

An overview of migrants' housing conditions in the city of Brescia

Andrea Torre and Alessio Cangiano

ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (University of Oxford)

european forum for migration studies

Institute at the University of Bamberg

Katharinenstraße 1

D-96052 Bamberg

fon +49-951-932020-0

fax +49-951-932020-20

efms@sowi.uni-bamberg.de

<http://www.efms.de>

Director

Prof. Dr. Friedrich Heckmann

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1 Background information on the country

1.1 History of migration and composition of migrant populations



For more than a century Italy was a country of emigration rather than one of immigration. The shift occurred in the 1970s and 80s when the number of immigrants arriving balanced that of Italian people emigrating¹. By the second half of the 1980s, foreign workers in the country were more than 300,000².

The immigrant population in Italy is characterised by a large pool of irregular residents. This is the result of many migrants either overstaying a residence permit or tourist visa or – to a lesser extent – entering the country without the necessary authorisation. Thus, the evolution of the legal foreign presence in Italy has been largely affected by the chronology of the frequent regularisation programmes. Following the first two regularisation programmes carried out in 1986 and 1990, the number of valid permits in 1991 was already above 600,000. In the 1990s, the number of residence permits grew slowly until the third amnesty, carried out at the end of 1995. More than 250,000 applications were submitted, giving rise to a sudden increase in the amount of legal foreigners. A similar situation occurred three years later with over 253,000 applications submitted for the fourth regularisation programme. However, the real turning point in the evolution of the legal foreign population in Italy took place with the most recent regularisation programme, following the new immigration law enacted in 2002 (the so-called "Bossi-Fini"). More than 700,000 applications were submitted and more than 650,000 new permits were issued, implying a 50% increase in the legal foreign resident population.

Estimates combining the different available data sources suggest that the overall legal foreign population living in Italy at the beginning of 2006 was over 3 millions people³. In addition, other 500-600 thousand irregular migrants were supposed to live in the country at that time⁴. The most stable part of the migrant population – those registered with the local municipalities – numbered 2,670,514 people⁵, accounting for 4.5% of the total population. Of those, 1,319,926 are women and 1,350,588 men. Minors represent nowadays a significant part of the foreign population (585,000 were less than 18 years old) and contribute substantially to its growth. After the substantial increase that occurred in response to the 2002 regularisation, the foreign population is continuing to grow due to relatively high numbers of births (over 50,000 in 2005) and because of more generous quotas for legal entry.

In terms of countries of origin immigration to Italy is rather heterogeneous. Albanians are the largest group (348,813) followed by Moroccans (319,537) and Romanians (297,570). The fourth largest community is the Chinese (127,822) followed by migrants from Ukraine (107,118, of which 87,593 are women). Other major migrant communities include Filipinos, Tunisians, and former-Yugoslavians.

¹ Martiniello, 1996, Italy: the late discovery of immigration. In Thranhardt, D. (Ed.) *Europe: A New Immigration Continent*. Münster, LIT; Ambrosini, 2001, *La Fatica di Integrarsi. Immigrati e Lavoro in Italia*, Bologna, Il Mulino; Zincone and Caponio, 2005, Immigrant and immigration policy-making: The case of Italy. *IMISCOE Working Paper: Country report*.

² Reynery, 2002, *Sociologia del Mercato del Lavoro*, Bologna, Il Mulino.

³ Caritas, 2006

⁴ Blangiardo GC and Molina S., 2006, Immigrazione e presenza straniera, in Fondazione Agnelli G (ed.), *Generazioni, famiglie, migrazioni: pensando all'Italia di domani*, Torino.

⁵ ISTAT, 2006



1.2 General national integration policy

Initial political answers to the phenomenon of immigration started to be developed relatively late in Italy (from the 1990s onwards) in comparison to the arrival of migrants, and were given in the form of emergency measures. The first actual law that attempted to regulate the development of migration flows in the country was approved and implemented in 1986⁶. The Act, whose main aim was that of protecting Italian citizens against possibly unfair competition on the labour market⁷, introduced some basic civil and social rights for foreign workers but no article dealing with the integration process was included within the law. In the following years four more legislations were implemented in 1990⁸, 1995⁹, 1998, and 2002.

The 1998 legislation¹⁰ was the first systematic Italian Immigration Act¹¹ and was also the first to contain norms related to migrants' integration¹². However, although this law adopted a more liberal approach in comparison with the previous regulations¹³, it also contained a number of repressive measures especially relating to expulsions. Furthermore, integration was considered as possible only if subordinated to an effective policy counteracting irregular immigration.

The 2002 legislation passed by the new centre-right coalition came into force in July 2002¹⁴. The Act did not apparently change the norms concerning the integration of migrants but considerably reduced the funds allocated to the integration policy and increased, from five to six years, the length of stay required to apply for the permanent residence card. Furthermore, the Bossi-Fini Act had two main purposes: to link more strictly the issue of new residence permits to employment requirements, and to

⁶ Statute no. 943 of 30 December 1986

⁷ According to the Statute no. 943, only in case of shortage of Italian workers in a specific sector, entry and working papers could be issued to foreign workers. Moreover, non-EU citizens were prevented from moving freely from one kind of job to another (Pugliese, 2002, *L'Italia tra Migrazioni Internazionali e Migrazioni Interne*, Bologna, Il Mulino.)

⁸ Statute no. 39 of 28 February 1990

⁹ This legislation was attached to the Legislative Decree no.489 of 18 November 1995. This Decree was named the Dini Decree after the then Prime Minister. This Decree, was not converted into law except for the norms concerning the third amnesty which allowed the regularisation of 248,501 illegal immigrants.

¹⁰ The Turco Napolitano Act

¹¹ Law no 40 of 1998

¹² The four pillars of the law were concerned with 1) the introduction of more severe measures counteracting illegal immigration and smuggling and trafficking of migrants; 2) the regulation of new flows of foreign workers; 3) the granting of some innovative and basic provisions related to treatment of illegal immigrants in the sphere of the health care and children education; and 4) the promotion of integration paths for new immigrants and foreign residents (Zincone, 1998). A National fund was set up to finance the integration measures promoted by the regional and local authorities and permanent residence cards were introduced for legal foreigners who had been in Italy for at least five years.

¹³ The right to health and education for all migrants (including undocumented migrants), quotas for sending countries with which readmission agreements had been concluded, and the possibility of entering via sponsorship schemes.

¹⁴ The Bossi-Fini Act (Statute no. 189 of 2 July 2002) was followed by a regularisation programme which was the largest ever in Europe, with 700,000 applications and over 600,000 permits granted. Nonetheless, the status granted to regularised migrants is relatively precarious and short-term, and many of the permits are coming up for renewal once gain, rising the possibility that some of those who had moved from a irregular to a regular status may find themselves once again without papers, a situation that occurred following earlier regulations.



contrast illegal entry¹⁵. Hence, the current immigration act virtually makes the condition of regularity as a 'mandatory' condition for social integration, i.e. integration is considered possible only on the basis of legal status of immigrants¹⁶.

Each change in the legislations was followed by a regularisation programme. This is a major aspect the Italian migration policy as regularisations have been the main instrument to contrast the widespread irregularity in relation to the residence and work conditions. In fact, regularisations have been an important pathway for entering legality for a large number of migrants settling in the country¹⁷. However, the short duration of permits and the restrictive requirements for their renewal often meant migrants falling back into a condition of irregularity. Generally speaking, although the implicit intent of the Italian policy makers was that of offsetting the lack of a comprehensive immigration policy through an ex-post management of the irregular presence, this approach was only partially effective as shown by the re-emergence of a large number of irregular residents in the periods following the regularisations.

This restrictive approach is also reflected in the reform of the citizenship legislation passed in the early 1990s. In fact, this legislation penalises immigrants in Italy while introducing and reviving the links with Italian emigrants. In 1992, the Italian Parliament passed a law on citizenship (law 91) that confirmed *ius sanguinis* to be the main criterion to become an Italian citizen, creating distinctly favourable conditions for Italian emigrants abroad and for their descendants, and established that foreign non-EU citizens need to have had permanent residence in the country for at least ten years before being able to apply for citizenship. The *ius soli* criterion¹⁸ was thus modified. They must be legal residents since birth, and must prove their continuous presence in the country. Almost ten years later, in 2001, Italy passed another law (law n.459) to ensure the right to vote of Italian citizens resident abroad, many of whom are descendents of Italian emigrants who have never been to Italy and are also citizens of the state they were born in, while the political participation of immigrants still remains the subject of controversial debates and is mostly discussed only in relation to local elections.

At local level, some interesting experiences have been implemented to enhance immigrants' active participation in the community in which they live. Three initiatives are particularly relevant: the introduction, in some municipalities, of *consiglieri aggiunti* (assistant councillors), elected by immigrants in their municipality of residence - they have a consultative and mainly symbolic role and no right to vote in the City Council; the creation of consultative committee on migration issues to which migrants themselves are invited to contribute; finally, several ongoing initiatives at local, regional and national level, for the introduction of the right to vote for immigrants in local elections.

¹⁵ Zincone and Caponio, 2005: 5 (op. cit.)

¹⁶ Such approach clashes with what Schuster refers to as "status mobility", that is the high level of insecurity of status among a large proportion of Italy's foreign population. (Schuster, 2005, The continuing mobility of migrants in Italy: shifting between places and status. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31, 757-74).

¹⁷ Blangiardo G., 2005, I processi di immigrazione: dall'illegalità alla regolarizzazione, in Livi Bacci M (ed.), *L'incidenza economica dell'immigrazione*, Quaderni Cesifin, n. 20. Turin: Giappichelli.

¹⁸ Access to citizenship for foreigners born in Italy when they turn 18



The new centre-left government has announced in April 2007 a new proposal for an immigration law¹⁹ which plans to introduce the passive and active electorate to the administrative elections for the foreign long term residents. According to the Amato–Ferrero law proposal, migrants with leave to remain permit will therefore have the right to vote and to stand for elections at municipal and constituency level.

At the moment, however, it can be said that the issue of immigration in Italy is still predominantly dealt with in relation to border control and national security issues. The scope of integration, instead, as previously emphasised, has been limited to legal migrants only, and labour market integration seems to be perceived as a necessary and sufficient condition to ensure social integration. This approach strongly clashes with a reality characterised by a significant presence of migrant workers who have been in Italy for a short period of time, who are largely with limited resources, and who often lack a residence permit or a formal job contract.

This situation shows the difficulty of both politicians of all political orientation and the public opinion to accept the new reality of migration. “Improvisation” and “emergency”, therefore, seem to have turned into permanent features of the Italian political response to immigration with amnesties still playing an important part in the political approach to the issue, while the non-profit third sector is still the main provider of assistance for immigrants in the country. Local authorities, which generally have limited available resources to cope with emergency situations and that can not be directly responsible for providing shelter to irregular migrants, have learned to heavily rely on shelters and services provided by associations. The most important associations and facilities have links with the Catholic Church which often provides important resources on which these organisations can rely such as significant volunteer staff, clerical personnel experienced in basic reception services, spaces often located in the city centres and well-equipped for reception.

¹⁹ <http://www.interno.it/assets/files/4/2007424175111.pdf>
<http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/briguglio/immigrazione-e-asilo/2007/aprile/sommario-ddl-delega.html>



2 Background information on the city and its integration policy

2.1 General structural data of the city

Brescia, located within the Lombardy region, is the principal town (capoluogo) of the Province of Brescia, the fourth economic centre of the country – producing 3.5% of the Italian GDP. It is a densely urbanised area characterised by a significant process of development of the tertiary sector. Although the finance sector is also growing – some of the new financial hubs are located in the city – Brescia's industry is still very much based on manufacture businesses in the areas of metallurgic industry, of textiles and food processing, and on agriculture (zootechny and milk industry). Also, Brescia's Multiutility, ASM, represents one of the largest producers of energy of the country together with AEM of Milan. Furthermore, the Province is national leader for the disposal of waste and its transformation in electricity – 35,000 private houses and all the public offices are heated using this energy. Most of the industrial areas are spread in the Province but the city of Brescia still houses some of them: le Fornaci, San Polo etc. Most businesses are medium- or small-size firms, many of which are family-run businesses. The labour market is characterised by high segmentation and flexibility.

The city has a surface of 90.7 km². On the 30th of April 2007, the number of residents was estimated at 190,1177 by the Registry Office of the Brescia City Council, while the number of families residing in the city is about 90,000. The Province of Brescia has less than 5% of unemployment and its large industry and expanding labour market in the tertiary sector have allowed for the settlement of nearly 150,000 foreign workers, almost 30,000 of whom in the city of Brescia alone. As some recent research has shown, in this area migrants represent a significant proportion of the labour force, given that the local population does not see working in the industrial and especially manufacturer sector attractive anymore²⁰.

2.2 History of municipal migration and composition of migrant populations

Lombardy hosts about ¼ of the total migrant population of the country. In the Province of Brescia, the migrant population has more than doubled in the past 5 years. Migrants living in Brescia account for 9.4% of the Province's total population²¹ and for 17% of Lombardy's total foreign population.

Although this large concentration of migrants tends to characterise the Province on the whole, the migrant population is concentrated mainly in some specific areas of the

²⁰ Ambrosiani, M. 2001, (op. cit.); Marini, L. (a cura di), 2002, Formare una professione o educare al lavoro? I fabbisogni professionali degli immigrati secondo gli imprenditori del Nord Est, Venezia, Quaderni Fondazione Nord Est.

²¹ Source: <http://demo.istat.it>

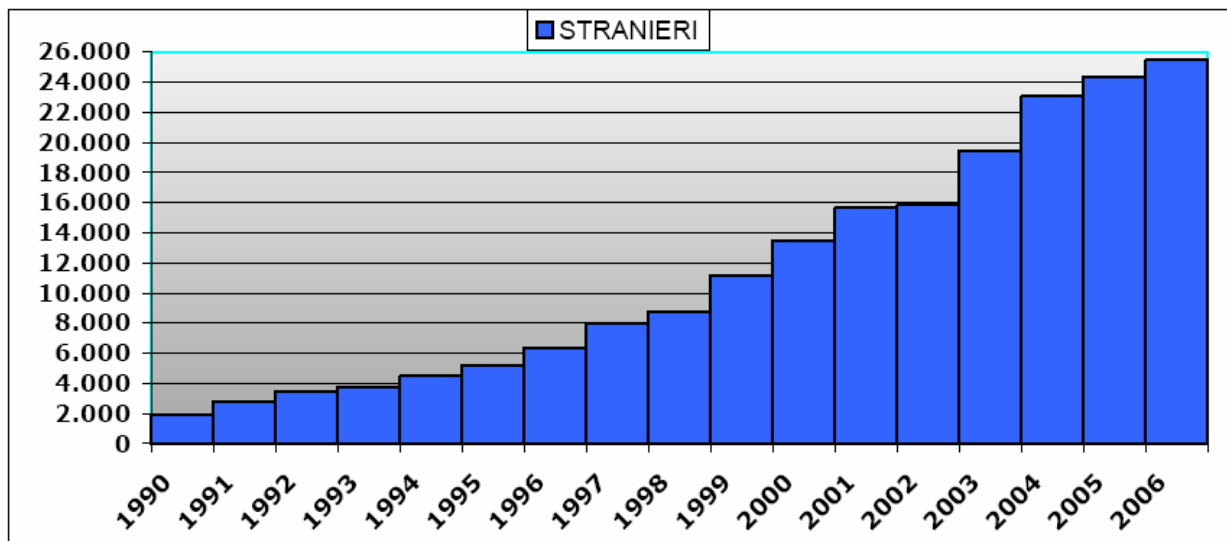
Province, where there is a larger supply of accommodation as well as a concentration of public services and services for migrants²².

Since 1990s, the municipality of Brescia started to have a stronger concentration of migrant population mainly characterised by families and with a tendency towards a more permanent settlement within the urban area. This happened especially after the regularisation of 1998. Currently, about ¼ of the foreign residents of the Province live in the municipality of Brescia²³.

In the municipality, the foreign population accounts for 14.6% of the total population (30.04.2007), making Brescia one of the Italian cities with the largest proportion of immigrants in the population. The increase of both the number and the proportion of foreign residents have been dramatic especially since the end of the 1990s (figg.1 and 2). Taking into account birth rates and family reunions, this trend will take the proportion of migrants over 20% in 2010²⁴.

In terms of countries of origin, the largest migrant communities in 2006 are from Pakistan (2621), Egypt (2061), China (1899), Albania (1774), Ukraine (1641), Bangladesh (1471), Ghana (1236), India (Sikhs) (1207), Sri Lanka (1205), and Romania (1166). As in the rest of the country, in the past few years there has been especially a significant increase of some Central and Eastern European communities – especially Ukrainians, Moldavians and Romanians.

Figure 1. Foreign residents in the Municipality of Brescia, 1990-2006



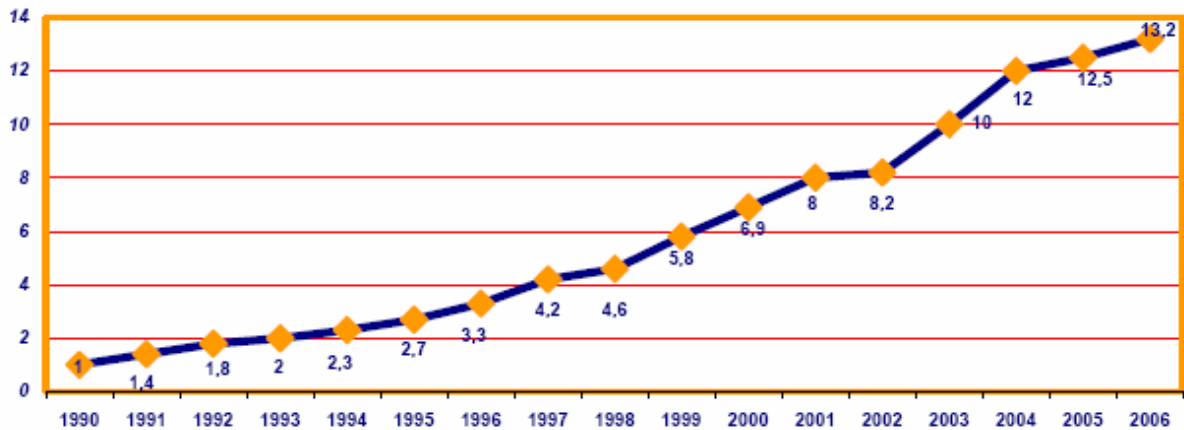
Source: Statistics Office, Brescia City Council

²² Progetto Sicurezza Urbana, Assessorato alla Sicurezza, 2007, p, 25 http://www.comune.brescia.it/NR/rdonlyres/8D1FFFD3-7929-4E63-9439-E0FED2E38E6F/0/PROGETTOSICUREZZAGENNAIO2007_Online.pdf

²³ SISTAN, COMUNE DI BRESCIA, Unità di Staff Statistica, Rapporti di ricerca, 23/2006, Scappo dalla città, Le migrazioni intraprovinciali a Brescia dal 2000 al 2003: 24

²⁴ Estimate of the Office for Integration and Citizenship of the Municipality.

Figure 2. Proportion of foreign residents in the total population of the Municipality of Brescia, 1990-2006

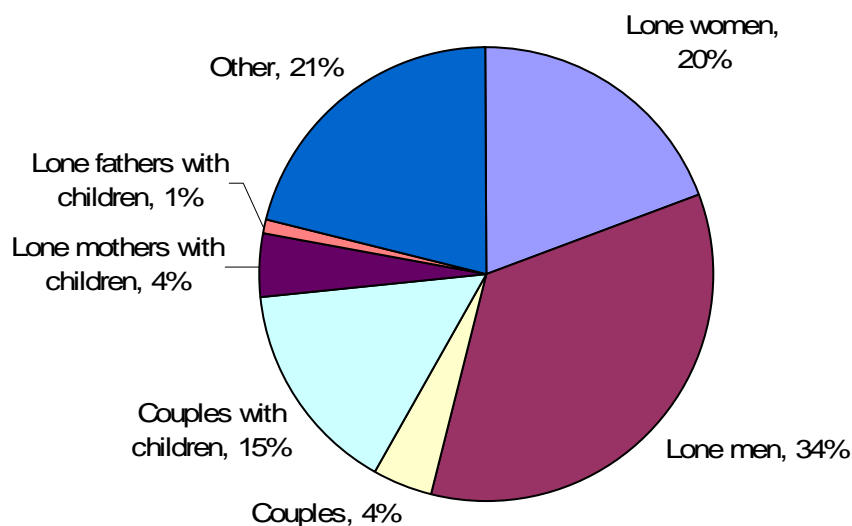


Source: Statistics Office, Brescia City Council

As far as the gender distribution is concerned, men are still the majority (54%) in the foreign population. This contrasts with the gender structure of the Italian population where women are 53%. However, the proportion of female migrants is rapidly increasing – from 38% in 2000 to 46% in 2006. The foreign population is substantially younger than the Italian population – mean ages are 29 and 47 years respectively.

The distribution of migrant households by family type is also very different in comparison to the Italian population (fig. 3), with a much higher proportion of lone men (decreasing) and lone women (increasing). However, migrant couples with children are rapidly increasing. Consistent with this trend, the number and share of minors is also rapidly growing (6,300 in 2006, one quarter of the total foreign population).

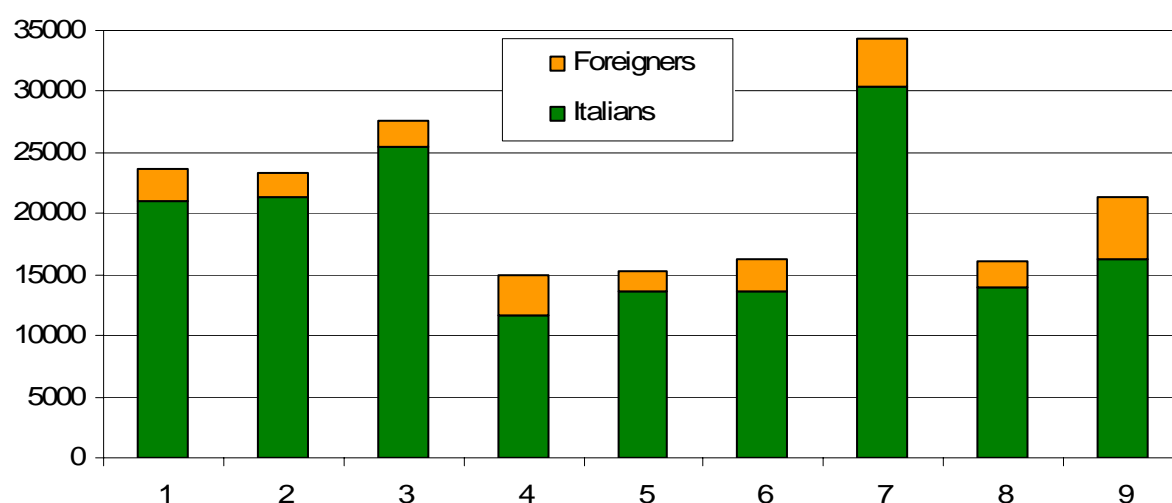
Figure 3. Foreign households in the Municipality of Brescia by family type, 2006



Source: Statistics Office, Brescia City Council

The territorial distribution across the municipality is a very relevant aspect when looking at the housing issue (see the Appendix for a map of the city). The largest number of foreigners (approximately 20% of the total foreign population) reside in the 9th constituency (*circoscrizione*), where the proportion of foreigners in the population is 23% – the highest among the nine constituencies of the city. *Centro Storico Nord*, a borough of the 9th constituency, houses alone more than 50% of the constituency’s foreign population: here foreigners are over 30% of the total population. The proportion of foreign residents is also very high in the 4th constituency. The 5th constituency, on the contrary, accounts for the smallest absolute number of foreigners while in the 2nd and 3rd constituencies there is the smallest proportion of foreign residents (8%).

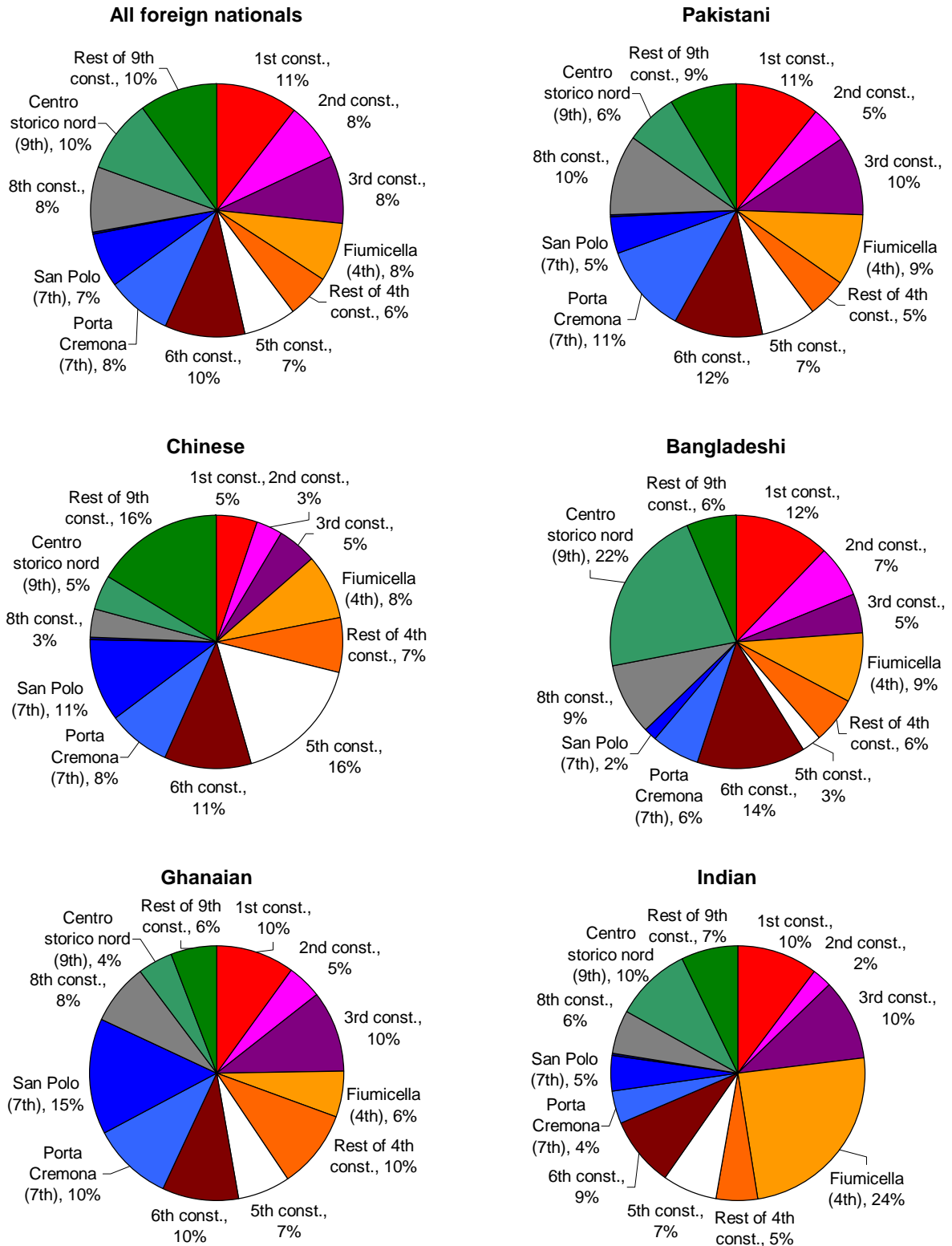
Figure 4. Italian and foreign population in the Municipality of Brescia by constituency, 2006



Source: Statistics Office, Brescia City Council

Another way to look at the geography of the migrant settlement in the Municipality is to consider the percentage distribution of the foreign population across the constituencies and the major quarters where migrants have settled (fig. 5). Again, it is clear that the immigrant population is rather distributed across the city, although some quarters – Centro storico nord, San Polo, Porta Cremona, Fiumicella – have been particularly attractive for the newcomers. However, not all migrant communities share this general pattern of residential distribution. The Pakistani community is more evenly distributed across the municipality than other major migrant groups. Egyptians are especially concentrated in the areas hosting a high proportion of immigrant residents (4th, 7th and 9th constituencies, particularly in the northern part of the historical centre). Chinese immigrants reside especially in the southern part of the historical centre (9th), in San Polo (7th) and in the 5th constituency (Chiesanuova, Villaggio Sereno). A significant part of the Bangladeshi community has settled in the southern part of the historical centre (9th) and in the 6th constituency. Ghanaians are more concentrated than other groups in San Polo (7th), Indians in Fiumicella (4th) and Sri Lankans in Porta Venezia (8th).

Figure 5. Territorial distribution of foreign nationals (total and selected groups) across constituencies and major quarters, 2006



Source: elaboration on data from the statistical office of the Municipality



2.3 Municipal integration policy

Since 1989, Brescia's local administration has developed and activated welcoming and integration policies for migrants. It represents the only case in Italy for the continuity and coherence of its interventions in the last 20 years.

The municipality have developed its migrant integration policies and practices around the concept of 'proximity citizenship' (*cittadinanza di prossimità*). What this theoretical and political concept means is that the integration process has to be developed and continued starting from, and together with, the concept of citizenship. Such vision is based on a philosophy which sees universalistic services supported by specific interventions needed in a city which is becoming a multiethnic and multicultural city.

Disorganic emergency policies, implemented only with the scarce resources of the local authorities and third sector organisations, are not enough for the realization of this process. What instead is needed is an integration project for migrants which takes into account a holistic view of migrants socio-economic integration within the local social fabric.

Therefore, the municipal integration policy seeks to focus first of all on creating the possibility of an easy and constructive access to the labour and housing market, as well as on facilitating access to public services. The idea behind this is that segregation can be overcome only when migrants have the opportunity to access adequate working levels and conditions and are able to use of public services in the same way as Italian citizens²⁵.

Political participation is also seen as necessary in the process of migrant integration into the local framework and their participation to the public life of the city. The aim of the municipal policy is that of creating the necessary conditions for a co-participation of Italian and foreign residents.

The underlying motif is the convinced adhesion to the fundamental values of the Constitution and therefore a mutual interest into a constructive living together of all citizens despite their ethnic origins. This principle that inspires the municipal policy of integration, and which sees intercultural relations at the core of its implementation, wishes to be put in place starting from the very places in which migrants and locals find themselves living next to each other- their neighbourhoods, their constituency, their city.

Therefore, the municipal policy, aims at trying to provide and implement the same service to all residents without activating specific services and measures for specific groups. The only specific measures and projects concern emergency and temporary reception services, and nomad camps.

Furthermore, housing is also seen as a significant aspect in the process of settlement of the migrant population in the city and their active, peaceful and beneficial participation to the local environment. The local administration aims at the distribution of decent housing solutions for migrants in different areas of the city, thus promoting

²⁵ From the speech of Prof. Mario Corsini, Mayor of Brescia (see www.comune.brescia.it)



the creation of a multi-ethnic urban reality which avoids the formation of ethnic ghettos²⁶.

However, interviews with non-municipal actors such as churches, migrant organisations and other NGOs reveal that most initiatives for migrants' integration are still implemented in a very fragmented way and delegated to third sector and religious organisations.

2.4 Inter-city cooperation

Brescia is a member of the European Programme Equal (phase 2) which aims, according to the European Strategy for Employment, to promote innovative policies and practices to contrast discrimination and disparity of immigrants within the labour market. The programme, therefore, wants to be the *locus* for experimenting and sharing new initiatives on transnational bases.

Within this framework the city has developed two projects:

- 'KOINE', *Immigrants' integration in the local society and enterprise*
- "QUALIFI-CARE"

The first project, which started on the 1st of July 2005, sees the co-participation of the Brescia's local administration, Unioncamere of Lombardy, Milano's City Council, Cremona Province, and the Province of Lecco and plans to monitor and manage diversity in an area of the city with a high immigrant presence, the Carmine neighbourhood. Furthermore, the project includes two more initiatives: courses of professional advice for immigrants and a campaign for better integration of migrants in the Brescia's labour market.

The second project, "QUALIFI-CARE", is directed towards immigrants, mainly women, working in the care sector. The final goal of the project, based on a number of language and vocational courses, is that of improving the skills of workers in the private care sector. Another Italian city, Sesto San Giovanni, is involved in this project together with Brescia. At European level, other partners of in this project are: Toledo, Belfast and Dublin.

Furthermore, an *INTI* project is about to start this year. This project involves the partnership of four institutions/organisations in four different European contexts: Caritas International in Belgium, Caritas Luxemburg, IREAS in Prague, and ISOP in Graz.

The aims of this partnership are:

- to create a network of best practices on issues regarding migrant integration in the four European cities, and to promote the knowledge of these practices;
- to support the process of networking of these different experiences at European level through the creation of a database and a website;
- to evaluate the adaptability and transferability of these processes to other contexts;
- to make social workers, public officials, migrants and locals more aware of the necessity of a cooperative approach to integration.

²⁶ Comune di Brescia, *La casa a Brescia. Percorsi, Progetti, Proposte*, 2003: 16.



At a more local level, the experience of CSSI, Consortium for Study and Services for Immigration (Il Consorzio Studi e Servizi per l'Immigrazione), an alliance of four cooperatives operating in the field of immigration, involves 37 municipalities (comuni) of the Province of Brescia and a number of districts. The four cooperatives are: Accoglienza Migranti don Renato Monolo, Tempo Libero, Scalabrini Bonomelli and Poly-service. The main objectives of the consortium are: to promote services related to migrants' needs; to promote training courses, research and access to public and private funding; to support the implementation of national and international projects aiming at improving the quality of services and activities for foreign citizens; to improve life quality for an easier and better integration and participation of foreign migrants to the social and civil life of the community, and to achieve citizenship rights.

Migrant-specific inter-city activities or networks are limited and the CLIP project could represent an incentive towards connecting the city and its experience with migrants with other cities in Italy and Europe. This experience, as members of the City council have emphasised during our discussions, is seen as a useful moment for learning for the development of a more constructive policy but in the same time an occasion for the city to present and share its achievements in the field of immigration and integration policy.

3 Housing situation of the city

3.1 Housing stock and housing market in general

In Italy a large majority of the Italian population owns the house where they live. Only about 5% of the accommodation is public housing. A similar situation characterises the city of Brescia as well. Here 70% of the families residing in the city live in owned accommodation²⁷. However, although this high percentage of house ownership may give the impression of high standards of living, difficulties concerning accommodation in the city are also significant especially for vulnerable groups such as elderly people, young couples and migrants.

In 1981, 3% of the houses in Brescia were occupied by more than one family (two or more families were cohabitating in the same house). At the time, this living conditions characterised mainly Italian families from the outskirts of the city. According to the last 2001 census, instead, these living conditions are now reduced to 1% of the houses, and concern mainly immigrant families: 308 houses out of 932, accounting for 33.1%, are occupied by foreign resident families²⁸.

In 2006, the market value of houses in the more central areas of the city of Brescia fluctuated around €3,750 per square meter, while in the semi-central neighbourhoods and in the periphery quotations were around €2,550 per square meter and €1,750 respectively²⁹.

²⁷ Claudia Rosso, *Le Politiche sociali a Favore della Famiglia Immigrata. Il Caso Bresciano: dall'emergenza all'integrazione nella comunità locale*, Comune di Brescia

²⁸ Comune di Brescia, Unità di Staff Statistica, (2006), *Il fabbisogno abitativo a Brescia*. Elaborazioni sui dati del 14° censimento generale della popolazione 20 ottobre 2001, Comune di Brescia.

²⁹ S CENTREDIL-ANCE Lombardia and Scenari Immobiliari ,2007, *Decimo Rapporto sul Mercato Immobiliare in Lombardia*



The continuous grow of prices has conditioned the demand, and has therefore modified purchasers' behaviour in the city. Consolidated families are still the principal purchasers, but singles, looking for high quality, small size, accommodation, and migrants, interested instead in lower standard accommodation mainly located in the periphery, are among the new target groups for the housing market in the city.

Between 1981 and 2001 the housing estate of the municipality of Brescia has grown by about 8%. The local authority tries to purchase new properties in order to increase its own estate but can not cover the gap in between demand and supply. At the moment the public housing estate of the city accounts for about 9,000 accommodation, of which 3,000 are owned by the Local Authority and the remaining 6,000 by ALER (Office for Residential Estate of Lombardy, *Azienda Lombarda per l'Edilizia Residenziale*)³⁰.

The public estate is distributed across the city in most of the neighbourhoods in order to avoid strong concentrations in specific areas. However, in the '70s some new neighbourhoods were built in order to face the housing needs of a growing population. These neighbourhoods as, Casazza, San Polo, Chiesanuova, have a stronger concentration of public housing. It is in these areas that it is possible to find some situation of overcrowding, especially with regard to Asian groups as Pakistani, Bangladeshi, or Chinese.

As mentioned by the local authority during our interviews, the public estate is well taken care of and infrastructures in these neighbourhoods are decorous and in continuous process of improvement. The same can be said about road conditions and green areas.

In the city of Brescia the *Congrega della Carità Apostolica*, a confraternity born in the Middle Age, is currently owner of a large estate which amounts at 16 buildings subdivided in 328 properties of various size to be assigned at a moderate rent, and 6 buildings subdivided in 49 apartments to be rent at fixed rent³¹.

Relation of demand and supply; overcrowding of housing units

Overcrowding is a problem affecting mainly the immigrant population. Only 7.2% of the Italian families in Brescia live in overcrowded accommodation, while the situation is far more negative for foreign residents. 38.4% of the migrant families³² suffer from this problem, which seems to be increasingly common. For instance, looking more in detail at the family dimension, more than 65% of the Italian families with 4 or more members have accommodation of no more than 3 rooms, possibly with kitchen. As far as migrant families are concerned, almost 50% of the migrant families with two members live in houses of only 2 rooms, possible with kitchen, and this percentage arrives at 90% for families of four or more members.

Mobility within the city

³⁰ Source: Servizio Casa of the Brescia City Council, last census 2001

³¹ More information about the Congrega will be given in the next paragraph.

³² Sistema Statistico Nazionale, comune di Brescia, 2006, Il fabbisogno abitativo a Brescia, (op. cit. p.27)



As far as mobility is concerned, the most important trend is characterised by a movement from the city towards the more rural areas of the Province of Brescia. Such movement is justified by the lower rents and the possibility of purchasing houses at a lower price. However when migrants decide to buy accommodation in the areas outside the city, they prefer areas which are well connected by public transports as most of the jobs are located in the city of Brescia. The municipalities of Concesio, Roncadelle, Gussago, Bovezzo and Botticini are among the most favorite³³. Therefore, the city of Brescia seems to represent a gateway for migrants initially moving in the area until they settle more permanently in the surrounding municipalities.

Within the city instead, it is interesting to notice the mobility related to the regeneration of the Carmine neighbourhood. Indeed, following the regeneration plan, many migrant families have moved towards other areas of the city because of the increase in prices and rents, while Italian families started to move in.

The most visible move happened towards a specific area of the city, *via Milano*, where there is a number of working class accommodation and farmhouses and where there is already a concentration of ethnic shops, call centres and ethnic groceries. What this move has produced is a replica of the overcrowding conditions already existing in the Carmine neighbourhood without effectively solving the problem³⁴.

Another move from Carmine is towards San Polo, the largest working-class neighbourhood of Brescia. In this case, migrants arriving here have obtained a council house. Finally, a third pattern of move from Carmine is towards the train station. This is another area with high concentration of migrants where there is a large number of ethnic groceries and shops, call centres, bars where migrants meet, and also an area where some of the municipality services for migrants are located.

3.2 Housing situation of residents with migration background

Housing is the main problem migrant families meet in the process of settlement in the city of Brescia. This problem invests all nationalities living in the city and has been highlighted during interviews with both local administration and Italian organisations/institutions involved in helping and providing accommodation for migrants as well as in interviews with representatives of the various migrant communities. The difficulty to find accommodation, different forms of discrimination, high rents, are all factors pushing many migrants to choose to cohabit with other migrants.

The Brescia City Council has 5 reception centres³⁵ for single men and single women with children. In the city there are other similar accommodation managed by third sector organisations or religious institutions which in total offer 544 bed sits. First reception³⁶ is

³³ According to the Research done by CENTREDIL-ANCE Lombardia and Scenari Immobiliari ,2007, *Decimo Rapporto sul Mercato Immobiliare in Lombardia*

³⁴ Granata, E., Lainati, E. and Novack, C. (2006), *Metamorfosi di uno storico quartiere di immigrazione. Osservazioni sui recenti mutamenti del Carmine di Brescia*, Synergia, Milano.

³⁵ Here people can stay from 5 months to more than a year.

³⁶ Here usually people can stay for no more than 12 months.



provided by dormitories and in the city of Brescia there are 4 dormitories for a total of 101 bed sits. Of these, only 69 are for foreign citizens³⁷.

While in the recent past the main problem was finding accommodation for single people and for short periods of time, with the rise in family reunifications there is an increase in the number of migrant families in search of adequate accommodation.

In the second half of 2005 there were 100 applications for public housing on behalf of foreign citizens. Of those, at the end of 2005, only 5 were successful. Currently the percentage of public houses assigned to migrant families is only 7% of the total, but the percentage of applications for public housing on behalf of foreign citizens is around 50%. This figures emphasise the high and increasing size of the demand, but also the existing difficulties that public institutions face in trying to respond to this demand.

Moreover, as mentioned above, the private market rents does not offer better possibilities for migrants either. Its excessively high rents, indeed, encourage cohabitation and overcrowding.

The majority of migrants lives in rented accommodations. In 2002, 50.7% was the percentage of migrants renting alone or with family, 17.1% are sharing a rented accommodation with other migrants while migrants owning a property are 9,8% (Tosi 2002). However, an interesting aspect is the increase of house owners among immigrants. Data at provincial level show that the percentage of the purchases involving foreign residents doubled in the last two years from 10 to 21%. In the city of Brescia numbers are lower³⁸ but this data show how migrants are following an already widespread trend among Italians: that of buying a house instead of renting it.

According to a recent study³⁹ the reasons behind the decision to buy a house instead of renting one are various. First of all the issue of discrimination, as very rarely migrants find Italian owners happy to rent their houses to migrants. Secondly, high rents. Thirdly, the increasing number of family reunions.

Most of the purchasing happens in the central and semi-central areas of Brescia (48.9%), while the periphery accounts for 24%, with a slightly growing tendency in the last year. Favourite neighbourhoods are those where there are already migrant residents. In this areas buildings are around 30-40 years old and their quality is quite low. In the city centre, migrants prefer the area close to the train station (especially as far as Chinese are concerned) and the Carmine neighbourhood. In these areas there are also shops and restaurants managed by migrants. Foreign purchasers bought accommodations also in some areas of the periphery of Brescia in the last 12 months, mainly in the San Polo and Chiesa-Nuova neighbourhoods. The kind of accommodation mostly purchased by migrants in Brescia is three rooms apartments, but differences exist between the city centre – where prices are higher and the size is usually smaller (70-80mq) – and the periphery – where the average size is 90-100mq.

³⁷ Source: Claudia Rosso, Op. cit.

³⁸ Reasons for this are to be find not in the decrease of willing to buy of the foreign citizens but in the increase of prices. The high number of purchasing of the last years is responsible of the clearance of the medium and low standard houses that were the once migrants will look for given their financial possibilities.

³⁹ CENTREDIL-ANCE Lombardia and Scenari Immobiliari ,2007, *Decimo Rapporto sul Mercato Immobiliare in Lombardia*



Most purchasers are South-Asians (42.5%) or North-Africans (26.8%), although Chinese are also buying a significant quota – real estates bought by Chinese alone account for 16.5% of all transactions. Chinese are then followed by Romanians (7.5%) and Albanians (5.6%).

Conditions for specific groups of migrants

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has expressed concern for the living conditions of Roma and Sinti population in camps and 'for the fact that the segregation of Roma/Gypsies in Italy appears to reflect the general approach of the Italian Authorities, who tend to consider Roma as nomads who want to live in camps'⁴⁰. Similar concerns were previously expressed in 1999, by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination⁴¹ which declared that 'in addition to a frequent lack of basic facilities, living in the camps not only leads to the Roma's physical segregation from Italian society, but their political, economic and cultural isolation as well'.

The Roma population in the Brescia numbers 196 people while the Sinti population is of 97 members. The evidence that we gathered on the situation of these groups is to some extent controversial, with the local administration claiming success for its settlement policy to get families out of the camps and deprived living conditions within the camps denoted in a recent academic research⁴².

According to the Brescia City Council, the Municipality of Brescia is one of the few municipalities in Italy which, for the last 15 years, is putting into effect a coherent inclusion policy for Roma and Sinti population. As it was mentioned during our interviews, nomad camps in the city, where Roma Vlax were living, have been replaced by residential settlements, and, currently, an area with 13 prefabricated houses of 100 square metres each plus the space needed for two roulettes, is under construction for the Sinti families. Each family living in these areas pays water, electricity and gas bills plus a rental fee to the local administration for the garbage disposal and for the general maintenance of the common living areas.

Furthermore, in the attempt to follow a process of integration of 'nomad families'⁴³ in the urban context, 86 Roma families have been included in the lists for public housing. Only two of those families have encountered difficulties in the process of settlement. Problems were related to the relationship with other tenants and in both cases the intervention of *neighbourhood mediators* was needed.

For the time being there is the intent to continue this project, the main idea being that offering the possibility to access affordable and decent accommodation means to create the right environment and to give a chance, especially for the young families, to integrate into the local community and local labour market.

⁴⁰ ECRI (2002) *2nd Report on Italy adopted the 22nd June 2001*. Strasbourg: ECRI; ECRI's view was recently confirmed in the third report on Italy published in May 2006.

⁴¹ CERD (1999) *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Italy, 07/04/99* (CERD/C/304/Add.68). Geneva: United Nations.

⁴² Sigona, N. and Monasta, L. (2006), *Imperfect Citizenship. Research into patterns of racial discrimination of Roma and Sinti in Italy*, OsservAzione and ERRC

⁴³ The term nomad has been used by the local authority during our interview.



The picture emerging from a recent research on patterns of racial discrimination against Roma and Sinti in Italy⁴⁴ is not so positive. A first problem highlighted by this research is that regulations of the Municipality of Brescia for Roma and Sinti settlements (called 'Regulations for Nomad Areas'⁴⁵) consider as nomads the Sinti and the Roma living in the 'Nomad Areas', despite the fact that most of them are not. The Regulations state that Roma and Sinti are authorised to stop in these areas for one year, while the renewal of the permit to stay is subject to the regular payment of rent and other costs.

The same research also point out the precarious housing conditions in the Municipal camp in Via Orzinuovi (*Nuovo Villaggio*), located on the outskirts of the city in between the river Mella and the toll booth of the motorway and hosting Serbian, Kosovar and Romanian Roma.

In Via Girelli – where 15 Romanian Roma families have been living from January 2004 to the summer 2005 in a private area in caravans provided with water and electricity connections – a situation of mis-jurisdiction causing legal problems to the foreign residents was reported. This settlement was directly managed by the Police administration (prefecture) with the support of the Municipal Red Cross. According to Sigona and Monasta (2006), this resulted in a lack of recognition by the Municipality of Brescia (e.g. no civic number was assigned) that prevented families from having a regular residence and from renewing their permits to stay⁴⁶. However, the camp has been dismantled in the summer 2005 and most families are now hosted in prefabricated houses owned by the Municipality. Currently, the Municipality is trying to provide the families working in the formal labour market with a public housing accommodation.

3.3 Segregation: Spatial concentration of residents with migration background

As it was mentioned in the first part of this report, residents with a migrant background are mainly concentrated in some specific areas of the Province Brescia – those with a larger supply of accommodation, mainstream public services and services for migrants. The city of Brescia, therefore, is characterised by a strong concentration of migrants settled within the urban area. However, residential concentration within the Municipality is not very high, as shown by the fact that migrants are spread across most areas of the city. Furthermore, migrants prefer to live in places which are close to their employment and which very often, especially for women, is the central area of the city. Also, the different communities do not show particularly high concentration patterns. Also according to the local authority it would not be correct to talk about actual situations of segregation in Brescia, as the policy of administration and Local

⁴⁴ Sigona and Monasta, 2006, op. cit.

⁴⁵ Regulations were established in July 1996 for Italian and foreign nomad citizens living in camps in Via Borgosatollo, Via Chiappa (closed in 2003), and Via Orzinuovi (Article 1 of the Regulations).

⁴⁶ For foreigners, housing, residency and work are three crucial and inextricably related requisites, and as established by the Bossi-Fini Immigration Law, the possibility of obtaining a permit to stay strictly depends on them.



Council on the issue of migrant housing and social integration is succeeding in promoting a strong social *mixité* within city.

Nevertheless, a number of neighbourhoods in the city are characterised by a stronger spatial concentration of foreign residents. One of the areas where spatial concentration of residents with migration background live is the historical quarter of Carmine. Here the foreign population accounts for about 36% of the total population of the neighbourhood⁴⁷. While at the beginning of the 1990s migrant population in this area was characterised by first arrivals, mainly young men from Maghreb and Albania, now the number of families with high presence of minors, often living in overcrowding conditions, is increasing.

A project of regeneration of the area is currently underway – see next paragraph. As mentioned before, the regeneration of this area and the consequent move of a large number of foreign resident out of the neighbourhood created a new situation of spatial concentration of migrants in a different areas of the city. More in general, very high rents in the city centre are pushing migrants towards more peripheral areas, but still, the favourite ones are those where good transportation allows people to quickly move in between home and place of work.

As far as issues of segregation are concerned, the situation of Roma and Sinti population should also be carefully taken into consideration. Indeed, although, as emphasised by members of the City Council during our interviews, Brescia has managed to reduce the number of families living in camps, there is still a significant number of Roma and Sinti people living in these conditions. In most of the cases camps are located in the periphery of the city, in isolated areas lacking of public transports and public facilities. Schools are also located far away from these places. Such conditions do not, facilitate a positive contact of these populations with the city and with the other residents, Italians or other migrants.

3.4 Accessibility of the housing market system for people with migration background

A number of difficulties or barriers have to be taken into consideration when discussing the issue of accessibility of the Brescia's housing market system for people with migrant background. These problems regards both buying and renting accommodation in the city and are linked to discrimination in public housing allocation (this will be discussed in more details in the next paragraphs), high costs of housing especially if compared with low wages often earned by migrants, insecurity due to irregular work and to work permit eligibility or renewal. Therefore, migrants wishing to secure accommodation have to face a number of institutional and practical obstacles.

Very high rents often prevent migrants from living in adequate accommodation. If public housing rents are decided on the basis of family income, on the private housing market, instead, prices oscillate in between 80 and 120 € per square meters per year (i.e. between 8,000 and 12,000 € per year for 100 squared meters).

⁴⁷ Source: Statistics Office of the Brescia City Council. The percentage looks only at migrants from outside the EU.



In such situations single migrants or migrant families have to sublet part of their accommodation or to cohabitate with other families, relatives or co-nationals. If, on one hand, this allows for the number of people contributing to the household budget to be higher and the rent more affordable, on the other it may become a problem as far as obtaining a permit to stay. Indeed, according to the Immigration Act, in order to claim the permit to stay, the applicant needs to demonstrate adequate housing (as defined by Law in minimum square meters per person), according to the parameters established in Regional Housing Laws.

Another problem that many migrants face once trying to rent an accommodation is the difficulty to obtain a regular lease. Often house owners, in order to be able to seek higher rents or avoid taxes, refuse to make regular contracts when renting accommodation to migrants. Given that in order to be allowed to claim family reunion with someone living abroad, or to obtain a permit to stay, a person needs proof of an adequate (as defined by Law) annual income and, again, to be resident in an adequate living space, the lack of a regular contract can constitute an obstacle to long term planning, especially for families who wish to settle for longer periods of time.

Furthermore, as emphasised by one of the representatives of the Bangladeshi community during our interviews, the discriminatory behaviour of many Italians towards migrants wishing to rent accommodation from them is another obstacle. Housing is in fact an important source of exclusion for all immigrants in Italy; flat listings sometimes openly specify that the flat will not be let to foreigners⁴⁸. Discrimination is exacerbated by the speculative local real estate market, the low number of flats available, and high rents which, as previously noticed, lead to the overcrowding of tenants. Some landlords take advantage of the difficulties faced by migrants in finding accommodation that is not considered to be fit for the local Italian population at prices for above the market rate.

In alternative to a rented accommodation, other options may be available. One of this is public housing. This option ensures some stability, the conquest of the council house is seen as the end of a difficult path and the arrival in a safe heaven: the rental is reasonable and the migrant has the possibility of keeping the house for an indefinite period of time.

However, institutional barriers are in place as far as migrants' eligibility is concerned. Information often represents one of the problems as most of it is provided in Italian and therefore not always reaches all migrants, especially those in greater need. The Office for Integration and Citizenship is at the moment developing its own website in three languages so that information can reach a broader public, and they are also considering making basic information, especially as far as public housing is concerned, available in the languages of the most representative migrant communities of Brescia.

Furthermore, the new Regional Regulation regarding the assignation of public housing also discriminates against migrant families, making even more difficult their access to public housing.

In many areas of the industrial north, therefore in Brescia as well, housing costs are the main obstacle to local labour market development and internal migration.

⁴⁸ As some of our interviewees noticed, especially in the 1990s, renting advertisements could easily include words as "no immigrants".



Employers have recognised this and become involved in seeking solutions. In addition, Law 189/2002 requires employers to provide their immigrant workers with accommodation meeting the minimum standards of public residential housing⁴⁹. Although the law allows foreigners who hold residence cards, or a residence permit valid for at least two years and a job, to access public housing on the same terms as Italian nationals, public housing is far too limited to meet the needs of foreign population. The fact that immigrants with larger families and lower incomes in some cases have priority in the assigning of vacant public housing units has given rise to some resentment. Different municipalities have tried to defuse this by tightening the eligibility conditions or placing a ceiling on access for immigrants.

Solutions can mainly be found in the private and public-private partnership arena. A number of agencies have been created in the recent years, providing a model for such partnerships. These agencies attempt to acquire property in order to rent or sell it to individuals who otherwise lack the income, especially in the first stage of their migration, or credit guarantees to rent or buy a house. In some other cases, the province provides credit to firms and co-operatives to help them in the field of building, renovation, or purchase of housing for foreign workers. Charitable and religious institutions also offer houses or rent accommodation for migrants, or stand as guarantors in trying to secure credits from banks. However, as emerged from our interviews with the Association *Centro Migranti Scalabrini Bonomelli* and with *Congrega della Carità Apostolica*, both of them committed to act as guarantors for migrant families wishing to secure housing, in the recent years less banks are willing to offer loans or mortgages on easy terms to migrants.

Although the percentage of migrant families which benefits from public housing is still very low if compared with Italian families, the increase since 2000 has pushed the Local Administration towards the elaboration of an *ad hoc* project which aims at helping the integration of the new inhabitants within the pre-existing community⁵⁰.

As mentioned by the local authority during our interviews, the co-presence of foreign residents, has often created tensions with the local community. Similar tensions were already in place in some buildings of public housing as in the “Torri”, two towers both having a large number of residents, about 600 each. Therefore the service triggered by the City Council and implemented by the Cooperative “La Rete”, has as its goal that of accompanying foreign families, and families coming from the nomads camps, towards a constructive integration into the local fabric.

Furthermore, migrants living in accommodation provided by the company for which the migrant works is still another option. Although this case also ensure some stability, it is also has its limits and risks: it is an accommodation which is strongly tied to the migrant’s work and it can hence be lost with the job. This, therefore, can have implications and a strong impact on family planning.

⁴⁹ OECD, 2006, From Immigration to Integration. Local solution to a Global Challenge, p. 180

⁵⁰ Servizio di accompagnamento degli assegnatari di alloggi di edilizia residenziale pubblica



4 Institutional setting and relevant actors

The city of Brescia, at a political-administrative level, has been governed by a central-left city council since 1992. Since 1989, a period in which immigration was still a new phenomenon characterised mainly by male adult migrants coming alone⁵¹, Brescia City Council has established a Foreign Office, directed by Giovanni Valenti who is still in charge for the coordination of the department.

At present, Brescia City Council provides a wide range of services for the city's residents, including those with a migrant background. Within the Council, the Office of Integration and Citizenship, is in charge of receiving and orienting immigrants, promoting the process of integration, seeking means of socio-economic emancipation of new city dwellers and sustaining the participation in public life of new city dwellers. This unit is also tasked with developing a strategic policy and specific services aiming to facilitate the process of integration and participation to the city's life of the residents with migrant background.

In charge of those services there are 20 operators of which four are City Council employees, 1 lawyer, 1 psychologist, 1 social worker, 1 trade unionist, 10 foreign, or of foreign origins, cultural operators (2 Moroccans, 1 Lebanese, 1 Algerian, 1 Ghanaian, 1 Chinese, 1 Pakistani, 1 Serbian, 1 Albanian, 1 Argentinean) and 2 specialists in intercultural relations⁵².

Other relevant departments work closely with the Office of Integration and Citizenship on issues housing for migrants:

- ▶ Social Services (Servizi Sociali) which acts within the area of Social Affairs and which is in charge of social inclusion and participation of all members of the local community;
- ▶ Council for Housing (Assessorato alla casa) which acts in the area of housing and is in charge of the public housing estate and of its distribution;
- ▶ Public Works (Lavori Pubblici) which acts in the area of city development.

Municipal properties are managed by ALER – Office for Residential Estate of Lombardy (*Azienda Lombarda per l'Edilizia Residenziale*) – and assigned or revoked by the municipality itself.

There are not large private housing companies dealing with accommodation issues for migrants. Mainly private owners rent accommodation to migrants.

Migrant organisations are not strong enough to have a decisional power as far as accommodation matters are concerned.

The local administration is working closely with a number of association and religious organisations/institutions which have started several actions to promote better social housing policies.

⁵¹ This predominantly mail migration was due to the characteristics of the economy of the Province of Brescia where there was a strong demand for mail workers.

⁵² Valenti, G. F. 2006 "Brescia Città Plurale", in *Immigration and integration: cooperation between regional and local governments and civil society organisations*, Barcellona 2-3 February.



The *Congrega della Carità Apostolica*, given its significant estate owned, is another relevant actor to be taken into consideration when talking about accessibility of the housing market for people with migrant background. Although the congregation's work is not directly targeted to the housing inclusion of migrants and migrant families, but more generally towards families having problems in accessing the housing market because of economic difficulties, the *Congrega* is often helping migrant families. As emphasised during our interview with one of the *Congrega's* representatives, the typology of tenants has changed considerably in the last few years and about 75% of the demands now come from foreign citizens. The kind of help that the congregation offers is especially an economic contribution for rents' payment. Often the congregation has worked together with the local administration and ALER, but also with other organisations as *Accoglienza Migranti*.

The Association *Centro Migranti Scalabrini Bonomelli* was the first one to start working for/with migrants in Brescia in 1981. The association was created by the diocese of Brescia to give social assistance. They do not own any building so in order to help migrants with accommodation they rely on the collaboration with municipal social services or with other third sector or religious organisations (e.g. the *Congrega*). Their intervention, which follows a long-term approach, consists mainly in acting as guarantors on migrants' behalf on the housing market, but also in buying, with funds from charity, buildings, renovating them, and putting them at migrant families' disposal. The association, at the moment, has 30 accommodations where mainly African migrants live, and, as far as the guarantor activity is concerned, it has managed about 100 cases. This last activity has been concluded this year.

The Association *Il Tetto* introduced an innovative approach by purchasing accommodations and then renting them out to the Association's members at a moderated monthly rent⁵³. Accommodations managed by *Il Tetto* can be considered as temporary accommodation (*seconda accoglienza*) since migrants in these structure are supposed to live for a limited period of time before moving into a permanent accommodation. Therefore, although migrants may stop for even 4 or 5 years in one of the these accommodation, the Association has the possibility to ensure a certain turnover of its own apartments. In the same time, they give migrant families the possibility to plan their future in an adequate period of time. The Association works closely with local social services and with the Immigration and Integration Office of the City Council.

The Cooperative Accoglienza Migranti don Renato Monolo is active since 1991. Since then, it has opened seven receiving centres (*centri di accoglienza*) for foreign people in the Province of Brescia⁵⁴ aiming at promoting migrants' integration into the local community. Moreover, the cooperative manages several offices (*sportelli*) which offer services as translation of documents and help in dealing with Italian bureaucracy; information on language courses, trainings, access to public services; assistance in meeting some basic needs as accommodation and work. These offices are opened in

⁵³ Most of the apartments purchased by the Associations were owned by the Local Authority, ALER and *Congrega della Carità Apostolica di Brescia*. Not all apartments were sold to the association, some of them were rented to "Il Tetto" for a number of years.

⁵⁴ Centers of *accoglienza*: Quinzano 1: 20 guests; Quinzano 2: 18 guests; Pontoglio 1: 20 guests; Pontoglio 2: 12 guests; Cazzago San Martino: 40 guests; Gussago: 10 guests; Villa Carcina: 12 guests.



16 cities of the Province⁵⁵ and have helped more than 2000 people to find accommodation and work. They have been promoting activities of reception, training and promotion of migrants' integration.

The Cooperative *La Famiglia* has been involved in building neighbourhoods for workers and has created 6,980 apartments in the city of Brescia. The aim of the cooperative is to build public housing accommodations for its members. Most of the beneficiaries are Italian families but the cooperative is working towards the creation of a social boarding house (*pensionato sociale*) of 80 bed sits for foreign and Italian workers. At this project, *La Famiglia* is working together with Brescia City Council which has supplied the land at a moderate price.

ADL, The Embassy of the Local Democracies (Ambasciata delle Democrazie Locali), manages, on behalf of the municipality, the accommodation for asylum seekers and refugees.

The administration has implemented a strategy in the last 10 years which aims at working together with some co-operatives, such as *Accoglienza Migranti* and Scalabrini-Bonomelli, and with some associations, such as Il Tetto and ADL.

Currently, together with Regione Lombardia and ALER (*Azienda Lombarda di Edilizia Residenziale*), Brescia's local administration is running a project for the refurbishing of a building where a large number of migrants, mainly from Senegal, is living.

The above mentioned *CSSI, Consortium for Study and Services for Immigration (Il Consorzio Studi e Servizi per l'Immigrazione)*, an alliance of four cooperatives operating in the field of immigration, is another example of cooperation involving non-governmental actors.

The Cooperative *Accoglienza Migranti* has also created a network of different organisations (*Associazione Zavidovici, Cooperativa La Famiglia, Consorzio Cons.edi, Consorzio Studi e Servizi per l'Immigrazione*) in order to increase the possibility of solving the housing issue from three different point of views: housing emergency; rents on the free market; home ownership.

AIB, The Association of Brescia's Industrial Entrepreneurs (Associazione Industriali Bresciani) stipulated an agreement with Brescia Local Authority and ALER for the creation of 36 accommodations for 50-55 single workers at San Polino. Accommodations were created so to house 1 or 2 people and AIB had the responsibility to signal those businesses which needed accommodation for their employees. The next step is that ALER rents the accommodation directly to the company which ensure the rent payment. The project unfortunately did not have a positive outcome, as companies who agreed to participate were very few.

⁵⁵ The sportelli managed by the cooperative are those of Gussago, Castegnato, Ospitaletto, Passirano, Rovato, Coccaglio, Castelvovati, Rudiano, Urigo d'Oglio, Cazzago S. Martino, Orzinuovi, Dello, Quinzano, Pontoglio, Cologne e Brescia.

5 Discourse, concepts and policy concerning housing

5.1 Vision, concepts and policy of administration and Local Council on the issue of access to affordable and decent housing, segregation and integration of migrants

Housing plays an important role in the process of migrants' social integration because of the general housing crisis. From our interviews with both local administration and non-profit and voluntary organisations, the issue of housing, so relevant for the integration of migrants within the local community, and so vital for the maintenance of their legal status as well, has been described as the most serious.

As the coordinator of the Office of Integration and Citizenship has noticed during our interview, the issue of accommodation for migrants arriving to work in the city has been, since the beginning, one of the most important matter that the municipal authority had to face.

Home ownership is close to 80% among Italians and social housing accounts for less than 5% of the market, while mortgage conditions are not favourable. This means that the migrant labour force is forced into an overcrowded rental market. In addition, many Italian homeowners prefer not to place their vacant homes onto the rental market because of concern about lengthy eviction procedures and fiscal issues.

Brescia local administration's policy strategy concerning housing is focused on providing a *differentiated* answer which aims at facing accommodation needs through public housing and other measures for affordable housing (moderate rental fee or purchases subject to price control).

However, the all-in answer, although carefully planned and diversified through a balanced mix of public and affordable housing, is not able to cover even partially the large demand. The reasons for this failure are the small number of new initiatives and the slowness of the turnover of the public of the existing public housing estate.

In addition, there is an input towards promoting a stronger social *mixité* within the larger public housing neighbourhoods in order to avoid social problems that may emerge.

At the local level there are not significant differences with the regional and national normative, and what also needs to be noticed is that the criteria for accessing municipal services including public housing concern all citizens residing in the city, including those of foreign origins. The best practices are represented by the possibility, opened to all residents, to access public housing, as established in the national and regional normative and by the passage, in the last 15 years, from a policy mainly created to respond to emergency to more long-term oriented policies.

This means that the local authority has based social policies on an apparent equality of treatment and rights among different categories of citizens. The only formal requirement for accessing welfare benefits is to be registered at the local registry office, to be resident.

However, although it can be said that migrants can benefit of the same help as Italian citizens, the Regional Regulation regarding the assignation of public housing discriminates against migrant families because to the evaluation of the socio-



economic situation of the applicants adds a further criteria: the length of residency in the region. This criterion explicitly gives priority to people who have been residents in the region for a longer period of time. Indeed, the normative gives a higher score according to a longer period of residency in the city. Therefore, many migrants and especially new-migrants, are automatically disadvantaged, or even excluded from accessing public housing⁵⁶. Furthermore, being part of a migrant family is not a criterion taken into consideration for this purpose.

Therefore the criteria for the assessment of public housing claims are the economic situation, family situation and housing situation. Through the combination of these three criteria the region defines an indicator of the regional housing needs (*Indicatore dello stato di bisogno abitativo regionale, ISBAR*). The fourth criterion, which becomes a decisive factor, is the length of residence. Detailed below is the scoring assigned to the length of residence:

- up to 1 year – 5 points
- 2 years – 15 points
- From 3 to 5 years – 35 points
- From 6 to 10 years – 65 points
- More than 10 years and up to 20 – 85 points
- More than 20 years – 90 points

Where instead migrants are more numerous as beneficiaries of a specific service, is on the list for the insertion of families in the “Accommodation Emergency Services” (*Servizio Emergenza Allogiativa*). In this case, being part of a migrant family constitutes a benefit and gives the possibility of receiving a higher position on the lists and therefore higher possibilities of being assigned an accommodation⁵⁷.

5.2 Public discourse on housing, segregation and integration of migrants

In the city of Brescia the problems that migrants face when looking for accommodation are mainly related to an insufficient development of the intercultural integration which still persists among different strata of the population and among various institutions migrants have to enter in contact with.

⁵⁶ Regional Regulation 2/04/2003 n.4 “General Criteria for the Assignment and Management of the Public Housing Estate”.

⁵⁷ Criteria for ranking in the “Servizio Emergenza Allogiativa” list: Family living in a Centre for first reception, Family living in a hotel, family living in a precarious accommodation, problematic family (single mother with children, drug problems etc.), presence of a magistrate decree, impossibility of paying a very high rent, number of children, migrant family, family with one or more disabled members, family with newborns.



According to the local authority, an overall positive attitude towards immigration in the city emerges quite clearly from the local media. The media also played a role in providing a better understanding of the migratory phenomenon among the native population. Overall the two local newspapers *il Giornale di Brescia* and *Brescia Oggi* tend to approach this issue in a critical and objective manner. However, even if sporadically, they report also statements of particular political parties which are based on stereotypical assumptions and aim at reinforcing a negative public opinion towards migrants.

Migrant as well as religious organisations wish to take part in the life of the city and in the various processes of decision making regarding the whole city and its inhabitants. Their opinion and involvement, as far as housing matters for migrants are concerned, has been discussed in various sections of this report.

Non-profit and voluntary organisations is particularly involved in providing information and advice as far as services linked with first reception and housing matters.

6 Interventions on housing and integration: measures and projects

6.1 Interventions to improve access to affordable and decent housing for migrants

A number of measures and projects have been activated within the Office for Integration and Citizenship to improve access to housing for migrants. Some of those projects have seen working together different actors involved in providing services in the area of housing.

As it has already been mentioned in this report, the Brescia City Council does not have specific policies aiming at facilitating access to housing for migrants. There is a commitment towards providing affordable and decent accommodation to all residents and therefore migrants' access to housing is regulated by the same policies available to Italian citizens, although with an eye to their specific needs.

- Counselling and information services:

The Office for Integration and Citizenship of the Local Authority offers a service called "Accommodation Research" which provides advice for migrants looking for an accommodation to rent or for buying house. The project, which is still in progress, is coordinated by *Servizio Casa* and ALER, while the evolution of the project is done by the Lombardy Region, Brescia Local Administration and ALER. This is a complementary project which needs to run side by side with other projects aiming at facilitating access for migrants on the housing market in the city.

In 2005, 3,385 migrants turned to this office in search of advice. However, what is evident from this experience is that the existing resources are not adequate enough for the growing difficulties that both migrant and Italian families face in this area. There is a need of more resources that could increase the possibility for families with low income or other difficulties, including migrants, to access affordable housing.



However, often the spread of information among migrants in Brescia constitutes a problematic issue as far as the procedure for the assignment of public housing is concerned. This information very often is available only in Italian and, despite the intervention of the various third sector organisations, creates problems in understanding and therefore making correct use of the available procedure. This inefficient circulation of information is a major hindrance as it affects migrants' awareness of their rights and their actual possibility to benefit from these rights.

- Accessibility and Financial support

Schemes to make housing more affordable: As we mentioned before, due to the difficulties that migrants meet in renting an accommodation, many of them are currently trying to purchase. This operation, however, is also difficult for migrant families. Difficulties are in most of the cases related to the access to credit/mortgage. Indeed, when the buyer is a resident with a migrant background, banks are more reluctant to easily grant such credits. For this purpose Brescia Council for Housing is trying to put together a specific project involving some of the most important Foundations of Brescia in order to contribute to the creation of a fund to be used as guarantor in case of transactions between migrant residents and banks. Some of these Foundations as *Fondazione ASM*, *Fondazione Cariplo*, *Fondazione Cab*, *Fondazione Lucchini* have already agreed to the project.

Financial support for new buyers: For this purpose the Lombardy Region, in compliance with the Law 289/2002, offers a subsidy to new families, legally married couples of less than 35 years old, for the purchase of the first house. Although this measure is not specific for migrants, the access is open also to EU citizens and non-EU citizens with permanent leave to remain or temporary leave to remain (for at least two years) (*carta di soggiorno*, *permesso di soggiorno*). The subsidy is of 5,000 euros.

Financial support for rents: A further method to help low and middle income residents in search of a decent and affordable accommodation is a rental accommodation scheme. These scheme consists in Brescia City Council allocating a contribution towards the payment of the rent: the so called '*contributo caro affitto*'. Also in this case, the scheme is been introduced for both Italian and foreign residents. According to the most recently available information, 30% of these contributions are given to foreign residents.

6.2 Local policies related to spatial segregation

6.2.1 Policies to reduce spatial segregation

- Improvement of the image of a deprived neighbourhood

The Equal-Koinè Project, which includes the regeneration work of the historical quarter of Carmine as well as the renewal of the damaged urban areas, is also aiming at the improvement of the living standards of the migrant population in the area and therefore at reducing spatial segregation.

The project, which started in 2001, and in which the Local Authority and ALER are strongly involved, consists in the improvement of the area throughout the introduction



or relocation in this part of the city of a number of institutions and general services for the city as the University, the Library, the nursery school, the police station and university housing, and through interventions on public spaces to overcome a situation of urban deterioration which characterised the area previously. Strong regeneration practices have been actuated on the private buildings as well. Also in this case, a large number of buildings, in which very often migrants were living, were seriously damaged.

Therefore, the project is introducing in the area a number of essential services for the residents of the neighbourhood and will allow also for a diversification of the population, in terms of both class and ethnic background.

The results of the project, which is evaluated by the City Council and by the Urban planning division of the Brescia City Council, are seen in a positive light because greater *mixité* has been achieved in a neighbourhood which, before this intervention, was characterised by a strong presence of migrant population. However, as mentioned above, the increase in houses' prices in the area, on one side led to the return of Italian residents in the neighbourhood, and on the other has been responsible for the relocation of a large proportion of migrants towards other neighbourhoods of Brescia. In this way, another situation of overcrowding and maybe segregation is happening, this time in areas of the city which is even less prepared to receive a large concentration of migrants.

Another policy for reducing spatial segregation is that of spreading the assignment of public housing in different areas of the city. Indeed, as mentioned during our interviews with the local administration, the beneficiaries of council houses with a migrant background have been spread in more than one neighbourhood of Brescia so to avoid concentrations of foreigners or Italians only.

6.2.2 Policies managing spatial segregation

- *Neighbourhood-based social policy measures and projects and cultural diversity management (incl. mediators)*

Although the number of council houses assigned to migrant families is still very low, this situation is growing and increasingly local authorities perceive the need to find ways to ensure the cohabitation and the right use of common spaces.

In a 17 floors public housing tower building of public housing which since 2004 houses mainly migrant families of different origins, the local administration provides social advice and support (*portineria sociale*). Some of the services provided are managed by a cooperative, *La Rete*, which helps migrants and Roma people to get settled in the apartments that have been assigned to them. Furthermore, ALER has contributed with a number of mediators helping the inhabitants to solve some of the problems linked to the use of common spaces. The Lombardy Region and Brescia City Council has provided funds for all these initiatives and the project has been extended to other public housing in the city where it was considered as needed by the local social services.

The project, coordinated by the Office for Integration and Citizenship of the Brescia City Council and by the Cooperative *La Rete*, was completed and was considered



successful because every potential conflict has been easily spotted and solved and the measures have been extended to other realities. Still, more resources would be needed to start this kind of projects, as well as the possibility of a larger amount of time to be allocated.

- Neighbourhood-centred network programmes

Currently, the local authority is working together with representatives of the ethnic communities and of the native population living in various neighbourhoods of the city in order to create groups of civic initiative in light of the creation of a future civic network: '*Brescia città aperta e solidale*' (Brescia open and united city). This network will act at the level of the neighbourhood and will be working together Italians and migrants in the attempt to create and spread the idea of 'proximity citizenship' (see par. 2.3). The ultimate goal of the network is the creation of a council of migrants in Brescia. This council will be elected by both Italian citizens and migrants which are members of the network and will aim at promoting a more active and larger participation in the administrative elections of foreign citizens residing in the city for more than 5 years.

- Measures and projects for specific migrant/ ethnic minority groups

Specific interventions have been put in practice for Roma populations. The Local administration has realised two camps hosting 53 families, and a third camp is currently being built for 13 families of Sinti from Lombardy. These initiatives have been coordinated by the head of the Housing Services and Services for Integration and Citizenship.

The project has been evaluated positively because the previous situation of deprivation has been eliminated. Accommodations are now considered as safe and all primary services are available. In addition, the new housing situation seems also to facilitate the process of social integration of the Roma population.

Furthermore, Brescia Local Authority in cooperation with the Lombardy Region, ALER, and the Prefecture, are trying to solve the problem of a hostel, *Residence Prealpino* in Bovezzo, which houses more than 200 Senegalese migrants since 1980s. The hostel was in extremely precarious conditions from both structural and hygienic point of view, and already in the '90s there was a proposal to restructure the building. The restructure of the residence will be finalised with the creation of apartments to be assigned to families of various social and ethnic background so to overcome the current ghetto situation.

As far as both projects are concerned, more resources are needed to further improve the socio-economic integration of these populations.

- Innovative housing projects

"Una casa in più" (one house more): The project wishes to reduce the accommodation difficulties present in the city and to facilitate migrants' access to housing. Its final goal is to build a boarding house of 7 rooms with toilet and kitchen (monolocali) and to purchase of 12 flats to be rented and then sold to 12 families. The money derived from the selling of the 12 apartments will be used to help some of the migrant families registered on the waiting lists for public housing. In this way the project develops on a longitudinal axis, acquiring continuity in time.

The project has been realised by the Office for Integration and Citizenship of the Brescia City Council and its management and implementation has been handed to two co-operatives: *Scalabrini Bonomelli* and *Accoglienza Migranti*. The *Foundation Siepec* was also involved in the project.

Apartments have been chosen in the area of the Province of Brescia because of the need to diminish the demand of accommodation in the city and because an important criterion in the choice of the location is to give the possibility of an appropriate housing integration in the areas where migrants work. The initial funding (€ 750,000) came from the Lombardy Region.

Throughout this project, that aimed at alleviating the difficulties that migrants in the city of Brescia and in the Province meet when looking for accommodation, the Local Administration wanted to offer new possibilities to those migrant families which have sufficient economic means to undertake their own path. The intent was to offer a differentiated set of possibilities of access to housing to different migrant families with different needs, potential and perspectives.

The project shows also that foreign citizens who often meet various difficulties in renting a house, are actually able to buy a house if, for instance, provided with access to credit. Furthermore, accommodation in the boarding house gives the possibility to people leaving in extremely precarious conditions, often in Reception Centres, and who have not been joined by their family or matured as yet a long term migratory project, to live in a more decent accommodation. This experience, that has already been implemented in other European cities, can respond to the currently very mobile and flexible labour market as well as to the even more mobile characteristic of the nowadays migration.

The project has been evaluated positively by the ISMU Foundation on behalf of the Lombardy Region. However, although all apartments and rooms have very easily been assigned, the project has not been renewed or transferred to other cities. The lack of initial funds that are essential for the first stage of the project has blocked the reproducibility of an experiment which has all the possibilities for being considered as an example of good practice.

7 Highlights and Failures: Learning for CLIP

The economic boom, particularly of the metallurgic and car industry, in the '60 and '70, brought to Brescia a large number migrant workers coming primarily from the South of Italy. The city has acquired the features of a large industrial centre and it started to grow in that period developing in particular towards north and south of the city centre. In both directions new public housing neighbourhoods were built to house the growing population.

To the internal migration a new international migration added, and especially starting from the '80 and beginning of the '90, Brescia became an important destination for international migration coming from North Africa and India and after that from the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Therefore, Brescia's large industry and expanding labour market in the tertiary sector have allowed for the settlement of a large number of foreign workers, many of them living in the Municipality of Brescia, where the



proportion of immigrants in the total population is among the largest observed in Italian cities.

If initially the city centre was the main area of settlement for migrant workers and migrant families, in the last ten years a move towards other areas of the city started to happen. Industrial areas which are not used anymore in the city are being now reclaimed to the city space. These peripheral areas of the city are experiencing significant regeneration processes. New transportation facilities are introduced to better link them to the centre of the city and major initiatives for the requalification of dismissed industrial areas are underway.

Since 1989, Brescia's local administration has developed its migrant integration policies and practices around the concept of 'proximity citizenship', aiming to create the conditions for a migrant integration process which has to be developed and continued together with the concept of citizenship.

The municipal policy aims to provide and implement the same services to all residents, without activating specific measures targeting specific groups – with the exception of temporary receiving services and specific measures for the management of emergency situations, and the camps for the Roma and Sinti population. Instead, a differentiated answer to the different accommodation needs of the migrant population is implemented within the mainstream public housing services – e.g. through moderate rental fee, purchases subject to price control and counselling services.

The local administration aims at the distribution of decent housing solutions for migrants in different areas of the city, promoting in this way the creation of a multi-ethnic urban reality which avoids the formation of ethnic segregated neighbourhoods. There is, therefore, an input towards promoting a stronger social *mixité* also within the larger public housing neighbourhoods. The assignment of public housing has been spread across different areas of the city, so to avoid social problems that may arise from residential concentration in specific areas. Indeed, migrant segregation seems not to be not a major issue in the city of Brescia. Cases of strong concentration of migrants in specific areas are very limited. So far, measures aiming to avoid the formation of 'ethnic ghettos' seem to have been rather successful.

There is also evidence for innovative housing projects in the city which can be relevant for a comparison with other cities. "*Una Casa in Più*" for instance, is a project, which aims at alleviating the difficulties migrants in the city of Brescia and in the Province meet when looking for accommodation, and which offers new possibilities for migrant families who have sufficient economic means to undertake their own path. This experience is seen as a possible response to the currently very mobile and flexible labour market as well as to the even more mobile characteristic of the nowadays migration. The municipality's intent is to offer a differentiated set of possibilities of access to housing to migrant families with different needs, different potential and different perspectives. This is a project which is considered by the City Council as an example of good practice transferable to other cities. The same can be said about another neighbourhood based project which, since 2004, provides, through the work of mediators, social advice and support for migrant families who are living in a 17 floors public housing tower building. The Lombardy Region and Brescia City Council have provided funds for all these initiatives and the project has been extended to other public housing in the city where it was considered as needed by the local social services.



A major support to the local administration housing integration policy is provided by the private and non-profit sector. In the recent years, a number of agencies in a public/private partnership have been created which attempt to acquire properties in order to rent or sell them to families or individuals who otherwise lack the income or credit guarantees to rent or buy a house. In some other cases, the Province provides credit to firms and co-operatives to help them in the field of building, renovation, or purchase of housing for foreign workers. Charitable and religious institutions also provide accommodation or rent properties to migrants, or offer to act as guarantors in securing credits from banks. Among these, the *Congrega della Carità Apostolica* represents a very interesting example of housing support for socially excluded families.

Despite this encouraging picture, the issue of housing, so relevant for the integration of migrants and their positive participation to the life of the local community, is very serious and still far from being fully solved. Migrants, most of whom are concentrated in private accommodation, often have difficulties to get access to affordable. High prices in the housing market and unwillingness of Italian families to rent their properties to migrants, are two of the main reasons why access to rents can be hindered, while additional barriers, such as limited access to credit, limit the possibility of buying a property.

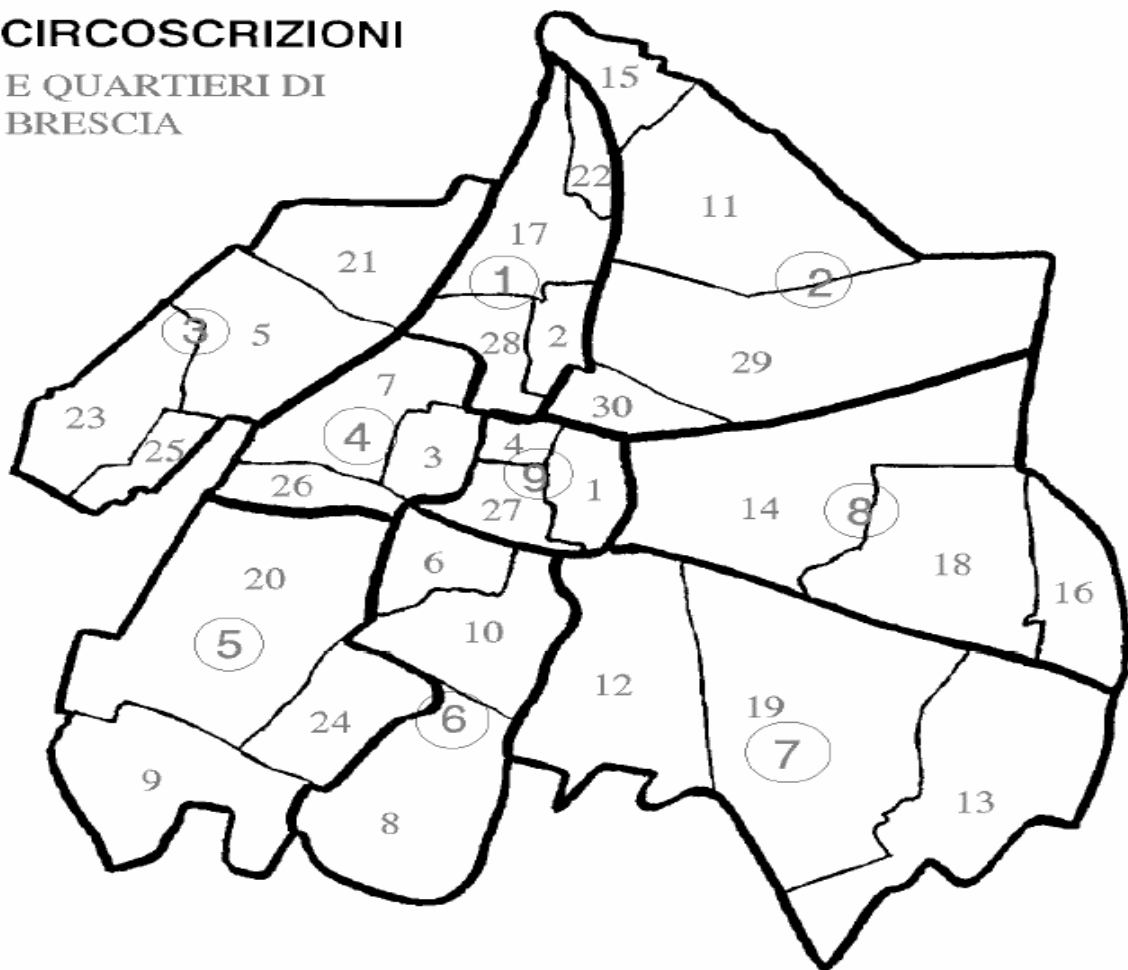
The increasing demand for social housing from migrant families can not be fulfilled by the limited housing estate owned by the Municipality. The lack of a comprehensive national and regional policy for the housing integration of migrants does not ensure sufficient access to fundings for locally implemented initiatives.

Appendix

Map of the city of Brescia subdivided by constituencies (circoscrizioni) and quarters (quartieri)

CIRCOSCRIZIONI

E QUARTIERI DI
BRESCIA



Constituency 1, Quarter 2:
Borgo Trento
Constituency 1, Quarter 22:
Casazza
Constituency 1, Quarter 17: S.
Bartolomeo
Constituency 1, Quarter 28: S.
Eustacchio

Constituency 2, Quarter 30:
Crocifissa di Rosa
Constituency 2, Quarter 11:
Mompiano
Constituency 2, Quarter 29: S.
Rocchino
Constituency 2, Quarter 16:
Vill. Prealpino

Constituency 3, Quarter 6:
Chiusure
Constituency 3, Quarter 21:
Urago
Constituency 3, Quarter 23:
Villaggio Badia
Constituency 3, Quarter 25:
Villaggio Violino

*Constituency 4, Quarter 7:
Fiomicello*
*Constituency 4, Quarter 3:
Porta Milano*
*Constituency 4, Quarter 26:
Primo Maggio*
*Constituency 5, Quarter 20:
Chiesa Nuova*
*Constituency 5, Quarter 9:
Fornaci*
*Constituency 5, Quarter 24:
Villaggio Sereno*

*Constituency 6, Quarter 6: Don
Bosco*
*Constituency 6, Quarter 8:
Folzano*
*Constituency 6, Quarter 10: La
Marmora*
*Constituency 7, Quarter 12:
Porta Cremona*
*Constituency 7, Quarter 13:
Buffalora*
*Constituency 7, Quarter 19:
San Polo*

*Constituency 8, Quarter 14:
Porta Venezia*
*Constituency 8, Quarter 16:
Caionvico*
*Constituency 8, Quarter 18:
Sant Eufemia*
*Constituency 9, Quarter 27:
Centro Storico Sud*
*Constituency 9, Quarter 4:
Centro St. Nord*
*Constituency 9, Quarter 1:
BresciaAntica*