approach of the Terra d’Asilo practice. The first stage might involve implementation at the central level only by the Integration Centre of SAR or by an outside organisation (BRC) commissioned and supervised by the SAR Integration Centre. In such a scenario the following conditions would have to be at place:

- While the implementation of such an approach would not require a lengthy preparatory period, both implementation alternatives (via SAR or via BRC) would require relevant funding and capacity
building with regard to establishing relevant project teams and training cultural mediators (or resource teachers).

- A gradual introduction of this approach at the regional level would involve the allocation of additional resources and regional-level capacity building related to the establishment of adequate regional project teams (irrespective of whether they operate within the SAR or the BRC network).

The negative aspects of this modified approach would be that with the system of school enrolment preserved, older children would remain placed in lower school grades. This in turn would not solve issues related to the difficulties that teachers of RASC of this category face in the training process (due to tense group dynamics in classes with children of different ages and psychological stages). In addition, the need of developing a proper official school enrolment test (on the part of MEYS) and improving the Bulgarian language training scheme at the SAR Integration Centre would remain highly relevant, thus posing both financial and time challenges for all involved institutions.

The supporting activities to be provided outside the mainstream school curricula would thus need to focus on compensating for the difficulties caused by the enrolment of older children in lower grades. Supporting activities will have to be designed in such a way as to enhance the motivation of older children to attend school and to speed up their transfer to higher school grades closer to their age.

The potential advantages of this scenario are related to the presence of cultural mediators and interdisciplinary project teams ensuring the smooth communication between all involved parties and channelling the concerns, fears, difficulties and desires of RASC pupils – which would result in a better understanding of the deficiencies in the approach of placing older children in lower grades on the part of decision making stakeholders.

The positives aspects of this approach relate to the potential for improving the educational inclusion and the quality of training for all RASC pupils. The psychological distress that RASC of older age face as a result of their allocation to lower grades would be communicated and mediated, therefore relieved to some extent.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

It should be noted that the Terra d’Asilo practice which is being implemented in the municipality of San Pietro Veronico has a strong focus on providing educational services to unaccompanied RASC. This aspect of the practice could be very helpful in discussing potential solutions within the Bulgarian context as the present reality is such that unaccompanied RASC effectively remain outside of the educational system. However, the aspects related to unaccompanied RASC have not been discussed in the present social impact assessment as the issue would require separate attention to an additional set of stakeholders, and a discussion of a set of needed legal preconditions related to the appointment of a guardian. A social impact assessment of this aspect of Terra d’Asilo could however be undertaken additionally in order to trigger debates regarding the problems related to the educational integration of this specific group of RASC.

The three implementation models of the Terra d’Asilo practice discussed in this study regard the educational needs of accompanied refugee and asylum seeking children in Bulgaria. The indicated pre-conditions for Scenario 1 demonstrate that the introduction of the Terra d’Asilo practice in Bulgaria in this form would require a significant investment in terms of preparation time and financial resources, as well as a change in the views and positions with respect to managing integration on the part of the key state institutional stakeholders. It is very likely, therefore, that the positive potential of Terra d’Asilo could be better realised in Bulgaria by means of a modified mode of implementation.

Of the three scenarios discussed earlier, the optimum one is scenario 2, presenting a modified application of the Terra d’Asilo practice at the central level only. This modified form of application takes into consideration the present institutional frameworks in Bulgaria, as well as the trends of refugee migration and the profile of the target group of RASC. This modified scheme would take care of integrating and upgrading the existing institutional capacities and expertise, rather than investing significant financial resources and time in securing the involvement of new actors. Therefore,
social impact assessment of the potential implementation

...it is likely to present an optimal opportunity for the improvement of the system in a reasonable timeframe with no significant preliminary resource allocation. At the same time, this modified scheme of application would address some of the significant shortcomings in the educational integration of RASC, related to what are rather non-flexible RASC school enrolment regulations, and to the absence of in-school tailored support to RASC and their teachers. The modified implementation of the practice in Sofia where most RASC support institutions and NGOs are placed could serve as a pilot phase of a broader intervention to be planned and designed carefully, taking into consideration refugee migration trends, institutional capacities and financial resources. The preparatory work needed for the introduction of this modified form of Terra d’Asilo could be managed within a moderate timeframe. Both the preparatory activities and the modified practice could be reasonably funded by allocations from the NPIR funds and targeted external sources such as ERF.

Some of the elements of the Terra d’Asilo practice could indeed be adjusted into the existing framework of RASC educational integration services taken separately from the overall framework of the practice. Such an important element is the work of cultural mediators with knowledge of RASC mother tongues and close familiarity with RASC communities. Cultural mediators are very much needed in Bulgarian public schools in order to ensure communication between RASC pupils, teachers, parents and SAR officers. It is advisable that in the Bulgarian context the role of the cultural mediator should be transformed into that of a resource teacher – a position that in the Bulgarian context involves more comprehensive responsibilities. While the function of cultural mediators (in the framework of Terra d’Asilo) includes providing translation and consultations between teachers, RASC pupils and their parents, and monitoring of ongoing school performance and results, the functions of resource teachers (following the framework of the Bulgarian educational system) would also involve active participation in the training process with tailored training being provided to pupils in need. For this purpose resource teachers need to be well acquainted with the general curricula programmes and all related terminology as well as with the main training methods used in Bulgarian public schools. In the Bulgarian context the figure of resource teacher would be in a position to provide more comprehensive and effective in-school support than that of a cultural mediator. Reflecting their differing responsibilities, the positions of cultural mediators and resource teachers should involve different skills backgrounds. While the knowledge of RASC home languages and familiarity with the refugee community as a whole will be sufficient in the case of cultural mediator, some level of pedagogical training as well as a high school diploma, in addition to the former two, might be requested in the case of resource teachers. It is also highly recommended that both figures are in contact with children still in the first stage of the education integration process – that of preparation for school enrolment. Resource teachers could be used in schools where more than ten RASC or so are enrolled, while cultural mediators could be used in schools where only a few RASC are enrolled.

The conducted SIA exercise in Bulgaria has been very helpful in shedding light on some important shortcomings in the present system for educational integration of RASC. It was also very helpful in exploring alternatives for improvement of that system. The study has demonstrated that differences in legal and stakeholder frameworks, target groups and educational structures should not be viewed as a hindrance to the transfer of effective educational integration practices from one context to another. These differences however, need to be carefully investigated so that realistic and doable modified implementation schemes come to shape. Such modified schemes need to recognize and integrate local modalities, resources and mentalities and build on existing (often unused) potentials.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIRM — Association for the Integration of Refugees and Migrants
ARCI — Italian Non-profit Social-promotion Association
BCRM — Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants
BRC — Bulgarian Red Cross
CRW — Council of Refugee Women
FNSPA — National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services in Italy
LAR — Law on Asylum and Refugees
MEYS — Ministry of Education Youth and Science
NPIR — National Program for the Integration of Refugees in the Republic of Bulgaria
RASC — Refugee and Asylum-seeking Children
RIE — Regional Inspectorate on Education
SAR — State Agency for Refugees
SPRAR — The (Italian) System of Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees
APPENDIX 1
THE SPRAR TERRA D’ASILO PRACTICE

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE: The Project Terra d’Asilo is implemented over the national territory of Italy. It is funded by the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services (a fund set up by the Italian Ministry of the Interior) and is being implemented at the local level by the respective municipalities on the principle of fund applications. Project Activities are implemented by various organisations selected by municipalities and follow a national model for the reception and integration of asylum seekers – termed the System for Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPAR). The present project summary describes the implementation of the Terra d’Asilo project in the Municipality of San Pietro Vernotico (with a population of 15,000) by the national non-for-profit association ARCI (which has branches all over the territory of Italy).

AIM: 1. To ensure effective and comprehensive reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees on the territory of Italy, including the integration of refugee children into the educational system. 2. To enable operators throughout the territory to work together in a network in such a way as to optimize the opportunities and resources made available by all the players in the system, and thus provide the fullest possible support to refugee children and families with a view to enabling their full social emancipation, their ability to participate autonomously in the labour market, their education and training and, once they have completed the entire protection programme project, their full autonomy in the Italian social context.

GENERAL FRAME OF ACTIVITIES: The Terra d’Asilo project implements a wide range of services for a wide group of beneficiaries which includes asylum seekers and refugees (individuals or families) of all ages, including minors (both accompanied and unaccompanied). These services include: reception; housing; food (shopping vouchers); legal consultancy; psychological assistance; health protection; Italian language courses; extra-curricular activities (for children between six and fifteen years of age); job placement.

The overall annual cost of the project in the Municipality of San Pietro Vernotico (including services, operation, personnel, and other related costs) is 182,000 EUR.

EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION OF RASC UNDER TERRA d’ASILO

BENEFICIARIES: The project has a particular focus on schooling and minors’ formation. It fosters a series of processes designed to favour the integration of pre-school age children, compulsory school-age children (between six and sixteen years of age) and children older than fifteen years of age. Since 2004 the project has assisted 209 minors (137 boys and seventy-two girls; of all of them seventy-two unaccompanied), from the following countries: Afghanistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kurdistan, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Togo, Turkey.

ORGANISATIONAL FRAME: The educational integration of RASC into the Italian school system is implemented by project operators, local schools and RASC families working together in close cooperation – all three parties take active part in the development and implementation of personal education plans. The major figure assuring the communication between these parties including RASC themselves is the cultural-linguistic mediator. The relationship and cooperation between ARCI and local schools is formalised and arranged by way of mutually signed Protocols of Understanding.

EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES UNDER TERRA d’Asilo:

• conducting an orientation interview to evaluate the student’s skills and aptitudes and to provide him/her with information regarding facilities, personnel, project organisation, and regulations (ARCI, cultural-linguistic mediator);
• developing a personal inclusion project setting minimum formative targets in the different educational fields (prepared jointly by ARCI and schools and/or professional training centres);
• enrolling in school (implemented by local schools in cooperation with ARCI);
• monitoring children’s study activities (implemented by ARCI cultural-linguistic mediator);
• holding (out of school) remedial classes in Italian as a second language or providing support with
Integrating refugee and asylum-seeking children in the educational systems

School subjects to help completion of elementary or middle school (implemented by ARCI, general educators);

- Assisting with school homework (provided either at RASC homes or ARCI offices, by ARCI general educators);
- Organising extra-curricular activities, such as soccer tournaments or thematic workshops related to the local cultural heritage and traditions (these aim at complementing educational integration with socialisation activities and integration into the wider community) (implemented by ARCI).

Project Team: The project team hired by ARCI includes a cultural-linguistic mediator, general educators, and a psychologist who also serves as Supervisor to the team.

Appendix 2

The asylum seeker and refugee reception and integration system in Italy

The reception and integration system with regard to asylum seekers and refugees in Italy is designed according to the “National Asylum Programme” promulgated in 2001 via a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Interior Ministry, the National Association of Italian Municipal Councils (ANCI) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The “National Asylum Programme” sets the framework of a public-sector system for the reception of asylum seekers and refugees, implemented throughout Italy, with the involvement of centralised and local institutions, and based on the sharing of responsibility between the Interior Ministry and local agencies.

The system was subsequently formalised (Italian Law No. 189/2002 on Immigration) with the establishment of the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services (FNSPA); the System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) and the SPRAR co-ordination infrastructure – the Central Service. The SPRAR coordination infrastructure – the Central Service is responsible for providing information, promotion, consultancy, monitoring and technical support services to local agencies – entrusting its the management of these services to the National Association of Italian Municipal Councils (ANCI).

SPRAR is financed by ENSPA and a minimum of 20 % in co-funding provided by local agencies. The ENSPA funding is ensured via tenders issued by the Ministry of the Interior for the assignment of projects. Until 2008 tenders were issued on an annual basis. After 2008 they became biennial, and since 2010 they have become triennial. The increasing duration of the programmes was determined by the need to give continuity and stability to the projects undertaken in the individual areas.

Appendix 3

Basic elements of Italy’s educational system as it relates to the integration of foreign students, including RASC

- According to Italian educational regulations and the guidelines which Italian schools need to follow, RASC should be accepted in schools at any time during the school year;
- The officially accepted rule is to enrol children from this group in classes corresponding to their age;
- Italian schools have the autonomy to organise the particular organisational path of RASC in school;
- No official school certificates or formal proof of the level of knowledge (by means of tests) is required in order to enrol RASC between the ages of six and fourteen in Italian schools;
- Children above the age of fifteen could be enrolled in an upper secondary school class (without official proof of the level of knowledge) and following an evaluation of their level of knowledge they could attend after-school courses/adult learning courses/ to help them obtain primary and/or lower secondary school diploma;
- No knowledge of the Italian language is required
in order to accept RASC in Italian schools;

• The provision of additional Italian language courses in Italian schools is not always possible as it is dependent on the number of foreign pupils and the available resources. In this context, the TERRA d’Asilo project is instrumental in providing additional training in Italian as a foreign language to RASC pupils;

• The enrolment and allocation of RASC into the Italian public school system follows a national requirement quota of up to 30 per cent of foreign students in one class.

APPENDIX 4

STAKEHOLDER GUIDELINE QUESTIONNAIRES

School directors and teachers

• Which needs of RASC remain not taken care of by the present educational system? At pre-enrolment level? In school?

• What should be changed in the training schemes to respond to RASC specific backgrounds, home training curricula, skills and culture?

• How could effective language training be provided to RASC in order to allow them to participate fully in the school training process?

• What kind of guidelines, tools and standards are needed to meet the educational needs of RASC?

• (Following a short description of the Terra d’Asilo practice) What do you like and dislike about such a programme?

• What could motivate RASC and their parents to participate in such programme?

• Will your school be interested in participating in such a programme? Why (not)? Under what conditions?

• Which organisations could provide funding for a similar programme?

• Which organisations could implement the programme in cooperation with the school? The cooperation of which institutions would be indispensable (absolutely necessary)?

• Which organisations could block or hinder the implementation and why?

• Are there any requirements regarding training for staff members within the framework of such a project?

• Will the educational situation of RASC be changed for the better or for the worse by their participation in the programme? Why (not)?

• Will your situation as an educational professional be changed for the better or for the worse by participating in the programme? Why (not)?

• Could RASC enrol in school grades corresponding to their age?

• Will RASC attend the programme regularly? Will the dropout rate of RASC decrease if the programme is implemented?

• Will that programme result in better Bulgarian language proficiency on the part of RASC?

• Is it important (and possible) for the views of RASC and their parents to be taken into account?

• How could RASC and their parents take part in the process of the design, implementation and evaluation of the educational programme?

Potential implementing and funding organisations

• (Short description of the Terra d’Asilo practice) What do you like and dislike about such a programme?

• Would you be interested in implementing/funding such programme? Why (not), and if so under what conditions?

• What do you think should be the most relevant specific target group to be addressed by the programme? Why?

• What are the needs of this specific group of RASC that should be met by such an educational programme?

• How could the beneficiaries (RASC and their parents) be involved in the programme?

• How could your institution and other participating organisations motivate RASC and their parents to participate in such a programme?

• How could RASC and their parents take part in the process of designing and implementing the educational programme?

• How could other relevant stakeholders be involved in the programme?

• What kind of specific educational services and extracurricular activities should and could be offered to RASC under the framework of this programme?

• Does your organisation have the capacity (number
of staff and relevantly trained professionals) to become a key stakeholder of the project?

• If the answers is no – what should be done in order to secure the necessary staff with relevant professional capacities?

• Are you willing to cooperate with other organisations? Which ones? To what extent?

• How could relevant funding be secured for the implementation of the programme?

• What minimum requirements do organisations involved in the development and implementation of such a practice have to fulfil in order to be able to successfully implement the practice?

• What will be the actual positive and/or negative impacts on the practice for the implementing organisation, the situation of the beneficiaries as well as other relevant stakeholders (parents of pupils, teachers, etc.) and environments (educational system, labour market integration of youngsters, housing situation, etc.) in comparison to the stated goals of the practice? (alternatively: What are the, externalities, i.e. any unintended positive and/or negative impacts of the practice on other than immediate beneficiaries?)

• Will the educational situation of RASC be changed for the better or for the worse by their participation in the programme? Why (not)?

• What could be the major obstacles encountered during the implementation of the programme?

• What do you think are the main factors enabling successful implementation (in the sense of achieving the objectives defined) of the programme?

• How viable and sustainable is the practice in the long term?

• What kind of long-term perspectives and opportunities could be provided to participants after completing the project?

Experts in the field of educational integration of RASC

• What kind of support related to the education of RASC do teachers need?

• What should be changed in the training schemes to respond to RASC specific backgrounds, home training curricula, skills and culture?

• How could effective language training be provided to RASC in order to allow them to participate fully in the school training process?

• What kind of guidelines, tools and standards are needed to meet the educational needs of RASC?

• (Following a short description of the Terra d'Asilo practice) What do you like and dislike about such a programme?

• What could motivate RASC and their parents to participate in such a programme?

• Which organisations could provide funding for a similar programme?

• Which organisations are best suited and equipped to implement the programme in cooperation with the schools?

• The cooperation of which institutions would be indispensable (absolutely necessary)? Which organisations could block or hinder the implementation and why?

• Would Bulgarian schools be interested in participating in such a programme? Why (not), and if so under what conditions? What kind of schools?

• What kind of specific educational services and extracurricular activities should and could be offered to RASC in the framework of this programme?

• Will the educational situation of RASC be changed for the better or for the worse as a result of their participation in the programme? Why (not)?

• Will the programme provide RASC with the same opportunities for inclusion into the educational process as other children have?

• Could RASC enrol in school grades corresponding to their age as a result of the programme's implementation?

• Will RASC attend the program regularly? Will the dropout rate of RASC decrease if the programme is implemented?

• Will that programme result in improved Bulgarian language proficiency on the part of RASC?

• Do you think that the views of RASC and their parents should be taken into account?

• How could RASC and their parents take part in the process of designing, implementing and evaluating the educational programme?

RASC parents

• What are the main problems/difficulties that your child faces at school?

• What are the needs of your child and family that should be met by an educational programme? What could motivate you to participate in such a programme?
• (Following a short description the Terra d’Asilo practice) What do you like and dislike about such programme?
• What kind of educational services and extracurricular activities should be offered to your child?
• Will the educational situation of your child be changed for the better or for the worse by their participation in such a programme? Why (not)?
• Will the programme give your child the same opportunities for inclusion into the educational process as other children have?
• Could your child have better chances to be enrolled in school grades corresponding to his/her age?
• Will your child attend the programme regularly?
• Will that programme effectively improve the Bulgarian language proficiency of your child?
• If your child is older than thirteen years– do you think he/she will have greater motivation to attend school? (e.g. via enhanced opportunities for language and vocational training?)
• Is it important for your views and those of your child to be taken into account in the design of such a programme?
• Would you like to take part in the design, implementation and evaluation of the educational programme?