

# Intercultural policies and intergroup relations

## Case study: Bologna, Italy



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# About CLIP

In 2006, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the city of Stuttgart and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) established a 'European network of cities for local integration policies for migrants', henceforth known as CLIP.<sup>1</sup> The network comprises a steering committee, a group of expert European research centres and a number of European cities. In the following two years, the cities of Vienna and Amsterdam joined the CLIP Steering Committee. The network is also supported by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), and has formed a partnership with the European Network Against Racism (ENAR).

Through the medium of separate city reports (case studies) and workshops, the network enables local authorities to learn from each other and to deliver a more effective integration policy. The unique character of the CLIP network is that it organises a shared learning process between the participating cities, between the cities and a group of expert European research centres, as well as between policymakers at local and European level.

The CLIP network currently brings together more than 30 large and medium-sized cities from all regions of Europe: Amsterdam (NL), Antwerp (BE), Arnsberg (DE), Athens (EL), Barcelona (ES), Bologna (IT), Breda (NL), Budapest (HU), Copenhagen (DK), Dublin (IE), Frankfurt (DE), Helsinki (FI), Istanbul (TR), İzmir (TR), Kirkcaldy (UK), Liège (BE), Lisbon (PT), Luxembourg (LU), L'Hospitalet (ES), Malmö (SE), Mataró (ES), Newport (UK), Prague (CZ), Strasbourg (FR), Stuttgart (DE), Sundsvall (SE), Tallinn (EE), Terrassa (ES), Turin (IT), Turku (FI), Valencia (ES), Vienna (AT), Wolverhampton (UK), Wrocław (PL), Zagreb (HR), Zeytinburnu (TR) and Zürich (CH).

The cities in the network are supported in their shared learning by a group of expert European research centres in:

- Bamberg, Germany (European Forum for Migration Studies, efms);
- Vienna (Institute for Urban and Regional Research, ISR);
- Amsterdam (Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, IMES);
- Turin (International and European Forum on Migration Research, FIERI);
- Wrocław (Institute of International Studies);
- Swansea, Wales (Centre for Migration Policy Research, CMPR).

There are four research modules in total. The first module was on housing – segregation, access to, quality and affordability for migrants – which has been identified as a major issue impacting on migrants' integration into their host society. The second module examined equality and diversity policies in relation to employment within city administrations and in the provision of services. The focus of the third module is intercultural policies and intergroup relations. The final module (2009–2010) will look at ethnic entrepreneurship.

*The case studies on intercultural policies were carried out in 2009.*

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<sup>1</sup> See also <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/populationandsociety/clip.htm>.

## Acknowledgements

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The author is fully responsible for the content of this report, the copyright of which remains with Eurofound.

# Introduction

This module of CLIP examines aspects of urban life that are related to the multinational, multi-ethnic and multi-religious structures of urban populations which challenge the ability of municipalities to establish or foster peaceful relations among the different segments of the population. Thus, the main subjects of this study are intercultural and interreligious dialogue and intergroup relations. After a brief overview of Italy's migratory history and national policies, the report analyses the characteristics of the migrant population that has settled in the northcentral city of Bologna. The study then focuses on the municipality's approach and policies towards ethnic and religious minorities.

The CLIP network has decided to devote particular attention to Muslim communities due to the tensions between this religious minority and the majority population which have been witnessed in several European cities throughout the 1990s and 2000s. As a consequence, a considerable part of the study is devoted to the analysis of the Muslim community's socioeconomic structure and organisations, as well as to the relations established with local authorities. The report then examines intergroup relations and radicalisation processes in both the majority and migrant populations.

This study began with a review of the existing literature and databases. Research work comprised two main stages: gathering information by means of the so-called Common Reporting Scheme (CRS) compiled by the municipal Office for Development, Intercultural Integration of Policies and the Third Sector, as well as a field visit to Bologna by the author, with the support of the municipality. The CRS, which is the same for all of the cities involved in the CLIP project, includes information on policy objectives, programmes and activities of the city, the characteristics of the relevant communities and relations with them. Regarding the field visit, the author interviewed key actors in the Bologna municipality, religious and ethnic associations and federations, local journalists and researchers (see the list of persons interviewed at the end of this report). During the field visit, the author collected documents produced by various local actors in order to obtain more precise information on their aims, activities and results.

## Brief history of migration to Italy

Italy became an immigration country in the second half of the 1970s, with three main waves of immigration. The first wave included people from Africa (mainly Senegal, Eritrea and Somalia), the Middle East, Asia (the Philippines) and South America. The 1980s saw increasing migration flows from the Maghreb region, comprising five countries in North Africa – Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. Other nationalities also emerged: Chinese, Peruvians and Nigerians (Pugliese, 2002). At the beginning of the 1990s, migration flows from eastern Europe started: from Yugoslavia, Albania and Romania, which became the fastest growing group. Nowadays, immigration in Italy is undergoing a process of settlement and the demographic, socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the immigrant population have changed (Blangiardo, 2005).

Longer stays, changes in gender balance, family reunification, more immigrants with children and more immigrant students in schools are some of the characteristics of this deep-seated phenomenon. Immigrants are now part of Italy's socioeconomic fabric and give rise to associations aiming to support the integration process and keep alive connections with the countries of origin.

A diachronic analysis of the data on residence permits underlines the increase in the number of immigrants from eastern Europe, with migration from Poland, Romania, Ukraine and Bulgaria becoming progressively more significant since the late 1990s.

Migratory flows naturally follow a growth curve, but they are also characterised by internal transformations. The main change took place on 1 January 2007, with the entry of Bulgaria and Romania into the European Union.<sup>2</sup> This led, on the one hand, to a decrease in the number of non-EU citizens officially resident – with consequences in terms of free circulation, access to the labour market and expulsions – while on the other hand it did not improve the conditions of insertion and integration in the Italian socioeconomic context.

Table 1: *Main nationalities of foreign documented citizens, December 2007*

Country of origin	Number of foreigners
Romania	625,278
Albania	401,949
Morocco	365,908
China	156,519
Ukraine	132,718
Philippines	105,675
Tunisia	93,601
Poland	90,218

Source: *National Institute for Statistics (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, Istat), 2008*

<sup>2</sup> Among the 10 Member States that joined the EU in 2004, Poland is the only country that sends numerous citizens to Italy, both for temporary work and for settlement.

## Composition of migrant populations

At the beginning of 2008, over three million immigrants (3,342,651) held a regular residence permit in Italy, from more than 191 countries, especially from central and eastern Europe, North Africa, Latin America and southeast Asia, according to the National Institute for Statistics (*Istituto Nazionale di Statistica*, Istat). The current debate on immigration is frequently monopolised by the problem of illegal entry; this risks mistaking a part for the whole and losing sight of the increasing number of legal movements. According to a recent estimate by Istat, Italy expects to see an annual increase of 110,000 new immigrants, with migrants accounting for more than 8% of the entire population by 2010. The immigrant population exceeded 4% in 2004; in 2008, it was about 6% (Billari and Della Zanna, 2008).

According to a 2009 report of the ISMU Foundation, Initiatives and studies on multi-ethnicity (*Fondazione ISMU – Iniziative e studi sulla multiethnicità*, Ismu), country groups can be divided into four different types based on the proportion of two kinds of permits issued:

- immigration exclusively for work reasons (China, Senegal, Ukraine);
- immigration mainly for work reasons with family reunification below average (Philippines);
- a balance between the two types (Albania, Morocco);
- significant family migration (Romania).

According to the geographical distribution of residence permits, at the beginning of 2008, 62.5% of legal foreigners were living in the north of Italy, 25% were in the centre of the country and 12.5% were in the south (Caritas, 2008). Nevertheless, there is a different ethnic composition of migrants in each city; for example, the Chinese are overrepresented in the northern cities of Prato in the Tuscany region and Milan in the Lombardy region. Meanwhile, more Romanians than average are found in the northern city of Turin in the Piedmont region, and more Albanians and Filipinos than average are living in the capital city of Rome in the Lazio region (Ismu, 2009).

Regarding gender composition, the data show a prevalence of female immigrants among some African groups (for example, Ethiopians and Somalis), Asian groups (Filipinos), Latin American groups (Brazilians and Peruvians) and eastern European groups (Poles and Ukrainians), whereas male immigrants prevail among other African groups (Senegalese and Tunisians). The age profile shows a young immigrant population in Italy, with 70% of residents falling into the 20–54 year age bracket (Istat, 2009).

Focusing on socioeconomic status, some immigrant communities are at a more advanced stage of the migration process, such as family reunion. However, this does not correspond to successful insertion into the labour market. Men are mainly employed as labourers, while the female workforce remains to a large extent absorbed in specific areas of the services sector, at the lowest level. As the data show, the economic distribution of regularly employed workers is as follows: 7.3% in agriculture (almost nine out of 10 with short-term employment contracts), 35.3% in industry and 53.8% in the services sector (Caritas, 2008). The employment of immigrants is growing faster in sectors characterised by a high degree of casual and irregular work – primarily services and construction.

The highest concentration of immigrant workers is found in domestic service, where over half of the employees are immigrants, reaching around 75% in certain areas such as Rome and Milan. In Piedmont, half of the construction enterprises – very small companies – are owned by foreigners (Di Monaco, 2008). Taking into account domestic workers employed illegally – for example, the so-called care workers from eastern European countries hired on a temporary basis – the proportion is even higher. Immigrant self-employment, mostly male, shows an increasing trend (Ismu, 2009).

The Italian context is also characterised by a certain proportion of irregular immigrants. It is difficult to quantify the current illegal immigrant population in the country: it is estimated that about two thirds of foreigners in Italy have spent some time in the country under illegal residence conditions (Blangiardo, 2005). Readmission agreements have been signed with the main sending countries in eastern Europe, the Balkans in southeast Europe and North Africa, and are currently being extended to Sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian subcontinent. Temporary reception centres (*Centri di permanenza temporanea*, CPT)<sup>3</sup> have been set up to allow officials to identify people without authorisation to remain in the country, and to carry out repatriation.

In terms of religion, the Italian context has changed considerably since the arrival of sizeable eastern European migration flows. The presence of Romanians, Ukrainians and Poles has modified the religious composition of the migrant population. Although the media sometimes emphasise the risk of Islamisation, it is inaccurate to speak of an ‘Islamic invasion’: according to estimates by the Roman Catholic charity Caritas, 48% of immigrants are Christian, 37% are Muslim and 7% practise oriental religions. As Table 2 shows, it is clear that Islam is not the main religion among immigrant groups in Italy when all of the Christian denominations are combined.

Table 2: *Residence permits, by main religion, January 2007*

Religion	%
Catholic	22.0
Orthodox	21.7
Protestant	3.9
Other Christians	1.5
Muslim	33.2
Jewish	0.2
Hindu	2.5
Buddhist	1.9
Animist	1.2
Other religions	11.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: All of the percentages are drawn from estimates for the country of origin.

Source: *Estimate drawn from data of Ministry of the Interior (Ministero dell’Interno), 2008*

Following the arrival flows registered in the course of the 1990s, there was a strong geographical diversification of immigrants from Islamic countries.

It is important to be cautious when dealing with numbers regarding religious beliefs: this is uncertain ground, especially when it comes to the faiths of immigrants. The method used to determine the number of Muslims – and Orthodox Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and others – among immigrants is based on a projection of the religious beliefs of their countries of origin. It is therefore conjectured that the religious composition of foreign communities is similar to that in their countries of origin, without taking into consideration how, for example, religious behaviour might change over the

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<sup>3</sup> Law No. 289/98 established these centres, where illegal migrants can stay for six months at the most. Under Law No. 189/2002, they were renamed as Identification and Expulsion Centres (*Centri di identificazione ed espulsione*, CIE).



course of time or how faith can change during migration – growing weaker or stronger. Addressing religion in the context of immigration therefore means working with estimates. This warning should be stated before undertaking any quantitative reasoning on immigration in Italy: the number of illegal immigrants is, obviously, an estimate, as is the number of legally resident people, because the data do not account for children aged under 14 years or persons thought to have an expired resident permit.

Research on the Muslim presence offers numerous cognitive elements that provide an insight into most of the many internal differences, especially because usually: ‘there is no distinction between practising and non-practising, Muslims are generally defined as people who in some way find a more or less fixed point of reference in Islam for their identity’ (Spreafico and Coppi, 2006, p. 68).

## National policy context

The first wide-ranging policy on immigration was introduced in 1998. Law No. 286/98 explicitly encouraged the development of programmes and policies to favour cultural exchange. For this purpose, ‘the Law set up the National fund for Migration Policies, which in turn transferred most of it to local public administrations and [non-governmental organisations] NGOs’ (Zincone and Ponzio, 2006, p. 53).

The new law on immigration, passed by parliament on 11 July 2002 (No. 189) came in on a wave of law-and-order campaigns and ‘alarm calls’ over immigration. It tightened the restrictions of the previous legislation, especially concerning entry and residence rules: the duration of residence permits for subordinate work was reduced and the possibility of coming to Italy as a jobseeker (vouched for by a sponsor) was abolished.

Policy changes since 2002 have essentially aimed to control borders and restrict access to the social welfare system (Ismu, 2009). With regard to integration and intercultural policies, the Fund for Integration Policy has been practically abolished: it has been merged into the National Fund for Social Policies, which means that the task of developing policies specifically addressing immigrants now falls to the regions. The few existing studies (Campomori, 2008; Caponio, 2006) show considerable differences among the Italian regions: only a few still devote a specific budget to immigrant integration – the Emilia Romagna Region, encompassing Bologna, is not among them.

However, despite these inconsistencies in national and regional policies, local authorities have always played a crucial role in providing the necessary conditions for immigrant settlement and integration. Many local administrations, especially in the north of Italy, started to provide free advice, counselling and other services in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when national legislation was still considerably lacking in this respect.

The first efforts of local public authorities to facilitate the integration of immigrants have been complemented by the activities of a wide range of civil society organisations. In many cases, these organisations have proven to be in the best position to provide immediate and practical solutions to the problems commonly experienced by immigrants. In most cities, there is close cooperation between local government and NGOs on integration initiatives. This highlights one of the main aspects of Italian immigration policy: in a situation characterised by a lack of intervention from central government, associations and NGOs have come to the forefront. In this way, dealing with increasing numbers of migrants, some needs were met in a timely manner. The other aspect of this method of operating is the uncertain nature of these initiatives: they are funded on an annual basis, and lack continuity and final assessments of their efficacy.

With regard to interreligious dialogue, the main debate concerns relations with Islam. In Italy, recognition and the rights of religious minorities are regulated by bilateral agreements (intese) between the state and representative bodies of religious groups. Muslims have not yet succeeded in concluding an agreement with the state, despite the fact that they

are the second largest religious group in Italy. According to Aluffi Beck-Peccoz (2004, p. 138), ‘laws currently in force can give satisfactory answers to some of the basic needs of Muslims’, for example in relation to mosques, cemeteries, ritual slaughtering and the supply of Halal food. Nevertheless, without an agreement in place, Muslim communities cannot enjoy the benefits that such agreements bring – for instance, the right to abstain from work on religious holidays, to delegate teachers to public school to provide religious education, to allocate a quota of personal income tax to the Muslim community and to observe other religious rites.

A total of four Muslim organisations are involved in promoting an agreement with the Italian government. The main body is the Italian Islamic Communities and Organisations Union (*Unione delle Comunità e delle Organizzazioni Islamiche d'Italia*, UCOII), a federation of about 60 mosques across the country. The Islamic Cultural Centre of Italy (*Centro Culturale Islamico d'Italia*) is the second most important Muslim organisation in Italy, mainly supported by Islamic states. It is not an association but a religious legal entity, recognised by a decree passed by the President of the Republic. This centre is based at the Great Mosque in Rome, and promotes the official ‘Islam of the states’. The latter refers to attempts by governments of prominent Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Morocco and Turkey to sponsor the creation of Islamic activities and institutions for Muslims living in Europe, in line with the official version of Islam that these states support. The other two organisations – the Association of Italian Muslims (*Associazione Musulmani Italiani*, AMI) and the Islamic Religious Community (*Comunità Religiosa Islamica*, Co.Re.Is) – are composed predominantly of Italian citizens who have converted to Islam (Aluffi Beck-Beckoz, 2004).

In recent years, a new organisation has emerged at national level called Young Muslims of Italy (*Giovani Musulmani d'Italia*, GMI). It is a federation of young Muslim groups set up in various Italian cities, who are involved in the debate on Islam in Italy, and is representative of second generation Muslims (Frisina, 2007).

Due to the increasing number of Muslims, their associations and demands, in 2005 the Ministry of the Interior (*Ministero dell'Interno*) set up the Council for Islam in Italy (*Consulta per l'Islam Italiano*). This entity is seen as a way to create an ‘Italian Islam’ – that is, ‘a community peacefully included in the economic and social fabric of our country, free to profess its religious creed and preserve its own identity, but at the same time, completely respectful of our values and our laws’ (Cesareo, 2006, p. 24).

The publication in 2007 of the charter of the values and significance of citizenship and integration (*carta dei valori della cittadinanza e dell'integrazione*) is another step towards the creation of an ‘Italian Islam’. A technical committee oversees the charter, which is promoted by the Ministry of the Interior. It establishes the values and principles ‘for all wishing to have permanent residence in Italy irrespective of whatever religious, ethnic and/or cultural group or community to which they may belong’ (Article 1).

# Profile of Bologna

## Brief description of the city

Bologna is the capital city of the Emilia Romagna region, which lies to the north of central Italy. The province of Bologna has experienced a substantial process of urbanisation since the end of the Second World War. However, since the beginning of the 1970s, residents have been leaving the city in favour of other municipalities in the area (Anderlini, 2003). On 1 January 2008, the total population of the city of Bologna was 372,000 persons.<sup>4</sup>

In Bologna, immigration started in the 1970s, mainly comprising students and political dissidents from Argentina, Chile, Greece, Iran and Palestine. These inflows highlight two of the main features of the city. The first is the large student population attracted by the University of Bologna: students account for about 20% of the city's total population (Decimo, 2003). The second feature is the presence of well-established, influential left-wing political organisations and trade unions, making it attractive terrain for political dissidents. Indeed, the Communist Party governed the city from the end of the Second World War until 1999, when a right-wing civic list won the election and governed for five years. One of the main consequences of the long-lasting predominance of the left-wing parties is that Bologna is one of the most advanced cities in Italy in terms of local social welfare and public services.

The province of Bologna is characterised by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located in the outskirts of the city and in the other municipalities. In the area, 30% of the working population is self-employed and, while the construction and manufacturing sectors are losing workers to the services sector, they still employ about 30% of workers. Due to its flourishing economy and advanced local welfare services, Bologna is the third city in Italy in terms of total employment rate and ranks first with regard to female employment. However, the constant decrease in the size of the working population – about 25% of residents in the Bologna province are aged over 65 years – makes the immigrant workforce particularly valuable. The area's many thriving companies have in fact attracted economic migrants since the 1980s.<sup>5</sup>

## Migrant population

As of 1 January 2009, 86,700 foreign residents were living in the province of Bologna, representing 8.9% of the population, with 39,500 foreign residents in the city of Bologna, representing 10.5% of the population. The increase in the number of foreign residents has been rapid: 243% in the whole area in the last decade (1998–2008), according to the Provincial Immigration Observatory (*Osservatorio provinciale sulle immigrazioni*) (2008b). In more specific terms, between 1998 and 2008:

- The increase was 176% in the city of Bologna and 306% in the rest of the province, which since 2000 has hosted the majority of the foreign population. On 1 January 2009, only 45.5% of the whole foreign population of the province lived in the city of Bologna;
- The number of women has increased faster than the number of men (248% in the city and 407% in the rest of the province) and, since 2002, women have represented the majority of foreign residents in the city of Bologna (51.9% on 1 January 2009).

At the start of 2009, 15.5% of the whole population of minors in the city of Bologna was foreign and 17.4% of children born in the Bologna province have foreign citizenship.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.comune.bologna.it/>.

<sup>5</sup> Report on the economic situation of Bologna presented at the Extraordinary Provincial Council on 28 September 2006.

The largest migrant groups are from Romania and the Philippines (Table 3). No official data are available on immigrants' religious affiliations.

Table 3: *Foreign residents in city of Bologna, by country of nationality, 30 June 2009*

Country	Total residents
Romania	5,507
Philippines	4,294
Bangladesh	3,906
Morocco	3,178
Moldavia	2,492
Ukraine	2,400
Albania	2,347
China	2,301
Pakistan	1,558
Sri Lanka	1,316
Tunisia	1,056
Poland	1,126
Serbia and Montenegro	1,000
Peru	870
Eritrea	779
<b>All nationalities</b>	<b>42,104</b>

Source: *Municipality of Bologna*

Despite the medium size of the geographic area, about 100 immigrant organisations exist in Bologna province.<sup>6</sup> According to the persons interviewed, this situation arises due to the legacy of the local association movement, which is very active and has therefore fostered a high level of immigrant participation in civil society organisations.

A 2003 study carried out by the Provincial Immigration Observatory points out that while most resident immigrants live in the rest of the province, three quarters of immigrant organisations are located in the city. In any case, the range of action of these associations usually goes beyond the city borders. While some studies (Paradisi, 2003) and interviewees highlighted the fluctuating nature of most of these associations, the study by the Provincial Immigration Observatory reveals that 60% of organisations were established in the 1990s, thus making them of longer standing than immigrant organisations in many other Italian cities.

The largest migrant communities are also the most active in terms of developing associations, with the exception of eastern European immigrants. However, the presence of eastern Europeans is recent in comparison to that of the other main communities living in Bologna and – as some studies explain (Institute for Economic and Social Research (*Istituto Ricerche Economiche e Sociali*, Ires) Piemonte, 1998; Ponzio, 2002) – in Italy, immigrants from former Soviet

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<sup>6</sup> This estimate was drawn from a study carried out by the Provincial Immigration Observatory in 2003 and was confirmed by persons interviewed.

Union countries are less inclined to form associations. Concerning nationalities, research carried out by the Provincial Immigration Observatory (2003) shows a surprising element: half of the nearly 100 associations in the Bologna area are mixed, that is, composed of foreigners and Italians. According to the persons interviewed, this is the result of the high level of association activity in the local area, which has involved foreigners in local organisations since immigration began.

According to the people interviewed, the legacy of local associations has determined two other features of immigrant associations. Firstly, as in the local society, where there are many cultural associations but few religious ones, among immigrants there are more cultural associations than religious ones. Secondly, strong local feminist movements have fostered the involvement of foreign women in associations. In Bologna, ethnic female participation in associations is widespread (Carchedi, 2000): just 10% of ethnic and mixed associations comprise men only, with 10% comprising women only – although 40% are characterised by a prevalence of men. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the female presence is strongest in mixed associations (Provincial Immigration Observatory, 2003).

With regard to associations' support for the welfare of local migrant communities, most of the ethnic and mixed associations:

- offer information (90% of associations composed of foreigners only and 80% of mixed associations);
- aim to preserve and promote the culture and language of the countries of origin (80% of associations comprising foreigners only and 70% of mixed associations);
- manage sociocultural mediation services (75% of associations comprising foreigners only and 60% of mixed associations).

The main difference between mixed and ethnic associations is the target for their activities. Mixed associations usually address both foreigners and Italians, while the activities of ethnic associations are more oriented towards fellow nationals (Paradisi, 2003; Provincial Immigration Observatory, 2003). For instance, mixed associations promote the cultures of ethnic minorities through events and activities which address the whole local population, while ethnic associations promote them mainly through native language courses for children and events connected to religious or traditional celebrations.

The local administrations support these associations, as will be shown later, as they are seen as relevant instruments for immigrants' participation in the local civil society and a means of expression for the different cultures.<sup>7</sup>

## Muslim population and its characteristics

In the Bologna province, Muslims represent nearly half of the immigrant population, while in the city of Bologna the figure is about 40% (Barberis, 2004). The main minorities come from Morocco and Tunisia in the Maghreb region and from Pakistan and Bangladesh in the Indian subcontinent, followed by immigrants from eastern Europe and other countries in Africa (ibid). The communities from North Africa are the oldest, while those from Albania and Asia only became significant in the 1990s; the eastern European communities are the most recent.

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<sup>7</sup> Municipality of Bologna, Triennial Plan of Health and Social Well-being 2009–2011 (*Piano triennale della salute e del benessere sociale 2009–2011*).

Regarding the gender ratio, as mentioned above, in 2002 migrant women surpassed migrant men in Bologna. On the other hand, in the minorities from Islamic countries – while the female presence has grown – men are still overrepresented (Table 4).

Table 4: *Women in Muslim minorities in city of Bologna, 30 June 2009 (%)*

Country	Women
Morocco	45
Bangladesh	36
Albania	47
Pakistan	18
Sri Lanka	40
Tunisia	30
Senegal	27

Source: *Municipality of Bologna*

There is a large proportion of second generation residents: people born in Italy account for 10%–20% of these minorities and are particularly numerous among Moroccans (20%) and Tunisians (21%), surpassed only by Chinese (27%) and persons with a background from Serbia or Montenegro (34%) (Provincial Immigration Observatory, 2008b).

With regard to economic integration, while Muslims from Maghreb are mainly employed in the construction, manufacturing and services sectors, Muslims from Asia are very active in ethnic businesses. Most of them – certainly the most visible among them – run small grocery shops, which are open until late in the evening and are often located in the city centre.

As explained in the previous section, religious ethnic associations, including Muslim ones, are rare in Bologna. According to the data provided by the city's multicultural centre, the only Muslim religious organisation is the Islamic Culture Centre of Bologna (*Centro di Cultura Islamica di Bologna*). However, other cultural associations, mainly organised on an ethnic basis, also carry out religious activities, and some of them run small prayer rooms, which are often on loan from the municipality.

The Islamic Culture Centre manages the biggest prayer room in the city, runs a small library on Islam and organises Arabic and religious courses for children and adults. It also offers legal aid and information, thanks to the collaboration of a lawyer. As the president of the centre, Radwan Altounji, explained, they also give advice on 'matters that can be only managed through Islamic laws', such as marriage problems. Mr Altounji is Syrian and arrived in Bologna in the 1950s; he is helped in his managerial role by an Italian Muslim. It is worth underlining that in Bologna – like in other southern European cities such as Lisbon (see the CLIP report) – the Muslim community is led by immigrants who do not belong to the current main Muslim ethnic minorities but who arrived in the host country before the beginning of the labour immigration and belong to the upper-middle class. This situation can favour dialogue, since these leaders are well-integrated and well-educated, but it also raises doubts about their real representativeness of local Muslim communities.

The centre – including its religious services – is well-attended, with the exception of people from the Indian subcontinent, despite the fact that they are predominantly Sunnis like the rest of the Muslim immigrants in Bologna. The reason indicated by persons interviewed – both from the Islamic Cultural Centre and the Pakistan and Bangladeshi associations – is that immigrants from this geographical area do not speak Arabic and therefore do not understand the sermons for the Friday prayer. However, this problem should be easy to solve since the sermon is already translated into

Italian and could be translated into other foreign languages, as happens in some of the little prayer rooms scattered throughout the city. Some interviewees suggested that the real reason that the Pakistanis and Bangladeshis do not use the centre's prayer room, and the reason behind the fact that the centre does not translate its sermons, is probably connected to tensions within the local Muslim population.

Finally, it should be noted that many non-religious organisations composed of immigrants from Islamic countries seem to pay special attention to the transmission of language and faith principles to children, on the one hand, and to women's social integration, on the other. In particular, many of these associations are committed on a voluntary basis to providing training for women and helping them to find work. They also organise recreational opportunities to help women avoid being isolated and to promote activities to favour the transmission of social knowledge (Which is hampered by the distance from relatives), for instance concerning childcare. Indeed, these associations appear to be very aware of the different role that women play in the sending and receiving societies, and seem to be committed to mediating between these two different cultures. This attention to the situation of women is probably the product of the local cultural and social environment, where the women's association movement and the feminist movement are highly developed in promoting specific action and campaigns and therefore raising the awareness of immigrants in this regard.

# Local intercultural policies in general

## Responsibility in the city and general approach to ethnic and religious groups

As noted, the local administration explicitly supports immigrant associationism, which is one of the goals of the Triennial Plan of Health and Social Well-being 2009–2011 (*Piano triennale della salute e del benessere sociale 2009–2011*). Indeed, the municipality's attention to ethnic associations is not new: it started in the 1990s, when the presence of immigrants and their participation in civil society began to be visible.

Concerning relations with ethnic associations, according to the research carried out by the Provincial Immigration Observatory (2003), almost all of the ethnic and mixed associations of the province of Bologna have relations with local authorities. In particular, the municipality tries to consider and treat this kind of association in the same way as any other, requesting that they address the relevant departments according to the nature of their demands and needs. Nevertheless, the Department of Social Policies has the most contact with these associations; it encompasses the office dedicated to immigration – the Office of Development, Intercultural Integration of Policies and the Third Sector – as well as the city's Zonarelli Intercultural Centre (see below). The Municipal Cabinet is also often involved in intercultural and interreligious dialogue events and debates. Moreover, the neighbourhoods are becoming increasingly crucial in maintaining relations with immigrant associations as a consequence of the recent decentralisation process undertaken by the Municipality of Bologna.

Although the municipality's attention towards immigrant associations dates back some time, in recent years local authorities have changed their perspective. They have realised that forming immigrant associations is an expression of a foreign population but that this does not fully represent this group. Thus, at the end of 2007, the Council of Foreign and Stateless Citizens of the Province of Bologna (*Consiglio dei cittadini stranieri ed apolidi della Provincia di Bologna*) and, at municipal level, the Neighbourhood Councils of Foreign Citizens (*Consulte di Quartiere dei Cittadini Stranieri*) were established. Before these councils were set up, there was a political debate in the municipality about giving foreign residents the right to vote in local elections. However, since similar attempts previously undertaken by other Italian cities had already been rejected by the central government on the grounds of unconstitutionality, the Bologna administration decided to adopt other channels of participation such as the councils.

Each of the nine neighbourhood councils comprises five people, elected directly by foreign residents in the neighbourhood.<sup>8</sup> Elections take place on the basis of the individual candidates in order to discourage ethnic lists from giving too much relevance to ethnic interests.<sup>9</sup> However, according to the President of the Metropolitan Forum of Immigrant Associations, Richard Amechi, the smallest ethnic communities do not feel represented since there are no council members of their nationality. This means that the ethnic communities still follow an 'ethnic logic'; nevertheless, the election method adopted by the municipality could progressively change this outlook.

The councils are consultative bodies, and can also propose measures and programmes concerning integration policies to the neighbourhood councils. Periodically, the presidents of the different neighbourhood councils meet in the Municipal Conference, which has consultative tasks at municipal level in the field of integration policies. However, so far, these councils seem to have exerted a limited influence on local policies. In the interviews, it emerged that the elected representatives have encountered various difficulties due to inadequate language skills or incomplete knowledge of institutional structures and processes. In order to solve these problems, the municipality organised training courses.

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<sup>8</sup> In order to foster women's presence on the councils, if a man and a woman have the same number of votes, the woman prevails.

<sup>9</sup> In the case of the Council of Foreign and Stateless Citizens of the Province of Bologna, the candidates form the lists.



These courses were welcomed but, as they had just concluded at the time of writing, it is difficult to evaluate their real impact.

From the perspective of intercultural dialogue, it is relevant to note that the establishment of the Council of Foreign and Stateless Citizens of the Province of Bologna and the Neighbourhood Councils of Foreign Citizens was the result of a participatory process that involved political, technical and administrative initiatives, including seminars, debates and conferences. This process aimed to make these councils an expression not only of the political authorities but also of the civil society organisations. The immigrants' involvement was significant and, during this participatory process, foreign citizens promoted new political movements and ethnic associations, and strengthened existing ones (Paradisi, 2008; Provincial Immigration Observatory, 2008a).

It is worth noting that the participatory process was also recently introduced into Bologna's Triennial Plan of Health and Well-being, as well as the Annual Plan of Implementation, which also concerns intercultural policies. In fact, they are both written on the basis of the needs that emerged in the Services Conferences held at neighbourhood level, in which civil society organisations, including ethnic associations, can also take part.

To summarise, the city of Bologna aims to encourage immigrants and ethnic associations to use the same channels employed by the local population to express their needs, and in recent years the municipality has undertaken several significant initiatives towards this aim.

## Issues, demands and interests

The major issue concerning the integration of ethnic minorities in Bologna seems to be the recognition of immigrants as part of the local society and the promotion of exchanges between ethnic minorities and the native population in order to foster a two-way integration process. With regard to the needs of immigrant minorities, the demands raised in the interviews with ethnic associations almost completely coincide with those that emerged from the Public Inquiry (*Istruttoria Pubblica*) on Policies for Immigration held in 2007.<sup>10</sup> The public inquiry lasted three days, scheduled on 6 and 13 February and 6 March 2007. It was attended by 85 public and civil society bodies – 74 of which contributed their views – including immigrant organisations (Municipality of Bologna, 2007). The main requests that emerged from the public inquiry and the CLIP interviews are the following, namely to:

- boost Italian language teaching;
- improve the competence of offices and public structures in providing information and services to people of different cultures and languages;
- give immigrants the chance to express their own cultures, since this is a condition of a reciprocal exchange between foreigners and Italians;
- enable immigrants to raise their own visibility in order to combat the negative images conveyed by the media, since communication is regarded as a crucial element in the integration process;

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<sup>10</sup> The public inquiry is regulated by Article 12 of the Statute of the Bologna Municipality, which was approved in 1990 and which established that public measures can be drawn from a public inquiry called by the local administration or requested by at least 2,000 persons. The 2007 inquiry on immigration was requested by a civil society committee supported by more than 2,400 citizens. A public inquiry should be held in the form of a public debate in which the associations and prominent groups of citizens can take part.

- pay attention to the language used by the media and public authorities with regard to ethnic minorities, since an incorrect use of language can generate reciprocal suspicion and fear;
- view immigrants not as people in need but as resources for the local society, who should be treated not as poor people but as citizens. The housing and labour problems identified should be handled from this perspective: not just providing council houses but also supporting access to the property market and not merely offering help with jobseeking but also with starting up small businesses. Furthermore, special attention should be devoted to women and second generations, as they are more at risk of marginalisation;
- support ethnic associations that seek the conditions for promoting activities and initiatives by themselves, using the culture and links with the country of origin as strategic elements for successful integration.

Concerning the last point, many associations underline that the voluntary contributions given by members have substantially decreased as a consequence of the economic crisis; thus, the economic situation of the associations has worsened and greater municipal financial support is needed.

As the next section will explain, the municipality seems to be willing to meet the needs of the associations. However, their demands are challenging and require medium to long-term action.

### Forms of relations and dialogue

In recent years, the Municipality of Bologna has shifted from a multicultural to an intercultural approach, with the aim of developing a local society that can be regarded as the result of exchanges between the different cultures. Indeed, in Italy, Bologna has always represented the cutting edge in terms of integration policies, adopting or promoting new approaches to immigration.

This shift towards an intercultural approach was marked by the name change of the Immigrant Service to the Intercultural Service (now the Office of Development, Intercultural Integration of Policies and the Third Sector). The public inquiry mentioned above is also part of this strategy and has been used to identify shared goals. More specifically, in the Triennial Plan of Health and Social Well-being 2009–2011, the municipality has set the following objectives, inspired by the results of the inquiry, namely to:

- foster immigrant associations by giving them premises and financial support;
- encourage intercultural communication initiatives and new forms of participation and political representation for immigrants;
- develop the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre, fostering second generation associationism;
- favour intercultural initiatives that address the whole local population, in order to promote a sense of belonging, personal and collective responsibility, solidarity and dialogue.

Regarding support for ethnic organisations, the research carried out by the Provincial Immigration Observatory (2003) shows that 30% of associations in the province of Bologna claim to run services on behalf of local administrations and over 30% receive public funds through contributions or covenants. However, mixed associations seem to be at an advantage: they run more public services and receive more funds than ethnic associations. This is probably the result of their Italians members' better knowledge of the local institutional context.

At local level, most of the economic support and the premises are usually distributed among ethnic and mixed organisations – as applies to any local organisations – through calls for tenders published both by the municipality and the neighbourhoods. In this regard, some associations pointed out that it is easier to receive money to start new projects than to continue existing ones, even if the results are positive and the initiatives can be regarded as good practices – which risks wasting the experience gained. Furthermore, while the local authorities intend that calls for tenders should guarantee transparency in the distribution of resources, some ethnic associations state that they face difficulties in answering these calls due to limited language skills and a lack of information. Thus, the risk is that the local administration support goes mainly to the more powerful, better established organisations, which are usually the mixed associations.

This last problem is linked to another issue that emerged from the Public Inquiry on Policies for Immigration: the public structures' ability to provide information and services to people with different cultures and languages. In Italy, this problem is usually solved by using cultural mediators; however, local authorities find it difficult to supply mediators for all of the different services that immigrants use, as the expense would be too high. Therefore, services with few foreign clients generally do not have mediators. Bologna has adopted a successful solution, which can be regarded as a best practice: the Centralised Service of Cultural Mediation and Social Interpreting. The service is contracted to a non-profit association of mediators, the Intercultural Association of Social and Health Mediators (*Associazione Mediatrici Interculturali in ambito Sociale e Sanitario*, AMISS). It allows different municipal services – as well as other public or private organisations, such as schools, hospitals, training centres or juvenile detention centres – the opportunity to use mediators from more than 20 countries. The service can be used both for meeting limited and occasional needs and for developing complex projects, such as the 'Parents' Permanent Workshop' set up in a city school to create opportunities for contact between Italian and foreign parents, their children and teaching staff.<sup>11</sup> The municipality and the Local Health Agency (*Azienda Sanitaria Locale*, ASL) pay AMISS an annual sum to guarantee a certain number of mediation hours for their own services, while other organisations pay each time that they use the service. In any case, it costs much less than hiring mediators for all of the services and organisations that use the centralised service.

In terms of communication and exchanges between majority and minority cultures, it is worth noting that in the city many organisations offer Italian language courses, often with the support of the municipality. Among them, the General Confederation of Italian Workers (*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*, Cgil) organises free Italian language courses that include trips to places of historic interest, learning the principles of the Constitution, and visits to city libraries and services. The idea is to increase immigrants' knowledge of both the national language and the local society and culture. The Cgil courses, which could be regarded as best practice, register a quite high attendance of about 500 persons a year.<sup>12</sup>

As well as these initiatives, the main instrument used by local authorities to implement the new intercultural approach is the city's Zonarelli Intercultural Centre, established in 1999 to foster immigrants' involvement in city life. Its task is to develop and maintain relations with ethnic and mixed associations. Indeed, according to the centre, nearly all of the associations in the province of Bologna are members, with the exception of a few associations located outside the city with a very small range of action. Therefore, it may be said that the municipality's relationships with associations are relatively institutionalised. In Bologna, the tendency to institutionalise civil society has always been strong, as the local authorities tend to organise, register, support and involve civil society organisations in institutional activities (Ponzo, 2008b).

<sup>11</sup> In terms of figures, in 2008 a total of 2,473 hours of mediation were provided: 1,580 in schools and 893 in other services.

<sup>12</sup> Trade unions also organise meetings for immigrants to provide information about legislative measures in the labour or immigration field; these are often held by immigrants who work with the trade unions on a regular basis.

The municipal Department of Social Policies provides the human and economic resources needed for the centre's functioning and appoints the director. The municipality runs the centre through a steering committee which comprises: councillors from the municipal Departments of Culture and Education, a representative of the Institution for Social Inclusion, the president of the neighbourhood where the centre is located, the president of the Municipal Conference, the provincial councillor from the Department of Social Policies and three representatives from associations. The associations are brought together in the Associations Coordination, which prepares activity proposals according to the steering committee's directions. The activities of the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre are also developed through involvement in European, national, regional and local calls for projects in the intercultural field. These calls can be answered by the municipality or the associations, while the projects are always implemented by partnerships.

The centre also hosts cultural, sporting and artistic events – such as language, cooking and music courses, meals, film screenings, concerts, seminars and conferences – to highlight the cultures of ethnic minorities and foster intercultural dialogue. However, some associations underline that not enough space is available, since many associations want to organise activities in the centre. Furthermore, they point out that the centre is not easy to reach, hampering immigrants' participation in the activities. In order to make it easier for immigrants to get involved, some associations have suggested establishing branches in different neighbourhoods.

Although several associations use the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre's premises and services or are involved in activities and projects in various ways, the organisations which take part in the Associations Coordination are only a small proportion of those that belong to the centre. There are several possible reasons for this. According to some representatives of the local administration, probably not all of the associations are really interested in intercultural dialogue. As noted earlier, while mixed associations are strongly committed to improving intercultural dialogue through social and cultural activities, ethnic associations are mainly concerned with preserving their culture of origin. Two further possible explanations are that the limited resources of many associations hamper involvement in the Associations Coordination and its planning activities, and the strong steering role played by local authorities might discourage associations' participation.

Despite these difficulties, the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre has become the main instrument for implementing the municipality's new intercultural approach. This strategy regards the second generation as a strategic element of intercultural dialogue. Indeed, the new Zonarelli Intercultural Centre Project focuses on the empowerment and social visibility of new generations and has been developed through the project '2 X 1 X 2g. Expression and Identity'. The latter is financed on the basis of an agreement on the integration of second generations between the central government – specifically, the Immigration Directorate-General of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (*Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali*) – and the Italian metropolitan cities, including Bologna. The '2 X 1 X 2g. Expression and Identity' project aims to foster the participation and social visibility of second generations and encourage exchanges with Italian young people. The Zonarelli Intercultural Centre implements most of the activities, due to its collaboration with immigrant associations. Among the most interesting activities are the following:

- 'Crossing TV' – a web television channel run by Italian and foreign young people;
- 'I go around with a radio on my shoulder' – a series of workshops on interculturality that will end with a feast and participation in the city festival Par Tòt Parata;
- the 'Second Generations Festival' – a festival featuring meetings, readings, videos, music and theatre performances promoted by second generations.

Together with the Documentation Centre-Laboratory for an Intercultural Education (*Centro di Documentazione-Laboratorio per un'Educazione Interculturale*, CD-LEI), which is a partner in the project, mentoring activities involving

both migrant teachers and migrant students have been developed in schools. Indeed, like the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre, CD-LEI can be regarded as another crucial instrument in implementing the new intercultural approach, even though it was established some time ago in 1991. It involves different municipal and provincial departments, as well as the University of Bologna and trade unions, and aims to promote intercultural dialogue in schools. CD-LEI offers support to young people from an ethnic background to help them find a stable balance between their family traditions and the hosting society. It also tries to foster the integration of students' families through initiatives such as Italian language courses and computer training for the mothers, discussion groups composed of Italian and foreign parents, and social activities developed within certain schools. Furthermore, CD-LEI offers permanent training for teachers on intercultural issues and support to schools for the development of intercultural projects; it fosters the exchange of good intercultural practices adopted at local, national and international levels and runs a multicultural library containing an archive of the intercultural projects carried out by schools. CD-LEI also promotes networks between public and non-profit organisations aiming to develop initiatives for the integration of foreign students and their families (Ognisanti, 2008).

With regard to promoting and raising awareness of immigrants' cultures of origin, in partnership with the 'Mother Tongues' immigrant association, the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre runs native language courses for second generations, as well as the 'Mother Tongues Festival'. The centre also organises the Festival of Cultures, designed to be a showcase for different cultures and an opportunity for exchanges between cultures, generations and genders. The festival aims to promote a new image of Bologna as the 'city of the new citizenship' through the expression of cultures that, although different, are all engaged in developing shared ways of exchange and dialogue.

Indeed, as a consequence of adopting an intercultural approach, the emphasis is more on exchange than on preserving immigrants' original cultures. In other words, the enhancement of the original cultures is seen not as a value in itself, but as a prerequisite of a fair and fruitful exchange between ethnic minorities and the local population. In this perspective, municipal initiatives focused on immigrants' original cultures address the whole of the local population rather than just the minorities.

Besides the above initiatives, other measures directed towards the majority population and aimed at improving relations with ethnic minority groups consist mainly of intercultural education in schools and cultural events. These include documentaries and films, meetings and conferences to redefine the concept of identity, give relevance to immigrants' original culture and dismantle prejudices and stereotypes. These events are usually promoted by associations and civil society organisations with the economic or logistical support of the municipality or neighbourhoods.

It is worth noting that although the municipality recognises the significant role played by mixed associations in favouring intercultural dialogue, no special action has been taken to encourage such organisations, which are treated like the others.

In addition to the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre, another best practice for the support of immigrant associations is the Metropolitan Forum of Immigrant Associations. A group of 40 associations established this forum in 1997 – two years before the Zonarelli – thanks to a European project carried out by the municipality. Up until 1999, the forum was located in the municipal Immigration Service's premises and was highly involved in formulating and implementing local integration policies. In 1999, the newly elected centre-right local government moved the forum into the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre. After that, its visibility and involvement in the municipality's integration policies diminished. However, the local administration continued to view it as a sort of representative body of immigrants, since no institution comprised elected representatives of the local foreign population. Since the establishment of the Neighbourhoods Councils of Foreign Citizens, the role of the forum has weakened. Nevertheless, it is still involved in municipal integration projects and in the management of services addressed to immigrants, as well as sometimes playing a consultative role in relation to local immigrant policies.

In the meantime, the municipality has moved the forum out of the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre in order to better distinguish the two platforms. Indeed, following the adoption of the new intercultural approach, their functions have become clearer, even though they are both committed to supporting immigrant associations. While the Zonarelli is more focused on intercultural dialogue, the forum mainly addresses foreigners and is composed of ethnic associations only. Furthermore, the municipality is not part of the forum's steering committee, which is elected by the associations through a democratic mechanism. The municipality provides the premises, while funding comes from local, national and European projects carried out by the forum. However, the forum's involvement in municipal projects and services can be regarded as a sort of indirect support. Currently, it runs a multimedia services centre and computer training courses for immigrants and associations. As part of a now concluded EQUAL<sup>13</sup> project, the forum ran a vocational guidance front office. Lastly, it takes part in the 'Civic Assistants' project on a voluntary basis, in partnership with the municipal Public Security department: 20 volunteers from the forum patrol public places such as schools or parks with the aim of preventing antisocial behaviour. To summarise, the forum can certainly be regarded as a best practice, since it fosters cooperation between different ethnic associations and is an important channel for immigrants' participation in civil society.

### Interreligious dialogue

While the municipality has invested considerably in intercultural dialogue, no special platforms have been established for fostering interreligious dialogue. Indeed, religious associations are excluded from the Metropolitan Forum of Immigrant Associations and the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre, which both explicitly state that religion has nothing to do with their activities. Relations between the municipality and religious minorities are not institutionalised and contacts are forged on specific issues, as will be shown in the next chapter on Muslim minorities. Nevertheless, the municipality and neighbourhoods usually provide venues for religious celebrations and prayer rooms.

According to municipal representatives, this situation is due to two main factors. Firstly, it is usually difficult to identify recognised and legitimate persons or organisations to represent whole religious communities, since in Italy no agreement exists between the state and all of the religious minorities. Secondly, the municipality prefers not to interfere in religious matters. In Bologna, religious matters have never been considered relevant to the municipality's actions or policies. The traditional predominance of the Communist Party in local government has probably contributed to this attitude; the limited development of interreligious dialogue therefore also appears to be a political legacy.

Indeed, the main local institution engaged in interreligious dialogue seems to be CD-LEI, the activities of which are primarily addressed to schools. In this regard, its main initiatives are (Ognisanti, 2008):

- training activities for school teachers, at the end of which CD-LEI produces materials distributed in schools and available online;
- promoting or participating in public events (mainly seminars) on interreligious dialogue;
- promoting projects to foster dialogue between cultures and religions in schools – mainly workshops in which external experts explain the cultures of different countries, including the religious aspects. According to CD-LEI's archive, about 10% of schools' intercultural projects include religious issues;
- promoting an intercultural approach to the teaching of the Roman Catholic religion. Looking at the Educational Supply Plan (*Piani dell'Offerta Formativa*, POF), this strategy seems to be particularly developed in schools with a high proportion of students from an ethnic background.

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<sup>13</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/equal/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/index_en.cfm).

The municipality recently promoted a travelling photography exhibition entitled ‘The skies above Bologna’ (I cieli sopra Bologna) on the practices of the different religious communities living in Bologna. Cultural associations organised music events, debates and workshops on interreligious dialogue related to the photography, which were supported by the neighbourhoods hosting the exhibition. For instance, the Saragozza Neighbourhood organised ‘Make dialogue’ – a series of five workshops focused on five different faiths – aiming to raise awareness of the different religious groups living in the city and foster a society based on pluralism. However, ‘The skies above Bologna’ exhibition is not part of a medium or long-term project on interreligious dialogue, being an isolated initiative promoted by cultural associations and supported by the Municipal Cabinet.

## Relations between ethnic groups

The local population has traditionally been open to immigration. Unfortunately, no surveys on Bologna are available. Some interesting results however emerge from a survey concerning the Emilia Romagna region (Colombo, 2007). As Colombo shows, the population of Emilia Romagna has moderate positions on immigration: small proportions of the population consider that immigration implies only disadvantages or only advantages (Table 5).

Table 5: *Advantages and disadvantages of foreign population*

**‘Taking into consideration both today and the future, do you think that the foreign population in the region implies...’ (%)**

Only advantages	8.7
More advantages than disadvantages	37.4
More disadvantages than advantages	33.1
Only disadvantages	11.3
No answer	9.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: *Colombo, 2007*

Among the respondents who think that immigration implies only disadvantages or more disadvantages than advantages, a larger proportion of people do not know any migrants or have a local or national identification rather than a global one.

Regarding relations between minorities, nearly all of the city’s ethnic and mixed associations are in contact with other associations; these contacts are obviously fostered by the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre and the Metropolitan Forum of Immigrant Associations (Provincial Immigration Observatory, 2003). Trade unions – which are strong and well-established in Bologna – also play their part, representing a relevant means of interethnic cooperation, although they operate more in the social than cultural field.<sup>14</sup> For instance, Cgil has an Immigration Committee comprising Italians and foreigners of different origins, which is responsible for orienting the trade union’s policies on immigration.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, in some SMEs, the trade union representatives are immigrants and represent not only foreign workers but also Italian workers.

<sup>14</sup> In the cultural field, the main intervention consists of the language classes mentioned earlier.

<sup>15</sup> This committee exists not only at municipal level but also at regional and national levels.

However, all of the associations interviewed highlight the need to develop stronger cooperation between associations, besides those encouraged and supported by local institutions. So far, immigrant associations have not autonomously established relevant common organisations; the Metropolitan Forum of Immigrant Associations and Zonarelli Intercultural Centre are probably not considered by immigrant associations as effective instruments for lobbying the municipality. Nonetheless, the associations interviewed believe that the problems faced by the various ethnic organisations are very similar and, if they acted and lobbied together, they would probably obtain more from the municipality. However, according to these associations, competition for resources prevails over cooperation. This could in part be a negative effect of the calls for tenders used by local institutions to distribute resources, since this mechanism generally tends to emphasise competition rather than cooperation. On the other hand, in terms of projects, the calls often reward networks of organisations fostering cooperation or at least the creation of clusters of associations working together.

Despite these problems, interviewees did not highlight any conflicts between different ethnic minorities. Nevertheless, during the field visit, immigrants from Arab countries often underlined that immigrants from the Indian subcontinent are particularly isolated, hampering cooperation. This perception is probably exacerbated because it is unexpected among people belonging to the same religious minority. However, it is true that Bangladeshi and Pakistani immigrants have great difficulties in speaking Italian and sometimes only know a few words, even if they have been in Italy for a long time or are presidents of relevant associations. This difficulty could be the product of infrequent relations with other Italian and foreign groups; equally, it can hinder relations with other immigrant associations and minorities that use Italian as a common language.

### Public communication

The Municipality of Bologna has not developed a strategy for public communication relating to ethnic and religious minorities. Nevertheless, according to municipal representatives, since the Public Inquiry on Policies for Immigration in 2007, all of the local authorities have emphasised interculturality in their public communications about immigration, as well as the contribution of the different cultures to local society.

Furthermore, in November 2008, local authorities – including the Bologna Municipality – signed an Agreement on Intercultural Communication promoted by the Emilia Romagna Region. Various Italian media organisations and several multicultural media, the Intercultural Centres of Emilia Romagna and the University of Bologna also signed the agreement. The objectives are to:

- improve immigrants' opportunities for self-representation;
- enhance dialogue and mutual knowledge between immigrants and the native population;
- increase communication on institutional initiatives.

Actions that should be undertaken are:

- research and data gathering on the representation of immigration in the media;
- information campaigns directed at journalists;
- the promotion of multicultural media;
- the development of training activities.



So far, except for some training activities for journalists from the multicultural media, the only action adopted has been the creation of a network of multicultural media at regional level, called Emilia Romagna Intercultural Media (*Media Interculturali Emilia Romagna*, MIER). Some of the multiethnic media which are part of the network are afraid that the agreement's impact will be limited since it depends on the financial resources available to implement the above activities. Indeed, the journalists from the local media who were interviewed had never heard of the agreement.

Up until now, no foreigners have been on the editorial staff of local media. Nevertheless, the ethnic associations, the Metropolitan Forum of Ethnic Associations and the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre are usually consulted by local media in relation to ethnic and religious minorities. Furthermore, the local media try to pay attention to ethnic community integration processes. For instance, a couple of years ago, the *Resto del Carlino* – a traditional Bologna newspaper which is usually classified as being politically centre-right – dedicated a twice-weekly page to an ethnic community. The page addressed both foreigners, providing useful information, and the local population interested in knowing more about the immigrant population living in the city. The more left-wing newspapers also try to provide information about the life of immigrants in Bologna, giving news on ethnic or minority religious festivals, and the integration of the second generation in schools, for example.

However, the 'media logic' usually prevails. According to the people interviewed, the local media usually only pay attention to immigration-related matters when conflicts or problems arise. This was the case of the mosque, for instance, (see next chapter) and the Council of foreign citizens of the province of Bologna. As Brambilla (2008) points out, during the council's first year of activity, the media did not pay attention to its work or position on topics even if they were on the media agenda, whereas attention grew when it came to the problematic election of the council president.

Regarding the ethnic media, as already noted, the promotion of self-representation by second generations is one of the main goals of the '2 X 1 X 2g. Expression and Identity' project organised by the Bologna Municipality and the central government through the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre. One of the main results is 'Crossing TV', a web television channel managed by Italian and second generation young people with a migration background. Its purpose is to convey the self-representation of young people, including those belonging to the second generation of immigrants. The project was very successful and is often indicated as best practice in national conferences and seminars. It has attracted the attention not only of scholars but also of private enterprises, as well as public and private institutions needing consultancy on second generations' communication practices. This fact is crucial – as the Editor-in-Chief of Crossing TV, Silvia Storelli, underlined – since the local authorities usually only fund project start-ups rather than the continuation of existing initiatives, as explained earlier.

More general ethnic media are not widespread in Bologna. The only two local ethnic media mentioned during the interviews were the newspaper *Il Tamburo* [The Drum] and Asterisco Radio [Asterisk Radio]. These are the only local media managed by an editorial staff composed purely of foreigners, albeit from different countries. Both of these media, which focus on matters concerning immigration and integration, came into being within the Metropolitan Forum of Ethnic Associations and were initially financed by the National Fund for Integration Policy. Currently, they are still supported by public funds; otherwise, they could face closure. This kind of editorial project does not have a sufficient market to survive autonomously. Among the media with a mixed editorial staff, it is worth noting *El Ghibli*, an online review of migration literature, developed with the support of the province of Bologna.

Bologna has no ethnic local media produced by one minority only or using foreign languages. Some years ago, the Pakistani community tried to produce a local newspaper in their language but the project failed due to limited sales. According to the persons interviewed, this sort of local media is not competitive: if ethnic minorities want news about their countries of origin, they use the internet or satellite television. Otherwise, for information on local services and events, it is better to use Italian to address all of the foreign population, since none of the ethnic communities is large enough to guarantee a sufficient circulation.

## Summary and lessons learnt

Intercultural dialogue is fairly well developed in Bologna. There appear to be three main reasons for this. Firstly, exchanges and dialogue have been fostered by the great development of ethnic and mixed associations, which seems to spring – at least partly – from a strong local legacy of associationism.

Secondly, intercultural dialogue has improved due to the municipality's support for immigrant associations. For instance, the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre and the Metropolitan Forum of Ethnic Associations provide key logistical support for associations. Furthermore, they offer channels of communication with the local administration and give assistance in raising the visibility of minorities in the city. However, the associations do not have much involvement in the planning activities of the platforms, and some associations feel the need to develop further cooperation in order to have their voices heard by the local administration. Indeed, the fairly strong dependence of these platforms on the municipality probably limits their independence and voice.

The third and probably most significant factor is the municipality's ability to combine specific measures like the above platforms with the attempt not to treat immigrant associations differently from other associations: they answer the calls for tenders just like any other association and they take part in the Services Conferences like all of the other important local organisations. This difficult balance is a key element of the new intercultural approach recently adopted by the municipality. According to this approach, reinforcing immigrants' cultures of origin is not a value in itself but an instrument which guarantees fair and fruitful exchanges with the native population.

# Local intercultural policies towards Muslim communities

## Major issues, demands and interests

From the fieldwork, it emerged that the major demand of Muslim minorities in Bologna concerns places of worship. The city has many small prayer rooms located in public – former or still active – first accommodation structures or in private apartments and garages, while the largest one is in the Islamic Cultural Centre of Bologna. Thus, Muslims usually ask for bigger prayer rooms and, during Ramadan, for dedicated spaces that can host all of the believers. The municipality and the neighbourhoods usually try to satisfy these demands according to the available premises.

However, these requests have recently been channelled into calls for a proper mosque, generating great debate in the city. According to the President of the Islamic Cultural Centre, Mr Altounji, the mosque issue is related to the necessity of having a sufficiently large place of worship that belongs to the Islamic community rather than the municipality, in order to be sure that it can never be closed down. The other, non-religious associations of Muslim immigrants interviewed during the field visit are also interested in the mosque, not only for reasons of space but also to boost recognition of the city's Muslim community.

The opinion surveys register an open attitude among the local population towards the idea of building a mosque. For instance, according to the survey carried out in the Emilia Romagna region, two thirds of the residents state that they would be in favour of the creation of a non-Catholic place of worship near their homes; in the larger municipalities, such as Bologna, the level of acceptance was even higher (Table 6).

Table 6: *Views regarding other places of worship*

**'If a non-Catholic place of worship was built near your home (for instance a mosque, a Buddhist temple or an Orthodox church), would you be against or in favour of it?' (%)**

In favour of	62.7
Against	30.8
No answer	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: *Colombo, 2007*

Nevertheless, when this idea became a real possibility, hostility became quite widespread among the residents of Bologna. Some of the ethnic associations interviewed reported their disappointment at this attitude. However, Mr Altounji was not surprised: according to him, the hostility of the local population towards Muslims has grown considerably in recent years, as a consequence of international terrorism and the increase in the number of Muslims living in the city. No discriminatory behaviour or hate crimes specifically directed towards Muslims were mentioned during the field visit and no longitudinal studies on this topic are available to support this conjecture. Nevertheless, the Islamic community has gained increasing importance among the concerns of the local civil society, becoming one of the main issues of public debate in recent years, as will be explained below.

Another significant demand from the Muslim community concerned the creation of an Islamic cemetery, but this was met in 2004, after several years of negotiation. The municipality finally reserved part of the city cemetery for Muslims, where the tombs point to Mecca and there is a specific section for foetuses. However, with regard to the most problematic elements – that is, the practice of permanent burial and the placement of the body directly into the ground wrapped in a simple, plain cloth, as Islam prescribes – Italian law prevailed: the possibility to exhume the body after 10 years and the

obligation of using a coffin have been imposed (Ghesini, 2004). The interviewees from the Islamic minority consider this compromise to be acceptable.

Besides these needs related to religion, the Islamic Cultural Centre and the associations of immigrants from Islamic countries place great importance on the transmission of cultural and religious principles to new generations and would like to receive support from the municipality, at least to pay the teachers. As explained, the municipality has developed a specific project in this regard called ‘Mother Tongues’, which aims to teach the language spoken by parents to second generations. Some associations view the project positively while others consider that the language courses provided are not intensive enough to be effective and prefer to organise these activities themselves.

Lastly, Muslim minorities underlined the need for further recognition from the local administration. Indeed according to Mr Altounji – who has been in Italy since the 1950s and has been in contact with the local administration since the beginning of the 1990s – nowadays the municipality is more cautious in openly supporting the Islamic organisations than in the past, because the local population’s attitude towards Muslims has become more negative in recent years.

### General approaches and policies towards Muslim groups

The Municipality of Bologna has not developed an integration policy specifically addressed to Muslims, since it is not considered necessary in light of the absence of significant problems related to this religious minority. With regard to contacts with the Islamic communities, they are neither institutionalised nor regular – as is the case with other religious communities. Nevertheless, no Muslim communities are totally isolated. Given the erratic nature of the contacts, the municipality and Muslim minorities agree on the need to strengthen relations and make them more regular. However, so far, no specific actions have been undertaken to achieve this goal.

The reasons for the sporadic nature of contacts echo those cited for the marginal role of interreligious dialogue in municipal policies: religious matters are not regarded as an arena for public action and the lack of representatives recognised by all of the Muslims hinders the development of stable dialogue. Nevertheless, the local administration gets in touch with Muslim minorities when matters concerning the Islamic religion become issues of public relevance. In these situations, the municipality usually identifies the main interlocutor in the Islamic Cultural Centre, which is the biggest and one of the oldest Muslim organisations in the city and the only one with an explicitly religious nature; the others are ethnic cultural associations that also carry out religious activities, such as running small prayer rooms. However, this solution entails some problems (see below).

The main sections of the local administration that have contacts with Muslim minorities are the Department of Social Policies and, at least during the last local government (2004–2009), the Head of Cabinet. Muslims are also part of some Neighbourhood Councils of Foreign Citizens but not as representatives of the local Islamic communities. As Mr Altounji explained, Muslim minorities do not want to become political actors: the intention is to keep political matters separate from religious affairs, in this way following the municipality’s approach in this regard.

Even though there are no institutionalised contacts with Muslim minorities, they receive the support of the municipality, which grants prayer venues. As explained earlier, the municipality has provided the building where the Islamic Cultural Centre is located, and the other prayer rooms in the city. Apart from this support, the centre does not receive any money from the local administration and its only funds come from worshippers’ donations.

The centre does not receive financial aid from abroad either. This is the result of a desire to avoid influence from foreign countries, as Mr Altounji explained. Indeed, he mentioned that the Moroccan government puts some pressure on the

centre to accept economic support in order to create established places of worship where Moroccan national festivals can be celebrated, but to date with no result.

While the municipality is not greatly committed to supporting interreligious dialogue, the various religious groups seem to be a little more active. Public meetings and seminars involving representatives of the different religions – especially Catholics, Jews and Muslims – are sometimes organised. The main activity in this regard consists of workshops organised every two months by the local Catholic Church and the Islamic Cultural Centre. Each workshop analyses a specific topic from two perspectives: Islamic and Catholic. Particular attention is given to encouraging the participation of young people, in order to foster tolerance among the new generations of both religions.

Despite these initiatives, the relations between Muslims and the Catholic Church are fairly ambivalent. Although cooperation and dialogue are fostered, at times conflicts arise. For instance, the Bishop of Bologna recently stated publicly that the numerous shops run by Muslims in the city centre might be financed by money from the oil trade, insinuating the existence of ambiguous, potentially unethical business influenced by foreign countries. The bishop also openly criticised the Muslim common prayer in Piazza Maggiore – Bologna's main square, where the municipality and the Basilica of San Petronio are situated – during the pro-Gaza demonstration held on 3 January 2009. The Muslims explained that it was the time of one of the five prayers prescribed by Islam and that they did not intend to challenge the Catholics; however, some – including the bishop – did not give credence to this interpretation.<sup>16</sup>

Although inside the local Catholic Church there are different stances on this issue, the positions of the bishop could in part be explained by the fact that the Diocese of Bologna has always been particularly traditional (Ponzo, 2006). In fact, the previous archbishop was also well known in the country for his opposition to Muslim immigration, which he saw as a threat to Italian Catholic culture (Allievi, 2003). The result is that the Catholic Church in Bologna is sometimes involved in initiatives aiming to foster interreligious dialogue with Muslims, but it cannot be regarded as a crucial promoter of this dialogue.

## Good practice examples of improving relations with Muslim groups

As already explained, the municipality has no policies on developing relations with Muslim minorities. The negotiation concerning the building of the mosque probably represents the municipality's main effort to date to establish a dialogue with Muslim minorities and foster relations between them and the majority population. Indeed, this could change the current pattern of relations and is worth exploring in detail.

This issue has been a challenging one since the beginning. The municipality's main interlocutor has always been the Islamic Cultural Centre. Although the other Muslim associations interviewed did not openly criticise this choice, the local administration underlined that a large part of the Muslim minority does not feel represented by the centre. According to Mr Altounji, the leadership of the mosque should be held by Arabs since 'Arabic is the language of the Koran'. During the field visit, the associations composed of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent – who, as noted earlier, do not currently attend the Islamic Cultural Centre's prayer room – declared that they will attend the Friday prayer in the new mosque but that they would also like the sermon to be translated into their native languages. These linguistic problems seem to conceal difficult relations between the different Muslim communities, which could be the

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<sup>16</sup> 'Raccolta firme del Carroccio: no alla moschea in via Pallavicini', *Corriere di Bologna*, 7 January 2009; 'An e Lega contro l'Islam. Presidio al Crescentone', *Il Bologna*, 10 January 2009.

cause of future leadership conflicts. In fact, in Bologna, Muslims from Asia are at least as numerous as Muslims from Arab countries, even if they arrived later and are less integrated. It is therefore unlikely that they will relinquish having an influence over the management of the mosque. Furthermore, conflicts among Arab migrants are also likely to develop since the centre is strongly linked to UCOII, which is regarded as one of the most radical national Muslim federations and is thus criticised by part of the local Muslim community.

It is important to underline that the idea of building a mosque and the central role assigned to the Islamic Cultural Centre in this regard spring from the fact that the centre has a piece of land bought by the Islamic Goods Management Body of UCOII, where – according to the City Plan – it is possible to build buildings of worship. Thus, it may be inferred that the local administration has been forced to undertake the negotiation and choose that particular interlocutor. Indeed, as long as the construction of the mosque respects urban rules, it cannot be forbidden, unless the Municipal Council changes the rules to preserve public interests.

Given this situation, the local administration made two requests to the Islamic Culture Centre, which were both accepted. The first concerned the establishment of a Foundation for the management of the centre's social and cultural (but not religious) activities which will involve it managing the mosque, since the municipality considers these as activities of public importance. More precisely, the municipality requested the establishment of a steering committee with six members, three appointed by the Muslim community and three appointed by the local authorities. The Islamic Cultural Centre was initially against this solution due to the fact – as Mr Altounji explained – that in the future the local administration could be led by Islamophobic parties, such as the Northern League (*Lega Nord*), which might hamper the centre's activities. However, it finally accepted this solution since the building of the mosque was regarded as a priority. Nevertheless, the municipality's request underlines what was said previously regarding the platforms for intercultural dialogue: the municipality tends to play a strong steering role in immigrant associations' activities since in Bologna the tendency to institutionalise the local civil society has always been strong.

The second request of the local administration concerned the location of the mosque. The land at the disposal of the Islamic Cultural Centre is not considered a good place to build a mosque, since the high attendance at the Friday prayer could create traffic problems. Thus, the municipality offered another piece of land in the San Donato neighbourhood, proposing an exchange of land. The Islamic Cultural Centre accepted but another problem arose: many of the neighbourhood's residents raised doubts about the new mosque. The municipality's response can be regarded as successful good practice. It undertook a participatory process that also involved the Islamic Cultural Centre, and described the project to the residents and discussed it with them. After several meetings, most of the residents changed their minds. This initiative demonstrates that Islamophobic attitudes can be overcome through dialogue and interactions.

Despite these positive results, the negotiation reached a stalemate in 2009. According to the municipality, the Islamic Culture Centre did not respect the agreement while, according to the centre, the municipality stalled the negotiation so as not to lose votes in the local elections in June 2009. It is worth noting that all of the mayoral candidates, both centre-right and centre-left, were against a big city mosque. The centre-right candidate from the People of Freedom (*Il Popolo della Libertà*, PdL) – formerly known as Forward Italy (*Forza Italia*) – was against any mosque, while the candidates of the centre-left Democratic Party (*Partito Democratico*, PD) and the centre-right civic list expressed a preference for small places of worship scattered throughout the city rather than one big mosque.<sup>17</sup> Thus, even though the Democratic Party won the local election, the negotiations may have to start again.

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<sup>17</sup> 'La moschea? Non nel mio mandato', *Il Resto del Carlino*, 17 January 2009, p. 5; 'Delbono dice no alla moschea', *Il Bologna*, 23 January 2009, p. 1; 'Giusto il no alla grande moschea', *Il Resto del Carlino*, 23 January 2009, p. 5; 'No alla grande moschea', *Il Resto del Carlino*, 13 February 2009, p. 4; 'Moschea, ancora un anno in via Pallavicini. Gli islamici: "No, soluzione entro 100 giorni"', *Corriere di Bologna*, 22 April 2009, p. 6; 'Dal no alla mega moschea ai graffiti. I programmi (quasi) fotocopiati dei big', *Corriere di Bologna*, 12 May 2009, p. 1; 'Moschea? Neanche piccole. E lotta alla prostituzione', *Il Resto del Carlino*, 20 May 2009, p. 5.

## Public communication

Since the municipality has not developed a specific policy towards Muslims, it does not have a specific communication strategy concerning this religious group. This is evident in relation to the mosque issue. As the local administration underlined, the local population's initial opposition to the mosque was partly due to the poorly managed communication process and the inability of the local authorities to convey the right messages. The issue was presented in the wrong way. For instance, the announcement by the Islamic Cultural Centre that the Bologna mosque would have the highest minaret in Italy was a source of great alarm.

The positive aspect is that the centre had the opportunity to express its position in the local media. Indeed, it is always consulted by the media when they report on issues concerning Islam, as Mr Altounji explained. This practice was confirmed in a review of the 2009 local newspaper articles on the mosque issue.

However, local media mainly devote attention to the local Muslim community when conflicts arise. As noted, the other main Islam-related topic that the local media covered in 2009 was the Muslim common prayer during a pro-Gaza demonstration in the main square of Bologna where the Basilica of San Petronio is situated.

Moreover, although the Islamic Cultural Centre is always consulted by the local media on issues related to Islam, in the cases of the mosque and the common prayer in the central square great attention was given to the Northern League, despite its fairly marginal role in the local political context and its persistent anti-immigrant stance. Since this attention was common to centre-right and centre-left local newspapers, it would appear not to be related to the political orientation of the local media but rather to the media practice of stirring up controversy to sell more papers.

While there are some examples of local ethnic media, there is no local Muslim media. Mr Altounji believes that local Muslim media could be useful. Surprisingly, he identifies the target market as the local population rather than Muslim migrants and considers that such media would help to convey a positive image of Muslim minorities, thereby combating stereotypes. According to Mr Altounji, it would be even more useful to regularly reserve a page in various international magazines or newspapers, which would be devoted to explaining the problems faced by Islamic minorities in Europe and proposing possible solutions. This strategy reasserts the close links between international events and political positions, on the one hand, and local public opinion, on the other. The idea highlights another notable element: Muslim minorities' interest in local public opinion and interreligious exchanges.

## Summary and lessons learnt

The Muslim minorities appear to be well integrated. Nevertheless, relations with the local population and with the municipality could certainly be improved, as both sides hope. The negotiation concerning the mosque highlights the potential of and obstacles to this process.

On the one hand, the mosque issue revealed the attitude of suspicion among the local population towards Muslim minorities, which was greater than emerged from opinion surveys. On the other, it showed how dialogue can successfully overcome this attitude and improve relations between Muslims and the native population. Indeed, the participatory process undertaken by the municipality produced some good results.

Secondly, the negotiation process regarding the mosque highlights a frequent problem in local authorities' relations with Muslim communities: the lack of a representative for the entire local Islamic population. In the case of the mosque – as in the case of the Muslim cemetery – the Islamic minorities were not able to reach agreement autonomously and designate one or a few representatives. In both cases, the municipality chose to negotiate with the Islamic Cultural Centre

since it is the main Muslim religious organisation in Bologna; however, many minorities – including the large Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities – do not feel represented by the centre and their voices risk remaining unheard. To date, no acceptable solution has been found in Bologna in this regard.

Lastly, the municipality's attitude risks reinforcing the distrust of the local population with regard to Muslim minorities. The request to establish a Foundation with a steering committee half composed of local authority representatives, responsible for managing the cultural and social activities of the mosque, probably springs from the 'institutionalising' tendency of the local authorities. It also suggests however that the Muslim community's activities need to be kept under control as they might be dangerous or illegal. Furthermore, the mayoral candidates of all of the political parties showed very cautious positions concerning the building of the mosque. Despite some positive intentions, this attitude from the political authorities could damage the recognition of Muslim minorities.

Unfortunately, while in many Italian cities the Catholic Church is relatively active in forging interreligious dialogue, in Bologna it shows a rather ambiguous attitude towards Muslims and risks feeding the fears of the local population.



# Intergroup relations and radicalisation

## Radicalisation within majority population

No radicalisation tendencies within the majority population emerged during the field visit. Nevertheless, the Northern League – a party characterised by its anti-immigrant stance – organised protests against the building of the mosque and the common Muslim prayer in the major square of the city during the pro-Gaza demonstration in January 2009. This is not, however, a local phenomenon but a national one; the Northern League is one of the two parties in the national government coalition. Furthermore, in Bologna, the party is not particularly well-established. In fact, despite its opposition to the mosque, in Bologna the Northern League recognises that Muslims have the right to have places of worship, and it acts in a less provocative manner than in Italian cities where it is more embedded.

Several reasons for the lack of radicalising tendencies became evident from the field visit; these are summarised in Table 7.

Table 7: *Factors preventing radicalisation among majority population*

Factors preventing radicalisation	Effects of prevention of radicalisation among majority population
High level of economic activity and high demand for immigrant workforce	Low local competition in the labour market and strong awareness of the economic advantages related to immigration
Left-wing political tradition characterised by pro-immigrant stance	Marginalisation of extremist and xenophobic movements and parties
Local government tendency to institutionalise civil society organisations by organising, registering, supporting and involving associations in institutional activities	No isolated local organisations
Adoption of anti-racism and anti-discrimination programmes with preventive aims	Prevention of xenophobic movements

Firstly, Bologna has shown a high rate of economic activity and, at the same time, a great need for foreign workers to compensate for the decrease in the local population; thus, immigrants are crucial for SMEs located in the area. This situation probably reinforces the perception of the positive impact of immigration on local society and prevents the development of xenophobic movements related to the idea of competing with foreigners in the labour market.

Secondly, the left-wing political tradition of the city government has always marginalised extremist and xenophobic movements and parties in the local political context.

Thirdly, local authorities tend to institutionalise the civil society by establishing specific platforms, federations of associations and local representative bodies. As a result, there are no isolated organisations without contacts with the local authorities. This situation obviously contributes to preventing the development of radicalisation processes.

Lastly, the local administration has adopted several measures to combat racism and discrimination, which will be explained in the next section.

## General approach, policies and measures against radicalisation

Since the 1990s, the Municipality of Bologna has developed anti-racism and anti-discrimination programmes to prevent radicalisation processes in the majority population. In the 1990s, for instance, the municipality – together with the NGO Cooperation for the Development of Emerging Countries (*Cooperazione per lo Sviluppo dei Paesi Emergenti*, Cospe) –

promoted the training course 'Police for a multicultural society' which involved about 60 police officers.<sup>18</sup> They also established the project 'Monitoring racist behaviour', which set up a free telephone helpline for reporting discriminatory behaviour.

The municipality is a member of the Coalition of Cities Against Racism (ECCAR). This coalition was established in Nuremberg on 10 December 2004, as an initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It aims to establish a network of European cities to support learning processes and the exchange of skills relevant to combating racism. The activities of ECCAR are based on a Ten-Point Plan of Action, which defines the following areas of action, supplemented by several practical examples for municipal measures and activities:

1. greater vigilance against racism;
2. assessing racism and discrimination and monitoring municipal policies;
3. better support for the victims of racism and discrimination;
4. more participation and better informed city dwellers;
5. the city as an active supporter of equal opportunity practices;
6. the city as an equal opportunities employer and service provider;
7. fair access to housing;
8. challenging racism and discrimination through education;
9. promoting cultural diversity;
10. hate crimes and conflicts management.

The plan aims to support member cities in their struggle against racism and help them set priorities, optimise their strategies and intensify their cooperation.

The Municipality of Bologna is also involved in the Regional Centre Against Discrimination. Within this project, the municipality manages two types of offices:

- the 'antenna nodes', which provide information, collect reports of discrimination and promote projects aiming to raise awareness and combat xenophobia and discrimination;
- the 'connection node', which coordinates the front offices located in the province, which are run by local administrations and non-profit organisations.

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<sup>18</sup> Immigration Services Institution (*Istituzione dei Servizi per l'Immigrazione, ISI*), *Relazione di consuntivo 1998 – Balance Sheet 1998*, Bologna, ISI, 1999.

Another important instrument in combating discrimination against immigrants is the Ombudsman, although this does not specifically address foreign citizens. It is elected by the city council but is independent. Its main task is to defend citizens against measures and behaviours delayed, omitted or irregularly adopted by the local administration. Citizens who apply to the Ombudsman are not charged a fee.

To summarise, the key elements of the municipality’s fight against racism and discrimination are:

- the prevention strategy, which has led to the adoption of specific actions, even though discrimination behaviours are not widespread;
- close cooperation with other local public institutions and non-profit organisations working in this field.

This strategy seems to have produced good results to date, as explained in the previous section.

### Radicalisation within migrant and/or minority population

No radicalisation tendencies within the minority population were indicated during the field visit. According to the results of the city visit, the factors that might explain this situation seem to be similar to those underpinning the lack of radicalisation among the majority population.

Table 8: *Factors preventing radicalisation among minority population*

Main factors	Effects of prevention of radicalisation among foreign minorities
High level of economic activity and high demand for immigrant workforce	Good economic and social integration of immigrants
Left-wing political tradition characterised by pro-immigrant stance	Advanced integration policies favour immigrants’ inclusion in local society and avoid marginalisation.  Local authorities’ attention to the foreign population avoids immigrants becoming resentful towards the local government and population
Local government tendency to institutionalise civil society organisations by organising, registering, supporting and involving associations in institutional activities	No isolated ethnic organisations

In the Bologna area, the high demand for immigrant workers and the advanced integration policies have favoured the economic and social integration of immigrants, helping to prevent radicalisation processes.

Furthermore, local authorities’ attention to the foreign population and their commitment to integration policies have prevented immigrants from developing processes of marginalisation and feelings of resentment towards the local government and population.

Lastly, the local authorities’ tendency to institutionalise civil society has limited the number of isolated foreign groups, preventing radicalisation.

## Radicalisation: summary and lessons learnt

In conclusion, radicalisation elements are absent in Bologna in both the majority and minority populations. This situation seems to be the result of economic, social and institutional factors, namely the:

- flourishing economy up until 2009;
- left-wing political tradition;
- contacts developed by the municipality with civil society organisations, preventing their isolation;
- municipality's prevention strategy and its strong cooperation with other local organisations active in this field.

It is impossible to identify which of these elements plays a more important role in limiting radicalisation. In any case, it is evident that the municipality has played a central role.

# Key challenges and lessons for CLIP

In Bologna, intercultural dialogue is fairly advanced. This is partly due to the legacy of local associationism, which has encouraged the development of ethnic associations and mixed associations in particular, which constitute an important means of exchange between different cultures. Furthermore, strong local feminist movements have favoured immigrant women's participation in associations and have encouraged a reflection on gender roles within the immigrant organisations. Therefore, the social context of the receiving society and the forms of local associationism could be regarded as vital factors influencing the ways in which immigrants participate in civil society and shape intercultural dialogue.

However, given the objective of CLIP projects, this study is more interested in municipal strategies and actions. From this perspective, the main lesson learnt by the case of Bologna is the relevance of specific platforms in developing intercultural dialogue. The two main platforms – which can still be regarded as good practices 10 years after their creation – are the city's Zonarelli Intercultural Centre and the Metropolitan Forum of Immigrant Associations. Although both have the task of supporting immigrant associations, their functions have been clearly distinguished: Zonarelli focuses mainly on intercultural dialogue and usually develops activities that address the entire local population, whereas the Metropolitan Forum is mainly focused on ethnic associations and its activities primarily address the foreign population.

Thanks to these platforms, the municipality not only gives support to immigrant associations but also provides opportunities to organise activities and exchange ideas. Furthermore, in this way it fosters the involvement of immigrant associations in municipal projects and the implementation of services: ethnic organisations can raise money by carrying out activities useful to the local society. Thus, this involvement becomes a sort of 'citizenship school' enhancing the participation of associations and, at the same time, fostering the intercultural nature of local services and policies. However, the ample use of calls for tenders for this purpose could have a negative effect, by favouring stronger associations over weaker ones.

Another lesson that can be learnt from the case of Bologna is the crucial role that the visibility of minorities can play in the development of intercultural dialogue. The adoption of an intercultural approach has raised the visibility of the immigrants' cultures of origin and has led to most of the municipality's intercultural activities addressing not only ethnic minorities but also the majority population, in order to convey the idea that all of the minority groups living in Bologna contribute to creating the local culture.

The involvement of second generations in intercultural dialogue could also be regarded as good practice and a lesson learnt. Isolation, radicalism and rejection of the host society are usually more prevalent among second generation than first generation migrants, since young people with ethnic backgrounds often find it difficult to develop a clear sense of belonging to places or groups. Furthermore, the idea of also involving Italian young people seems to be the best way to develop an effective intercultural approach. To make young people – both Italian and foreign – the key elements in the development of a new intercultural society could be a winning choice. However, this project was just beginning at the time of writing and it was impossible to predict how successful it would be.

Finally, the municipality's programmes to combat racism and discrimination are a crucial element in fostering intergroup relations in Bologna; they contribute to preventing radicalisation processes and develop a fertile terrain for fruitful exchanges and cooperation between the different cultures.

With regard to intercultural dialogue, the main challenge is probably religion, which is an important part of a culture. In Bologna, religion has never been considered an object of public action. However, if religious issues are not managed, they risk hampering intercultural dialogue and intergroup relations, especially in the case of the Muslim minority, which

is the largest religious minority in the city. The activities of CD-LEI in this regard are welcomed and are one of the few interventions that the municipality has undertaken in this field. For example, the participatory process concerning the construction of the mosque in the San Donato neighbourhood had a positive outcome, persuading residents to change their minds and look favourably on the mosque. This episode suggests that municipal intervention could help to overcome prejudices and tensions between the different religious communities and in particular towards Muslims.

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# List of persons and organisations interviewed

Berardino Cocchianella, Head of the Municipal Cabinet

Chris Tomesani, Head of the Office of Development, Intercultural Integration of Policies and the Third Sector, Municipality of Bologna

Fabiana Forni, Office of Development, Intercultural Integration of Policies and the Third Sector, Municipality of Bologna

Fausto Amelii, Director of the Zonarelli Intercultural Centre

Asher Colombo, Professor at the University of Bologna

Rita Bartolomei, journalist at *Il Resto del Carlino*

Linda Chiaramonte, freelance journalist

Elena Nicolini, Editor of the Zonarelli Newsletter

Silvia Storelli, Editor-in-chief of Crossing TV

Roberto Morgantini, Manager of the Foreign Workers Centre of the General Confederation of Italian Workers (*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro, Cgil*)

Richard Amechi, President of the Metropolitan Forum of Immigrant Associations

Radwan Altounji, President of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Bologna

Safir Association

Association of Young Moroccans (*Jeunesse Marocaine Association*)

Diversamente Association

KankurwaKai Kashi Association

Federation of Filipino Associations Bologna

Greater Dhakka Bangladesh Association

Association of Bangladesh Community

True Integration Association (*Associazione Integrazione Vera*)

**Irene Ponzo**, International and European Forum on Migration Research (FIERI), Turin, Italy

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