

DESCRIPTION OF SPRAR

THE SYSTEM FOR THE PROTECTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES (SPRAR) was created under law no. 189 of 2002 and consists of a network of local authorities¹ that set up and run reception projects for people forced to migrate². It draws, within the limits of available resources, upon the *National Fund for Asylum policies and services* managed by the Interior Ministry and included in State Budget legislation³. At a local level local authorities, with the valued support of the third sector, guarantee an **"integrated reception"** that goes well beyond the mere provision of board and lodging, but includes orientation measures, legal and social assistance as well as the development of personalised programmes for the social-economic integration of individuals.

SPRAR's MAIN OBJECTIVE is to take responsibility for those individuals accepted into the scheme and to provide them with personalised programmes to help them (re)acquire self autonomy, and to take part in and integrate effectively into Italian society, in terms of finding employment and housing, of access to local services, of social life and of child education.

THE PRINCIPAL FEATURES of SPRAR are:

- The public nature of the resources made available and of the bodies responsible for the reception of immigrants, the Interior Ministry and local authorities, as part of a multilevel system of governance.
- The synergies existing at a local level with the so called "managing bodies", members of the third sector - associations, NGOs, and co-operatives - which make an essential contribution to the success of projects.

¹ Local authorities, consortia of such authorities, and Provinces

² SPRAR provides services for international asylum seekers, refugees and those granted humanitarian and subsidiary protection

³ Access to the *National Fund for Asylum policies and services* is controlled by an Interior Ministry decree which sets out the conditions under which project proposals for integrated reception by local authorities may be made. The decree (together with the associated call for proposals) was issued annually until 2008. In 2009/10 the call for proposals – together with the time-span for the associated projects - became biannual. Starting in 2011 this has been changed to a three year basis.

- Decentralisation of the "integrated reception" projects, which are therefore spread across the country and found in each of the various Regions (apart from the Aosta Valley).
- The encouragement and development of local networks - stable, solid and interactive-involving all those actors and recognised organisations that can contribute to the successful operation of activities aimed at the reception, protection and integration of asylum seekers and those already granted recognised international protection status.
- The willingness of local authorities and bodies to take part in a network of reception projects.

LOCAL RECEPTION PROJECTS. Local authorities and bodies, in partnership with the third sector, set up and operate reception projects in their areas, applying SPRAR guidelines and standards while taking local factors and conditions into account. Local authorities can, depending on the type, capability and level of competence of local actors as well as on the resources (professional, organisational or economic) available to them, choose the type of reception facilities they can offer and the sort of persons they can best take responsibility for. For this reason projects can be aimed at individual adults and two parent families (the so-called "ordinary category"), or at single parent families, unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, victims of torture and those persons in need of constant care or with physical or psychological problems (classified as "vulnerable categories"). Special projects are provided for those people whose vulnerability results from problems of mental health. In any case, all those being cared for under the scheme are accepted on **a temporary basis**, and this is fundamental given that the ultimate objective is to give them self- autonomy and integrate them in society.

Facilities offered by SPRAR - which tend to be either apartments or small to medium sized accommodation centres, have a social-educational nature and must never be considered as part of the health service facilities.

SPRAR NETWORK 2011/2013

Projects	151	Projects (of which 111 in the ordinary category , 30 in the vulnerable category and 10 for mental disorder)
	19	Local authorities that manage two projects (for the ordinary and vulnerable categories)
	2	Local authorities that manage three categories (for ordinary and vulnerable categories and for mental disorder)
Places funded	3,000	Of which 2,500 in the ordinary category, 450 in the vulnerable category and 50 for mental disorder
Local Authorities	128	Of which: 110 local authorities 16 provinces 2 consortia of local authorities
Nationwide coverage	70	Provinces
	19	Regions

COORDINATION OF THE PROTECTION SYSTEM IS GUARANTEED BY THE CENTRAL SERVICE,

which is an organisation set up at the initiative of the Interior Ministry with its operational aspects entrusted to ANCI (National Association of Local Authorities) under law no. 189 of 2002.

The Central Service has responsibilities in the fields of information, promoting initiatives, and providing consultancy and technical assistance to local authorities, as well as for monitoring the presence of asylum seekers and of those already granted international protection status within the country. In particular, the Central Service:

- Manages the databank containing information on activities and services provided at a local level, collecting information regarding the reception, activation of transfer procedures and monitoring of the presence of beneficiaries and of the services provided throughout the country.
- Assists local authorities in organising and managing “integrated reception” services, as well as in administrative procedures.
- Provides consultancy and support to local authorities in various fields of activity to achieve “global responsibility” for everyone accepted into the system: measures of a psycho-social nature, providing legal assistance and guidance as well as programmes for socio-economic integration in society.
- Promote the setting up of local networks and Regional co-ordination.
- Managing the training and up-dating of local operators, also producing means for operational support and making possible an exchange and comparison dynamic.
- Promoting projects aimed at strengthening the performance of the System.
- Supports ANCI in its role as the delegated authority for the management of the European Fund for Refugees (EFR), also with a view to creating a virtuous link between planning at European level and day to day reception activities.
- Supports the assistance, information and guidance services activated within government frontline reception centres (as per Art. 11 of DPR 303/2004);
- Draws up *policy papers*, analysis documents regarding the law, studies, research, guides and other materials of an operative nature.
- Produces data and statistics for studies, research and reports.
- Ensures a wide distribution of information about the *Protection System* through various means of communication.

HUMAN RIGHTS

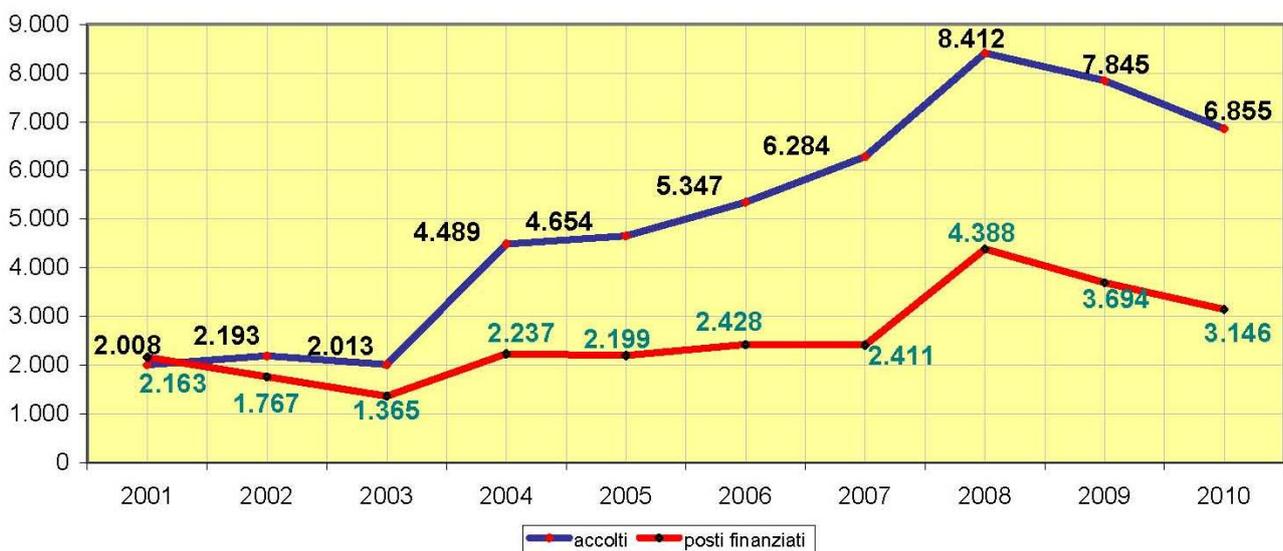
At the reception centre there are people we must take a global responsibility for, shifting the core activities **from the sphere of assistance to that of fundamental rights**. Therefore, reception as such is not a choice driven by motives solidarity, but by the application of an international obligation which the Italian State is called upon to meet, choosing in practice to adopt an approach based on human rights (*human rights based approach*).

EVALUTATION OF IMPACT

In the first ten years of operation SPRAR has progressively increased its capacity to offer reception facilities and, as a result, the number of persons accepted.

Number of persons fully accepted into the Protection Scheme and the related number of places funded yearly from 01/07/2001 to 31/12/2010

Beneficiari complessivamente accolti nel Sistema di protezione e relativi posti finanziati per anno dal 01/07/2001 al 31/12/2010



(accepted / places fund)

In 2010 the number of people accepted was 6,855:

PERSONS ACCEPTED BY SPRAR IN 2010		
Sex	number	%
Male	5,209	76,00%
Female	1,646	24,00%
Age group	number	%
0-17	963	14,0%
18-25	2,538	37,0%
26-30	1,628	23,7%
31-40	1,352	19,7%
41-60	366	5,3%
61-90	8	0,3%
The 5 principal nationalities	number	%
Somalia	1,158	16,89%
Eritrea	1,020	14,88%
Afghanistan	814	11,87%
Nigeria	610	8,90%
Iraq	329	4,80%
Family Status	number	%
Single	5,155	75
With family	1,700	25
TOTAL BENEFICIARIES	6,855	100%

Source: SPRAR Central Service data bank

In the same year, the services provided at local level were:

Services	%
Social assistance	19.8
Linguistic-cultural mediation	18.9
Health-specialist Assistance	17.7
Job placement Services	14.6
Legal guidance and information	9.5
Multicultural activities	8.5
Housing Services in local communities	4.9
Training Services	4.3
Placing minors in the schooling system	1.8
Total services	100

THE IMPACT WHICH SPRAR produces can be measured from different aspects, regarding: those benefiting from the scheme, local administrations, local areas and communities, and the national asylum system itself.

Assuming responsibility for **those benefiting from the scheme**, depending on the objectives and methods used for an integrated reception, makes it easier for individuals (and families) to follow a path leading to self-autonomy, thus allowing them to pass from being persons merely receiving assistance to being full participants in a reception project and, above-all, being able to pursue their own pathway towards socio-economic integration in society. Their experience in SPRAR permits ex-beneficiaries of the scheme, once they have left, to make use of what they have learnt whilst within the system. In other words, the socio-economic integration of refugees is not measured by their acquiring a house and a job so much as by the possibilities /opportunities they have to act and interact within the local area they live in, both in terms of their day to day living conditions and as regards situations of difficulty such as when they are ill, or face eviction, or lose their job.

In this sense, the impact SPRAR produces on **local administrations** can be translated as:

- the prevention of social marginalisation, with consequent savings in expenditure on welfare services;
- best use of resources for the possibility of using policies, strategies and actions to make changes to the “social priority order”, in order to improve the position of refugees within the more general welfare context;
- strengthening the potential of local services, and extending their range, so as to benefit the entire local population, be they native to the place or immigrant;
- enriching the area, also from a cultural viewpoint, through the arrival of new skill and abilities;
- the revitalisation of areas where agriculture or crafts predominate, that became depopulated as a result of population movement to urban areas;
- keeping open schools and maintaining educational services that would, otherwise, risk closure
- maintaining control of the local area and preventing the risk of deviant behaviour.

When its different facets are taken into consideration, the impact of SPRAR on **local communities** can be seen as an “opening to the world”: from the ability to enter into dialogue and make comparisons with other cultures to being prepared to search for similarities and to use them to overcome differences which might cause division; from a knowledge of the contexts and differing histories of distant countries to the ability to talk about and explain their own history. Such openness recognises the inevitability of cultural progress, following in the footsteps of what has been happening to Italian national culture for centuries, as a hybrid of the many civilisations that have arrived and crossed paths in previous ages.

Finally, within the **national asylum system**, SPRAR represents the transition to a second level of reception, internally within the country, as well as a reference point for all those situations of vulnerability that arise. The impact of SPRAR at a national level must be seen from an economic standpoint before being considered from a social or political one.

The cost of the Protection System is distinctly more limited than what is needed to manage the government's frontline reception centres, also because – apart from the state's contribution through the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services – local authorities are required to co-finance their involvement in the system. Furthermore, given the impact described above in terms of welfare, of the prevention of forms of marginalisation and deviant behaviour, as well as regards best use of the resources made available, the relationship between costs and benefits cannot be compared to any other reception provisions foreseen.

It is interesting to note that in 2010 the number of new entrants into the SPRAR scheme was 2,886, while 2,755 people left the *Protection System* having concluded their programmes. A substantial balance in the number of entrants and leavers testifies to the effective *turn over* of persons accepted into the reception scheme and to its validity.

CONTACTS

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