

Roma Inclusion in Italy: National education and employment strategies and actions

Roma Education Fund Draft Research Report 2012



Roma Education Fund

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Legenda:

Kindergarten – Scuola dell’infanzia
Primary School – Scuola Primaria (Elementari)
Lower Secondary School – Scuola Media
Upper Secondary School – Liceo
University - Università

Acronyms and Abbreviations:

CM: Circolare Ministeriale – Ministerial Circular
CNPI: Consiglio Nazionale della Pubblica Istruzione – National Council for Public Education
D. Lgs: Decreto Legislativo – Legislative Decree
DM.: Decreto Ministeriale - Ministerial Decree
DOA: Docenti di sostegno – Support Teachers
DM.: Decreto Ministeriale – Ministerial Decree
DPCM: Decreto Presidenza Consiglio dei Ministri - Decree of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers
DPR: Decreto Presidenziale - Decree of the President of the Republic
GILEIIAS: Gruppo di Lavoro Interdirezionale per l’Integrazione degli Alunni Stranieri e per l’Intercultura - Interdirectional Working Group for Intercultural Education and Foreign Students’ Inclusion
INVALSI: Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema dell’Istruzione
ISFOL: Istituto Superiore per la Formazione dei Lavoratori - Institute for the Development of Vocational Training for Workers
ONP: Operational National Plan
MPI: Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione – Ministry of Public Education
MIUR: Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca – Ministry of Education, University and Research
NOFSIIE: Osservatorio Nazionale per l’integrazione degli alunni stranieri e per l’educazione interculturale - National Observatory for the integration of foreign children and for intercultural education.

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REF consultant Kari Smith provided extensive assistance in analysing interview transcripts and commenting on the draft report. REF staff also provided comments on the original research and funding proposal and the draft report as well as provided advising and guidance on the project’s fiscal and administrative management.

The Italian-based NGOs (Romnì Onlus, Popìca Onlus and ARCI Nazionale Immigrazione) composed the field research team.

Popìca Onlus was founded in Rome in 2006. Popìca Onlus is also established in Romania, where their mission is that of helping orphans and abandoned adolescents and children living either in institutions or in the streets. In Italy, they are committed to interventions of social inclusion based on the self determination of Romanian Roma communities that are living in Rome’s spontaneous dwellings.

Since 2009, Popìca Onlus has collaborated with the schools of Rome’s VIth and VIIth Districts (in particular with the 126th Circolo Didattico “Iqbal Masih”) in projects of school support for Romani children. Since this time, Popìca Onlus has constantly been present and is committed to the “Metropoliz” project, an experimental, self-built multi-ethnic city located at Via Prenestina 913 in Rome where Italian, African, Roma and Asian families share a common self-built space; the Metropoliz project was recently formally recognized by Rome’s Mayor through a specific municipal deliberation. Since 2010, Popìca Onlus has been accredited by the European Voluntary Service (2010-IT-111) and in the same year they received the prize “Human Rights Defender 2010” from Amnesty International.

Romnì Onlus is a Roma NGO operating in Rome in the field of Romani women’s empowerment and support for the communities, acting as social secretariat. Romnì Onlus’ mission is that of undertaking actions and projects which will help and actively support the process of female emancipation against all forms of gender discrimination and through specific interventions directed to the support of Roma and Sinti education.

The founder and President of Romnì Onlus, Saska Jovanovic, holds a BA degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Pristina and has been working since 2001 in various activities as a cultural mediator and official interpreter and translator.

ARCI is the largest Italian NGO working at the national level; it was founded in 1956 in order to diffuse the values of mutual solidarity. ARCI’s aim is to promote forms of active citizenship and encourage the self-organisation of citizens in order to build and diffuse a “culture of citizenship rights.” ARCI’s activities are concentrated on the areas of humanitarian, educational, social and legal counselling, and the issues of housing, employment, conflict resolution and human rights. Since 1994, ARCI has also worked with migrant Roma communities on projects of social and

school inclusion in the cities of Messina, Rome, Milan, Arcore, Pescara, Firenze, Napoli, Torino and Genova, in particular with former Yugoslavian and Romanian communities. In Rome, since 1996, ARCI has been one of the NGOs responsible for the schooling of Romani children from the encampments as well as other projects directed at Roma social inclusion.

Our hearty thanks goes to the school personnel and teachers, the NGOs, the Roma communities and to the many operators and volunteers that in the three cities chosen for the Focus Groups (FG).have helped us to conduct this research and have generously shared with us their experiences and knowledge. We would like to thank in particular Elisabetta Cimoli in Milan, Antonella Rossilli and Simonetta Salacone in Rome and Luana Ammendola, Gianfranco Sangermano and Vincenzo Altomare in Cosenza (the full list of focus group participants is included within the report).

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1. Presentation of the research

Efforts in Europe to combat the social and economic exclusion of Roma have intensified in the course of the last ten years. Important Directives, Resolutions and Recommendations have been dedicated to this theme. Short of summarizing all of the documents produced, this report aims highlight some of the most important, recalling in particular the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of Education of 22 May 1989 (89/C 153/02). This resolution concerns the schooling of Roma, Sinti and Travellers, and presents different actions (structural, pedagogical, traineeships, information, research and orientation) that EU Member States should promote at the national level and subsequently harmonise at the transnational level. This resolution is a key document for the Roma as it states that the Roma language and culture are part of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the European Community.

At a more general level, three key documents are the Directive 2000/43/EC (Racial Equality Directive), the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 7 December 2000 (which incorporates fundamental rights into EU laws and reaffirms the EU commitment to non discrimination), and the Strasbourg Declaration of 2010. Specifically concerning Roma education are Recommendation No. R(2000)4 and Recommendation CM/REC(2009)4, both dedicated to the education of Roma and Travellers in Europe.

Many of the Member States have implemented these measures in national legislation and have activated plans and specific interventions which have culminated in the commitment of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion¹ and the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” (2005 – 2015),² two international initiatives which governments, institutions, Roma civil society have participated in to accelerate and support the process of socio-economic inclusion of the Roma and to evaluate these actions in a transparent and quantifiable way.³

Italy, in spite of the fact that the Roma presence is extremely modest and the country is not part of the countries involved in the Decade of Roma Inclusion, has also accepted to present its own national strategy for Roma inclusion in the spring of 2012.

This report intends to offer a background exploration and a critical overview of the legislative acts in Italy directed towards the Roma and their educational inclusion, using data gathered via a desk review and from fieldwork. It is hoped that these data will constitute a useful tool for all those working on and interested in Roma education.

A supplemental section to this report presents the results of a short survey and it intended to offer a general vision of the initiatives undertaken by Italian institutions concerning the social and working inclusion of Roma.

1 See official website: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/roma-platform/index_en.htm

2 See official website: <http://www.romadecade.org/home>

3 The countries involved are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Spain. A thirteenth country, Slovenia, has been included with the status of “observer.”

Regardless of the many efforts undertaken by national and international agencies, the problem of the right to study and work for the Roma and Sinti minorities still lingers. In particular, concerning school success, a vertical fall in the upper secondary school enrolment⁴ and, consequently, a high concentration of school drop-outs within the Roma population has been registered (not only in Italy). Moreover, there is now a clear awareness that inclusion can not be attainable if we do not achieve similar and contemporaneous results in the quality of the habitat, work, and right to education, goals which demand clear and decisive political will and commitment.

The ultimate scope of this research is that of offering documentation that will be useful in planning possible future policies dedicated to the members of this minority in the areas of education and employment.

⁴ See Table IV, p.20

2. Methodology of the research

2.1. Desk review

The first part of the research consisted in the gathering and analysis of all documents produced by the relevant institutional agencies on the theme of the education of Roma and foreigners. This basically includes the documents produced by the Ministry of Education, Research and University (from now on MPI - MIUR)⁵ for education and the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Policies, the Italian Institute for the Development of Vocational Training for Workers (ISFOL)⁶ and other agencies regarding employment.

More specifically on the theme of the education of Roma and foreigners, which is the core theme of this research, the official documents produced by the MPI - MIUR, by its National Council for Public Education (from now on CNPI) and by other structures such as the National Observatory for the Integration of Foreign Children and for Intercultural Education (NOFSIIE, also seated within the MPI – MIUR), and the Interdirectional Working Group for Intercultural Education and Foreign Students' Inclusion (from now on GILEIIAS) have been analysed.

These documents can be generally divided into two categories: guidelines, which are relative to general principles, and the so-called “normativa di dettaglio” (detailed norms) for the practical enactment of the principles that need to be achieved.

These research proceedings have not been dedicated in particular to Roma as a specific group, but to the inclusion of all students of foreign origin (for both education and employment). This is because the Italian legislation, as we will see further on in this text, does not foresee particular actions directed toward specific groups.

2.2. Fieldwork

In order to acquire an in-depth understanding of the problems and of the positive and negative elements that have emerged from the schooling processes of Roma and Sinti, we conducted three Focus Groups (FG) in as many Italian cities (Milan, Rome and Cosenza) centered on the issue of Roma education.

The team which participated in the case studies and which conducted the Focus Groups was constituted by Gianluca Staderini (operator of Popica Onlus), Marian Mihalache (representative of the Romanian Roma community of “Metropoliz”⁷ and also collaborating with Popica Onlus), and

5 The actual denomination and acronym is MIUR (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, Ministry of the Education, University and Research), but because of the fact that a large quantity of important documents are reporting the previous name (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione - Ministry of Public Education or MPI), we have decided to keep both acronyms in order to avoid more confusion in the reader.

6 ISFOL is the Institute for the Development of Vocational Training for Workers and is a public research body implementing and promoting studies, research, trials, documentation and evaluation activities as well as information, advice and assistance in the areas of vocational training, social and labour policies.

7 See Rossi M. (2011), Home is where your heart is: the “Metropoliz” experience in Rome, paper presented at the EWL-HWL Conference on Roma Women: Budapest, 7 April 2011. Available at: <http://edasociety.educazione-degli-adulti.it/farm/materiali/integrazione/home.pdf>.

Saska Jovanovic (cultural and linguistic mediator and President of the grassroots organisation Romnì Onlus).

In the selected schools, the group had the duty of interacting with all the social actors that, in these territories, operate for the support to the schooling of Romani children, i.e. teachers, operators and members of the same Roma communities. This in-depth preparation allowed us to accumulate evidence (via the Focus Groups) regarding the processes connected with school inclusion in a given area and to underline the chasms existing between the basic principles established by documents and laws and their effective implementation in diverse local situations.

Rome, Milan and Cosenza have probably been the top three examples of best practices and at the same time the places where we have witnessed the most serious cases of institutional pogrom against the Roma. Rome and Milan were actually the cities interested by the 2008 Emergency Decree, the so-called “Nomad emergency.”⁸ The enactment of this Decree, which entrusted to the city Prefects⁹ authority over the “nomad encampments” provoked the indiscriminated mass evictions of Roma and serious human rights violations. These events have all been reported by numerous human rights organisations¹⁰ and in November 2011 a ruling of the Consiglio di Stato ruled these proceedings illegitimate.

The choice of these three cities for the Focus Group research was motivated by different important factors. First, we have tried to produce a representative national overview by including the north, center and south of Italy. The second element was the numeric consistence of the Roma presence in the geographical areas. Lastly, all of these three case study cities have seen within them programs that can be defined as “good practices” in regards to Roma educational integration. Furthermore, we thought it was very important, from a methodological point of view and in order to produce useful data and insights, to analyze and investigate just within the best practices seen within each city the eventual moments of difficulty or crisis.

As mentioned, the main research partners were Popica Onlus, which is working with the Romanian Roma community of “Metropoliz” and with the street children in Romania, and Romnì Onlus, an NGO entirely composed by Roma. In order to enable these partners to stimulate and moderate the Focus Groups discussions held during the fieldwork, it was necessary to undertake an intensive preparatory training that provided the NGO partners with detailed information on the most relevant documents produced by the MPI - MIUR. This period of initial training included an experimental Focus Group session conducted between the members of the research group. The proceedings of the actual Focus Group sessions were documented through audio recordings.

⁸ DPCM 21/05/2008 “Dichiarazione dello stato di emergenza in relazione agli insediamenti di comunita' nomadi nel territorio delle regioni Campania, Lazio e Lombardia”. Available at: <http://www.governo.it/Governo/Provvedimenti/dettaglio.asp?d=39105>.

⁹ The *Prefetto* (Prefect) is a governmental executive which represents the central government in the single Italian provinces. Its duties are that of controlling the local administrative bodies and that of the safeguarding of law and order.

¹⁰ See, for example, the initiatives carried out by “Amnesty International” (<http://www.amnesty.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/5597>); Associazione 21 Luglio” (http://www.21luglio.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=52:il-diritto-all-alloggio-non-si-sgombera&catid=19:appelli-e-petizioni&Itemid=164); “Gruppo Everyone” and many others.

Additionally, meetings were organised with representatives of the MPI - MIUR and the ISFOL and thematic interviews took place with privileged witnesses who were working in these institutions. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain an adequate background scenario and to promote the dissemination of knowledge among both the research group and the social actors involved in the research.

The interview solicitations to school operators were semi-structured in nature, though this scheme was not followed rigidly and the interviewees were given opportunity to express their opinions in the most exhaustive way.

We were fully aware of the great amount of first hand information and knowledge that the volunteers have amassed in the course of their work, and therefore we tried to offer them as much space as possible to lead the fieldwork. For this same reason we have asked them to also contribute with a written contribution on their experience. These documents have been included in Appendix II and they also serve to thank these men and women who have dedicated their life and efforts to the fight for the right to education and whose work is often almost invisible.

3. Italy: from land of emigration to country of immigration

In 2011, Italy celebrated the 150 year anniversary of the birth of the unitarian state; in comparison to other EU countries, it became a nation-state in a relatively short amount of time. However, the linguistic and cultural differences between one region and another have been and are today extremely strong. For this reason, legislators have posed much emphasis on the concept of national unity, in an attempt to establish obstacles to the secessionist and centrifugal processes that had interested Italy in its recent history.

Until the 1950s, there were the strong linguistic differences within the country and a deep-rootedness to the dialects, resulting in a scarce knowledge of the proper Italian language and low educational levels of the population. After the 2nd World War, the Italian state also had to confront demands being made by national minority populations included within the Italian national borders, such as the French minority of the Valle d'Aosta and the Germans of the Trentino Alto Adige.

It is on this basis that some Italian regions obtained a special status (e.g. Trentino Alto Adige, Valle d'Aosta, and Sicilia). The creation of regions with the special status (regioni a statuto speciale) represents an attempt towards political mediation, one that has been sought over the last twenty years the party of the "North Liga," a political party that has often stressed the necessity of secession to create the Padania, a territory configured and based on the invention of a tradition. This also illustrates the divisive stance of the North Liga, a group that has led one of the most violent campaigns against the Roma in Italy.

Italy has historically been a country characterised by a strong emigration, both to Northern Europe and the Americas and by internal migrations (from the south to the center and north of Italy). It has been estimated that in the world there are almost 30 million persons of Italian origin, a fact that has led some scholars to use the term "Italian diaspora" (in the year 1879, 870,000 persons left Italy to emigrate abroad). During the 1970s, Italy experienced the phenomenon of a returning migratory flow, with serious problems regarding their reintegration and linguistic recovery of the Italian language.

The transformation from a country of emigration to a country of immigration is still a recent phenomenon and one which has occurred extremely rapidly. The constant increase of immigration has brought the number of migrants present in Italy from the 320,000 registered by the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) in the early 1980s to the almost five million today.

The other characteristic of immigration in Italy is the non-homogeneity of this presence. Italy today welcomes almost all nationalities recognised by the UN, with some groups more numerous than others (Maghrebi in the beginning, then Albanians, while today the most consistent group is that of the Romanians). Thus, immigration in Italy remains a composite phenomenon.

Until the 1970s, the foreigners who entered Italy were mainly returning migrants, who returned to Italy though they had been citizens of other countries for a long time. It is only from the 1980s that immigration to Italy began to be composed other Europeans and citizens from other continents that did not have Italian origins.

To understand the entirety of this phenomenon, it is worth reporting some synthetic demographic data: in 1981, there were 320,000 foreigners officially registered in the ISTAT census of the population, a third of which were stable residents while the rest represented a quota for seasonal workers. In 1991, the number of migrant workers almost doubled, reaching 625,000. In 1996, following the consistent arrivals from Albania and the Maghreb, the foreigners residing in Italy reached almost one million (924,500 according to the 1996 Caritas Report). In 2001, this number rose to 1,334,889, with the largest presence being that of Moroccans (180,103 persons) and Albanians (173,064) (ISTAT, 2005); in 2005, this number reached 1,990,159 (ISTAT, 2007).

According to the most recent ISMU data, there are 5.3 million foreigners residing today in Italy ¹¹ (including the undocumented migrants) who represent 14% of births (from 1993 on, the demographic count became negative). Today Italy is the first EU country where the number of persons over 65 years of age has surpassed the number of those of 18 years of age and the migratory increase has now become the sole factor of growth of the Italian population.

3.1. The quest for the right to education in the Italian school system

The achievement of mass schooling has been one of the determinant factors which has allowed Italy to become a modern and democratic country, though this was accomplished thanks to processes of diffuse social conflicts. The end of the 1960s and the 1970s was characterised by strong social movements which saw the involvement not only of the working classes but also the students and operators of schools and universities. These movements found one of their strongest expression in the fight for the right to free education. The result has been that of an important success for mass schooling and for the strengthening of the public¹² system of education, helping to realise the equality of opportunities promised by the Italian Constitution, at least for the education sector.

The 1962 reform of the unified lower secondary school was a fundamental point of arrival because it prevented many children from being destined to work as early as during the first cycle of secondary school without any chances to gain access to the higher cycle of studies. The students' mobilizations of 1968, in synergy with the "workers' hot autumn" of 1969 accomplished the liberalisation in the access to all universities' faculties even for students with a diploma from a professional or technical school and the promulgation of the Law (L.) of 20/5/1970 Number (n.) 300, the "Workers' Statute," one of the most advanced in EU countries. With this law the steelworkers ensured that their collective contract included the so-called "150 Hours," i.e. 150 hours every three years that the workers could dedicate to educational and cultural activities. Public schools were to host afternoon and night courses that in large part led to the completion of compulsive schooling (lower secondary school diploma) for all of the adult workers that previously had not obtained the qualification. The implementation of the "150 Hours" resulted in a glorious period of experimentation from all points of view. The State accepted programmes through which the life and working experiences of the attending workers were valorised.

11 This number indicates only the foreigners who are legally residing in Italy and does not take into account those who are undocumented. According to ISMU research, the number of "irregular" migrants in Italy is around 420,000 (XV Rapporto ISMU 2009 – 2010).

12 Public school in Italy is a school run by the state and where attendance is free of charge, opposed to private school where there is a fee to be enrolled.

This was also an exalting occasion for the growth of social ties and for the strengthening of democracy and collective participation. In two years, 100,000 workers were going back to school, later to be followed by other workers' categories, by the unemployed and by housewives. Before the establishment of the "150 Hours" system, adult education was entrusted to philanthropic night schools (*scuole serali filantropiche*) or to TV programmes such as "It is never too late," unsurprisingly closed down just in 1968.

There were other significant goals reached during this decade, always due to the attention that the workers' world had toward the education system. In 1968, the state maternal school was instituted. In 1971, the L. 820/71 instituted this "full-time school," not only to facilitate women's access to employment, but also for the amelioration of the educational perspective for the most disadvantaged sectors of the population. Finally, the L. 517/77 opened the normal school to disabled students and created the figure of the support teacher (DOA), whose role was to flank the regular teacher by helping the disabled student.

However, Italy is also the country where experimental initiatives of "education from the ground" have been of great importance and significance. The exemplar cases deserve to be quoted here, many of which prior to 1968, whose objective was the exposure of the school class system which had been excluding the sons of agriculturalists and workers. The school of Partinico run by Danilo Dolci,¹³ the Don¹⁴ Zeno's Nomadelfia,¹⁵ the "Scuola di Barbiana" of Don Milani or the "Scuola 725" of Don Roberto Sardelli, all constitute an important point of reference both political and pedagogical.

This research does not have the goal of undertaking an historical detailed analysis, but these experiences of non-formal didactics dedicated to the inclusion of the lower classes provide examples that are valuable and relevant to the integration of any minority or otherwise underserved populations.

The Italian pedagogy had included experiences of strong innovation which resonate at the European and global levels, beginning with the new pedagogy introduced by Maria Montessori during the 1950s, which is today diffused and recognized all over the world, to the experiences of the Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (Movement for Cooperative Education) group¹⁶ and of Bruno Ciari.

One example of the opening of the school system in Italy is the practice of the so-called "open classes" which allow for collaboration through a common project between different classes within the school institute which implemented the project. This possibility of an almost seminar-style

¹³ See the Danilo Dolci's website: http://www.danilodolci.it/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

¹⁴ The prefix "Don" indicates a priest in Italian.

¹⁵ See the Nomadelfia website: <http://www.nomadelfia.it/ita/>

¹⁶ Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (Movement for Cooperative Education) was inspired by the Freinet principles and composed by a group of progressive teachers. See official MCE website: <http://www.mce-fimem.it/home.html>

activity in school that allows for the exchange of experiences among students of different class ages.¹⁷

Always within the school ambit, in the Italian schools the “methodology of the real duty” (metodologia del compito reale) is practiced. This represents a method that is described very efficaciously by the Director of a Roman school:

“The educational ground, founded on the basis of the real duty outweighs the situation centered on teaching in favour of a situation centered instead on learning, able to motivate the student, especially in case of disadvantage, and to support him in the learning process. Such methodology, based on operativeness is framed within the wider field of the action-research. Each student, through operative situations, becomes the protagonist of his learning process and is stimulated to take up a stance toward an active, aware and responsible behaviour.”¹⁸

The text explains the “methodology of the real duty,” which is based more on maieutics than on that of the traditional pedagogical frameworks.

There are many other indicators which could be listed that could witness the opening of the Italian school system toward the new issues brought on by the aforementioned significant changes in migratory flows. Some indications of this were also present in the National Contract for the Education sector since 1998–2001 (undersigned in 1999). This integral contract intended to “incentivate, support and redistribute” the specific direct commitment of schools in the areas of those at-risk of social deviance, juvenile delinquency and school drop-out. Article 5 of the contract states:

“With the aim of supporting the school employees work, committed to endorse the best welcoming and the integration of students coming from other countries and/or nomads,¹⁹ and in particular for the teachers involved in the teaching of the Italian language the amount of the fund is increased ... considering the need to welcome the linguistic and cultural differences as a value to use as the foundation of reciprocal respect, of the exchange between cultures and to favour and to promote initiatives directed toward the welcoming and the protection of the language and culture of origin...”

Article 19 concerns the training of teachers in schools placed in areas where the migratory presence is particularly strong or where nomads are enrolled. This same article suggests that there is a need to

17 See here an example of one of these projects enacted by the lower secondary school “G. Bellini” of Rome dedicated to interculture, according to the methodology of the real duty. http://archivio.invalsi.it/classe-aperta/classe_aperta/educ_civica/01_diritti.htm

18 From the website of the network of schools of the XIVth and XVth School Districts. Active since 2003, the network gathers 32 schools of various orders and grades which, on the basis of the principle of the didactic autonomy, have developed a consortium by way of official protocols. This network has also prepared a questionnaire for the welcoming of Romani students (see Appendix II). <http://www.retescuole14-15.it/pagine/progetti1.htm>

19 The word “nomads” appears in almost all official Italian documents. Zingari is the Italian term used to define as a whole the Roma and Sinti population. Now considered derogatory, it is still used in some institutional documents together with “nomads.”

be ready for a linguistic “emergency intervention” and for the diffusion of intercultural themes and approaches.

3.1.1. The Italian way to interculture

In spite of the fact that the so-called non-communitarian immigration started to become a mass phenomenon only from the early 1990s, a certain attention to the themes of the welcoming of diversities was an element which was already present in the Italian school system, both in terms of general principles and regarding didactic experimentation. The reasons for this interest are due to various factors; first of all, we must take into account the attention toward the problems of school inclusion of the Italian ethnic and linguistic minorities (for example the French minority in the region of Valle d’Aosta, the German one in Trentino Alto Adige, the Ladin and the Slovenian in the north, and the Greek and Albanian minorities in the south). Secondly, the historical presence of Italian Roma and Sinti forced the school institutions to deal with the issues posed by the school inclusion of these communities, traditionally considered to be bearers of a cultural otherness. Just the presence of the “zingari” constitutes the starting point of a theoretical process of reflection on cultural diversities that would later on also be applied to migrants.

A final element to be elaborated upon is that of the Italian emigration. Around the 1970s, “returning” Italian migrants, that often were extremely deprived and poor Italians, posed to the school institution problems that needed to be coped with, by means of an intercultural approach.

The term “interculturality” appears in a document produced by the Council of Europe in 1978 and the importance of the concept is stressed in a publication issued by the same Council in 1989.²⁰ This new approach was not intended to be dedicated only to migrants, but to the very same citizens of the European Union that were engaged in the process of European fusion. The perspective of an intercultural pedagogy will characterise Italy in a much more significant manner than other European countries, greatly attributed to the mobilizations for the right to study mentioned in the previous paragraphs.

The term “intercultural education” appears for the first time in the official programs for the Italian lower secondary schools of 1979. In 1985, the intercultural approach is also applied and implemented for primary school students.²¹ In the 1990s, with the primary school reform, interculturality is included in the guidelines for kindergartens and in 1992 was also included in programs for the upper secondary schools.

Interculture is not seen as an accessory dimension upon which school curricula should conform but as a pathway based on dialogue where, instead of confronting each other or of being presented as monolithic, waterproofed blocks, cultures are fused and mixed, making themselves reciprocally available to cultural exchanges.

²⁰ Council of Europe, (1989), *L’education interculturelle. Concept, contexte et programme*. Strasbourg.

²¹ DPR of the 12/2/1985 n.104, *New programs for the primary school. Foreword. Education to democratic cohabitation*. Available at: www.edscuola.it/archivio/norme/decreti/dpr104_85.pdf

To support this process, the MPI - MIUR institutes a special office in 2004, the General Direction for Students (Direzione Generale per lo Studente) with a sector specifically dedicated to the inclusion of foreign, Romani and Sinti children.

From the year 2006 the same Ministry supports the creation of the “Osservatorio Nazionale per l’integrazione degli alunni stranieri e per l’educazione interculturale” (National Observatory for the integration of foreign children and for intercultural education. NOOFSIE), participated by thematic experts and representatives of the NGOs.

The following paragraph will be dedicated to the analysis of the Italian school legislation concerning the education of foreign and Romani and Sinti students, thus offering a more detailed account of the Italian approach to interculture.

3.1.2. The school legislation

The Italian school legislation has welcomed and ratified the international and communitarian directives, of which the most important are the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the UN International Convention on Children’s Rights (1989). At a national level the regulatory reference is constituted by the Constitution of the Italian Republic, and in particular by the Articles 1, 2, 3, 33 e 34²².

The MPI - MIUR has produced within the course of years a series of programmatic guidelines dedicated to the theme of the inclusion of foreign students and of interculture. Such documents, as for example the CNPI rulings have been supported by the Ministerial Circulars²³, which contained legislative references and operative indications.

In this paragraph we will provide an overview of the most important and representative of these acts because they show, in their articulations, the school point of view on a theme like that of school integration and on the right to education.

It must be underlined that the overall majority of the legislative acts analyzed for this research have as a target the “foreign students”, including in this category also the non Italian Roma.

The first element to be registered is that the Italian schools had already opted for an intercultural perspective many decades before that the migratory phenomenon became such a relevant data, and the whole Italian legislation reflects this development. It has already been said that the presence of local ethnic and linguistic minorities on the national territory, and of communities of Roma and the Sinti (although not officially recognised) had already pushed the institutions to confront with the problematic of the cultural differences.

²² The Constitution of the Italian Republic represents in our legal system a primary source so that any other law, decree, proceeding or act (both at a Regional and National level) must conform to it. If these conditions are not satisfied, the Constitutional Court, which has the duty to check this conformity, will rule it as invalid.

²³ Quoted in the text and officially with the acronym CM. In the bibliography there is a list of all the pertinent acts and circulars and of all the materials produced by the MPI - MIUR concerning the education of foreign students and intercultural issues.

Later on, with the consolidation of the migratory phenomenon and with its exponential growth, the Ministry of Education, Research and University (MPI – MIUR) endowed more sophisticated and specific tools, allowing for the full adoption of the indications given by the Council of Europe in 1989 which stated that intercultural education is the most apt instrument for the school inclusion of the sons and daughters of migrant workers. Already in 1984, the Council of Ministers of the Member States had introduced a recommendation for an intercultural orientation in the educational practices of those teachers who were working in areas affected by the migratory phenomenon.

In 1989, MPI - MIUR organised a working group²⁴ dedicated to the inclusion of foreign students, and it was this group which formulated and authored the most relevant acts on this theme.

Both in the European and Italian ambits we have seen a change in the consideration of the value of the intercultural approach in education, first seen as the most apt model for the integration of the students born from migrant parents and later on as an advanced and sophisticated educational mode tout court.

What follows is a listing of the most significant norms (mainly under forms of Ministerial Circulars) which represent the ratification of the European orientations regarding the inclusion of foreign students by mean of an intercultural pedagogy are:

Circolare Ministeriale (CM) of 8/9/1989 number (n.) 301, “Inclusion of foreign students in compulsory education: promotion and coordination of initiatives to favour the right to education.” This is an extremely articulated act, with punctual references to the situation of migratory flows, to the necessity of prefiguring coordinated initiatives to guarantee the right to education and with suggestions on the possible ways to solve bureaucratic and administrative procedural problems. The references to interculture are already clear. During that period, Italy was promulgating its first legislative act on immigration with the L.39 of 28/2/1990 (the so-called “Legge Martelli” from the name of the MP who promoted it). This law constituted the occasion for the regularisation of thousands of irregular migrant workers who were already present in Italy. The same law also broke, for the first time, the “geographical restriction” that made it possible in the legislation to consider only those coming from former Socialist countries as refugees, thus opening the flow of refugees from other countries and continents.

In particular, this CM explains the origins and the normative sources for the protection of the right to education of the foreign minority, considering the moment of welcoming as crucial for the determination of a positive school path; thus, this legislation has also concentrated on the determination of the criteria for the placement of foreign students.

In this act, it is already noted that “...it seems important...to underline the function of the maternal school, whose fruition offers irreplaceable stimulus and opportunities both on the cognitive and on the emotional plan” (p.2), thus anticipating many of the more recent international recommendations on the importance of the maternal schools as tools for a successful inclusion.

24 Gruppo Interdirezionale di Lavoro per l’Educazione Interculturale e l’Integrazione degli Alunni Stranieri - Interdirectional Working Group for Intercultural Education and Foreign Students’ Inclusion, from now on GILEIIAS.

In this same CM explicit reference is made to the D.P.R.²⁵ of 10/9/1982 n.722 which prescribes that foreign students should be “enrolled in the compulsory school classroom subsequent, for number of years of study, to the one attended successfully in the country of origin.”

CM of 27/4/1990 n.113, “Indications of the possibility to utilise DOA teachers²⁶ for the implementation of initiatives to promote the school inclusion of students with particular learning difficulties coming from extra non-comunitarian countries.” In the Italian school system, the DOA (acronym for support teachers) were normal teachers entrusted with the duty of following disabled children in all school subjects as a didactic support under the Law 104, which recognised the handicap and introduced this professional figure. With the last school reform, all teachers can be employed as DOA. In light of the lack of other professional figures specifically dedicated to individual school support, DOAs are often misused by also working with non-disabled children, including the Roma.

CM of 18/4/1990 n. 3316, (integrations into CM 301 8/9/1989). Through this CM, the Local Education Authorities (Provveditorato) are urged to arrange training activities for the teachers “for the predisposition of competences and appropriate tools that may be able to favour the inclusion of non communitarian subjects, cultures and problematics in the national education system.”

CM of 26/6/1990 n.176, “On the special literacy courses for adults to get the lower secondary school qualification. To extend to foreign citizens the experimentation carried on with the 150 hours.”²⁷ This CM explains technically how to extend the right to the “150 hours” to migrant workers.

CM of 26/7/1990 n. 205, “Compulsory school and foreign students: the intercultural education”. (integrations into the CM of 8/9/1989 n. 301). This is another important CM because it clearly explains that intercultural education is a transversal dimension of the Italian school system, and it represents a perspective upon which all school activities should be harmonised. With this document MPI – MIUR instituted a working group on interculture to be implemented within the local education authorities (Provveditorati). The aim of this group is that of dealing with the problematic of foreign students in agreement with local public bodies, NGOs, foreigners’ civil society organisations through the coordination of specific initiatives and the gathering of documentation on the experiences and actions already undertaken.

Also given in this text are indications as to how include the foreign student in school which, according to the CM, should be inserted in a grade adequate to his/her age and to the level of schooling obtained in the country of origin, thus implementing DPR n. 722 quoted above.

This CM also states that the “Regions have the duty of predisposing ad hoc Italian culture and language courses with the aim of favouring the integration of non-communitarian workers and their

25 DPR: Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica - Presidential Decree.

26 In order to be assigned to the schools, there is the need for medical certification from the ASL (Azienda Sanitaria Locale - Local Healthcare Offices) which assesses the condition of the child and his/her need for the DOA.

27 The “150 ore” (150 Hours) is another important result of the 1960s and 1970s mobilisations which have been described in paragraph 3.1. It allows to any worker to be absent from work for 150 hours a year in order to obtain a study qualification, including a university degree.

families within the Italian community also by means of cultural programmes for the different national groups.” Another remarkable point is found in Article 6 where it is suggested that schools make use of “mediators and mother tongue experts to enact initiatives of valorisation of the language and of the culture.” It is also suggested that schools implement local partnerships with the associations and other organisations of the foreigners’ civil society. Lastly, it is worth noting the reference to the professional profiles of the cultural and linguistic mediators to whom the task of facilitating the relationship between the school and the families is also entrusted.

CM of 15/10/1991 n.308, “Survey on the intercultural activities and on the presence of foreign students in the maternal, primary and secondary schools.” In 1991, a few years from the start of the mass migratory phenomenon in Italy, the MPI – MIUR produced a national survey on the quality and quantity of foreign students in Italy in all school cycles. This CM presents the data obtained by the survey.

CM of 1993 n.138, CNPI ruling on “Intercultural education as a prevention of racism and anti-Semitism.” This CM stresses the importance of intercultural education as a tool to prevent the rise of racism and discrimination. It should not be forgotten that, during these years in Italy, there had been the growth of a xenophobic front constituted by post-fascist organisations working in synergy with the North Liga.

Also, concerning the fight against all forms of discrimination, the CM of 9/2/1996, “European youth campaign against racism, anti-Semitism and intolerance” must be cited as it stresses the importance of an intercultural approach as a mean to fight racial, gender and religious discrimination.

CM of 2/3/1994 n.73, “Intercultural dialogue and democratic coexistence: the planning commitment of the schools.” This document was integrated with a paper by the GILEIIAS (“Intercultural dialogue and democratic coexistence”) which represented the first effort to systematize and give shape to what in subsequent documents will be explicitly called “The Italian way to interculture.” In this document the importance of the role of kindergartens and primary schools for foreign children is underlined and it offers normative references to allow flexible modalities of intervention. It also ensures the support of the Ministry in experimental projects and recommends that the interventions of the schools be coordinated with those that other institutions are planning or implementing for migrant workers and their families.²⁸

The CM of 12/1/1994 n.17, “Procedures for the enrolment in schools of every order and grade of minors without permit of staying.” This is an extremely important CM because it disposes of the idea that children of irregular migrants ought to be enrolled in school with reserve, in wait of the subsequent regularisation of his/her parents. It is a key norm because the right to education is considered to be an inalienable right for every child, including the ones whose parents have not got a permit of stay.

CNPI Ruling of 20/12/2005, “Intercultural problematics.” This document offers a short overview of the situation as it was in 2005 and underlines a series of nodal points that ought to be more

28 This law includes indications concerning rights relative to social and healthcare services, school, housing and with the purpose of maintaining cultural identity, (L. 943/1986).

thoroughly addressed. Among the points underlined, the filling of the gaps carried by foreign students due to the discontinuity of school attendance or for other reasons is considered as central, and the need of more adequate resources to invest in the filling of this gap is stressed, especially concerning basic linguistic competences. Other nodal points articulated are the necessity of appropriate training for the teachers and the improvement of the welcoming situation, which is considered as a factor of paramount importance for the foreign students' school success and integration.

MPI – MIUR December 2006, “Position paper for the integration of foreign students and for intercultural education.” The document reports the data on foreign students, whose presence in 2006 was attested to be 430,000, with an average increase of 70,000-80,000 students per year. This document is a policy paper which provides evidence regarding the key priorities for intercultural education, further dividing them into five main areas: training; teaching of the Italian language as a second tongue (Italian L2) and valorisation of the language and culture of origin; involvement of families and adult education; intercultural education in the new school curricula; and, lastly, the comparison with other EU countries.

For each of these five areas, priorities and proposals are singled out. Concerning intercultural education, the paper affirms its value in integration by stating:

“Intercultural education refuses both the logic of assimilation and the reinforcement of closed ethnic communities. It favours and promotes the heterogeneity of citizenships in the composition of the school classes, rather than create homogeneous classes according to the geographic or religious origins. We can affirm that these characteristics define a possible Italian way to integration, an original pathway when compared to other EU countries” (p.1).

Position paper of October 2007, edited by MPI – MIUR and the National Observatory for the Integration of Foreign Children and for Intercultural Education (NOFSIIE), significantly entitled: “The Italian way to intercultural education and for the integration of foreign students.” This probably represents the most important document among those already presented in this paragraph because it is the most systematic and summarizes all the preceding acts and norms produced on the theme of interculturality.

The ambits of the intervention are divided into three main areas: the support of integration (welcoming practices and school integration, Italian as a second tongue, valorisation of plurilingualism, orientation and relation with the migrant families), those dedicated to intercultural education (relationships in and out of school, prejudices and discrimination, intercultural perspectives in the knowledge and in the competences) and lastly, aspects related to organisational and procedural issues (autonomy of the networks among school institutions,²⁹ relationships with civil society and training of trainers).

Though the most relevant legislative acts for the school inclusion of foreign minors can be traced back to the 1990s, the Roma presence in Italy (although the Italian legislation does not foresee

29 See for example the website of one of these networks: <http://www.retescuole14-15.it/pagine/progetti1.htm>

special policies directed toward specific groups) had already gained important analysis³⁰ and decisions on behalf of the national and local education authorities by that time. These early experiences will be dealt with in the following paragraphs, but it is worth noting that the two MPI - MIUR documents specifically reference this minority. One instance is in a recommendation from the CNPI, and the second is in a Ministerial CM. The Ministry for Public Education extended compulsory schooling to all Romani children through the CM of 16/7/1986 n. 207 and put on the state the task of promoting this obligation.

The CNPI Recommendation of 14/04/1981 which, with respect to the principle of cultural diversity, indicates the “training of teachers coming from the same Roma communities as they are more apt to safeguard their cultural specificity.”

CM of 16/7/1986 n. 207, “Schooling of the zingari and nomad³¹ students in the kindergarten, lower and upper secondary first grade schools.” This CM is entirely dedicated to the Romani students and it is divided into four parts: principles, organisational issues, functional issues and teachers’ training. In the first part, dedicated to principles, the CM states:

“The school drop-out of Roma is a phenomenon which concern essentially the primary education, that according to the Italian Constitution principles is compulsory. In regard to this, it is worth underlining that each pretence to undertake the full schooling of these subjects forcing them sic et simpliciter to comply with the compulsiveness of schooling would betray the spirit of our legislation...The bilateralism of the school compulsion must not be forgotten , which also imposes on schools the maximum respect for the cultural identities of the students. The correct relationship between the school and the students should be based not on constrictions, but on the free will...of having access to education as a mean of intellectual elevation and as a factor of human and civil development...the “zingari” and the nomads, like any others who reside in the Italian territory, have a full right to access to our schools, even when deprived of the citizenship and it is worth it to remember that any hostility of mistrust represents an open violation of the Italian state Constitutional and civil principles...” (p.1)

The other two parts of this CM are dedicated to the functional aspects that are able to be implemented; it is important to notice that, at the principle levels, this statement represents an important standing point for Roma school inclusion. Further on in the text, it is specified that the “zingari and nomad students are not to be considered as disabled, but rather as bearers of a social disadvantage...” and that “such a condition of disadvantage is tied to irregularity in school attendance, to transfers from one school to the other and to the diffuse phenomenon of school drop-out tied to living conditions” (p.2). This point makes reference to the fact that the only possibility to have the help of a support teacher is by way of the DOA support teachers, which are to support the disabled children. For this reason, often the schools declare the student as disabled in order to obtain the support teacher. This of course represents a misuse of the DOA figure and a stigma for the student, not to mention the fact that it represents an illegal procedure. Nevertheless, in light of the

30 See paragraph: Roma and Sinti in Italian schools: some historical notes.

31 Also here as in many other Italian official documents denominated with the term now considered derogatory “zingaro” or with the word “nomadi.”

lack of other alternatives, this tactic has been often used by the schools in order to have the support they needed.

It is evident how clearly the contradiction emerges between the principles that the legislative acts declare and the effective implementation of policies, the latter of which is tied to the availability of funds and other resources.

3.1.3. Linguistic and cultural mediators

The theme of cultural mediation together with that of interculture must be considered as the two themes which have characterised the new course of the educational sciences in Italy. The number of scientific publications derived from empirical researches and/or by theoretical reflections on this new pedagogical border is extremely relevant, especially as seen during the 1990–2000 decade.

The need for a professional mediator arose for the first time within the field of healthcare. There have been numerous cases of healthcare services offered to both foreigners and Roma whose offices had to be equipped with linguistic and cultural mediators. Cited here are two of the most important cases in Italy: the NAGA in Milan and the San Gallicano Hospital in Rome.

The Associazione Volontaria di Assistenza Socio-Sanitaria per Stranieri e Nomadi - Volunteer Association of Social and Healthcare Assistance for Foreigners and Nomads (NAGA)³² was formed in Milan in 1987 as an answer to the needs of migrants, especially of those who could not have access to specialised healthcare (this is often the case with irregular migrants as the Italian legislation offers to the undocumented migrant only the emergency healthcare services). The NAGA, also interested in the quality of the welcoming and of the service provided, has on more than one occasion organised training courses for the qualification of cultural mediators. Similarly, from the mid-eighties the service of “Medicina Preventiva delle Migrazioni” of the San Gallicano Hospital in Rome has provided assistance to thousands of migrants with the help of linguistic and intercultural mediators.

The idea of having linguistic and cultural mediation in the field of education was first introduced with Articles 36 and 40 of the L.40 of 6/3/1998, “Disciplina dell’immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero” (Immigration Act) and later on implemented by Articles 38 and 42 of the DL 25/7/1998.

Article 36 “Education for foreigners. Intercultural education” is dedicated to the analysis of the procedures for the acknowledgement of the qualifications obtained in the country of origin and to the modalities of communication between the families of the foreign student with the support of qualified cultural mediators. However, the adjective “qualified” has not yet been accompanied by adequate specifications.

Article 40, “Measures of social integration” is centered just on the cultural mediator as a tool for the social integration of foreign minors. It also stresses the importance of the stipulation of agreements

32 NAGA: Associazione Volontaria di Assistenza Socio-Sanitaria per Stranieri e Nomadi - Volunteer Association of Social and Healthcare Assistance for Foreigners and Nomads. Members of this NGO have also participated in the Milan Focus Group due to their work with the Romanian Roma community of via Rubattino and others.

with migrants' civil society associations and organisations in order to employ mediators with the objective to "ease the relationship between the single administrations and the foreigners belonging to the different ethnic, national, linguistic and religious groups."

In the year 2000 the L. of 8/11/2000 n. 328³³ has included in Article 12 the mediators' profession among those classified as "social professions for services to the persons," but the issue regarding the necessary qualification still remains unclear and in need of further specification for the establishment of an official curricula.

Concerning the specifics of the school legislation, there are explicit references to this professional role in the following:

CM of 26/7/1990 n. 205, "The compulsive school cycle and the foreign students. Intercultural education." In Article 6 of this CM, the presence and use of mother tongue mediators are described as extremely useful in order to ease reciprocal communication, to favour the relationship between the schools and the families of the foreign student and for the valorisation of the culture of origin.

CM of 21/1/2000 n. 21, "Initiatives for the training and updating of knowledge." In the priority guidelines for intervention the importance and the centrality of a proper training for mediators and for those teachers and school operators which are operating in areas and regions interested by strong migratory presences is stressed.

CM of 1/3/2006 n. 24, "Guidelines for the welcoming and the integration of foreign students." The second part of this document deals with the operative indications, wherein there is a part dedicated to the cultural mediators. The document stresses that "...of paramount importance is the ability of the schools to facilitate the communication between the foreign student and his/her family, giving attention also to the non-verbal aspects and recurring, where possible, to the help of cultural mediators or interpreters to overcome the linguistic difficulties and also to facilitate the understanding of the educational choices of the schools" (p. 10).

Another key document where the role of mediators is explicitly quoted is the one produced by the NOFSIIE in 2007, "The Italian way to the intercultural school and for the integration of foreign students." In this paper, the linguistic and cultural mediators are described as a resource for the relationship with the foreign families and for school orientation.

In conclusion to this section dedicated to the cultural and linguistic mediators is some additional information which may be of use to policymakers. Although this is not one of the topics covered by this research report, it must be noted that there are another important areas where cultural and linguistic mediation is requested, such as in correctional institutions. Unfortunately, this need as expressed by this sector has been understood too late when compared with what has happened within the health and education sectors. A relevant percentage of the 60,000 persons restricted in the Italian jails is constituted by migrants, often awaiting judgement and therefore presumed innocent according to our legislation. Regardless to this important data, schools continue to not be

33 L. of 8/11/2000 n. 328. "Legge quadro per la realizzazione del sistema integrato di interventi e servizi sociali – Framework law for the implementation of the integrated system of intervention and of social services."

considered one of the possible realms to conduct cultural mediation, but rather as its privileged place of expression.

3.1.4. Roma and Sinti in Italian schools: some historical notes

It can be affirmed that the school system in Italy, beginning from the early 1950s, has characterised itself as the first large national laboratory for education regarding ethnic relations and intercultural contact. In particular, concerning the Roma, the same school teachers were the ones who initiated the first experiment of preparation and inclusion within the compulsive cycle of schooling. This experiment took place at first by means of voluntary actions by single teachers, who volunteered to go into the Roma encampments with the aim of fighting illiteracy and teaching basic elements of reading and writing to children. Later on, such experiments had the open support and commitment of the school institutions.

The schooling of Roma began in Italy in 1959 with the official institution of the first “Lacio Drom” (Good Trip) classrooms. Later this came via the creation of the first national foundation dedicated to Roma and Sinti, the “Opera Nomadi,”³⁴ founded by Don Bruno Nicolini in 1965 and with the collaboration of the Ministry of Education and the University of Padova, with the aim of supporting the experiment of the Lacio Drom classrooms for Romani and Sinti children.³⁵

Between 1965 and 1970, Mirella Karpati, whose academic formation is that of a pedagogic specialist, coordinated the training of the first school teachers who were to be involved in the classes of the Lacio Drom project at the University of Padova. These classes lasted until 1982, when Romani and Sinti students were finally included in normal classrooms. Meanwhile, the group led by Bruno Nicolini, Mirella Karpati and Secondo Massano gave life to a center for the documentation on Roma and Sinti, the “Centro Studi Zingari.” This group later also issued a review titled “Lacio Drom” and dedicated to the themes of Roma and Sinti culture, language, social structure and inclusion and exclusion processes.

It is worth a brief note on the peculiar historical, cultural and political combination of factors which had allowed this experience, and which are related with the already quoted mobilizations of the 1960s in the new perspective of “equal access to education for all.” In the CM of 11/03/1953 n.1771/12, the difference between the “special classes” and the “differential classes” is explained, indicating the system which was at work before the 1962 School Reform. Special classes were dedicated to students which were either physically or mentally disabled and were allocated in specific spaces, while differential classes were placed in normal schools and they hosted the so-called “difficult” students.

While the special classes were for the disabled, the differential ones were for the sons and daughters of the Italian working classes, whose destiny was that of becoming either school drop-outs or, in the most fortunate cases, finishing their school cycle enrolled in the institutes of avviamento al lavoro

³⁴ A National Foundation is normally approved by a Presidential decree; in the case of Opera Nomadi, the act is the DPR of the 26/3/1970 n. 347.

³⁵ In the year 1971-1972 there were 60 of these classrooms in the whole Italy.

(introduction to work), which served to guarantee to these youngsters access into the world of employment either as low-skilled workers or as shop assistants.³⁶

The “Lacio Drom” classrooms had nothing in common with these two other models. They were constituted following of model that was principally based on flexibility and specifically dedicated to Roma and Sinti. The word “flexibility” means that, for example, in these classrooms it was possible for a young Romani mother to follow the school lessons together with her children, or that the classes were composed by boys and girls from 6 to 14 years of age and that the teaching methods were strongly individualised.

These are the words of Mirella Karpati on the “Lacio Drom” classrooms:

“... the idea of the special classes for Roma had been adopted not because we think that the Roma children are subnormal, psychologically ill or because they carry any of the handicaps to which we refer when we talk about special schools. We talked about special schools because it is the formula which allowed us a larger flexibility in the formation of the classes, in the determination of the age class...and because they allow us to use a different timetable and calendar. Only in this sense we have talked about special schools, and not in any other...” (Karpati, 1989, p. 9).

We must repeat again that this experimentation had been made possible because of the democratic changes that happened during these years. In 1962, with the promulgation of L.1859 24/07/1962, the scuola media unificata (unified lower secondary school) up to 14 years of age was instituted, free, compulsory and equal for all. This intended to curtail the early discrimination still present today in some EU countries that foresees the passage from primary school directly to work.

Complementary to this experience were the many initiatives coming from the social-Christians, which had had a great impact in the exposure of class discrimination at work in the Italian education system previous to the 1962 Reform and in demanding the application of the principles guaranteed by the Constitution of the Italian Republic. In 1967 a priest, Don Lorenzo Milani, gave life to the experiment of the “Scuola di Barbiana” for the education of sons and daughters of the North Italian peasants and agriculturalists.

In Rome another priest, Roberto Sardelli, following the example of Don Milani and established a school (the “Scuola 725”) for the inhabitants of the shanty town of the Acquedotto Felice where Italian Roma (Sardelli, 1971) were also living. Another member of the Lacio Drom group, Maria Severino, taught to Romani children in the shanty town of the Mandrione (Severino, 1968) and actively fought for their right to education.

Finally, in 1969 there was the liberalisation in the access to University so that also those who had a diploma from a professional institute could have the possibility to continue studying and enrol in University.

It was in this particular time of large mass mobilization for the right to work, to education and to democracy, that the “Lacio Drom” classrooms were born.

³⁶ There were two main specialisations: industrial (for boys) and commercial (for girls).

3.1.4.1. The present situation

The Roma and Sinti presence in Italy is composed of both Italian (Roma and Italian Sinti) and foreign citizens, mainly from eastern European countries. The Italian Roma and Sinti have been citizens of the Italian state for centuries; therefore, there are no specific laws directed toward them. Although their presence in Italy has been documented for at least 500 years, both groups have not been included in the list of the officially recognised linguistic and cultural minorities protected by the L. 482/1999.

The Italian regions with the largest concentration of Roma and Sinti are Lazio, Lombardia, Calabria and Piemonte. The life conditions and the level of inclusion of the various communities are very diversified. Italy has a decentralised system and the regional differences can mean great changes from one place to the other; nonetheless, the metropolitan centers register the highest number of Roma and Sinti, who almost invariably reside in the dramatic conditions of the encampments, whether authorised or not. With the lack of reliable data on the quantity and quality of Roma and Sinti, there are estimates which report numbers oscillating between the 120,000 and 150,000, thus representing 0.3% of the Italian population.

Regardless the fact that the number of Roma and Sinti on the Italian territory is very small compared to other groups, MPI – MIUR has dedicated particular attention to the schooling processes of this minority.³⁷

The Roma and Sinti presence ceased to be registered in a disaggregated manner starting from 2010–2011; therefore, 2011 is the last year for which we have a clear indication of their presence, defined as “nomads” by the Ministry. Present-day statistics only registered the nation of origin of the student.

The region of Lazio has the highest number of students with 2,443, following by Lombardia (1,943), Piemonte (1,259), Calabria (1,165), Emilia Romagna (799) and Toscana (766). Among the provinces, these are the large metropolitan centers with the largest concentrations of Roma communities. Table I shows the number of Romani and Sinti students in the national schools divided by region.

Table I. Nomad students present in the national school system by region

³⁷ See in Appendix I the form that the MPI – MIUR has implemented in order to monitor and assess the quantitative aspects concerning the Romani students presence and the recognition of the educational activities directed toward them.

Main regions	School Year 2008-2009		School Year 2009-2010		School Year 2009-2010	
	V.A	V. %	V.A	V. %	V.A	V. %
Lazio	2.285	17,8%	2.375	19,6%	2.443	19,7%
Lombardia	2.006	15,6%	1.866	15,4%	1.943	15,7%
Piemonte	1.235	9,6%	1.197	9,9%	1.259	10,2%
Calabria	1.018	7,9%	1.097	9,1%	1.165	9,4%
Emilia Romagna	991	7,7%	796	6,6%	799	6,5%
Toscana	865	6,7%	779	6,4%	766	6,2%

Source: MIUR – Fondazione ISMU, 2011.

* Absolute Values (AV) and Percentage Values (V).

For the 2010–2011 school year, the same research conducted by MPI – MIUR and ISMU has documented the presence of 12,377 students identified as “nomadi”.³⁸ As visible from the data shown in Table II, the large majority is enrolled in primary schools (6,764 or 54.6% of the total) while only 158 (1.3%) are enrolled in the upper secondary schools.

Table II. Nomad students present in the national school system for type of school. School years 2008-2011.

Type of school	School year 2008-2009		School year 2009-2010		School year 2009-2010	
	V.A	V. %	V.A	V. %	V.A	V. %
Infanzia Kindergarten	2.171	16,9%	1.952	16,1%	2.054	16,6%
Primaria Primary School	7.005	54,6%	6.628	54,8%	6.764	54,6%
Secondaria I Grado Lower Secondary School	3.467	27,0%	3.359	27,8%	3.401	27,5%
Secondaria II Grado Upper Secondary School	195	1,5%	150	1,2%	158	1,3%
Totale	12.838	100,0%	12.089	100,0%	12.377	100,0%

Source: MIUR – Fondazione ISMU, 2011.

* Absolute Values (AV) and Percentage Values (V).

These data show very clearly that there is a vertical fall in the enrolment for the study cycles after lower secondary school and that student presence is mostly concentrated in primary school.

38 MIUR – ISMU, (2011), Alunni con cittadinanza non italiana. Verso l'adolescenza. Rapporto Nazionale A.s. 2010 – 2011, Quaderni ISMU 4, Milano. pp. 16-18.

The reasons for school drop-out can be traced to a series of causes, the first of which is to be attributed to the precarious living conditions in which the Roma are forced to live, especially in the large metropolitan areas. To this we must add the frequent evictions of encampments, which provoke almost invariably an arrest in the children's school performance and attendance.

An MPI - MIUR document³⁹ on the early school leaving of Romani minors registers that:

“It is evident...the strong difference of values for the different years of the school cycle. In the last year...a little more than a third of nomad students with respect to the totality of the students attending the first year of course in the same school year. Such values could be explained either with a progressive increase, during the years, of the number of nomad students attending the first years of schools or, and unfortunately this seems the most plausible hypothesis, with the interruption of the school attendance of the largest majority of these youngsters. This is probably due to various causes of social nature which determine a remarkable situation of deprivation and hence of scarce integration.”
(p.6)

Despite the institutional commitment and the attempt to limit the school drop-out of Romani students, much still needs to be done in order to guarantee a real equality of opportunities to these groups. We have schematically hinted to the processes which have forced the school institutions to cope with the problems of linguistic and cultural diversity but it must be said that the Roma and Sinti minority did not succeed in having an adequate attention, if not for the case of some exemplar initiatives carried out in some specific Italian territories.

The marginality in which Roma have been forced to live has not even allowed for them to use the openings offered by public schools. The experience of the “Lacio Drom” group quoted earlier in this text has been therefore an autonomous attempt to also involve the Roma and the Sinti in the same emancipation processes in which the popular classes were also involved .

³⁹ MPI - MIUR - Servizio per l'automazione informatica e l'innovazione tecnologica, Indagine sugli alunni appartenenti alle comunità nomadi (Sintesi conoscitiva dei principali dati), Ottobre 2000.

4. The Italian Operational National Programmes for the education sector.

Regarding Italy, the National Strategic Framework,⁴⁰ foresees an holistic approach of the regional development policies because it allows the use not only of the EU structural funds, but also that of other national funds. For the field of education and for the training system, the priority of MPI – MIUR is that of promoting and valorising human resources.

In this area of intervention, from the year 2000 to the year 2006 and thanks to funding provided by ESF and ESRF, the Operational National Plan (ONP) “Schools for the development” (Le scuole per lo sviluppo) was implemented. This initiative, realised in the southern Italy in the regions of Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Puglia, Sardegna and Sicilia, had the aim of contrasting the phenomenon of school drop-out and favouring social inclusion via initiatives to favour and endorse the intercultural approach, with particular attention to vulnerable groups.

The managing authority for the ONP 2007–2013 collaborates with the National Network for Roma Inclusion. Within the ambit of the ONP “Competences for the development,” attention to the Roma and the promotion of initiatives of inclusion is articulated in three thematic areas:

Minorities and contrast to racism and segregation

An explicit (but not exclusive) approach to vulnerable groups

The gathering of reliable data to favour adequate approaches and strategies pertinent with the data gathered

Actually, for the school compartment there are two active ONPs for the years 2007–2013: “Competences for the development,” financed with ESF funding, and “Learning Environments,” financed with ESRF funds⁴¹ in the Italian regions of Campania, Calabria, Puglia and Sicilia.

The single school institutes can ask to participate in the ONP in different ways, through either “multi-objective” or “mono-objective” calls or, as an alternative, within the educational plan of the institute which intends to participate. These different forms of calls allow for the implementation and the planning of many different interventions on behalf of schools, for example through the entrusting of services or of projects from the ONP management authority.

There are a series of criteria and conditions which are requested of the schools in order to meet the multiple objectives of the calls; these include being registered in the national system for the evaluation of education (INVALSI), compiling periodic “self-diagnosis” reports on the interventions implemented in order to allow for the elaboration of the integrated plan, and the allowance of regular procedures of monitoring and assessment for the whole length of the project.

⁴⁰ European Commission, Decision C (2007) 3329 of the 13 July 2007.

⁴¹ The ONP “Competences for the development” (ESF) concerns interventions of training to ameliorate and increase the students, adults, and school personnels’ competences, while “Learning Environment” (ESRF) is dedicated to structural interventions to ameliorate the school structures and infrastructures in order to increase the functionality of the learning environment.

One of the central aspects of these integrated plans is just the procedure of requesting that the schools undertake regular and periodic self-evaluation processes. These self-assessment activities make the social actors involved able to single out collective elements of weakness and strengths in the projects, therefore enabling the reassessment of projects, promoting collective and active reflection, and monitoring the actions implemented.

In 2009, a quantitative evaluation of the interventions realised insofar in the regions interested by the ONP plan was realised. Schools were asked to provide data concerning the number of Romani students present in their institution and whether they were or not involved in any of the projects activated within the same ONP. In the year 2007, 472 schools answered and offered their data; in 2008 this number rose to 493.

The monitoring report for the years 2007–2009⁴² registered that the schools which had participated in the two ONPs in the years 2007–2009 had 24,632 authorised projects (considering both the training and the infrastructural interventions).⁴³

Regarding the participation in these projects of Romani students, in total for the ONP 2007–2013 there were 213 Romani students which participated in the training programmes. Concerning the class age of the participants, of these 213, 72 had an age between 9 and 10 years old, 29 were between 11 and 13 years of age and the remaining 47 were between 15 and 16 years of age.⁴⁴

Table III shows the number of school institutions involved in the ONP, ESF and ESRF projects compared with the number of active schools in the regions targeted by the project.

Table III. School institutes which participated to the ONP ESF and ESRF (Objective Convergence), divided by region.

Regions	Schools which participated in the ONP (ESF)	Schools which participated in the ONP (ESRF)	Active schools in the region	Participation rate in ONP (ESF) compared with the number of active schools	Participation rate in ONP (ESF) compared with the number of active schools

⁴² See the Report available at the MPI – MIUR website:
<http://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/fondistrutturali/documenti/monitoraggio.shtml>

⁴³ *Ibidem* p.6.

⁴⁴ See data available at the following website:
<http://www.istruzione.lombardia.it/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Programma-Operativo-Nazionale-Competenze-per-lo-Sviluppo-Inclusione-allievi-Rom-Scheda-tecnica.doc>

Calabria	566	506	661	85,6	76,5
Campania	1.260	1.152	1.485	84,8	77,5
Puglia	932	903	990	94,1	91,2
Sicilia	1.154	1.111	1.277	90,3	87,0
TOTAL	3.912	3.672	4.413	88,6	83,2

Source: ONP School, Monitoring Report 2007 – 2009⁴⁵.

Over the years, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of Romani students who became involved in these ONP projects. There has been an increase from 30.7% in 2006 (in a year in which 12 school institutes declared that they had Romani students enrolled) to 50% in 2007 and 52% in 2008 (in this year 26 school institutes out of 50 declared that they had Romani students enrolled). In 2008, the young Roma participation in the different training pathways of the ONP has been of 36.3% (96 students on a total of 264), thus showing a slight increase with respect to the previous year in which the percentage of participants was 28.2% (61 participants out of 216 students).

Both genders have been involved in equal measure with 50% female and 50% male. The participation according to the country of origin has seen the large majority of Italian Roma (about 50% of the students) while regarding the foreign Roma there has been a participation by some members of the Romanian Roma community (about 20% of the students).

45 See note 30.

5. Analysis of the Focus Groups

As we have already explained in the section dedicated to the methodological aspects, a consistent part of this research has been the fieldwork visits of the team in three different cities. In these places three Focus Groups were conducted with teachers, representatives of the Roma communities and NGO operators. In the following paragraphs is a short introduction for each of the Focus Group cities, and a comment on the outcomes of the Focus Group discussions.

5.1. Case study 1: Milan

In the region of Lombardia, there is an estimated presence of around 13000 Roma with almost all of them living in encampments;⁴⁶ 1,400 are documented as living in houses, while the other 1,400 are giostrai (Sinti who practice the travelling show business). In the territory, a census accounted for 240 dwellings, although other estimates are much higher than this number (between 290 and 350). The Roma population is concentrated in the metropolitan area of Milan where 45 dwellings (4,130 persons) and between 80 and 110 in the territory of the Province of Milan have been registered.

In Milan the encampments, both the authorised and the unauthorised ones, are situated in peripheral zones, most often in decommissioned industrial areas characterised by abandonment and in some cases even in areas affected by serious environmental pollution. Even in the cases of an authorised dwellings, the health conditions are almost always disastrous.

The institutional interventions, as in Rome and other cities, have mostly concentrated on activities of control and repression such as the eviction and destruction of the unauthorised encampments (in the year 2010 there were 152 evictions⁴⁷) and relocations of some of the old ones.

There are various organisations who work in the encampments; in this section, we will describe the activities undertaken by teachers and volunteers⁴⁸ with the Romanian Roma that were living in the encampment of via Rubattino, which is the community where the Focus Group was delivered.

In the year 2008, the Municipality of Milan entrusted the management of two areas where the Roma are settled (the encampments of via Triboniano and via Bonfadini) to the Casa della Carità and to the NGO Segnavia - Padri Somaschi. In 2009, a project for the families of the encampment of via Rubattino commenced. Thanks to the support of private foundations, they have managed to implement the project “Romanò Krle,” which involves a series of integrated interventions directed to the vocational training and to other activities for Roma socio-economic inclusion.

The work of Segnavia – Padri Somaschi has concentrated on a group of 330 Romanian Roma coming from the encampments of Segrate and via Rubattino and evicted in February of 2010. After

⁴⁶ Ambrosini M. e Tosi A. (eds.), 2007, *Vivere ai margini. Un'indagine sugli insediamenti rom e sinti in Lombardia*, Milano, Fondazione ISMU.

⁴⁷ Rapporto 2010 Segnavia – Padri Somaschi, p.16. See the full report available at:

<http://www.somaschi.it/Files/Public/DocumentsCategories/5/12/14/14AttachmentROM%20%20Relazione%20annuale%202010.pdf>

⁴⁸ Comunità di Sant'Egidio, the Padri Somaschi – Segnavia, the NAGA and the “Mamme e maestre di Rubattino” (Teachers and mothers from Rubattino).

the eviction, the families were relocated to a series of abandoned warehouses on the opposite side of the road via Rubattino. In a few months, the encampment grew and in the summer had already reached 250 persons. On the 7th of September, 2010 a new eviction pushed the encampments' inhabitants to other areas at the eastern periphery of Milan.

The interventions enacted by the Segnavia – Padri Somaschi NGO have been implemented using operators organised in an outreach team with a project centered on what is called “encampments education,” whose objective:

“is that of establishing a significant relation with the Roma in order to propose different relationship patterns with the local population from the one they were used to before” (Relazione Annuale 2010 Segnavia – Padri Somaschi p.14).

Supplementing this activity is the so-called “Centro Necessario” (Necessary Center), a service guaranteed on a weekly basis in collaboration with another religious organisation (the “Fratelli di San Francesco”). The center offers pediatric visits and other forms of support regarding the right to healthcare.

5.1.1. Comments on the Focus Group

In Milan, the contact group was principally constituted by the activists of the Comunità di Sant'Egidio, the NAGA, the Padri Somaschi – Segnavia and by the “Mothers and Teachers of via Rubattino,” a group of volunteers that at various levels have supported the encampments' inhabitants. The participants in the Focus Group have been extremely representative of actors and witnesses of all the processes related to the schooling of Roma: a teacher, a parent member of a committee composed by teachers and parents, a volunteer from the Comunità di Sant'Egidio that for almost 20 years has worked on these themes and a Romanian Romani woman who, regardless of the fact that she was living in an encampment, has sent her children to school with regularity and is now collaborating with the Community of Sant'Egidio.

The framework depicted to the research team concerning these last ten years is dramatic. A plan based on the “Roma emergency” that was inaugurated by the centre-right government welcomed within its coalition the xenophobic party of the North Liga. This political alliance tried to gain electoral consensus with an unprecedented policy of the criminalisation of Roma and migrants. In particular, the Roma minority has suffered a real persecution, a persecution that has also been denounced by many national and international human rights defence organisations. Millions of euros have been spent for the indiscriminate evictions of the encampments, including those that had been institutionalised due to their long-term existence.

The more than 400 evictions carried out by the Vice Mayor De Corato have sabotaged the work that has been done for the inclusion, derived from years of volunteer commitment and work with the Roma communities. In many cases, the school year has been interrupted almost at its end, without the possibility of students being welcomed in another school. Some Romani parents, in order to avoid an interruption in the school attendance of his/her children, were forced to cross the whole city, with a commuting time of about one hour and a half each way.

The Council of State recently⁴⁹ negated the legitimacy of the emergency state decreed in 2008, but this happened too late to prevent the devastating abuses which had already taken place. The Milan Municipal Council has been eager to interpret with a particular diligence the discriminatory national directives; as if the evictions were not enough, there has also been an obtuse attempt of bureaucratic aggravations.

Regarding school enrolment and the gratuity of the school restaurant, a certificate of residence is now required that, which according to the norms, can only be released if the subject demonstrates an adequate level of income. In the case of a head of the family, the income must be proportionate to the number of members in the family household. Paradoxically, instead of receiving benefits due to living under the “level of absolute poverty,” one is excluded from the formal residence and from the free school restaurant access; this means that, in order to avail oneself to have access to these services, it is necessary somehow to be “richer.” It has often happened that the Romani parents could not pay the 670 euro annual expense for the service of the school restaurant.

Further, in order to accept the school enrolment of children the Fiscal Code (tied to the residence), the rigorous certification of the previous school documentation and documentation of the children’s vaccinations has been requested. The lack of the certificate of residence has also excluded the Romani children from the possibility of having free textbooks when enrolling in the lower secondary school. The school employees have protested against the fact that the cuts on public education have almost completely cancelled the use of linguistic facilitators (first they were one to every 50 students, now one to every 500)⁵⁰. The same support teachers (DOA), formally employed for the support of students with disabilities, were voluntarily employed in support activities aimed at the better inclusion of migrants and Romani students.

In many cases the fact that after an eviction it is impossible to make use of the school bus service; this has actually produced some unintended positive consequences, as it has led to a more direct involvement of the Romani parents in their children’s school pathways. It is not possible to realise real school inclusion without the systemic participation of the Roma families and their direct responsibility in accompanying their children to school; this also constitutes one of the few moments of meeting between Italian and Romani parents.

The Focus Group expressed a firmly shared belief; the participants were all fully aware that the attainment of good results in schooling is strictly connected to an initial “good welcoming.” This is a condition which affects every child, but is more true for the Roma because of the conditions in which this minority is forced to live. Successful and stable results can be obtained, according to the didactic experience of teachers, only within the span of the long-term and only if the institution is able to adequately motivate and support the attendance rates in the long-term (more than one school year).

49 Ruling 6050 of 16th November 2011, which states the illegitimacy of the emergency state decreed by the President of the Council of Ministers the 21st May 2008.

50 Although official data from the MPI – MIUR register an increase in the number of support teachers. See document available at: http://www.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/0c56033b-66f5-4081-862b-f2c4a6059cd1/anticipazione_dati_as_2010-2011_def.pdf.

The role of cultural mediators is considered important for the children's school inclusion but only if coupled with the solving of structural problems such as the right to decent housing. Cultural counselling is also considered as a key activity and as a good tool to contrast anti-gipsism. A teacher had the honesty of admitting of always having had strong resistance when dealing with the Roma, regardless of her previous long time experience with migrant students.

It must be underlined that none of the participants in the Milan Focus Group attributed excessive abstract importance to intercultural rhetoric or overemphasized cultural differences as an obstacle to school success. It was felt that lack of school success is never tied to cultural factors, but it is always connected with belonging to a weak and discriminated social part of the population. Intercultural counselling for Rubattino has been offered by the two Christian associations committed for a long time with Roma issues: the Comunità di Sant'Egidio and the Segnavia – Padri Somaschi.

The contribution in the Focus Groups of Mrs. Korabia has been particularly relevant because she underlined the generalised will on behalf of Roma to enrol their children in school and to foster their attendance. Her story is paradigmatic. Evicted more than one time, she has always personally accompanied her children to school at any cost. Sick after a surgical operation during one of the many evictions, she has been assisted in an improvised tent set up by Italian parents and volunteers who helped her to find a rented house and a small support to pay the rent. Mrs. Korabia is strongly committed with her work with the Comunità di Sant'Egidio in the different forms of assistance to the Roma.

The civil society in the Milan area has managed to implement small forms of self-financing to be able to offer small contributions via the borse – lavoro⁵¹ of only 100 – 200 euros per month. These modest sums that are anyway significant not only due to the condition of absolute poverty which afflicts the Roma, but also serve as a way to demonstrate solidarity, in moments of brute discrimination.

Participants in the Milan Focus Group

Silvia Borsani, teacher of the Bovisa neighbourhood
Annamaria Bufalini, NAGA
Korabia Pana, Romanian Roma, Comunità di Sant'Egidio
Elisabetta Cimoli, Lawyer, Comunità di Sant'Egidio

NGOs in Milan

NAGA
Comunità di Sant'Egidio
Segnavia – Padri Somaschi
“Mamme e maestre di Rubattino”

⁵¹ See note 71 in Par. 6.3.1.

5.2. Case study 2: Rome

Rome is the Italian city with the largest number of foreign Roma, the majority of whom are living in unauthorised or authorised encampments. In spite of the numerous attempts to carry out a census, the real number of the inhabitants cannot but be estimated and oscillates between 7,000 and 10,000.

The history of the schooling of Romani children in Rome has been documented in an exhaustive manner by the research group who gravitated around the review “Lacio Drom.”⁵² From 1982 to 2000 it was the historical organisation for Roma rights “Opera Nomadi” that carried out projects of support for schooling, financed by a public bid. The call required the activation of a school bus service and the realisation of activities for the right to education and to support the process of social and school inclusion. From the year 2000 to the 2008, other NGOs also participated in the triennial bids: ARCI Solidarietà, Ermes Capodarco and the Casa dei Diritti Sociali.

In 2008, the Municipality of Rome was led by a right-wing Mayor, Gianni Alemanno, who retired the previous triennial convention with annual bids, cutting the relationship with all the NGOs previously entrusted by the service. Following this, a network called “Tavolo Rom” was created, instituted by the same Municipality and composed solely of Catholic NGOs in order to discuss the recently approved “Nomads Plan.” The “Nomads Plan” was a series of measures regarding the Roman Roma communities approved by the Municipality of Rome based on a Decree of the President of the Council of Minister.⁵³ It was issued in May 2009 and was significantly entitled the “Declaration of the state of emergency in relation with the settlements of nomadic communities in the territories of Campania, Lazio and Lombardia Regions.”

With this Decree, the authority on the whole “Nomad issue” was entrusted to the Prefetti⁵⁴ of the cities involved (Naples, Rome, Milan), a public figure which normally deals with security and public order issues. The “Plan for Nomads” was based on two main ideas: that of a “maximum number of Roma for Rome”⁵⁵ and on the removal of almost all the encampments still left in the city’s area in order to relocate them toward large areas outside the city’s perimeter. The Comunità di Sant’Egidio was initially invited to be part of the “Tavolo Rom” group, but soon abandoned it due to its strong disagreement with the policy of continuous encampments’ evictions carried out by the same Municipality.⁵⁶

52 See here Paragraph 3.1.4.

53 DPCM 21/05/2008 “Dichiarazione dello stato di emergenza in relazione agli insediamenti di comunita' nomadi nel territorio delle regioni Campania, Lazio e Lombardia”. Available at:

<http://www.governo.it/Governo/Provvedimenti/dettaglio.asp?d=39105>.

54 See footnote 9.

55 See Municipality of Rome’s “Plan for Nomads”, p.4. Available at:

<http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/information/N869782002/piano%20nomadi%20sched e.pdf>

56 See article in the Italian newspaper “Corriere della Sera” regarding the position of the Comunità di Sant’Egidio:

http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/10_gennaio_19/nomadi-sgombero-casilino900-prima-baracca-1602310403399.shtml

Today, although the situation of the encampments has not changed and the situation continues to remain dramatic as shown in recent research,⁵⁷ there has been an important victory for Roma rights. A ruling⁵⁸ of the Council of State has declared the “Nomad Plan” of the Municipality of Rome, the whole Decree of the 1998 which declared the state of emergency for the “nomads” encampments to be illegitimate.

Nevertheless, long before the “Nomad emergency plan,” and with a left-wing administration, the Roma issue was dealt with by way of a large number of encampment evictions and destructions, which took place during 2006–2007. The 2007 “Pact for Lawfulness in Rome” also spoke openly of a “nomads emergency”⁵⁹ and, along the same lines of the aforementioned Decree, delegated the handling of the “nomadic encampments” to the same authority: the Prefetto of Rome. Even the Italian Kalderasha Roma that had for decades lived in an authorised encampment in the vicinity of the Municipal slaughterhouse had been evicted after having been lured by promises of better accommodation that never arrived.

The school where we carried out the Roman Focus Group is called Iqbal Masih, which brings the name of the Pakistan child killed after having reported the conditions of exploitation to which he and his companions were forced. This institution represents a model of avant-garde in the Roman landscape for what concerns the welcoming of foreign and Romani children. The Roman area where it is placed (physically the VIth District but it is actually at the border of the VIIth) is an important place in the history of the informal dwellings in Rome. It was an area where, until the 1970s, many of the Roman shanty towns inhabited by Italians were situated and in the 1990s it became the first District of the Capital for Roma inhabitants.

The employees of this school have been working for decades with children and Roma families of different nationalities that had settled in the area. This includes the historical encampment of via dei Gordiani, composed of Serbian Roma; there have also been the Bosnian, Macedonian and Romanian Roma of the former encampments of Casilino 700 and 900 and, more recently, the Romanian Roma of the “Metropoliz” community. Additionally, the neighbourhood registers an historical presence of north African immigrants, who have also organised a small Mosque.

The location of the school Iqbal Masih is also an important neighbourhood because it has been one of the areas of Rome more impacted by the migratory phenomenon and therefore constitutes an important case for the study of the processes of inclusion of Roma and migrant communities in Italy.

57 See the various Reports produced by the “Associazione 21 Luglio”: “Esclusi e ammassati” and “Linea 40”.

Available at: http://issuu.com/21luglio/docs/linea_40_ricerca_integrale

58 Ruling 6050 of 16 November which states the illegitimacy of the emergency state declared by the President of the Council of Ministers the 21st May 2008.

59 “Patto per Roma sicura”, first issued in 2007 and then reconfirmed and extended on 29/07/2008, p.2. Available at: http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/node/N661730458/0413_patto_roma_sicura_29.07.2008.pdf.

5.2.1. Comments on the Focus Group

Teachers who have been protagonists of the intercultural activities which have characterised this institution⁶⁰ participated in the Focus Group while the NGOs were represented by the Cooperative Ermes and by the NGO Popica Onlus.

Iqbal Masih is a school nationally acknowledged as an exemplar case for the results obtained with foreign and Romani students, though despite the decennial commitment, the teachers immediately showed their willingness to discuss the criticalities that have emerged during daily school practice. The first remark made by the group centers on an issue which is unanimously considered as the most serious problem for the Romani students: that of the numerous absences from school. The problem is serious to the point that in some cases the teachers have chosen to make the student repeat the first class of primary school. With deep regret and with a strong suffering it has been necessary to undertake this proceeding.

All the teachers we met during this Focus Group showed a great openness to all kind of criticism and all appeared eager to discuss these issues with us, without any of the mechanisms of self-defence often enacted by institutions. The school teachers had also invested a lot of effort for the direct involvement of the Romani parents through a continued work of sensitization. The teachers shared with us that, over the years, there has been an establishment of actual “pacts”⁶¹ between the school and the families in order to obtain stable school attendance. These pacts are “Honour” pacts, rather than the so-called “Legality pacts” that many Roma in Italian cities had been forced to sign with the Mayors. With their signature they promised to guarantee their sons’ and daughters’ school attendance, or to face expulsion from the encampment.

Unfortunately, a large part of the work of the relationships built with the Romani parents started to unravel when the Municipality entrusted the NGOs with the school bus service. This has created a sort of mechanism of delegation on behalf of the Romani parents and has brought a loss of all the previously established relationships due to the parents no longer accompanying their children to school (and thus interacting with the school staff and other parents).

The good practice of the parents’ accompanying of their children in school not only had a positive influence on the school success of the children, but it was also a flywheel of inclusion for the same parents, This was not only on a linguistic level, but it was an occasion to meet and to mix with Italian parents as well. The school bus service ended up depriving the Roma of this experience⁶². In the case of the Romanian Roma of the “Metropoliz” group this inconvenience did not happen. The NGO Popica Onlus, which has supported this community from their eviction in 2007 to their relocation in the “Metropoliz” occupation has always stood for: 1) refusal of requesting public funds and therefore never participating in any Municipal bid and 2) considering the Roma’s active participation a priority and a strategic objective to be pursued with determination.

60 The former school Director Simonetta Salacone, who was not present at the meeting, has been a national point of reference for the problems connected with the school inclusion of foreign students and on interculturality.

61 See the contribution of Antonella Rossilli in Appendix II.

62 Both the via dei Gordiani encampment and the “Metropoliz” squatted building are serviced by public transport. Other circumstances apply in the case of many Roman encampments placed far away from any infrastructure where there is the evident necessity of a school bus service.

Furthermore, the school bus service accompanies the children too late and picks them up earlier,⁶³ so it is easy to understand how much the Romani students are penalised in comparison with the others.

Although maintaining the proper distinction between the different types of associations which have tried to support the Roma, a teacher among the ones with the longest experience thinks there should be no more “alibis” and that the Roma should be able to represent themselves. Another teacher proposed a self-critique in relation to the teachers’ role; she objects that in the last years there has been a weakening in participation and it seems that the “collectively painted design” is not there anymore. The continuous interactions and dialogues, the numerous initiatives of didactical experimentation and the intercultural happenings have suffered an arrest in favour of an individualistic didactic practice. For this reason, the *statu nascenti* years at Iqbal Masih are remembered and regretted as extraordinary years.

Maybe in this “tiredness” lies the cause for the low attendance rates and the consequent school failures as early as during the first school year. It still can happen that a Romani child is suddenly enrolled in school, but at an already “advanced” age, although he had been living in the neighbourhood for a long time. These episodes, reported by the teachers (and which happens quite frequently), are seen by the interviewed as an indicator that all the potential targets of the school intervention have not been reached yet. A teacher from the kindergarten section of the school wanted anyway to underline that the thousands of initiatives undertaken in the field of welcoming should not be considered as lost.

With pride, all the participants remembered the first pioneering meetings between Italian and migrant women, the laboratories carried out within the school by external figures such as cultural mediators, the Carnivals, and many other initiatives of the school held together with the children and their families.

A volunteer from the *Ermes* cooperative thinks that it is important also to remember the patrimony of experiences produced in synergy during the last two decades with the VIth District administration and with the same police traffic wardens of the group *Nucleo Assistenza Emarginati – Nucleus for the Assistance to Emarginates (NAE)*.⁶⁴ But the strong network between the local administrators, schools and the NGOs had been made possible thanks to the allocation of a larger and steadier flow of funds. The *Rudara Roma* encampment of *via dei Gordiani* was under the direct attention of the VIth District administration and the District authorities had regular meetings with both teachers and operators for the assessment of the situation; then, the bids for the Roma schooling were triennial. Now all has undergone a process of involution. The management of the encampment (like that of all the other encampments in Rome) has passed directly under the authority of the central Municipality of Rome and the bids have become annual. Thus, it can happen that a bid is won by an NGO in the middle of the school year, effectively removing the organisation

63 For the inconvenience of the school bus service see the Report edited by the Associazione 21 Luglio “Linea 40.” Available at:

http://www.21luglio.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=68:linea-40&catid=21&Itemid=170

64 The NAE (*Nucleo Assistenza Emarginati – Nuclueus for the Assistance to Emarginates*) is a sector of the Roman Police traffic wardens composed of agents particularly sensitive to the themes of social deprivation.

that was previously entrusted with the service; the change of operators and mediators creates of course confusion and disorientation among the students.

The role of the cultural mediators is considered extremely important to consolidate the relationship between the school and the families. The Ermes NGO employs both Roma and non-Roma cultural mediators in the belief that this role is so complex in regard to his functions that it requires a “double figure” to able to deal with the cultural aspects (but who is also well-prepared in the necessary legal and bureaucratic aspects).

A DOA teacher with less experience than the “doyen,” who had provided a wide representation of the present situation, agreed with the importance of the cultural mediators but with a prerequisite of great interest and originality. Against any abused intercultural rhetoric, and with a certain surprise, she confessed that they [the teachers] have become so oriented toward the absolute equality for all children that they have even forgot any difference. The teacher realised during the Focus Group that she had not learned not even a single Roma word, not even a number; a cultural mediator probably would have prevented this, defined by the same teacher as “her amnesia.”

Another teacher introduced extremely significant reflections on the possibility of learning from the very same students if one has the sensitivity of being open and not being too rigid in the following of the school programs. After having said this, she told of an episode concerning one of her Romani student of twelve years old. This student had an insufficient attendance rate and therefore was not admitted to the following class. Despite his scarce notions, he always managed to surprise the teacher with unexpected ways of solving problems of numerical calculations following his own logical pathways. Other children have extremely quick modalities of problem solving, especially when working as a team. She concluded her intervention saying that it should be necessary and important to commit to systematically observing all these facts in order to draw all the necessary didactic implications.

A part-time teacher who is often forced to change schools due to her precarious work condition, proposed taking into account the particular emotional fragility of the Romani children. She expressed the desire to be part of a collective planning, to find a support and to confront with the others, instead of being secluded within the limits of her didactic intervention.

According to the Ermes social cooperative volunteer, the Romani children coming from the “Metropoliz” squatted experience have a high attendance rate because they come from a situation where education was held in higher consideration because of the same Ceaucescu socialist model. Actually, it must be remembered that the Romanian Roma students are coming from the “Metropoliz” squatting where the NGO Popica Onlus had strongly insisted on the regularity of the children’s school attendance and on their being accompanied into school which must be done by the same Romani parents, like all the other “Metropoliz” occupants.

A certain number of Romani parents from “Metropoliz” participated in the Focus Group, who for almost three hours followed the whole discussion with great attention. One of the members of the research team, Marian, also lives at “Metropoliz” and was accompanied by his daughter. Three fathers, Florin Constantin and Marius decisively, acknowledging all the importance that the process of school integration deserves.

The discussion involved some delicate themes, for example on how school attendance can be conciliated with the practice of early marriages. The examples reported from the families are very representative of how this reality is also changing. One of the fathers wanted to underline that his daughter will not marry before she reaches the age of eighteen. Marian has succeeded in having his older daughter re-enrolled in school, and nurtures the ambition that she could get a diploma or a university degree.

The last to intervene were the children, who confirmed their attachment to the school and to the friends and teachers made there, indicating their favourite topics and the games and activities they practice in the open space of the school garden.

Participants in the Rome FG

Antonella Rossilli, kindergarten teacher

Susanna Serpe, primary school teacher

Luisa Ticca, primary school support teacher

Valeria Magnanti, mother

Margherita, primary school support teacher

Mariella Gaeta primary school support teacher

Florin Constantin, Romanian Roma from “Metropoliz” (with his children who go to the school)

Marius Alexandru, Romanian Roma from “Metropoliz” (with his children who go to the school)

Marian’s Mihalache daughter Mariana, who also goes to Iqbal Masih

Riccardo Russo, Popica Onlus

Monica Cordova, “Ermes” social cooperative

NGO Rome

Ermes Social Cooperative

Popica Onlus

5.3. Case study 3: Cosenza

The case of Cosenza represents another interesting example of transversal cooperation led in a completely self-organised manner. The Roma presence in Cosenza goes back to the 1950s, when a group of Italian Roma built a small shanty town in the neighbourhood of Gergeri and in the area of via Popilia. After the destruction of the informal dwelling at the end of the 1990s, the Municipality, in agreement with the “Opera Nomadi,” realised a project of housing with the building of a whole complex dedicated to the Italian Roma community in the locality of via degli Stadi.

This experiment of a dedicated building has today become a real ethnic ghetto which ended up reproducing all the encampments’ negative dynamics without having ever produced any form of social inclusion for the resident Roma population.⁶⁵ This housing solution that had the pretense of being “anthropologically correct” has instead ended up endorsing, also at an architectural level, a physical separation between the Roma and the non-Roma.

⁶⁵ On the transformation of the ghetto into an hyperghetto see Rossi M., 2012, Fiori nella discarica. Forme di resistenza nell’iperghetto, in: Inchiesta n.175.

In 2004, Cosenza had its first arrivals of foreign Roma, for the largest part of Romanian nationality coming from the cities of Bistritza and Cluj. Between 2004 and 2005, these groups gave origin to four different informal dwellings on the shores of the River Crati (Mercato, Monaco, Campanella and via della Pace) and for almost three years remained there, completely ignored by institutions.

Meanwhile, the solidarity network autonomously activated by various NGOs from Cosenza⁶⁶ supported the Roma in many different ways in this difficult moment. The Municipality of Cosenza activated the OCI (Osservatorio Comunale sull'Immigrazione – Municipal Observatory for Immigration), participated in by all NGOs involved and by the same Roma representatives. However, after a few months, both the Roma and the NGOs abandoned the network while reporting its uselessness and its scarce capacity of interventions on actual problems.

In the winter of 2007, the level of the river Crati where the Roma had built their dwellings rose dangerously, making it necessary to evacuate the community for reasons of public safety. The Roma were hosted in accommodations offered by the same NGOs and by various individuals; some of them began a path of housing inclusion avoiding the previous experience of the Italian Roma, but the experiment did not work, basically because of the lack of a regular income, and the Roma went back to the river shores.

In 2009, the Public Prosecutor's Office confiscated the encampment area and issued 90 expulsion orders and as many criminal prosecutions for illegal occupation of public soil and for releasing potentially toxic wastes (due to the Roma's recycling activities). The NGO Network, reunited as FORA (Federazione Orizzontale Ribelle Autonoma – Autonomous Horizontal Rebel Federation) opposed the expulsion Decree and with the support of the ASGI (Associazione Studi Giuridici Italiani – Association for Italian Legislative Studies) managed to have the expulsions revoked.

In March 2010, the encampment eviction was decided and the Prefect organised a series of meetings between institutions (Municipality, Province, Police etc.) and NGOs in order to find other possible solutions. The NGOs presented in that occasion a list of 21 possible alternative housing sites, but the Municipalities where these sites were placed rebutted that it was never possible to use any of them. Another proposal was that of entrusting to the community the horticultural market which lies exactly in the middle of the encampments; this building also had the advantage of already being connected to water and electrical supplies. Also in this case nothing has been done, and the Roma have been left where they were in the beginning: on the shores of the river Crati.

The river Crati (named also "Vagliolise" from the name of the area) is situated at the periphery of the city and, according to the last census of March 2010, it hosts 280 persons, circa 90 familial groups divided between two nearby encampments.

From the point of view of the activities directed to school support, the NGOs' interventions have mainly concentrated on two aspects: the vaccinations of children, necessary to be enrolled in the schools of via Popilia, and the effective school support. In 2009, a small building dedicated to the school support which is named "La scuola del vento" was built in the encampment (The School of

66 MOCI, Associazione "La Kasbah", Associazione "Confluenze", Associazione "Sentiero non violento", Circolo Culturale Popilia, Suore Ausiliatrici, AUSER_ Ambulatorio Medico "Adolfo Grandinetti", Associazione "Baobab", Associazione "Stella Cometa", Associazione "Coessenza".

the Wind) where the volunteers work with children during the extra school time to offer them the school support needed. This experience, supported by the NGOs but also by a few researchers from the University of Calabria, aims to:

“...give voice and expression to the Roma culture, so not only a pro-literacy intervention, but also a way to diffuse between the children more awareness regarding their culture and identity...Clearly the School is not only a school, but especially a place for socialisation where different activities are undertaken collectively.” (V. Altomare, Associazione Cammino Non violento).

5.3.1. Comments on the Focus Group

The Cosenza Focus Group gathered teachers, support teachers (DOA) and volunteers from various organisations all intervening principally on the inclusion of Italian and foreign Roma. A support teacher explained very well the commitment on their behalf. Like in many other schools in the rest of Italy, it is a consolidated praxis that, after having cared for the disabled child officially entrusted to her, the support teacher passes to help the two Romani girls who are enrolled in the same class, helping them with the school and linguistic support, although the competence of the support teacher is not that of dealing with interculture. Without ever having had any sort of directive, this teacher has practically “invented” intercultural pedagogical modalities. She has made the whole classroom learn the numbers in Romanian and, in the occasion of religious festivities, has tried to involve the students in the reading of tales, legends and traditions. She could never have relied on any form of training offered by the school institutions but has had as a reference the MOCI volunteers, who are very present in Cosenza despite the lack of funding for their activities in the encampments.

Another teacher confirmed the fact that it is often the support teacher who is entrusted with the care of foreigners and Romani children; fortunately in Cosenza, the cuts to the personnel have been less destructive than in larger cities. She also remembers the difficulties concerning the delicate problem of the children’s hygiene. The Romanian children come from the Vagliolise encampment on the shores of the river Crati, where there is no water and no access to electricity. Only very recently has the Municipal administration allowed the installation of some water points; before, women and children had to go to gather the water from a public fountain far away from the encampment, with the help of water tanks.

In general, there has never been the possibility of making use of cultural mediators as their presence must be requested in advance and often the Romani minors enroll into schools at late in the year. After a collective reflection on the fact that not one of the teachers has had a specific preparation in order to adequately approach to the Romani students, teachers and volunteers of the MOCI debated on a controversial question: it is extremely complicated to have reliable data on the presence and the school attendance of both Italian and foreign students, including the Roma, despite the fact that the volunteers themselves took charge even of the responsibility of the Roma census. If only a school administration clerk or a secretary has a small distraction, all data can be tampered. According to the MOCI representatives, the Romani students’ school attendance is much higher than what the school statistics report. According to the official data, almost 50% of the Romani students are attending irregularly. Nonetheless, regardless the many difficulties told by the group, Cosenza represents an exemplar case of good collaboration between the teachers and the NGOs. There is not

only a synergy but also an harmonic and complementary continuity. The volunteers keep good contact with the teachers and the work with the children is always coherent with what has been done in the classroom.

A teacher discussed another problem that teachers must confront: that of taking over all the responsibilities themselves. The same procedure of the attribution of the student to a specific class is a task full of difficulties. Regardless of the “objective” criteria that you may use, there will always be negative consequences. For this reason, a “Comitato di accertamento scolastico” (School Assessment Committee) was instituted with the aim of acquiring the documentation relative to the level of literacy acquired by the student in his/her country of origin. There are also others factors which must be taken into account, including the level of knowledge of the Italian language and the physical characteristics of the pupil.

A teacher quoted the case of a student whose age would have prompted his enrolment in the fifth class, the last class of the lower secondary school. This would have meant making him pass to the upper secondary cycle of studies without a sufficient knowledge of the Italian language. In the end, it was decided to place the student in the third class of the lower secondary school, where he was the oldest among the other children. It is evident how each choice made, one way or the other, presented a difficulty for the student and the teacher ends up asking to herself: “Is it better to make him feel physically or culturally inadequate?” The school team opted to keep him for two more years. There is the collectively shared awareness that it is only possible to operate within a model of “individualised school pathways.”

After a comment of a teacher, the discussion passed to an analysis which involves all the Romani minors, both the Italians, defined as “stanziali” (settled) and the Romanian of the encampment. This analysis asks if, for all of them, though in different modalities, we can talk about criticalities, though such situations never originate from cultural issues, but rather by the fact that all these students are part of a “marginalized sector of the population, but certainly not because of their ethnicity.”

The problem of irregular and/or insufficient school attendance appears unsolvable for many cases; paradoxically, when pacts have been taken with the parents, the minors stopped going to school. Following this, the social services and the Carabinieri activated the official procedure to combat the school drop-out phenomenon, an event which can often create mutual tensions and misunderstandings. The role of volunteers and teachers in these situations can be of great help. Administrative and bureaucratic inefficiencies exacerbate the existing problems. It must be noted though that, while in other north Italian cities the failure in complying with school attendance requests has been used as a pretext to evict the Roma, in Cosenza the census has been instead used as a stimulus to better operate.

Another teacher gave a short historical account on the presence of 350 Romanian Roma who settled on the river Crati. The risk of the river overflowing was recalled, and the following mobilization which involved the Cosenza civil societies was a strong demonstration of the citizens’ solidarity.

The teacher further recalled that the humanitarian mobilization was able to provide rented houses for Roma families with the help of NGOs. After a year, almost all of the Roma went back to the

encampment. According to the teacher, this was determined by the fact that all the apartments found were outside of Cosenza to keep Roma away from the city center. In the interviews gathered by Monica Rossi and Roberto De Angelis, it was instead clearly illustrated that the Roma with low incomes coming from their informal activities were not even able to pay the average expenses such as water and electricity.

Some comments were also made on the building complex of the Italian Roma in via degli Stadi. In such areas the same phenomena were visible in all the social housing dwellings characterized by a strong concentration of social suffering. It also happened that the person entrusted with the social housing apartments ended up in renting it to other families for money.

A Romanian Roma parent expressed all his gratitude because finally we can talk about school inclusion and the encampments' children can start to demonstrate their intelligence as, in Italy, they have finally found a little respect. The relationship between families and schools are considered extremely important, and this sparked a discussion with Gianluca Staderini of Popica Onlus NGO which affirmed in all the Focus Groups the key importance of the teacher-parent relation, to be attained also through the direct accompanying of children into schools.

A MOCI volunteer talked about the service of school accompanying carried out by the same NGO volunteers without any form of funding. This has represented an attempt to support the school inclusion process also when the encampments were in conditions of serious deprivation. The volunteers searched the huts in order to motivate the minors toward school attendance; 5-10 volunteers have every morning guaranteed the accompanying of 35 children from the Vagliolise encampment.

With the passing of time, a school bus service was activated, offered by the municipality of Cosenza; but also in this case, due to organizational problems, the Romani students actually arrive to school one hour later and are brought back home one hour earlier than the other children, thus interrupting their lessons. Both volunteers and teachers are aware of the serious effects that this modality of service can have on the process of school inclusion, but they have opted not to protest in order to avoid putting the Municipal administration in difficulties, especially now that they have finally undertaken some actions. The volunteers and teachers considered it important and noteworthy that the city administration had never proposed for Cosenza the emergency plans carried on in the rest of Italy and based on indiscriminate evictions. Each time someone tried to suggest such proceedings, the whole NGO network was able to contrast them together with the NGO organization of the Christian-social.

Lastly, it was implicitly stated by all participants that both teachers and volunteers are against the Roma encampments, but they are also realistically aware that until better hypotheses are formulated, the encampments' habitat must be defended at any cost.

Participants in the Cosenza FG

Franca De Bonis, Circolo Culturale Popilia
Patrizia De Maddis, primary school teacher

Miranda Oliverio, secondary school teacher
Fernanda Quaglia, secondary school teacher
Paola Dodaro, primary school teacher
Vincenzo Altomare, Associazione Sentiero Non Violento, secondary school teacher
Enza Papa, legal advisor Associazione “La Kasbah”
Rosa Celona, secondary school teacher
Marisa Rizzo, secondary school teacher
Ramona Tataru, school mediator
Ciurar Lazar, Vagliolise encampment
Cheres Susana Maria, Vagliolise encampment
Bruzio Marzullo, MOCI Associazione
Manuela Antonella Lucirino, primary school teacher,
Luana Ammendola, MOCI Associazione
Gianfranco Sangermano, MOCI Associazione

NGO Cosenza:

MOCI Associazione (Movimento per la Cooperazione Internazionale)
Associazione La Kasbah
Associazione Confluenze
Sentiero Non Violento
Associazione Baobab
Circolo Culturale Popilia (“stanziali” Roma)
Suore Ausiliatrici
AUSER Ambulatorio Medico “Adolfo Grandinetti”
Associazione Coessenza

5.4. Conclusions and recommendations

The elements of strengths in the Italian school system are mainly in its approach to the theme of education which is seen as an element of participation and social emancipation. Marked by the principles of universalism, the Italian education system is built on the sign of welcoming, and the many documents analysed and the fieldwork research made for the compilation of this report confirms its prevalently inclusive character. This appears even more true when the Italian system is compared to other EU school systems much less egalitarian such as that of the UK or of Germany, which select at a very early ages the students that will have access to universities, just as it was in Italy before the 1962 School Reform. In addition, from the point of view of the quality of the teaching and concerning the structure and organisation of didactic activities, Italy has produced a series of important pedagogical innovations and experiences. Another element which constitutes an added value is the strong personal motivation which many of the teachers invest, often with results of excellence despite the chronic scarcity of resources and means.

Analysing the documentation produced by the MPI – MIUR, the commitment and efforts dedicated to the welcoming of foreign students and to intercultural practices appears evident. This is an effort which has not only been formal but rather substantial because it has produced practices and procedures. This represents the natural evolution of a system which had already interrogated itself

on the right to education for other disadvantaged groups, as it has been for all the post-war period the fight against working classes' illiteracy and for the defence of a school free and open to all (here described in section 3.1). This fight for social inclusion and for cultural emancipation has been continued by the schools when dealing with the new Italian citizens, building an extremely sophisticated welcoming model.

A very representative case of this opening is the fact that, for example, the right to education is guaranteed also to the "irregulars," having been implemented in the national law on immigration (L.40/1998) as "compulsive schooling," independently by the condition of regularity or irregularity of the student.⁶⁷ Such principles have later on been acknowledged and guaranteed by a Presidential Decree (**DPR 31/9/1999 n. 394**).

For the schools which are placed in areas characterised by a strong migrant presence, various actions of support are foreseen; for this the **CM n. 155 of 2001** assigns additional resources for those schools which have a percentage of foreign or of Romani students enrolled of more than 10%. However, the National Report on the state of Education in Italy, published in 2008 by the MPI – MIUR states that for the year 2007 the same Ministry "...has not received any budget fund to be destined to school integration, neither for the Roma, nor for the immigrants in general" (Rapporto Nazionale, 2008 p.13).⁶⁸

It is evident that there are still important unsolved knots, which pertain to the passage from the phase of planning and enunciation to that of the practical realisation, knots which must be attributed to the lack of investment in the education sector as a whole. With no resources regularly disbursed, there is little that can be done, despite the excellence of the legislative corpus available.

Our previous research experience has found confirmation in the results of the Focus Groups. The Roma are not only convinced but are often extremely determined in their willingness to obtain an education for their children. The high rates of school drop-out which afflicts them (only little more than 1% succeeds in obtaining the upper secondary school diploma), as pointed out by all of the Focus Group participants, does not come from a "suspicion" that the Roma hold toward the school institution, nor does it come from instrumental reasons such as the child begging or other such reasons. The determining factors must be attributed to housing and occupational exclusion, coupled with the necessity of regularisation, because many Roma are still "irregulars," even when born in Italy.⁶⁹ The case of the last flow of Romanian Roma is somehow exemplar in this sense. School success is directly proportionate to successful housing and working inclusion. Where there is adequate support, schooling can reach 100% (cases in the region of Campania and in the squatted situation of "Metropoliz"). In an illegal dwelling in Sicily, almost none of the children go to school, while in the Cosenza informal encampment, the school rates grows steadily. In these examples, we are referring to Romanian Roma all coming from the same areas.

⁶⁷ CM 5/1994, "Iscrizione nelle scuole e negli istituti di ogni ordine e grado di minori stranieri privi del permesso di soggiorno. Modifiche e integrazioni del paragrafo 7 della CM n. 400 del 31 dicembre 1991, già modificato dalla CM n. 67 del 7 marzo 1992". www.educational.rai.it/corsiformazione/.../circolari/circolari_5_94.ht

⁶⁸ Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, Rapporto nazionale sullo sviluppo dell'educazione, CIE UNESCO, Ginevra 25-28 Novembre 2008.

English version available at: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/italy_NR08_ei.pdf

⁶⁹ This afflicts in particular the former Yugoslavian Roma communities.

The school drop-out phenomenon also concerns Italian students⁷⁰ and reflects the serious marginality paid by large social sectors, especially in metropolitan areas. In order to try to ameliorate the school inclusion of Romani children illusionary proposals have also been made, which may even worsen the situation. A prominent Italian Roma, after seeing the school failures of Romani children, suggested the reintroduction of the “paternal school.” According to this model, the Romani minor would be educated in the encampment under the guidance of expert members of the community. Unfortunately, there are no illusionary ethnic ways. It is instead necessary to translate the experiences which have been accumulated in the course of these last thirty years into successful outcomes.

Italy has an adequate legislative corpus and moreover it has the commitment, the motivation and the solidarity of the largest part of the school teachers, who in Italy have always been supportive of the fight for the right to education for all. Interculturality has not for the teachers been a vain rhetoric based in exoticism, but a real practice, enclosed within the primary objective of the right to education.

Rather than getting lost in theoretical discussions concerning the proper model of relation with Roma and migrants, it is more important to realise a series of objectives in a decisive manner. The proposed objectives are the following:

- 1) **Restoration of funding to public school.** Other EU countries, despite the economic crisis, have not significantly reduced public expenditures for public education and scientific research. In this way, it is possible to make use of an adequate number of linguistic facilitators and support teachers. The Italian primary school has been, from the pedagogical point of view, one of the most advanced thanks also to the contemporary presence of more than one teacher in the same classroom. Presently, the state has returned to the single teacher model in order to limit expenses, although using pedagogical motivations as the given reason for the reduction.
- 2) **Special funding resources allocated to the schools placed in areas at risk of social exclusion.**
- 3) **Support facilities for the right to education** within the same encampments until they will be definitively dismantled. Based on the example of the Cosenza’s “School of the Wind,” built by volunteers and used for extra school activities, cultural activities and for adult education.
- 4) **Training of Roma cultural mediators** with a high level of education, leading to the formation of Romani teachers as already augured in the *CNPI Recommendation of 14/04/1981*. One of the key problems is the lack of a specific curriculum in the current

⁷⁰ Recent research produced by the INVALSI (Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema dell’Istruzione – National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System) registered extremely worrying data concerning the literacy competences of the Italian population, as reported in: Mattei A., Mastrogiovanni A., D’Orazio V. and Crialesi C. (eds.), 2009, INVALSI. Progetto competenze di base. Prima sintesi dei risultati. Available at:

http://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/documenti/Prima_sintesi%20attivit%C3%A0.pdf

See other reports, available at: http://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/documenti/Prima_sintesi%20attivit%C3%A0.pdf

training of cultural mediators. In many cases, the requirements for linguistic competences in the Italian language has been only partial, seen in the request of a lower and upper secondary school certificate or, as an alternative, the assessment of an adequate training in different disciplines (including reading and writing Italian language fluently). Cultural mediation can be exercised proficiently only by subjects with a double culture and when also supported through adequate training in social secretariat competences.

- 5) **Distribution of scholarships** to compensate for social disadvantage until a “minimum guaranteed income” of social citizenship will be guaranteed for foreigners and Italians. Roma and Sinti should be reimbursed for the policies that paradoxically, through granting the Roma the right to their nomadic lifestyle, led to a sort of “ethnicization” and their subsequent exclusion which has relegated them to the encampments.
- 6) **Distribution of borse-lavoro** aimed at the acquisition of base literacy competences for students, with particular attention to women. Today Romani women are supporting their sons’ school inclusion while being illiterate themselves.

These objectives look to us to be the minimum and are therefore inalienable, otherwise we will always remain within the ambit of the principles petitions. We do hope that the “National Strategy for Roma inclusion” deliberated in February 2012 by the Council of Ministers as the enactment of the “Attuazione della Comunicazione della Commissione Europea” n. 173/201 will be realised. The aim of the long document is the equality of treatment and the socio-economic inclusion; the first pillar is constituted just by education, expressed within by stating its goal to “Increase the quantity and the quality of the educational opportunities and the number of Roma, Sinti and Camminanti enrolled in the schools of every order and grade, favouring attendance and school success.”

6. Initiatives in favour of employment: an overview

Before analysing the initiatives that Italy has implemented in order to favour the socio-economic inclusion of Roma and Sinti, it is important to offer an overview and some information on the characteristics of the Italian job market. Without this background information it would be difficult to understand (especially for the non Italian reader) certain systemic aspects that are often aliens in the western country which has the most advanced “Workers Statute.”

Because of our understanding of the need for international agencies to arrive at forms of standardization for interventions, it is important to indicate some of the main national criticalities, which also concern other Mediterranean countries, in order to plan viable and successful interventions.

The situation of the Italian job market is extremely peculiar as the system is characterised by two important elements: the consistent presence of the informal economy and the fact that access to formal jobs is differentiated into more than forty different forms of temporary contracts. The flexibility toward which western countries are orienting themselves, justified by the need for competitiveness in the global market, is in Italy transforming into forms of generalised precariousness. To this we must add that salaries are the lowest among the countries of Old Europe, that there is a total absence of any forms of minimum social security systems and that the welfare system, extremely fragile historically, has undergone a drastic resizing. Concerning the diffusion of the so-called shadow economy, we must cite a study from the IMF, which reported these data:

“... In the 21 OECD countries in 1999–2001, Greece and Italy had the largest shadow economies, at 30 percent and 27 percent of GDP, respectively ...”, further adding that: “In some individual countries, the shadow economy labor force was very large: in Italy, 30–48 percent of the total labor force ...”. (Schneider and Enste, 2002)⁷¹.

This component has always lived side by side with that of the formal economy. On one hand, it has had extremely serious effects for the whole country in terms of social costs, for the lack of protection of the workers employed in these activities, as well as economic costs, in terms of fiscal income for the state. On the other hand, this vast shadowy area of the Italian economy has contributed to the wealth of the country. Such is the case of the migrant workers, now totalling almost five millions in less than twenty years, who are attracted by an unsaid but effective request for black work spanning all occupational sectors, particularly in the lowest tertiary. Concurrently, all other European countries were closing or drastically reducing the quota of foreign workers allowed in their countries⁷².

⁷¹ OECD, *Employment Outlook 2004*, Chapter 5, Annexes 1 and 2 to “Informal Employment and Promoting the Transition to a Salaried Economy”, e World Bank, F. Schneider (2002), *Size and Measurement of the Informal Economy in 110 Country Around the World*, intervento presentato al Workshop ANU di Canberra, 17/7/2002. Report downloadable: http://rru.worldbank.org/Documents/PapersLinks/informal_economy.pdf.

⁷² See De Angelis R. (2006), “Relazioni etniche e modello mediterraneo d’immigrazione”, in: De Angelis R. Mignella Calvosa F. (eds.), *La periferia perfetta*, Franco Angeli, Milano.

Table IV below shows the incidence of irregular migrations in small and medium sized companies in Italy. Although limited to the number of companies surveyed, this gives us an approximate idea of the phenomena.

Table IV. Italy. Irregular Migration in the findings of Companies Inspections (2000 - 2005)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Companies surveyed	25.742	24.591	21.572	23.341	26.256	24.555
Foreigners at work	11.172	12.186	12.444	21.031	24.720	23.449
of whom are irregulars	4.612	4.808	3.975	4.154	4.863	5.943
of whom are clandestine	3.046	2.664	2.223	1.159	2.596	3.043
% of irregulars	41,3	39,5	31,9	19,8	19,7	25,3
% of clandestine	27,3	21,9	17,9	5,5	10,5	12,9

Source: Elaboration Caritas/Migrantes Immigration Statistical Dossier on Data released by the Italian Ministry of Labour/Nucleo Carabinieri - Ispettorato Generale del Lavoro.

As we can see from this data, the percentage of “irregular” workers is very high, and it has become a structural aspect of our job market. However, the black economy also allowed to many Italian workers to have access to an income or the possibility of having a double occupation. We can affirm that all foreign Roma are forced to orbit in the sphere of the black economy in its poorest forms.

Such a developed dimension of the informal sector represents an anomaly in the system. To this, we must add another important factor -that of the lack of diffuse transparent mechanisms of job access and recruiting in order to ensure a fair competition as in any other country. We refer to the fact that transparent forms of selection and recruitment exists only for governmental jobs⁷³ and for the large companies. Only these occupational sectors have developed recruitment procedures similar to those of the Northern European countries; for the rest, work in Italy is found on average through to familiar or friendly relationships. For this reason Italy remains a country where social mobility is scarce (Cobalti e Schizzerotto, 1994) and the access to employment remains largely determined not by qualifications and competences, but by the strength and extension of these clientelistic ties.

The absence of diffuse forms of a welfare system even remotely comparable to that of Northern European countries is also very serious. In Italy, welfare is represented by one’s own family, and more specifically by the female part of it, on which is concentrated home and other duties like that of the care of elders and children, of the sick and of the handicapped⁷⁴. Since the Italian system does

⁷³ The competitive state exam has had a massive stop since 1992, in such a drastic manner that it does not even provide for the average turn-over needs. Large companies are many in Italy, whose main industrial strength is in small and middle sized companies.

⁷⁴ See the research report by CNEL downloadable at the website:

http://www.infn.it/cpo/docs/docs/lavoro_donne_CNEL.pdf. [Accessed January 2012], and more thoroughly: Brandolini A., Saraceno C. e Schizzerotto A. (eds.), (2007), *Dimensioni della disuguaglianza in Italia, povertà, salute, abitazione*, Collana della Fondazione Ermanno Gorrieri per gli studi sociali, Bologna, Ed. Il Mulino.

not offer enough services to families, women are often forced to leave their works in order to furnish these services of caring⁷⁵. Much in the same way forms of guaranteed minimum social salary, of support for housing rent, and support to single mothers are also absent. Even when they do exist, the level of income threshold required for access to them are so low that they cover only an extremely small percentage of the population, which is thus left to face the actual crisis with no adequate forms of social protection.

In summary: the absence of welfare policies, the consistent presence of the informal economy and the procedures of access to formal jobs mainly in forms of absolute precariousness represents the three key elements that have jointly produced the present day frame. This overview gives us a glimpse of the extent and of the effective difficulties in gaining access to the job market not only for the Roma, but also for any other citizens.

After having provided the reader with this introductory background of the national situation, we can pass on to the analysis of the strategies and the initiatives dedicated to Roma and Sinti socio-economic inclusion. Much in the same way as it has been for the education system, the Italian Republic in its national legislation for employment issues does not foresee actions specifically reserved to particular ethnic groups. This does not necessarily mean that there are no specific projects dedicated to these minorities, but that these actions are mostly implemented at the local level. The Italian system is characterised by a high degree of decentralization; therefore, the quantity and quality of the interventions enacted often varies very much from one region to the other, and sometimes even from one municipality to another⁷⁶.

For this series of reasons, to delineate the national frame concerning the actions undertaken for the socio-economic inclusion of the Roma minority is extremely complicated, not only for the reasons quoted above, but also because of the lack of adequate data, gathered in a systematic manner and kept up to date. To allow a better understanding of the typology and the organisation of the interventions enacted (at least of those of which we have succeeded in obtaining information), these analyses have been divided schematically in three territorial ambits: Transnational and National level, Regional level and Local level.

6.1. Transnational and National Level

At the transnational level the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds was instituted in 2007, which constitutes the EURoma network⁷⁷. The project begun with an initiative organised by the Fundaciòn Secretariado Gitano, which is the leading organisation and represents the Spanish managing authority, and by the Spanish Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. The goal of this network is that of developing a common approach promoting the use to structural funds with the aim of favouring Roma and Sinti socio-economic inclusion, to collect best practices, enact peer reviews and to share and diffuse knowledge and practices finalised to the

⁷⁵ To give an approximate idea of this phenomenon we quote the data from ISTAT (National Institute for Statistics), according to which Italian women were in 2008 – 2009 in charge of 76% of house work.

⁷⁶ The last important difficulty in mapping the initiatives is in their duration; sometimes an initiative advertised on a website and even reported on institutional websites is then discovered to have been closed down for years.

⁷⁷ The Network is composed by Italy, Spain, Hungary, Romania, Czech Republic, Sweden, Slovakia, Poland, Greece, Portugal, Finland and Bulgaria.

research of efficacious solutions to promote Roma's social inclusion within the European Structural Funds frame.

Italy also adhered to the network which is overseen by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (DG Immigration and former DG POF now DG for Active and Passive Job Policies), ISFOL (Institute for the Training of Workers) and UNAR (National Office Against Racial Discrimination). The network has implemented three working groups (social inclusion, employment and education) whose duty will be that of developing four major actions:

1. Gathering and analysis of the projects financed with the Structural Funds with the aim of building a reliable database regarding the use of such funds in favour of the Roma communities in order to evaluate the efficiency and the effectiveness.
2. Identification of best practices on the basis of commonly established criteria defined by the same network as guiding examples for future projects.
3. Analysis, using the peer review methodology, of the best practices and their chances of transferability between the various member states (via seminars, meetings etc.)
4. Development of common joint actions to improve the management of the funds dedicated to the Roma in each member state and to the promotion of transnational actions within the projects implemented.

At the national level there are the so called ONPs (Piani Operativi Nazionali – Operative National Plans), constituted by the national managing authority, UNAR, operates under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and is the national contact point for the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and that of Welfare. The ONPs are financed with European funds (European Social Funds and others).

Structural funds, and in particular the ones of the European Social Funds,⁷⁸ represent all great opportunities for member states to implement actions against inequalities, which also naturally includes actions in favour of the Roma minority. The use of the structural funds was on average concentrated on vocational training and economic development, but their areas of intervention have enlarged. Since the year 2000, the regulations also foresee the implementation of actions to promote the inclusion of disadvantaged groups and to include antidiscrimination norms. This process of enlargement of the themes the fund is already visible in the initiatives prepared for 2007 – 2013.

The material enactment of the funds can be entrusted to institutions, trade unions, NGOs and other social actors by mean of specific projects. The Operative National Plans (ONP) in Italy covers three thematic areas: assistance to systems; assistance to local communities; organisations and enterprises and assistance to persons.

Regarding that which specifically deals with the Roma as a group, three main areas have been singled out: education, employment and social integration at the community level. The ONP "Security for the Development of the South of Italy", whose managing authority is the Ministry of Internal Affairs, deals with specific activities dedicated to the exchange and cultural relations with

78 See official website: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp?langId=en>

the Roma and other ethnic groups. The other two ONP “Governance and System Actions” and “System Actions” are managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies; they include the Roma through three priority pillars: Employment, Transnationality and Equal Opportunities.

6.2. Regional Level

In Italy 21 Operative Regional Plans (ORP) have been activated, and they include the Roma via different modalities and foresee different actions dedicated to them.

The agencies engaged in these ORPs are: the Directorate General for the Labour Market of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (as managing authority), the Department for Public Administration (for actions concerning the pillar “Competences Development”) and the Department for Rights and Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (pillar “Equal Opportunities”).

In 2009 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies in collaboration with ISFOL, started a mapping of the projects for the period 2007 – 2013. This gave birth to a national network with the aim of gathering and organising the various initiatives promoting the mutual cooperation of all those who are working on Roma inclusion.

However, not all of the Regional plans explicitly quote the Roma, who can be involved both as a direct and as an indirect target. For this reason it is not easy to retrace all the projects which the have been included because they may not be explicitly cited as Roma, but rather fall under other categories such as unemployed, migrants, refugees, etc.

Table V presents a synthesis of the interventions relative to the implementation of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) region by region⁷⁹.

Tab. V: The Italian National Strategic Reference Framework region by region by European funding source and by explicit reference to Roma as a group.

Obiettivo Convergenza – Convergence

Programmi Operativi Regionali (POR) – Operative Regional Programmes (ORP)

Basilicata	FESR Fund	No	FES Fund	No
Calabria	FESR Fund	Yes	FES Fund	Yes
Campania	FESR Fund	No	FES Fund	No
Puglia	FESR Fund	No	FES Fund	No
Sicilia	FESR Fund	No	FES Fund	No

⁷⁹ Research by keywords: Roma, Sinti, Nomads.

Programmi Operativi Nazionali (PON) – Operative National Programmes (ONP)

Governance and Technical Assistance	FESR Fund	No		
Education	FESR Fund	No		
Network and Mobility	FESR Fund	No		
Research and Competitiveness	FESR Fund	Yes		
Security	FESR Fund	No		
Governance and System Actions			FSE Fund	No
Competences for Development			FSE Fund	No

Programmi Operativi Interregionali (POIN) –Operative Interregional Programs (OIP)

Tourism and other Cultural	FESR Fund	No		
Renewable energies	FESR Fund	No		

Obiettivo Competitività Regionale e Occupazione – Regional competitiveness and Employment

Programmi Operativi Regionali (POR) - Operative Regional Programmes (ORP)

Abruzzo	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	Yes
Emilia Romagna	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No
Friuli Venezia Giulia	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No
Lazio	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No
Liguria	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	Yes
Lombardia	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No
Marche	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No
Molise	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No
P.A. Bolzano	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No
P.A. Trento	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No
Piemonte	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No
Toscana	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No
Umbria	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No
Val d'Aosta	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No
Veneto	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No
Sardegna	FESR Fund	No	FSE Fund	No

Obiettivo Cooperazione Territoriale Europea – Objective European territorial cooperation

Other EU programs in which Italy is involved

INTERREG IV C	FESR Fund	No
ESPN	FESR Fund	No
URBACT	FESR Fund	Yes
INTERACT	FESR Fund	No

Source: Ministry for Economic Development: Italian National Strategic Reference Framework⁸⁰.

6.3. Local Level: other initiatives in favour of employment

It is at the local level where we can find the most diversified forms of interventions in favour of Roma employment to which both Italian and foreign Roma can have access.

These interventions can be divided into:

1. Institutional initiatives: tools offered by the institutions and dedicated to all citizens (i.e. apprenticeships, traineeships, borse lavoro and vocational training);
2. Initiatives enacted by the third sector: tools offered through cooperation with third sector organisations, for example as mediators or assistants;
3. Self-employment: All the other initiatives generically categorized as “self-employment” and of which the vast majority consist of social cooperatives and NGOs (such as the case of the various recycling cooperatives).

⁸⁰ See website: http://www.dps.mef.gov.it/QSN/qsn_programmioperativi.asp

6.3.1. Institutional initiatives: Apprenticeship, traineeship, borse lavoro⁸¹ and vocational training.

Although they have not been indicated explicitly as beneficiaries, Roma are often included in many of the categories who are entitled to benefit from these actions, i.e. as unemployed persons, as youth in need of training, or as migrants or refugees in the case that they are foreigners.

In Italy an apprenticeship⁸² entails a job contract for an undetermined period of time focused on the youth training and typically falls within three main categories: apprenticeship for professional qualification, traineeship, borse lavoro and high training and research apprenticeship.

The apprenticeship for professional qualification is offered to young persons from 15 years of age. The duration of the contract is determined by considering the qualification to be obtained and can not last more than three years. Within this category, there are the professionalizing apprenticeships that can be accessed by all youngsters between 18 and 29 years of age with a duration and modalities assessed considering the age of the individual, the kind of qualification desired and the duration of the training. This kind of contract can not last for more than six years.

The traineeship program is an initiative which is applied solely to youngsters from 16 years of age and who have successfully completed the compulsory schooling cycle. This program is dedicated to different targets: unemployed workers, students from vocational institutes and from professional schools (for a maximum period of six months), disadvantaged persons (maximum 12 months) or to handicapped persons (maximum 24 months). The traineeships have a duration that ranges from a minimum of six to a maximum of 24 months and they foresee not a salary but an expense reimbursement (quite limited, ranging from 300 to 500 euros).

There are also opportunities offered by the borse lavoro and vocational training. They are activated as a pact among three subjects: the company that welcomes the trainee, the trainee and the organisation or public body (NGO or others) who mediate between the other two subjects. The borse lavoro follows the same procedure as the traineeship, and also these requires that the subject who benefits from the intervention is at least 16 years of age and has successfully completed the compulsory schooling. For foreign citizens it is also required to have an adequate level of knowledge of the Italian as a second tongue (L2).

Lastly we have the high training and research apprenticeship to which all subjects between 18 and 29 years of age can have access. The final objective of this program is that of obtaining a degree, including University and doctoral studies.

All these forms of access to work and to training are tools which are especially used by local governments and NGOs to facilitate the access into the job market. All these initiatives have a maximum length of time after which they cannot be extended.

⁸¹ The Italian expression “*borse lavoro*” (literally “scholarship for jobs”) describes an initiative for which there is no translation; thus, we have decided to keep the Italian expression.

⁸² D. Lgs. N.167 del 14/09/2011

Theoretically, the person under training ought to then remain into the company where the training took place, but this eventuality became thinner year after year.

The job market erosion in Italy has assumed worrying dimensions; OECD data⁸³ have registered the 27,5% of youth unemployment for the year 2011 (European average is 19,7%). Another aspect is represented by the number of persons with less than 25 years of age who are employed with temporary contracts. While in 2004 the percentage of persons between 15 and 24 years of age with a temporary contract was of 16,7%, this same percentage rose in 2010 to 46,7%. With these background conditions, it is easy to imagine the difficulties for youngsters to build autonomous lives, noting that beyond the difficulties of entering the job market are those of remaining inside it.

6.3.2. Initiatives activated by the third sector

In some Italian cities, local administrations offers contracts for tenders directed to NGO's for various actions (i.e. to fight against school drop-out, fund toy libraries, work towards social integration etc.). For example the Municipality of Rome, which is also the city with the largest presence of Roma, has for many years via mean of specific bids financed projects dedicated to the support to the schooling of Romani children. These interventions have regarded both the authorised and the non-authorised encampments. Supplementary to these larger interventions are then many initiatives, activated by NGOs for smaller projects, often at a micro-local level, as it is in the case of those which may be financed by the Municipi⁸⁴.

In some cases, there have been services activated that were the fruit of a collaboration between NGOs and institutions. The most relevant problem these initiatives must cope with is their lack of continuity, even when they offer services of paramount importance for the community to which they are destined.

We can quote for example the cases represented by the "Sportello sociale lavoro Rom" (Social office for Roma employment), activated in 2004⁸⁵ and promoted by the Councillorship for Employment of the Municipality of Rome and entrusted to the Opera Nomadi. This program was subsequently closed down in February 2009. Another example is an intervention (the first one of this kind) for the prevention of drug addiction specifically targeting the Roma. This program was also working with an outreach team dedicated to the "damage reduction" (Project "Gypsy 2000").

These examples, which involve key assistance services, show the intermittent way in which even services of great usefulness are delivered, and they illustrate how urgent the necessity of guaranteeing the sustainability of the projects financed is, thus ensuring continuity. For many years (at least from 1990 to 2000), support for schooling was entrusted by the Municipality by means of triennial public bids to which NGOs were entitled to participate.

These schooling projects were targeted to the inhabitants of the encampments and they included a series of activities over the span of three years. The projects were further divided into allotments

⁸³ See the OECD report downloadable at: www.oecd.org/employment/outlook [Accessed December 2011].

⁸⁴ The city of Rome is divided into 20 administrative districts called Municipi and which enjoy financial, administrative and accounting autonomy.

⁸⁵ Convenzione con il Comune di Roma Dipartimento XIV Determinazione Dirigenziale n. 1939 del 23.12.2004.

which corresponded to the Roma encampments present in the areas covered by the bids. Among these activities were also additional features including the accompanying of children between the school and the encampment by means of a dedicated school bus, actions for integration and support of didactic activities, and sensitization of Roma families toward education and activities of mediation between institutions and the encampment. Within these projects, there were also Roma cultural mediators incorporated, a role that has often been used in schools and in other projects to support schooling, though this professional figure is still too generic and without a clear definition of the competences correlated to a rigorous professional training.

In many Italian cities, there has been a growth in Roma associations like in the case of the Romni Onlus, whose President is a linguistic mediator that has worked with this specific professional activity for many years. Nevertheless, these activities obviously remain as a marginal possibility for the great majority of the Roma population, and despite their scarcity and typology they are one of the only sources of an opportunity to constitute a reliable source of income.

6.3.3. Self employment: recycling cooperatives and others

Lastly, we present what constitutes the most widely practiced the economic activity by the Roma metropolitan communities, that of recycling. The presence of foreign Roma is prevalently concentrated in large cities such as Rome, Milan, Naples and Turin. This concentration is due to the recycling activities that a large number of Roma practice that can only be carried out in urban contexts.

Self-employment is certainly the modality to which Roma are forced for the lack of other viable opportunities for employment. Over the years, the gathering and recycling of metals, garments and other objects has become a specialisation of the Roma. Such survival activities which are generally carried out by the individual familial groups have, in some cases, structured itself in the form of social working cooperatives⁸⁶.

In spite of the fact that the recycling activities have for decades represented almost the sole form of income for the Roma communities of the encampments, it is still carried on in an informal manner. In some cases, the local administrations have established reserved spaces for this commerce within the district markets, but as we will see further on, these initiatives have also had no continuity. The historical activity of metal gathering has also been supplemented by that of the gathering and recycling of furniture and other objects, another activity which is still waiting to be formally recognised. It is the case of the *Pijats Romanò*⁸⁷, a cooperative whose associates have signed a petition which was given to the then Mayor of Rome and to the Presidents of the Province and the Lazio Region. The associates were requesting the conditions to do this economic activity legally, and to have reserved spaces within the district markets⁸⁸. Up to date nothing has yet been done to

⁸⁶ We will refer here only to the social cooperatives dedicated strictly to occupation (recyclers, tailors, caterers etc.). Therefore, in this section all the work done by NGOs run by Roma and non-Roma who work mostly on the social or cultural dimension will not be included. These will be dealt with in the section dedicated to Education.

⁸⁷ See reporting on the website: <http://retedisostegnomercatinirom.over-blog.it/article-pijats-romano-via-collatina-foto-66776306.html>.

⁸⁸ See here for a copy of the petition of the *Pijats Romanò* associates: <http://retedisostegnomercatinirom.over-blog.it/pages/sostieni-pijats-romano-4581140.html> [Accessed December 2011]

support this initiative in spite of the fact that this cooperative is one of the largest in Rome, with at least 183 associates registered.

Another important initiative, active since 2003 in Rome, is the one organised by the social cooperative “L’occhio del riciclone”⁸⁹. This association has elaborated and developed models of social business for Roma socio-economic integration including them in projects dedicated to the professional training. They organise courses for the re-use of second hand garments. They have also supported the creation of the costume jewellery line “Romamor”⁹⁰, created by various young Roma and Romnià and from the members of the Cooperative Bosnia Herzegovina (also composed of Roma) in 2006. Activities like this, just like many others, constitute an important resource for any far-sighted administrator. Unfortunately, they have been carried on in an almost exclusively autonomous way and supported only episodically on behalf of local institutions, which should instead have invested into these activities by supporting and endorsing them.

In the Appendix, is a summarizing overview of some of the most interesting initiatives in Italy. The list does not claim to list all the experiences happening on the national territory but rather it serves to orient the reader by presenting a series of cases.

89 See article: http://www.wantedinrome.com/articles/complete_articles.php?id_art=1109 [Accessed January 2012]

90 “Romamor” is word play between the words Rome, Roma and Love (in Italian: amore). See the cooperative’s website: http://www.occhiodelriciclone.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8&Itemid=16

7. Conclusions and recommendations

Within the perspective of favouring Roma inclusion, the initiatives in favour of occupation directed toward these minorities can not (and have not acted to) prescind some important principles that we list here synthetically. Noting that the absence of these principles represents the failure of current initiatives to sustainably offer economic mobility to the Roma in Italy, they concurrently represent our resulting recommendations.

1. **Avoid excessive ethnicization of initiatives.** All initiatives should include Roma, migrants and the local population in order to encourage and favour the occasions of encounter and to stimulate a peaceful cohabitation not undermined by rivalry or competition among the poor subpopulations. Within this frame, local administrations and training bodies must commit themselves to the regular supply of the *borsa lavoro* and of any other tool foreseen by the law and dedicated to favour occupation. A possibility could be that of guaranteeing incentives to those companies that accept to enroll unemployed youth, naturally including also locals and migrants. In particular, the category that is most at risk is that of the youngsters out of the compulsive schooling age;
2. **Rectify the lack of continuity in the initiatives.** Many of the actions implemented at the local level and here described, especially those enacted by cooperatives and by the third sector have been characterised by discontinuity due to different factors such as the intermittency of funding, the scarce institutional support necessary to many of the initiatives (for example for all those connected with recycling) and the lack of adequate forms of project sustainability both in terms of lack of administrative and marketing knowledge. Local administrations should make an effort to monitor the initiatives financed in a substantial and not only formal manner, i.e. rigorously verifying the efficacy and the activities that the project foresees, and offering support for example by way of forms of administrative and management “tutoring” of the actions activated.
3. **All initiatives should have adequate support from the local administrations.** This refers not so much to financial support (although this can constitute a big help during the initial phase of setting up of the activities), but rather in terms of business management and of its sustainability, guaranteeing support for bureaucratic, legal and marketing advice. Further, concerning the second hand market activities, to reserve small spaces to this activity. An ad hoc law should also legitimate (make legal) the gathering of metals and objects.
4. **Qualification and literacy plans for adults.** This represents a key issue for the professionalisation of these activities such as that of recycling which are currently carried out without any form of training. Most importantly, these activities occur in the absence of any form of health and security protection for those working in this trade who are exposed to unwholesome and dangerous materials. To invest in highly specialised training in this sector can contribute to systematize this activity, which could then become a resource for the whole urban collective and an opportunity for non-intermittent income for the Roma.

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Regione Emilia Romagna (Del. 1576/2004)

Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia (L.R. n.5/2005)

Regione Lazio (D.G.R. n. 321 del 24 maggio 2008), Regione Liguria (D.G.R. n. 874 del 4/08/2006)

Regione Veneto (proposta di Legge Regionale n. 174/2006 sull'immigrazione)

Regional laws

It is worth to make reference to the Regional legislation promulgated in relation to Roma and Sinti. According to the Italian Constitution the Regions have the competences for specific interventions and to enact the national laws. During the mid eighties 10 Regional Laws and one from an autonomous Province were issued with the aim of ameliorating the life and working conditions of the “nomads” with respect to the “cultural diversity”. The local administrations which promulgated these laws were mainly of center left, progressists. In these documents it is depicted a vast frame in which is underlined the full right of Roma to the school and to socio economic inclusion. Actually these laws were only used as a guidebook to the habitat for the Roma. In spite of the “good intentions”, the encampments were institutionalised and presented as places where it was possible for the Roma to preserve their “right to nomadism”, although the Roma were not nomads; with the institutionalised encampments, the ghettos for the Roma apartheid were built.

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Regione Liguria

LR 27/8/1992, n. 21 “Interventi a tutela delle popolazioni zingare e nomadi”.

Regione Lombardia

LR 22/12/1989, n. 77 “Azione regionale per la tutela delle popolazioni appartenenti alle etnie tradizionalmente nomadi e seminomadi”.

Regione Marche

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Regione Piemonte

LR 10/6.1993, n. 26 “Interventi a favore della popolazione zingara”.

Regione Sardegna

LR 9/3/1988, n. 9 “Tutela dell’etnia e della cultura dei nomadi”.

Regione Toscana

LR 8/4/1995, n. 73 “Interventi per i popoli Rom e Sinti”.

Regione Trentino - Alto Adige

LP 2/9/1985, n. 15 “Norme a tutela degli zingari”.

Regione Umbria

LR 27/4/1990, n. 32 “Misure per favorire l’inserimento dei nomadi nella società e per la tutela della loro identità e del loro patrimonio culturale”.

Regione Veneto

LR 22/12/1989, n. 54 “Interventi a tutela della cultura dei Rom e dei Sinti”.

Appendixes

Appendix Ia:

Questionnaire of the network of schools of the XIV and XV District of Rome for the welcoming of Roma students.

QUESTIONARIO D'ACCOGLIENZA PER ALUNNI ROM

SCUOLA:

Classe:

Nome:

età: nato a:

Cittadinanza:

NOTIZIE RELATIVE ALL'ALUNNO (barrare ciò che interessa)

da quanti anni frequenta?

La frequenza è: regolare irregolare saltuaria

Chi lo accompagna a scuola? operatori genitori

Frequenta centri sportivi? si no

Frequenta centri ricreativi? si no

NOTIZIE RELATIVE ALLA FAMIGLIA

Campo Rom di provenienza

Da quando la famiglia vive in Italia?

Da quando la famiglia vive a Roma?

Quali lingue si parlano in famiglia?

Religione praticata

In famiglia conoscono l'italiano? bene discretamente poco

Mamma sa leggere e scrivere?

Papà sa leggere e scrivere

nucleo familiare livello di scolarizzazione titolo di studio

nucleo familiare	livello di scolarizzazione	titolo di studio

INFORMAZIONI VARIE

La famiglia ritiene importante che i propri figli vadano a scuola?

si no

La famiglia ritiene importante per i propri figli conseguire un titolo di studio?

si no

I genitori si interessano di quello che fanno i figli a scuola?

si no

I figli sono contenti di andare a scuola?

si no

PER I DOCENTI

La frequenza scolastica è regolare irregolare saltuaria

Avete progetti di continuità con la scuola precedentemente frequentata?

si no

Utilizzate libri di testo o sussidi particolari? si no

Realizzate attività di laboratorio o individualizzate? si no

se si quali?.....

.....

Quali forme di orientamento prevedete? (per le terze medie).....

.....

Appendix Ib:

MPI – MIUR Monitoring form for the quantitative analysis and of formative actions directed to the Nomads, (Roma, Sinti and Camminanti)

SEZIONE A - DATI IDENTIFICATIVI DELL'ISTITUZIONE SCOLASTICA

TIPOLOGIA	CIRCOLO DIDATTICO	ISTITUTO COMPRENSIVO	SECONDARIA I GRADO	SECONDARIA II GRADO
DENOMINAZIONE				
DISTRETTO				
COMUNE - PROVINCIA				
TELEFONO/FAX				
E-MAIL SCUOLA				
DOCENTE REFERENTE (NOMINATIVO E RIFERIMENTI PER EVENTUALE CONTATTO)				

SEZIONE B - DATI RELATIVI AGLI STUDENTI APPARTENENTI A COMUNITA' NOMADI (ROM, SINTI, CAMMINANTI) 2007/08 - 2008/09 – 2009/10 – 2010/11

DATI QUANTITATIVI GENERALI A.S. 2009/10 (compilare riferendosi a tutta la scuola)

_____	NUMERO TOTALE		
PLESSI	N°	di cui con presenza di studenti appartenenti a comunità nomadi: n°	
CLASSI	N°	di cui con presenza di studenti appartenenti a comunità nomadi: n°	
DOCENTI	N°	di cui coinvolti nelle azioni destinate in modo specifico agli studenti appartenenti a comunità nomadi: n°	
PERS. A.T.A.	N°	di cui coinvolti nelle azioni destinate in modo specifico agli studenti appartenenti a comunità nomadi: n°	
STUDENTI	N°	di cui con cittadinanza non italiana (esclusi gli studenti appartenenti a Comunità nomadi): n°	
		di cui appartenenti a Comunità:	con cittadinanza italiana n°
			con cittadinanza non italiana n°

IL DIRIGENTE SCOLASTICO

DATI QUANTITATIVI RELATIVI AL PERCORSO DI APPRENDIMENTO (compilare riferendosi alla SCUOLA DELL'INFANZIA)

			ISCRITTI	DI CUI CON PERCORSO SCOLASTICO NON CORRISPONDENTE ALL' ETÀ ANAGRAFICA (iscrizioni in ritardo, ripetenze ...)	DI CUI CON FREQUENZA REGOLARE	DI CUI CON FREQUENZA SALTUARIA	DI CUI CON FREQUENZA IRREGOLARE (lunghi periodi di assenza)	DI CUI IN ABBANDONO SCOLASTICO (abbandono in corso d'anno)	DI CUI INADEMPIENTI	DI CUI AMMESSI/NON AMMESSI ALLA CLASSE SUCCESSIVA		
										ammessi	non am.	
INFANZIA	2007/08	ROM										
		SINTI										
		CAMMINANTI										
	2008/09	ROM										
		SINTI										
		CAMMINANTI										
	2009/10	ROM										
		SINTI										
		CAMMINANTI										
	2010/11	ROM										
		SINTI										
		CAMMINANTI										

IL DIRIGENTE SCOLASTICO

DATI QUANTITATIVI RELATIVI AL PERCORSO DI APPRENDIMENTO (compilare riferendosi alla SCUOLA PRIMARIA)

		ISCRITTI	DI CUI CON PERCORSO SCOLASTICO NON CORRISPONDENTE ALL' ETÀ ANAGRAFICA (iscrizioni in ritardo, ripetenze ...)	DI CUI CON FREQUENZA REGOLARE	DI CUI CON FREQUENZA SALTUARIA	DI CUI CON FREQUENZA IRREGOLARE (lunghe periodi di assenza)	DI CUI IN ABBANDONO SCOLASTICO (abbandono in corso d'anno)	DI CUI INADEMPIENTI	DI CUI AMMESSI/NON AMMESSI ALLA CLASSE SUCCESSIVA	
									ammessi	non am.
PRIMARIA	2007/08	ROM								
		SINTI								
		CAMMINANTI								
	2008/09	ROM								
		SINTI								
		CAMMINANTI								
	2009/10	ROM								
		SINTI								
		CAMMINANTI								
	2010/11	ROM								
		SINTI								
		CAMMINANTI								

IL DIRIGENTE SCOLASTICO

DATI QUANTITATIVI RELATIVI AL PERCORSO DI APPRENDIMENTO (compilare riferendosi alla SECONDARIA DI I GRADO)

		ISCRITTI	DI CUI CON PERCORSO SCOLASTICO NON CORRISPONDENTE ALL' ETÀ ANAGRAFICA (iscrizioni in ritardo, ripetenze ...)	DI CUI CON FREQUENZA REGOLARE	DI CUI CON FREQUENZA SALTUARIA	DI CUI CON FREQUENZA IRREGOLARE (lunghe periodi di assenza)	DI CUI IN ABBANDONO SCOLASTICO (abbandono in corso d'anno)	DI CUI INADEMPIENTI	DI CUI AMMESSI/NON AMMESSI ALLA CLASSE SUCCESSIVA	
									ammessi	non am.
SECONDARIA I GRADO	2007/08	ROM								
		SINTI								
		CAMMINANTI								
	2008/09	ROM								
		SINTI								
		CAMMINANTI								
	2009/10	ROM								
		SINTI								
		CAMMINANTI								
	2010/11	ROM								
		SINTI								
		CAMMINANTI								

IL DIRIGENTE SCOLASTICO

DATI QUANTITATIVI RELATIVI AL PERCORSO DI APPRENDIMENTO (compilare riferendosi alla SECONDARIA DI II GRADO)

		ISCRITTI	DI CUI CON PERCORSO SCOLASTICO NON CORRISPONDENTE ALL' ETÀ ANAGRAFICA (iscrizioni in ritardo, ripetenze ...)	DI CUI CON FREQUENZA REGOLARE	DI CUI CON FREQUENZA SALTUARIA	DI CUI CON FREQUENZA IRREGOLARE (lunghi periodi di assenza)	DI CUI IN ABBANDONO SCOLASTICO (abbandono o in corso d'anno)	DI CUI INADEMPIENTI	DI CUI AMMESSI/NON AMMESSI ALLA CLASSE SUCCESSIVA	
									ammessi	non am.
SECONDARIA II GRADO	2007/08	ROM								
		SINTI								
		CAMMINANTI								
	2008/09	rom								
		sinti								
		camminanti								
	2009/10	rom								
		sinti								
		camminanti								
	2010/11	rom								
		sinti								
		camminanti								

IL DIRIGENTE SCOLASTICO

SEZIONE C - RICOGNIZIONE INTERVENTI DESTINATI IN MODO SPECIFICO AGLI STUDENTI APPARTENENTI A COMUNITA' NOMADI – A.S. 2009/10.

c1 - Fornire sintetiche informazioni su: provenienza degli studenti, caratteristiche del campo che li accoglie, lingua parlata, facilità/difficoltà di raccordo con le famiglie ...

...

c2 - Descrivere brevemente i bisogni formativi rilevati in ingresso

...

c3 - Gli interventi formativi sono stati finalizzati a:

Favorire l'accoglienza e l'inserimento degli studenti appartenenti a Comunità nomadi

Utilizzare metodologie attive e laboratoriali

Favorire l'integrazione

Contrastare la dispersione scolastica di questa fascia di studenti

Promuovere una didattica focalizzata sulla persona

.....

c4 - Indicare gli interventi specifici realizzati per l'accoglienza, l'inserimento, l'integrazione:

....

c5 - Indicare gli interventi specifici per favorire e migliorare l'apprendimento:

...

c6 - Indicare gli interventi specifici di orientamento e ri – orientamento:

...

c7 - Indicare gli interventi specifici messi in atto nei casi di dispersione e abbandono:

...

c8 - Indicare gli elementi di coerenza degli interventi specifici con il percorso formativo della classe e con il P.O.F.

...

c9 – Sono state utilizzate le seguenti strategie metodologico - didattiche:

Didattica laboratoriale

Didattica individualizzata e personalizzata

Attività integrative – interne ed esterne alla scuola

Peer tutoring

Cooperative learning

Utilizzo strutturato delle tecnologie

.....

.....

c10 - Gli interventi sono stati svolti: in orario curricolare in orario extracurricolare

c11 – Indicare le attività svolte in orario extracurricolare

...

c12 - Indicare gli elementi di criticità in riferimento alle fasi del percorso formativo attivato (accoglienza, integrazione, percorso di apprendimento, orientamento)

...

c13 – Indicare gli interventi messi in atto per il coinvolgimento del personale della scuola, delle famiglie, dei Soggetti territoriali:

...

c14 – Indicare gli interventi realizzati in rete (con altre Scuole e con Enti e Associazioni del territorio) e/o in collaborazione (Università, Associazioni...):

...

c15 – Per la realizzazione degli interventi sono stati utilizzati i seguenti finanziamenti:

€ _____ provenienti da _____ € _____ provenienti da _____
€ _____ provenienti da _____ € _____ provenienti da _____

LUOGO E DATA

IL DIRIGENTE SCOLASTICO

Appendix II

Contributions from the Focus Group Participants

Notes to Appendix II:

This report has been compiled with the aim of offering the most possibly detailed and pragmatic overview of the situation on Roma education, and this was possible only by the “within and from” the field perspective.

For this reason we have chosen to include in this Appendix three interventions regarding the case studies of Milan, Rome and Cosenza directly written by the protagonists of the Focus Groups we have realised within the frame of this research work.

One of the key methodological tools of this research report has been that of the action research, and on this base we have tried to actively involving as much as possible the participants and partners in the research process.

Sant'Egidio and the Roma

Elisabetta Cimoli, Lawyer
Comunità di Sant'Egidio

The Comunità di Sant'Egidio is active among the various Roma groups in different Italian cities, and this happens also in Milan and in other cities of the Milan province.

In particular in Milan it is close to groups of various nationalities and in different housing conditions: it is an illegal though “tolerated” encampment which exists since 1997 with wooden or small bricks huts placed within the park “Parco Agricolo Sud Milano”. The population is composed by Bosnians and Montenigrinians part of which have become Italian citizens; Romanian Roma who live in illegal encampments often under eviction and who are living in tents and huts and Romanian Roma who are now living in apartments thanks to the network activated by the Comunità di Sant'Egidio and by the group of persons who, after the eviction of the via Rubattino encampment⁹¹, have tried to help the members of this community (in Milan and in its Province).

The guidelines and objective of the Comunità di Sant'Egidio in their work with the Roma in Milan and in the other cities where is present, is that of both offering attention to families in a friendship relationship with each one of them, coupled with actions of resistance against all that may limit or threatens human rights and does not allow the persons' promotion. This is done without renouncing to the dialogue with the institutions. The operators of the Comunità di Sant'Egidio are all volunteers and do not perceive any form of salary and they collaborate with various bodies and NGOs either composed by Roma and Sinti or by people who work with them.

Considering the importance of the promotion of school attendance and of education among the Roma, the Comunità di Sant'Egidio offers consultancies to institutions in the fields of schooling, intercultural mediation, access to employment.

At the same time, in order to favour the meeting between the Roma and the non Roma, have been promoted meetings with all the social formations interested, in particular on the Porrajmos or meetings with Roma or Sinti persons.

The work in favour of the compulsive schooling (and where possible to the upper secondary cycle of studies) of all Roma children, work where also the parents are involved, is flanked by education to cohabitation and to legality for the minors, also promoting public demonstrations on these themes. The young Roma are involved in these projects together with other Italian and foreign minors. Also the training of teachers is part of the activities connected with the promotion of the minors' rights. We try to support the regular job seeking for adults, facilitating the Roma relationship with the territory, from institutions to the civil society part of the “majoritarian” culture. Favouring the vocational training to allow the begin of paths of socio-economic inclusion.

Through the personal relationship it is possible to make circulate also notions concerning health prevention, and it is reinforced the access to healthcare for children and adults.

The Roma are part of Europe (must not be forgot that it is the largest minority present in the continent) and therefore of everyone's cultural patrimony. The term “nomad”, used for the Roma

⁹¹ This eviction took place the 19 November 2009.

does not describe their condition in Europe and certainly not in Italy but this term offers to the “majoritarian” culture the “tranquillizing” idea that their presence will be transitory.

Quite the opposite, the commitment for cohabitation and for the social inclusion, maintaining and respecting the cultures of this minority, is, together, an investment for the future and the sign that there is no intention of repeating the error of the road of despise and exclusion which led to the tragedy of the IIInd World War.

A history of “our” Roma.

Antonella Rossilli, responsible for the Interculture Group of the School “Iqbal Masih” in Rome.

All minorities are different, though some more than others; some stimulate thoughts and afterthoughts in our educational pathways and surely the case of the Roma is in this sense very representative.

A first awareness emerges and then hides during the school meetings among the teachers:

in the school environment, we should cope with tendencies which are standardizing and little respectful of specificities, but at the same time we should make an effort to give shape to common shared answers to many different situations, thus guaranteeing basic rights at a universal level.

At the same time, to assume diversity is a value means to be able to “put oneself in someone else’s shoes,” to account for the other’s presence, to expose oneself to the risk of empathy. The schools experience daily their natural predisposition to the welcoming of subjects which are so different from the school’s own experience, but at the same time we cannot refuse conflicts because they are positive and should not be avoided. It is the other face of the medal of inclusion.

To renounce to ethnocentrism, which reads the nomadism of human beings as a threat instead as of a resource,. The school in this sense becomes the shop window not only of individual conflicts, but also of social and familial models.

A shared and reiterated procedure: the teachers’ interviews

At least twice a year all the teachers who have Roma children in their classrooms reassemble with the NGOs which have been entrusted by the local administration to support the schooling of Roma children.

This occasion often becomes a place for the unleashing of feelings; if at the beginning we all tended to self-censorship, with the passing of years these outbursts have been accepted, even if never explicitly, as moments which can contribute to the solving issues and which can “heal” specific situations. There is a free flow of narration in which professional frustrations are dealt with and these frustrations reflect the educational and personal problems of the children enrolled in the various classrooms. The themes which emerge most frequently are those of school attendance and results, considered often as scarce and insufficient. In some cases the responsibilities are thrown onto the NGOs which participate in the schooling projects, but the most intelligent teachers try to offer more pertinent analyses, reminding the working group of the assembly that school success depends mostly on the solving of other issues such as that of housing, healthcare and familial poverty.

In the last two years, this form of confrontation/clash has allowed us to acquire at least two considerations from which to start from: the first is that school achievement has more difficulty in remaining stable for the Roma pupils and the second is that each Roma family constitutes a particular micro world where elements of discontinuity prevail.

This last consideration constituted a pivotal point 13 years ago in the choice made to build a sort of partnership between the families of the via dei Gordiani encampment in the VIth District and the

school, finalised by the signing of social reciprocity pacts. These pacts are a sort of institutional and civil society commitment to converge on positive actions aimed at bringing long-term results in the second and third generations concerning housing, education and social inclusion.

These pacts have had some results, but the new “Nomad Plan”⁹² has again centralised the management of these issues, including the encampment of via dei Gordiani, that were earlier managed in a much better way by the VIth District’s administration.

The school also suffers from this new situation. If before we had a much closer relation with the encampment and we used to go visit and go there for marriages, baptisms and funerals, now it is as if a wall has been erected. We are outside but also inside the bars and those who dare to trespass that border can begin to feel something that the story has already condemned.

And we now ask ourselves: in which way and how much has the school, our school, which has been for the last thirty years a positive example of welcoming all Roma communities which were close to it, been seduced by this forced separation? Of this stigmatisation of diversity as something inferior to us, outside the concept of “normality”?

Especially in a moment when all around us the points of strength of the institutional network collaboration are failing, like for example the GIN (Gruppo Integrato Nomadi),⁹³ the network created among the schools. These were “creative” elements that were extremely useful; due to their in-depth analysis of the social contexts of the various Roma encampments they underlined and promoted possible ways for empowerment (employment, education, sport etc.).

It is only through these forms of guarantees that the efforts coming from the best of our professions and individualities can once again find the right “creative” keys. We must support the intuitions that the pathways to learning and knowledge must feed, not only with formal codes, but which should also feed on the experiences, on the common knowledge that today, also for Roma children and adolescents who are living in the Roman encampments, include “modern” knowledge. New media and communications in languages which are grammatically poor but overflowing with the desire to communicate...and what are the school doing to cope with all this?

⁹² Municipality of Rome (2009) **Il piano nomadi**, available online at:

<http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/information/N869782002/piano%20nomadi%20sched e.pdf>

⁹³ The GIN (Gruppo Integrato Nomadi – Nomads Integrated Group) is a Roman municipality network composed of institutions, NGOs and members of the Roma communities whose goal was that of assessing the various issues concerning the Roma communities. With the election of the right wing administration led by the Mayor Gianni Alemanno, this important tool has been abandoned.

The MOCI and the Roma community of the river Crati

Luana Ammendola and Gianfranco Sangermano, MOCI

Since 2010, the Movement for International Cooperation (Mo.Ci.) has voluntarily undertaken a project of school support for the Romanian Roma children living in the Cosenza encampment, where school drop-out rates were around 100%. In Cosenza, there are no institutional policies for the inclusion of the Romanian Roma community but there are a series of NGOs and citizens who have for years undertaken the task of supporting the community not only in solving the existing housing emergency, but more generally working through the global processes of integration in Cosenza.

In June 2010, some NGOs involved in Roma's rights advocacy decide to tackle in a systematic manner the issue of the schooling of the Roma children through the following specific actions: conducting a census of the children in school and pre-school age in the three encampments, improving relations with the schools, meeting with the children's parents, and setting up after-school activities. In September 2010, the process of involvement of Roma families continued, and thanks to the unfailing work in the encampment, 38 children were enrolled in school. In the course of the same month, Mo.Ci. has activated (with the help of 30 volunteers) a service of extra-curricular support for all the children enrolled in school (Monday/Wednesday/Friday from 15.00 to 17.30 p.m.).

Children are followed both in the acquiring of their first literacy competences and, for those who are already enrolled, activities of school support and reinforcement of what has been learned in school. The aim of these activities is that of supporting school attendance with continuity and the effective acquisition of competences. There are also efforts to keep the same volunteer with the same child in order to make the path as least fragmented as possible.

Every fifteen days the volunteers meet to confront and elaborate together the impressions that have sprung from the work of the extra school support and to cope with the eventual difficulties and those single situations in need of special attention. Since January 2011, Mo.Ci. and the Circolo Culturale Popilia have organised a training for the volunteers involved, with the help of Cesare Moreno of the NGO Maestri di Strada⁹⁴ di Napoli.

A series of meeting with parents are periodically are organised to sensitize the families on the importance of schooling and to support them through all the bureaucratic aspects (filling out of forms, declarations, permits, etc.). Mo.Ci. operators are constantly following the children during schooling dealing with enrollement procedures, monitoring attendance, and cooperating with the teachers and the whole school community.

Actually, succeeding in guaranteeing the right to schooling is a difficult task, especially when you clash against the reality that there are many other important rights for human dignity which are not guaranteed: the right to housing, right to health, right to drinkable water, etc.

⁹⁴ The translation of the expression "Maestri di Strada" is "Street teachers," a movement born in Naples for the recovery of school drop-outs.

The Cosenza encampment is in extremely precarious health and hygienic conditions, with no toilets and no electricity; only this year have four public fountains been installed. The problems faced daily are generally due to three main causes:

the precarious living conditions in which minors are living within the encampment;

the difficulty of school institutions in welcoming any “diversity,” especially in this period which has seen the Italian school system seriously threatened by lack of personnel and budget cuts which have increased the social exclusion of the weakest; and

lack of responsibility on behalf of the institutions which are entrusted with the task of promoting social inclusion and acknowledgement of fundamental rights for the subjects at risk of exclusion.

Certainly, the biggest difficulty resulting from the precarious conditions of the encampment is the cleanliness, which becomes an issue especially in the interpersonal relations with the other school children. We must underline anyway that the situation in the encampment can be different and that this issue is more accentuated in the poorer family groups. The hygiene issue is also felt more during winters. Sometimes the smell comes from the environment and not from some real dirtiness of the children and is due to the fact that in the same environment people work, eat, and smoke. The winter period is also the most difficult because of the rain that for weeks prevents residents from doing their clothes washing and therefore children do not go to school because they have no clean dresses. We try to speak as much as possible with the teachers to explain the material difficulties that these children encounter, also because they sometimes cannot even imagine that some of their pupils may live without the commodities offered by modern society. One of the schools involved has offered its help through the use of the school showers in the afternoons when other children are not present. This problem evidences even more how difficult social inclusion is if the minimum services are not guaranteed and in our opinion a real inclusion of Roma children (and not only Roma children) is strictly connected with the solving of the housing situation.

The relationship with school institutions and with the teachers is that of a continuous dialogue. Often, they are not prepared to welcome diversity, also because the schools are severely understaffed and have been subjected to many financial cuts. Further, there has been an increase in the number of students per class which makes the task of following pupils individually more difficult, whether they are migrant, poor, Roma, or disabled. Our proposal is that of including ad hoc professionals for the school inclusion of foreigners and of all those who may experience difficulties in learning and in the integration within the classroom systems. This could be in the form of educators and cultural mediators, especially in the cases in which the children have never been to school before or are following a path of early literacy. The unpreparedness of schools originates also from the fact that there is the consolidated praxis of using support teachers (*insegnante di sostegno*) which should normally deal with disabilities as a support teacher for foreigners, difficult locals or Roma, thus almost labelling diversity as a form of “disability.”

Often the support teacher does not possess the adequate set of competences but must rather rely on his/her personal sensitivity and in doing so the child feels even more excluded and different from the others.

In the multi-ethnic school, teachers have a central role which should not be based only on teaching, but also on the building of ways of being which favour the establishment of a tranquil and relaxed environment, welcoming in the classrooms and able to mediate if conflicts arise. A process of continuous training is also important for the teachers, both in the teaching of the Italian language as a second tongue and in an intercultural didactic approach that establishes the foreigner as the bringer of a different culture not as someone to criminalise, but as someone to be known and respected.

We try to have a continuous dialogue with the teachers, especially regarding the educational extra-curricular activities in order to single out individual didactic pathways. This work is all done with the aim of supporting all that is not possible to be done in the classrooms, trying to regain a gap that Roma children bring with them for all their school careers, especially if they began their schooling in Italy.

One of the difficulties we are trying to overcome is that of disseminating the children in the diverse schools of the city so to avoid the formation of “ghetto schools.” This is difficult because there are not enough school buses to reach the various schools and also because some schools are reluctant to welcome the Roma, especially the one in the centre town.

Further, we register serious difficulties in enrollments when they happen in an advanced time of the year because of the large number of students for each classroom, and for objective reasons such as the lack of personnel, which makes even the ordinary management of activities difficult so that the introduction of more children may create more trouble to an already precarious equilibrium. These are the kind of answers we receive, and actually we can confirm that the situation in our schools is really very difficult and often it is only the personal sensitivity of the single teachers and school directors which allows the creation of positive and creative models of inclusion.

Within the encampment there are different migratory projects, and even if we try to sensitize the parents to plan their trips back to Romania during vacation time and not during the school year, very often this does not happen; therefore the process of learning gets arrested and often the gap accumulated is not recovered.

It must be evidenced that, after a lot of work on our behalf, four of the schools where the children are enrolled have gained access to the school bus service, even if in a partial manner because the children arrive at school late and leave earlier, so that everyday they lose circa two hours of lessons. This implies that some of the topics are not followed in the course of the year, and even more serious is that this creates an increase in the perception of their diversity from their schoolmates. We have been trying for two years to solve this problem with the competent institutions, but even if there is the institutional will to act, it looks like a miracle that there is a school bus service for the Roma. This is justified by the now structural lack of financial resources, but this is true only partially because we think that there is no full awareness of the phenomenon and of the discriminatory element which marks this service which is guaranteed only partially.

The Municipality of Cosenza seems particularly committed to all these issues, but at the same time it is impotent. There have been moments of meeting and periodically they have given signals of nearness to the Romanian Roma community. The problem is that the Roma issue is always coped with as an emergency instead of through a long term plan of inclusion. Regarding the school, we try

as much as possible to involve the competent administrators and to solicit them to take their institutional responsibility. What we have also noticed is that there is a lack of information or a lack of interest in finding the information; there is a need to establish a permanent group on schooling which deals in particular with the phenomenon of school drop-out not only for the Roma but also for foreigners and Italians. The Municipality, the schools, the Roma, and the third sector should participate in this group in order to make a stable, acknowledged, and less precarious cooperation that should have as a goal that of fighting discrimination and removing the barriers to the school inclusion of Roma children through a global vision of all the problems concerned.

Sometimes we find difficulties as an NGO which deals daily with the schooling of Roma children, to be acknowledged by the school institutions as active actor in the process of school inclusion. Some of the schools asked us not to enter in the classrooms anymore to talk with the teachers, so we cannot monitor the school attendance, and this is justified by the fact that there is a new law on privacy. A better acknowledgement and a network of all the subjects involved would avoid useless discussions and time wasted. The organisation of periodical networking events would have helped the reciprocal knowledge both at a personal and a professional level.

In the course of the last months, we have organised visits to the encampment with a social assistant from the Municipality of Cosenza who deals with juveniles and with a judge from the Minors Tribunal. This is part of a pathway of responsibility we have undertaken with the Romanian Roma community that for too many years has been used to welfarist practices that have only create more harm than good by creating dependencies. The goal of the visits is that of making the community understand the interest of the institutions toward the theme of schooling and of school drop-out. In this way, we want them to understand that they should not perceive us from the NGO as counterparts, to make them understand the consequences of school drop-out (the critical period for school attendances starts in January) and to have an opportunity to explain to institutions the difficulties when dealing with the schooling of Roma children.

We have insisted on the presence of the social assistant in the encampment because, first of all, we wanted to hold the competent institutional offices and personnel accountable for their responsibilities and duties because often the third sector is delegated with tasks which should be undertaken by institutions. The institutional part has in this way seen in person the encampment and has spoken freely with the parents and children. They have been made aware, also through the children's stories, of episodes of intolerance that can sometimes lead to school drop-out, because the children do not perceive the school as a safe and welcoming place. This is also due to the fact that the migratory phenomenon has touched us much later than what has happened in the rest of Italy, so there is recent involvement in intercultural issues.

We want to underline that our paramount interest is that of making the Roma community responsible, especially those who are more at risk because we must remember that the migratory projects vary from family to family; there are many who want to stay in Italy while many others see their stay in our country as a momentary passage while waiting to return to Romania.

We do not want to act as substitute for the parents, some of which do not need mediation at all, and this is possible for those who have been living longer in our city, that in the space of less than ten years have learned Italian well. Unfortunately, in the large majority of cases, we are dealing with

family groups which have arrived recently and that we try to accompany and flank along a pathway that we hope will become autonomous as soon as possible.

Lastly, we underline that schooling cannot be separated from more general interventions concerning the housing, healthcare, and social and economic inclusion. A process of inclusion cannot be conceived as a one way toward assimilation, but there is the need for all of us to bring all of our skills into play.

Appendix III

List of Roma social cooperatives for employment

Below is a list of some of the Roma working cooperatives and of other initiatives in favour of Roma occupation. The list does not intend to be comprehensive of all the projects and small cooperatives at work in Italy.

Lombardia:

Piccola Sartoria Sinta

Tailoring Laboratory in Treviglio (Milan), in collaboration with Opera Nomadi Milano and the Municipality of Treviglio.

Cooperativa Labatarpe

Sinti recycling cooperative.

<http://sucardrom.blogspot.com/2010/09/mantova-e-nata-la-cooperativa-labatarpe.html>

Wine R.O.M. (Rosso di Origine Migrante – Red of Migrant Origins)

It is a project built with the support of Gas Feltre and Intergas (GAS, Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale, Groups for Solidal Commerce) who have planned this initiative to gather funds for the support through scholarships and borse lavoro of the Roma families of the encampment of via Rubattino. A wine-grower from Tuscany who had in common with the Roma a background of evictions, offers the wine he produced. From this initiative the wine takes the name “R.O.M.”, Roma of Migrant Originche. The “R.O.M.” wine got the solidarity of a lot of people, so much that the income have allowed to implement the first borse-lavoro thank also to the support of the Comunità di Sant’Egidio and of his experience in organising pathways of autonomy and integration for Roma and homeless people in Italy.

http://www.gasmilano.org/?pag=progetto&id_progetto=3

Sartoria Taivè

Roma tailoring cooperative.

<http://www.caritas.it/Documents/0/4784.html>

Piemonte:

Artistic tailoring “Jelesan”,

Tailoring cooperative organised by the Turin NGO “Idea Rom”.

<http://idearom.jimdo.com/bazar/>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sartoria-Jelesan/187350521366712>

<http://museodelviaggirom.blogspot.com/2012/01/sartoria-jelesan.html>

<http://idearom.jimdo.com/bazar/>

Abruzzo:

Fattoria sociale Bravalipè – Social farm Bravalipè

This initiative has been promoted in 2011 by Associazione RomSinti@politica, Centro studi e ricerche Cilicìò and the farm Ciattoni. The goal of this project is that of implementing two social farms in the provinces of Chieti and Pescara and to offer an occupation to 15 Roma and non Roma.

Lazio:

Antica Sartoria Rom

The Antica Sartoria Rom, led by the lyric singer Carmen Rocco gathers Roma women of different nationalities for the realisation of tailoring products and in particular, scene costumes for theatre shows and opera performances. They have realised fashion defilè in collaboration with Altaroma at the Roman Auditorium-Parco della Musica and collaborated with the designer Romeo Gigli for the defilè presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome in Testaccio.

<http://www.anticasartoriarom.it/>

http://youtu.be/_gf9hKG1ic8

La lavanderia Rom – The Roma Laundry

The Roma laundry is in via della Seta, between Rome and Ciampino and is an initiative of the social cooperative “Baxtalò Drom”.

<http://www.romamultietnica.it/it/rom-sinti-e-camminanti/associazioni-rom/item/4154-cooperativa-baxtal--drom.html>

Laboratorio manufatti delle donne Rom

Since 2006 the “Associazione Insieme Zajedno” organised the “Manufacturing Laboratory” a project for the self-employment of Roma women by means of microcredits.

http://www.insiemezajedno.org/progetti_italia/index.htm

http://youtu.be/DIC3IgQM_7I

Social Cooperative of the “Pijats Romanò”

It is the largest Roma cooperative in Rome with 183 associates working in the second hand and recycling sector. They are in the impossibility to work and have signed a petition to ask that the

activity of the markets could be legally undertaken, and to ask the local governments to provide public regulated spaces for Roma to continue this activity.

Campania:

Progetto Kumpanìa

The NGOs "Chi rom chi no" with the project Kumpanìa, organises intercultural gastronomic pathways

<http://chiromechino.blogspot.com/>

Calabria:

Cooperativa Rom 1995, project "La ricicleria". Refusal gathering, management of "ecological islands", cleaning services, garden maintenance.

<http://www.rom1995.it/inde.html>

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