

SPRAR
**PROTECTION SYSTEM
FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS
AND REFUGEES**

SUMMARY OF THE 2008-2009 REPORT



SPRAR

Sistema di Protezione
per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati



DIPARTIMENTO PER LE LIBERTÀ CIVILI
E L'IMMIGRAZIONE





CONTRIBUTION

By Prefetto **Mario Morcone**,
Head of the Department for Civil Liberties
and Immigration at the Ministry of Internal Affairs

The European Commission is in the process of revising Directive 2003/09/CE, concerning the minimum standards to be applied in the granting of asylum, with the intention of achieving a European Community Right to Asylum, and of ensuring greater harmonisation of the living conditions of asylum seekers and refugees.

In the course of the preparatory work, which the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration took part in, it was possible to verify that our country already applies the standards foreseen in the new directive, and how we have, so far, been pursuing a correct operational strategy. This has been also due to the assistance given us by ANCI's Central Service, and is based on the concrete support of local authorities and is aimed at bringing them together in a countrywide network, developing integration approaches and, consequently, giving incentives to a reinforcement of a culture of social inclusion in Italy.

In view of the impressive nature of the migratory movement, such a positive step forward in receiving asylum seekers and refugees is yet more important if it is seen in the context of the structural and cyclical factors influencing its success and sustainability, such as the labour market, the accommodation problem, and the need for a wider and more adequate provision of health, educational and social services.

It is for this reason that we can claim to be the proud owners of a System directed towards cooperation, an example of governance that can and must be more widely developed as an adequate system of protection and guarantee for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. We have a System capable of offering a true prospective of a life protected from any possible recruitment into criminal organisations

Our System gives us the responsibility of guaranteeing respect for the fundamental rules of civil cohabitation, in a Society that is ever more open and complex, to guide the evolution of what is already an intercultural reality, respecting our history and our traditions.

The road we have followed, together with ANCI since 2001, with the first National Asylum Programme (PNA) and with the System for receiving refugees and asylum seekers, has, then, contributed to the training and settlement of new families, to an increase in the number of school children, to the opening of minds to other traditions, and to experimentation with different forms of cohabitation.

In a word, SPRAR has contributed to the initiation of a real process of integration in Italy, and today numbers 139 local projects involving 3000 people. However this is not all. The System, in fact, by categorising the types of person accepted as "ordinary" or "vulnerable", has identified a need to provide differing and more suitable forms of protection for those who are at greater risk. In this way we have already anticipated the present approach



of the European Community which is intended to pay full attention to situations of vulnerability both in the initial identification phase and in the ways they are dealt with.

It is not by chance that, based on indications from the Commission, the European Refugee Fund for the period 2008-2013, provides for a series of actions aimed at protecting the victims of torture and violence, at single parent families, and at unaccompanied minors seeking asylum.

It would appear necessary to give some consideration to this latter group. To date, about 200 minors have been accepted into SPRAR centres where they have had the opportunity to develop, to grow up, to learn Italian, to study, to plan a future life by acquiring a skill, and to choose to become Italian citizens someday.

However, we know that 200 minors seeking asylum in our centres are too few. Instead there are very many who do not seek asylum and who, despite the various solutions on offer within our national legal framework, remain outside our protection and are exposed to the most desperate dangers.

Study and analysis of the reasons for this situation, seen as a re-launching of the System to look at the real factors attracting such vulnerable categories, could be the new challenge for us to face together with ANCI, with the Central Service and in collaboration with other operators in this sector. It could also renew a common commitment to find the necessary resources to support and develop the System.

CONTRIBUTION

by **Flavio Zanonato**,
Mayor of Padova and the ANCI delegate for Immigration.

On the occasion of the Second National Conference on Immigration held last September, ANCI advanced a proposal for a national plan for integration. Underlying that proposal is the need – strongly felt by those who administer local authorities in Italy – that the question of the integration of foreigners into the Italian context should be finally addressed from an organic, long term, perspective in the various relevant sectors of social life, without being held hostage to any short term emergencies. Analysis of the experience gained under the SPRAR, Protection System for asylum seekers and refugees can contribute well to the definition of such a Plan. Although it is true that SPRAR deals with a particular group of people – those seeking and those granted international protection – who are clearly defined and quite distinct from immigrants as a whole, it is equally true that SPRAR's long experience is, from certain aspects, paradigmatic and can offer many interesting points that are also of relevance in a wider context.

SPRAR's annual report can, therefore, be seen as a means of acquiring a deeper knowledge of an experience of governance in the social field that is among the more advanced and innovative that we can find in Italy today. We can also draw from it strategic elements and points of reference that will be useful in facing the more general challenge of integration. It would be sufficient simply to think, for example, about the ways institutional collaboration between local authorities, provinces and central government have been developed. In particular, we should remember the role played in recent years by the SPRAR network in managing the effect of the arrival of asylum seekers in local communities, and the way they have managed to lighten and redistribute the duties and responsibilities entailed in it, in a capillary manner between the different local areas involved across Italy, be it supporting the disembarkation in the south or supporting the large cities in the centre north. Again, we should remember the way a host of subsidiary "practices" became embedded in the SPRAR network thanks to the involvement of the third sector and other social actors, putting into daily practice the constitutional principle that is, today, inspiring the federalist reform of the state.

The SPRAR model already represents a useful point of reference, not only for our country, however, but also for Europe. Looking at the situation from an observatory such as ours in Italy, it is evident that there is urgent need to introduce a coordinated European policy in this field that is capable of initiating an effective sharing of responsibility and standards between all the member states, going beyond the present Dublin regulations and building a common asylum system. From this comes the importance, strongly desired by Italy, of setting up a European Office dedicated to this topic soon, and the possibility of ANCI playing an active part in this process together with the networks of local authorities in other European countries.

The decision to include a section, in this report, dealing with studies carried out by academics from countries hit by forced immigration, is, finally, intended to show the need to look also at humanitarian aid beyond the boundaries of Europe. The dramatic data that UNHCR publishes every year on forced migration around the world underlines the need for humanitarian protective measures that involve third world countries and the countries of origin more directly in order to encourage the exercise of a right to asylum that is free from the influence of illegality and criminal groups.

The data in the report also highlight the still unresolved problems facing our System.

First of among these unresolved problems is the need, already stressed in the last report, to standardise the ways and means currently in use by systematically putting them in a SPRAR network together with the other activities undertaken to protect those seeking and granted international protection. It is essential to bring all the different measures in use together within the framework of a "national asylum system", so as to optimise resources, knowledge and competences. There are, then, new problems concerning the care of people who are particularly vulnerable and concerning the need to strengthen the link between the Central Service and local areas, within the framework of an ongoing undertaking to improve the service.

Finally, the central question remains that of those resources indispensable for the maintenance and extension of the network to all those who have a right of access to it, without reducing either the quality of service the System has so successfully been created to provide to small groups of people or the investment in ways of providing integration directed at self autonomy. The System is passing through a period of serious uncertainty due to the consistent cutbacks introduced in the last finance law. If such decisions should hold, the repercussions in terms of ability to plan ahead, and of the reliability and authority of the System will be significant. We cannot but point out how this position appears to clearly contradict the reality of a situation that is of unpredictable proportions and which only a system like SPRAR can manage to deal with through practical activities to provide true and proper stable integration across the country.

We must, therefore, face unresolved problems, and at the same time, place the strong points of the SPRAR model in a wider strategic context. Along these lines, a second network of local authorities has been successfully created dealing with unaccompanied foreign minors. Other developments along these lines can and must follow. All this as a contribution towards a "practical" definition of an Italian road to integration, capable of holding together the just demands for security and respect for rules made by residents, with guarantees for paths towards inclusion and citizenship for those who come to Italy to build a future for themselves.

A NATIONAL NETWORK FOR RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION



THE SPRAR SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE AND ITS NATIONWIDE PRESENCE

Protection System for asylum seekers and refugees (SPRAR) is the Italian network for the reception and integration of people seeking and granted international protection. The System is based on collaboration between the centralised institutions, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, ANCI and local authorities, with the involvement of the third sector.

The innovative idea behind SPRAR was that of involving local authorities in planning and implementing local *integrated reception* projects: with the collaboration of the third sector. Local authorities introduce activities that go beyond simple reception matters such as subsistence and accommodation, providing for legal and social induction into society and for personalised guidance towards social-economic integration.

The uniqueness of the Italian reception system, far from the logic of state assistance, lies in the close collaboration and synergy between the different levels of government (Ministry of Internal Affairs on the one hand, ANCI, local and provincial authorities on the other) and between the institutions and the third sector, following a logic in which each party plays its own role. In this way full implementation is given to the principle of *multilevel governance* whereby the different levels of government take part, each within its own area of responsibility, in the planning and implementation of reception, protection and integration projects.

Local authorities take part in SPRAR on a voluntary basis and with a minimum joint funding of 20% (the remaining part is funded by the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services – FNPSA – made available by the Ministry of Internal Affairs). In this way higher quality activities can be guaranteed since full commitment to the initiative is assured. The development of inter-institutional relationships is encouraged with all those local actors present who contribute to the success of the integration activities and to the ways forward towards the social-economic integration of those it is aimed at. Furthermore, belonging to a national network coordinated by the Central Service guarantees essential standards of quality for every project undertaken.

SHORT REVIEW OF THE PROTECTION SYSTEM FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

In 1999/2000 various Italian non-governmental organizations and associations started using different network projects to respond to the need for the protection and reception of asylum seekers and refugees. The opportunity to access European funds for the implementation of assistance measures for civilians fleeing from the Kosovo crisis area, allowed the testing of nationwide reception programmes. This was carried out with the support of an alliance of NGOs and associations and based on strong local leadership, thus being able to build closer collaboration between local authorities and the third sector. These early experiences of “reception networking”, made it clear how paths towards reception and integration gain higher effectiveness when based on certain key elements: networking, and the essential link between local authorities and associations; decentralization of activities; the creation of tailored projects, meaning “integrated reception”; and constant multi-level communication.

Those reception programmes drew much attention. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, The United Nations High Commissioner (UNHCR) and the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) looked with great interest at their outcome, and saw them as a basis for starting the former National Asylum Programme and, later, the protection system.

The National Asylum Programme (PNA) was officially launched on October 10th, 2000 with the drawing up of a MoU signed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI).

From the very beginning the purpose of the PNA was to produce a programme which took on board and integrated the guidelines set out by the European Refugee Fund (ERF). Its purposes were, namely: the *constitution of an integrated network of reception services* for asylum-seekers, refugees and humanitarian or temporary protection seekers; the *promotion of specific measures to improve social-economic integration*; the *creation of voluntary repatriation programmes and assistance for the reintegration of migrants into their countries of origin* with the support of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Coordination of PNA activities was managed by a Central Board at ANCI.

The PNA achieved its objectives by establishing a national network based on the involvement of local authorities. The PNA obtained significant success thanks to factors such as the voluntary nature of participation, the development of social potential and of features particular to the different areas involved, the sharing of responsibilities, and as a result of an integration of the services offered,

These results led to a further recognition of the value and importance of the Italian model: Article 32, 1-sexies of law 189/02 (the so-called *Bossi-Fini law*) amended Article 1 of law 39/90 establishing the *Protection System for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees* (SPRAR), producing a more organic and institutional version of the PNA. Likewise, Article 32, 1-septies, established the *National Fund for asylum policies and services* (FNPSA), co-funded by the ERF, which allocates “ordinary” funds to SPRAR activities. The same article also established a *Central Service*, run by ANCI, with responsibilities for information, promotion, advice, monitoring and technical support for the local authorities involved in the protection system.

Within the protection system, *project standards have been gradually increasing*: there is an increasing tendency to expect minimum requirements in the reception sector and to boost integration measures to the maximum also by sharing experiences implemented in various local areas.

The Central Service established permanent links between local projects, making it possible to disseminate and transfer solutions, good practices and innovative procedures adopted in other parts of the network to all those interested, so that they can be repeated elsewhere (obviously taking into account the specific nature of the different local areas). This enabled projects to grow together and to dramatically reduce differences at a local level. The structure described above emerged as a response to the ongoing need to balance the *standardisation of services and the promotion of “localisms”*, which is one of the cornerstones of the system.

SPRAR activities focus on *promoting and making the best possible use of already existing resources and services*, which Italian citizens should also be able to enjoy, without creating purpose-built facilities. We believe that in this way, the risk can be avoided of creating excessively self-referential services that would otherwise frustrate beneficiaries’ expectations of integration at a local level.

The reception network has spread in capillary fashion across Italy, thanks to the desire of many local authorities and provinces, of all shapes and sizes and in all regions across the country, to join the network. This has allowed the setting up of personalised reception projects, conceived and implemented at a local level and aimed at small groups (on average the number of places available in each project was 22), promoting good relations with the local community and the involvement of all the local actors in long term integration. Besides the material support needed for reception (subsistence and accommodation), SPRAR activities in fact cater for the induction and integration of the newcomers into the local social-economic scene. The synergy initiated by local projects with representatives of the third sector encourages the development of inter-institutional relationships with all those local actors in the area who contribute to the success of the integration activities and to the ways forward towards the social-economic integration of those it is aimed at.

The number of projects and of local authorities involved in the network has progressively increased over the years. In 2009/2010 there were 123 local authorities in the SPRAR network and 138 projects are ongoing, 31¹ of which are for vulnerable categories: disabled people (even temporarily disabled), pregnant women – in 2008, 127 babies were born to mothers in the SPRAR system, single parents, people in specific need of health care, victims of torture and violence, old people and unaccompanied minors.

The SPRAR network includes large metropolitan areas, medium sized towns, and small villages: the local authorities of all these together with the collaboration of the third sector make up a network that can develop at different levels. The network gives rise to a flow from area to area within a perspective of decentralised responsibility for the reception of those accepted into the system, and which operates in a manner that is proportional to the size of the local population. The involvement of small centres thus allows us to strengthen the reception culture even in areas of the country subject to consistent migratory flows. This is one aspect of the SPRAR reception system that marks it out from other European situations: communities that are demographically smaller, thus, take part with larger ones in defining the lines upon which activities can take place.

SPRAR STATISTICS FOR 2007, 2008 AND 2009-2010

		2007	2008	2009-2010
SPRAR PROJECTS	ORDINARY CATEGORY PROJECTS	84	86	107
	VULNERABLE CATEGORY PROJECTS	20	28	31
	TOTAL	104	114	138
	AUTHORITIES THAT HAVE PRESENTED 2 PROJECTS	9	13	15
PLACES FUNDED WITH FNPSA	ORDINARY CATEGORY PROJECTS	2,082	2,102	2,499
	VULNERABLE CATEGORY PROJECTS	329	439	501
	TOTAL	2,411	2,541	3,000
PLACES FUNDED BY THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S BUDGET				129
PLACES FUNDED BY SPECIAL FUNDS, OF WHICH	BY ORDER 3620 CIVIL PROTECTION OCT 2007- JUNE 2008	501	501	
	JUNE – DEC 2008		468	
	JULY – DEC 2008		330	
	AUG 2008 – AUG 2009		548	
	TOTAL	2,411	2,541	3,000
LOCAL AUTHORITIES	MUNICIPALITIES	88	92	103
	PROVINCES	5	7	17
	GROUPED MUNICIPALITIES	2	2	3
	TOTAL	95	101	123

SOURCE: CITTALIA REWORKING OF SPRAR 2009 CENTRAL SERVICE DATA

1. For this particular type of project see below, paragraph *Empowerment and support for self reliance*.

THE SPRAR CENTRAL SERVICE

The Central Service was established by Art. 32 of law 189/02 and formally activated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 24 July 2003, following the signing of the Convention entrusting its management to ANCI. It has a coordinating role within the SPRAR network.

Under the aforementioned law, the Central Service² is responsible for the coordination and technical support of activities linked to local projects.

This law allocates the following functions to the Central Service:

- monitoring of the presence of asylum-seekers and refugees entering in Italy
- creation of a databank with information on activities undertaken locally for asylum-seekers and refugees
- support for the dissemination of information about such activities
- providing technical assistance to local authorities, including setting up services.

The Central Service also acts as a link between the local operational level and the Ministry of Internal Affairs which is responsible for controlling and monitoring the results achieved by the services and that the procedural activities connected to the allocation and administration of the ERF are properly carried out.

THE DATABANK AND MONITORING FUNCTION

The management of the databank is one of the tasks allocated to the Central Service. This permits the monitoring of the presence at local level of the various categories of person being assisted, and of local projects in terms of persons received, services activated and places available in local facilities.

The information contained in the databank serves a dual purpose:

- it permits a constant monitoring of the services developed and offered by SPRAR projects and of the number and type of beneficiaries supported.
- it allows monitoring of the possibility of introducing new beneficiaries in real-time.

The databank plays a vital role because it is one of the few sources providing an accurate picture of the current asylum situation in Italy. It also acts as a link between the reception needs communicated by the various local areas and the system's capacity to respond.

CONSULTANCY AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR LOCAL PROJECTS AND OPERATOR TRAINING

Assistance activities guaranteed by the Central Service to the single projects mainly regard management and organisational aspects. The Service also provides information on the regulations in this sector, on the use of funding, on ways to create an adequate local network, and on the most suitable instruments for achieving quality targets and personalising services.

Monitoring and more project-specific consultancy are carried out by means of regular on-site visits.

The Central Service also focuses on capacity building for operators involved in projects, who periodically receive updates and training on different topics – often chosen according to the needs and requests expressed at local level – to give them the skills needed to guarantee reception and integration standards.

Other indications useful for projects are contained in the “Handbook for the activation and management of reception and integration services for asylum-seekers, refugees and beneficiaries of humanitarian protection” and in other publications produced by the Central Service in collaboration with experts and SPRAR operators³ themselves.

INFORMATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES

The Central Service is responsible for promoting the diffusion of information on the system's activities, and for raising the awareness of local, national and international institutions and of public opinion about asylum issues. In order to do so it draws upon a range of instruments that can be adapted to the varying needs. This Report is one such instrument.

2. ANCI draws upon the collaboration of Ancitel SpA to manage the structure of the Central Service.

3. The handbook and the other publications can be consulted or downloaded from the Central Service web site.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL FUND FOR ASYLUM POLICY AND SERVICES IN 2009-10



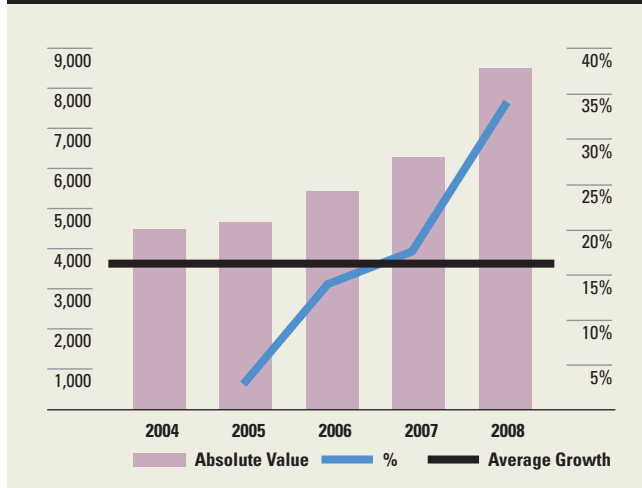
SPRAR BENEFICIARIES

SPRAR projects take people who are seeking international protection and who are awaiting a decision on their application, and people who have already been granted refugee status or an alternative form of protection (subsidiary or humanitarian).

In 2008, SPRAR projects accepted in total some 8,412 people, 34% more in respect of the previous year (when there were 6,284). Most of these are people who have applied for international protection and are awaiting a decision (43% of beneficiaries). On average, an applicant for international protection is accepted into a SPRAR project about 35 days after entering Italy (it was about 40 days in 2007).

Beneficiaries of the SPRAR system come, above-all, from African countries (66%). In recent years an increase has been noticed in arrivals from the African continent, in particular from the Horn of Africa, but there has also been a relative increase in the numbers coming from Asia, above-all from Afghanistan and Iraq, while the number of arrivals from Europe has decreased.

SPRAR BENEFICIARIES, ABSOLUTE VALUE AND ANNUAL GROWTH, 2004-2008

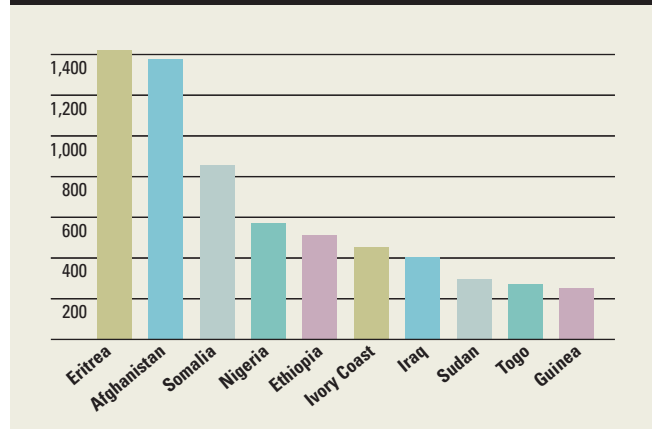


SOURCE: CITTALIA REWORKING OF SPRAR CENTRAL SERVICE DATA

Those benefiting from SPRAR are mainly men, while women in the scheme make up only 25% of the total. These data have remained almost stable over the years. Only as regards projects for receiving vulnerable persons has the gap between the two sexes reduced: women account for 44.5% of the total (it was 43.3% in 2007) as regards projects financed by the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services (FNPSA).

Those benefiting from projects are generally young people: over a third are in fact between 18 and 25, while a little less than half (46.55%) are between 26 and 40 years of age. Minors account for 13% of the total (1,091).

THE MAIN NATIONALITIES THAT BENEFITED FROM SPRAR PROJECTS IN 2008.

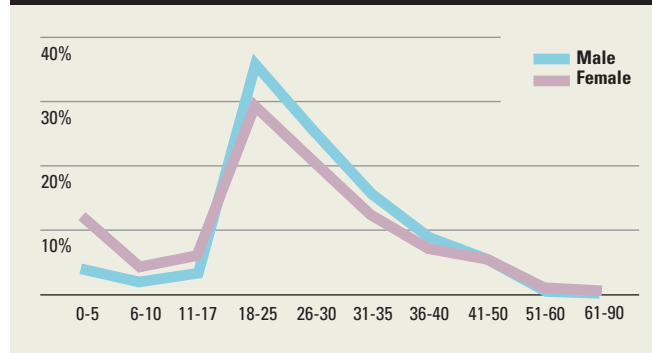


SOURCE: CITTALIA REWORKING OF SPRAR CENTRAL SERVICE DATA

74% of those accepted into SPRAR projects in 2008 were alone, without any relatives. The number of families accepted amounted to 754 of which a little less than half (374) consisted of 2 people. There were, furthermore, 314 single parent families, with the mother being the single parent in almost all cases. Larger families were less frequent.

The principal method of entry into Italy for such people was by sea (76% of the total). Some 17% arrived through airports of entry (above-all Milan Malpensa), while 4% re-entered under the Dublin II regulations⁴.

DIVISION OF SPRAR BENEFICIARIES BY SEX AND AGE GROUP FOR 2008



SOURCE: CITTALIA REWORKING OF SPRAR CENTRAL SERVICE DATA

4. On the basis of Regulation CE 343/2003 Dublin II, the asylum applicant is normally entrusted to the first country entered within the European Union area.

EMPOWERMENT AND SUPPORT FOR SELF RELIANCE

Beneficiaries of the SPRAR system, in 2009, amounted to 7,845. The greater part of these were men (75%), young people (62% between 18 and 30 years old). Most of these came from the African continent (15% from Somalia, 14% from Eritrea and 10% from Nigeria).

SPRAR BENEFICIARIES, 2009			
		ABSOLUTE VALUE	PERCENTAGE
SEX	MALE	5,849	75%
	FEMALE	1,996	25%
AGE	0-17	1,128	14%
	18-25	3,108	40%
	26-30	1,722	22%
	31-40	1,489	19%
	41-60	392	5%
	61-90	6	0%
MAIN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN	SOMALIA	1,177	15%
	ERITREA	1,099	14%
	AFGHANISTAN	1,092	13%
	NIGERIA	813	10%
	IVORY COAST	420	5%
FAMILY STATUS	SINGLE	5,810	74%
	FAMILIES	2,195	26%
	TOTAL	7,845	100%

SOURCE: SPRAR CENTRAL SERVICE DATA

SPRAR projects are not limited to guaranteeing support through the provision of subsistence and accommodation, but promote personalised programmes aimed at allowing each person involved to integrate into society and find work. Making use of qualified professional teams, the projects ensure cultural mediation, induction to relevant legal matters, social assistance and support by the health system, support in finding work and accommodation, helping minors enter the school system, as well as multicultural activities and involvement in the local community. In addition to these services, provided for all projects, we can add specific support to enable individuals to become self supporting. Our commitment is not, therefore, only to reception and protection, but is intended to enable the person to achieve their full potential in society, to help and support them in achieving self reliance within the framework of an *integrated reception programme*.

Usually people remain involved in projects for six months starting from the moment they are granted international protection status. This period can be extended in more complex cases. For this reason, in 2008 the average period spent within a project was 230 days for ordinary projects and 254 days for projects aimed at vulnerable categories of person.

In 2008, 3,519 people left SPRAR programmes. Little short of half of these (47.5%) had achieved a situation of self reliance both as regards work and accommodation. This statistic is increasing and assumes a greater importance when one considers that it had occurred during a period of serious economic crisis with the consequent difficulties in finding employment. Some 24.2% of those being helped abandoned the scheme of their own free will and an equal percentage (24.1%) left because they had come to the end of the period allocated for their support. As regards this latter group, we also need to bear in mind the presence of those people waiting to be accepted onto programmes: in the course of 2008 the Central Service dealt with applications from a good 1,417 people waiting to enter the scheme.

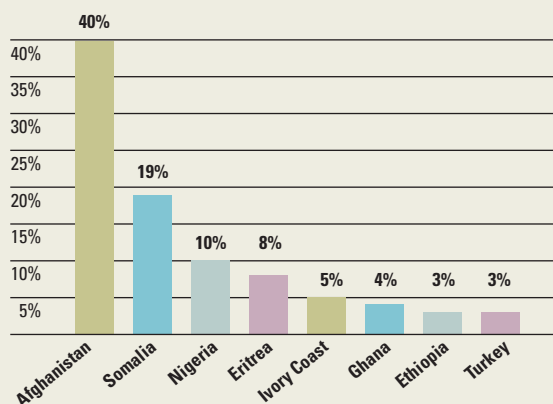
COMMITMENT TOWARDS MORE VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Some projects within the SPRAR network are aimed at the reception of people who are more vulnerable. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of such projects with respect to the growth in the numbers of those seeking international protection who arrive in Italy in a seriously “fragile” condition (28 projects in 2008, while the number of such projects has reached 31 in 2009-10).

The people who benefit from these projects are disabled people (even if only temporarily), pregnant women – in 2008, 127 babies were born to mothers in the SPRAR system, single parents, people in specific need of health care, victims of torture and violence, old people and unaccompanied minors.

In particular, the number of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum and accepted into network projects is continually increasing. In 2008, 409 minors alone were accepted (this had been 197 in 2007), coming mainly from Afghanistan and mainly male. Almost all those unaccompanied minors seeking asylum who were accepted onto SPRAR projects were approaching the age of majority: 97% were 17 years old, 2% were 16 and the remaining 1% were 15 years old. In cases where the person reached 18 while taking part in a project for minors, they were allowed to continue for a further six months so that they could fully benefit from the course of social-employment integration on which they had started.

THE MAIN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS SEEKING ASYLUM FROM SPRAR



SOURCE: CITTALIA REWORKING OF SPRAR CENTRAL SERVICE DATA

FINANCING THE SPRAR NETWORK

The SPRAR network is financed by central government from the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services (FNPSA) and is supported by local authorities making a minimum contribution of 20%⁵.

In 2007, in respect of a national financing of SPRAR network projects amounting to 20,481 million euro, local authorities invested 10,857 million euro. We must add a further (non-economic) cost to such economic co-funding; one that is linked in the creation of projects to a substantial element of “added value” supplied by different local actors who give their services free of charge to those being helped.

An analysis carried out on the final accounts for 2007⁶ reveals that the average pro-capita cost considered for ordinary category SPRAR projects was equivalent to 29.76 euro per day. For vulnerable categories the average daily cost was 37.73 euro per head. We need to bear in mind that these figures do not only include the cost of hospitality (subsistence and accommodation), but all the network of professional services dedicated to the integration process.

5. In 2007, the 20% minimum initial funding foreseen for vulnerable category projects was reduced to 11.66% following the national resources made available.
6. The case of Rome was excluded from the analysis due to its special nature.

SPRAR IN THE ITALIAN CONTEXT



A RIGHT TO ASYLUM IN ITALY

The most important news concerning the evolution of a right to asylum in Italy in recent years (2007-2009) regards the reception of the Community Directives on the right to international protection. Our country does not have a separate law in the matter of asylum rights and, until our reception of the Community Directives, the matter was exclusively dealt with by a few paragraphs

in the laws on immigration, in addition to being found in Paragraph 10 of our Constitution.

With our reception of the Community Directives, Italy today is taking part in a process of harmonisation, with a view to the creation of a body of European Asylum law.

TYPES OF PROTECTION AND RIGHTS		
TYPE OF PROTECTION	DEFINITION	PERMISSION TO REMAIN
REQUESTING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION	An application for international protection is an application aimed at obtaining refugee status or subsidiary protection status (D.lgs 25/2008)	A permission to remain to apply for international protection has temporary validity, may be renewed for the entire period necessary for the procedure, but can never be converted into a permanent permission to remain.
REFUGEE STATUS	A refugee is a person who has been granted refugee status under the terms of the Geneva Convention of 28th July 1951	A permission to remain lasts 5 years and is renewable upon expiry
SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION	Is the protection granted to a non EU citizen, or a stateless person, who does not possess the requirements necessary to be recognised as a refugee, but for whom there exist justified reasons to believe that if they returned to their country of origin, or to the country in which they normally reside, they would run an effective risk of serious harm to themselves, and who cannot or do not wish as a result of such risk to avail themselves of the protection of the said country. (D.lgs 251/2007).	A permission to remain for subsidiary protection lasts 3 years. When renewal falls due, it may be converted into a full permission to remain for reasons of employment on condition that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the conversion application is made before the expiry date of the previous permission • the applicant has an employment contract or is self employed.
HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION	In the absence of grounds for international protection, the Questure can issue the asylum seeker with a permission to remain on humanitarian grounds whenever the Local Commission finds there are "serious justifications of a humanitarian nature"	A permission to remain on humanitarian grounds lasts one year and may be converted into a permission to stay for reasons of employment on the same conditions indicated for international protection. Everyone who holds a permission to remain on humanitarian grounds issued before the entry into force of decree law no. 251/2007 (19th January 2008) is given subsidiary protection permission when their existing permission expires.

THE PRESENCE OF REFUGEES AND THOSE SEEKING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

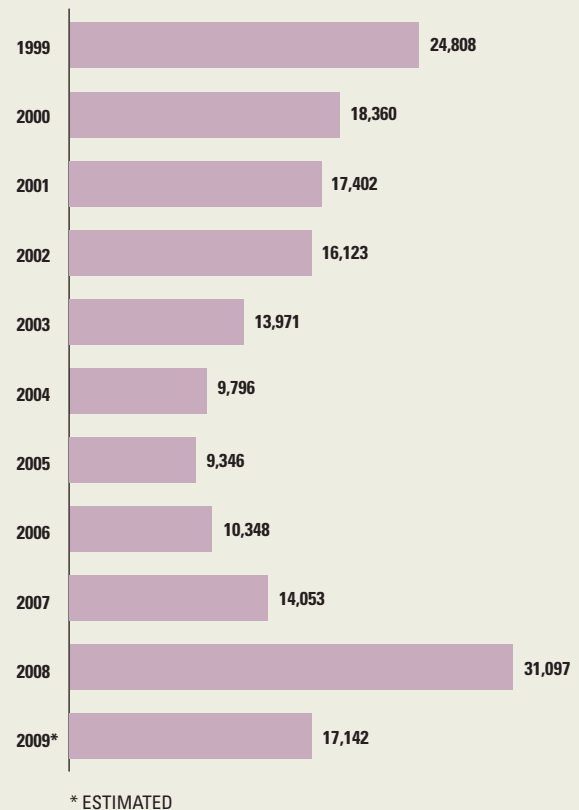
It is estimated that at the end of 2008 there were about 47 thousand refugees in Italy⁷.

The number of applications for asylum made in Italy in 2008 amounted to 31,097, with an increase of 121% in respect of the previous year (when there were 14,053) and of 200% in respect of 2006 (10,380). The large growth in the number of new applications was mainly caused by very substantial flows of people arriving by sea. In this way Italy has shot into fourth place among the principle destination countries of the industrialised world for asylum seekers, and has become one of the European countries with the greatest number of requests for protection. To deal with the increase in arrivals, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has invested extraordinary resources to increase the number of places available within the SPRAR network and has, furthermore, set up some Initial Reception Centres⁸ to provide initial assistance to foreigners, arriving in contravention of regulations, in Italy during the period when they are being identified and may possibly present an application for international protection. Consequently, in many cases, SPRAR has taken on the role of “second reception” following an initial emergency reception at government organised centres.

Despite the peak in arrivals in 2008, the overall number of refugees accepted into Italy, in both absolute and relative terms, remains low overall with respect to other European countries⁹. There has been a discontinuity of the trend in applications presented over the years.

In 2009, there was a noticeable slowing down in the number of cases where requests for protection were made in Italy: at 31st December 2009 it was estimated that these amounted to a little more than 17 thousand. This strong contraction in the number of applications, which should be seen in the light of initiatives undertaken regarding border control and security¹⁰, comes within a general, even if more contained, reduction in applications for asylum made within the European Union.

TREND IN ASYLUM REQUESTS 1999-2009



SOURCE: CITTALIA REWORKING OF MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS DATA

7. Source UNHCR. This data does not include minors and refugees recognised before 1990.
 8. On the basis of Law no. 563/1995 (the so called Puglia law).
 9. Compared with about 47,000 refugees accepted into Italy, 580 thousand refugees live in Germany, while there are 290 thousand in the United Kingdom, 160 thousand in France and 80 thousand in the Netherlands.
 10. Here we refer in particular to the Italian-Libyan agreement for coastal controls.

EXAMINATION OF APPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AND THEIR OUTCOME

Examination of applications for asylum is entrusted to ten local Commissions, appointed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. They are presided over by Officers from within the Prefect structure, and consist of a Police Official, a Local Authority representative and a representative from UNHCR. Of the applications presented and examined by the local Commissions in 2008, 39.9% were granted a form of international protection. In 7.7% of cases refugee status was recognised on the basis of the Geneva Convention (1,695 people) while, of the remainder, 32.2% were granted subsidiary protection (7,054 people). If we add humanitarian protection to these figures, the number of applications granted some form of protection arrives at 50%.

ASYLUM REQUESTS REACHING LOCAL COMMISSIONS AND THEIR OUTCOME, 2008			ABSOLUTE VALUE	%
REQUESTS RECEIVED			31,097	
INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION	REFUGEE STATUS		1,695	7,7%
	SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION		7,054	32,2%
	TOTAL		8.749	39,9%
APPLICATIONS EXAMINED	HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION		2,100	9,6%
	NOT RECOGNISED		9,478	43,2%
	OTHER OUTCOMES: WITHDRAWAL, DUBLIN, UNTRACEABLE		1,606	7,3%
	TOTALE ISTANZE ESAMINATE		21,933	100%
APPLICATIONS AWAITING EXAMINATION			10,232	

THE SUMMING OF THE DATA ON APPLICATIONS EXAMINED AND APPLICATIONS AWAITING EXAMINATION DOES NOT COINCIDE WITH THAT OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN 2008, SINCE SOME APPLICATIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR WERE ALSO COUNTED.
SOURCE: CITTALIA REWORKING OF MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS' DATA

APPLICATION OF THE DUBLIN II REGULATION

Regulation CE 343/2003 Dublin II¹¹ defines the criteria used to identify the member state having competence to examine an asylum application presented by a citizen from a third country. In 2008, Italy received a substantially increased number of requests to assume such responsibility, from other states applying the Dublin II regulation, rising from 3,314 in 2007 to 5,676 in 2008 (+71.3%). On the other hand, Italian requests to other countries, although more than double with respect to the previous year (1,895 versus 889), represent a third of the requests for Italy to assume such responsibility. Of the total number of requests made by other states, Italy received more than half (2,901, i.e. 51% of the total).

The statistics also show how Italy, a country with external borders vis-à-vis Europe and therefore one of the main entry points in Europe for asylum seekers, is changing from being a transit country into being a recipient country: those people transferred here amount to ten times more than those transferred to other European countries (1,308 versus 124).

REQUESTS FOR AND FROM ITALY TO ASSUME COMPETENCE 2007-2008						
	REQUESTS TO ASSUME COMPETENCE PRESENTED TO ITALY BY COUNTRIES BOUND BY THE DUBLIN REGULATION			REQUESTS TO ASSUME COMPETENCE PRESENTED BY ITALY TO COUNTRIES BOUND BY THE DUBLIN REGULATION		
	2008*	2007	VARIATION	2008*	2007	VARIATION
PRESENTED	5,676	3,314	71,30%	1,895	889	113,20%
EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION REQUESTS	1,158			341		
ACCEPTED	2,901	1,931	50,20%	1,063	697	52,50%
REFUSED	814	594	37,00%	473	183	158,50%
IN A PRELIMINARY STAGE	803	789	1,80%	18	9	100,00%

* THE 2008 TOTAL INCLUDES REQUESTS FOR AN EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION FROM MEMBER STATES TO ITALY EQUAL TO 1158, AND FROM ITALY TO MEMBER STATES EQUAL TO 341

SOURCE: CITTALIA REWORKING OF DATA FROM THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS/DEPARTMENT FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES, IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM, CENTRAL DIRECTORATE FOR CIVIL SERVICES FOR IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM, DUBLIN UNIT

11. Council Regulation (CE) no. 343/2003 of 18th February 2003, that establishes the criteria and mechanisms to determine the member state competent to examine an asylum application presented in one of the member states by a citizen of a third country.



CONCLUSIONS

by **Daniela Di Capua**,
Director of the Central Service of the Protection System
for asylum seekers and refugees



As we did for the 2007-2008 SPRAR Report, we have again decided to refer to a two year period, 2008-2009, so as to detail what occurred in the course of a year which has now finished, but extending the information and reflections on it over a wider time scale.

The SPRAR Report, managed for the first time by the Cittalia Foundation, is intended to be a means of monitoring not only the state of the service, but also the evolution of the System overall. It provided an overall view of a wider and more complex situation of asylum that is undergoing substantial change both as regards those who seek asylum and as regards the ever more clearly defined needs of a complex and structured system of governance.

From this derives the need for the SPRAR System to adapt to change and to new needs.

As can be seen, in 2008 the protection System was based on a network of 4,388 reception places (2,541 with ordinary funding and 1,847 with funding of an extraordinary nature), spread over in 114 local projects, with the involvement of 101 local authorities.

As a result of the makeup of the network – enriched by the managerial role of third sector, and by collaboration with other local institutional and non-institutional bodies – the protection System was able to take on responsibility for some 8,412 people in the course of 2008, including both those seeking and those who had obtained international protection. Overall, the network provided some 52,018 instances of support through social assistance, mediation, specialist health care, job counselling, housing, schooling, legal information and guidance, and through multicultural activities.

Despite all this, and despite the fact that the Ministry approved a good local 138 projects providing a total of 3000 places in the two year period 2007-2008, some important aspects remain unprotected today.

First of all, it must be noted how the restructuring all the measures involved in the presence (and arrival) of those seeking and holding international protection status still remains an ongoing objective, so that we may optimise our efforts and resources and reduce the “national asylum system” to a single unified system. In this respect it should be remembered that in 2009 the Ministry of Internal Affairs initiated a planning phase for a European Refugee Fund (ERF III), approving training projects in government-run centres, support and rehabilitation measures for the victims of torture, and activities to facilitate the social-economic integration of those holding international protection status. FER follows an “ideal” path, extending from the arrival in Italy of protection seekers to the social-economic integration of refugees, taking on board factors emerging from the experience of SPRAR itself, with the intention of strengthening those areas that need extra resources and help. The support ANCI is providing, by donating resources to the value of eight for every thousand given, is also aimed at these goals and, as a consequence, greatly complements FER.

Therefore, to avoid any useless replication of activities and waste of resources (human, economic and planning) we need the knowledgeable direction of someone able to look at the Italian asylum situation in all its complexity, and who can manage to carry out a review of the national programmes and to further consider them in the light of the dozens of activities that are, fortunately, organised at an individual, provincial and regional level.

Secondly, as the attention given in this report to an analysis of the SPRAR accounts shows, one of the innovative and interesting aspects of the System lies in the mix of resources made available at different institutional levels, of value above-all when viewed together with the data on the results achieved by the integrated reception approach adopted by SPRAR. The analysis carried out reveals an overall picture of efficiency in the use of resources that, reinforced and stabilised, could provide the investment on which to base a possible new planning of national guidelines and resources aimed at the creation of integration processes, essential for a future vision of the country.

Finally, faced with the ever larger percentage of people seeking or holding international protection status in a state of serious vulnerability due to physical, psychological or psychiatric problems, not to speak of the delicate situation regarding unaccompanied minors, we cannot avoid the obligation to raise an urgent question: does SPRAR accept victims of torture? The reply cannot (nor should) be avoided, and for this reason we have started to think about how, in the near future, to define specific guidelines for engaging and dealing with the different specific needs of people who are particularly vulnerable.

The work carried out by the SPRAR Central Service is ever more orientated towards a role aimed not only at monitoring and assisting projects, but also and above-all at obtaining more detailed information on and at the cross referencing of the data, experience, changes, and needs that emerge day by day from the situation on the ground. Cross referencing and analysing such information, seen in turn within a wider national context, is providing the Central Service with tools that are used to identify more structured forms of support. These new forms of support are aimed at those operating in the field in terms of professional updating and specialist training, at projects in terms of improvement and exchange of experience, and at local areas in terms of setting up or strengthening networks and local boards. Although with grey areas, with alternation between critical factors and best practices, the final objective of the process we are trying to direct and support must always remain, at all times, the protection of the individual; individuals who without question have a recognised fundamental right: the right to protection and assistance along the road to the rebuilding of a new possibility of a safe and dignified life.



PUBBLICAZIONE REALIZZATA CON I FINANZIAMENTI
ASSEGNATI PER L'ANNO 2007 AD ANCI
DALLA PRESIDENZA DEL CONSIGLIO DEI MINISTRI
SUI FONDI DELL'OTTO PER MILLE DELL'IRPEF
DEVOLUTO DAI CITTADINI ALLA DIRETTA GESTIONE STATALE.

SPRAR
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OF ASYLUM SEEKERS
AND REFUGEES**

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