



Report on the event about: Social Housing Agency and the *Housing First* approach

Asse 3 – PON METRO, Catania, 14 May 2018

Sala Giunta, Palazzo degli Elefanti, Catania

The issue of social inclusion and the challenge of poverty, in general, and of housing poverty, in particular, are undoubtedly a priority for the whole Europe, for Italy and for the region of Sicily.

The Italian programme '**PON Città Metropolitane 2014-2020**' (Metropolitan Cities), as highlighted in the 'Guidelines on social inclusion': *"supports, as an intermediate means and as a goal for social and labor integration, the overcoming and the prevention of housing poverty, which is one of the main forms of material deprivation and social exclusion. The phenomenon of housing poverty as an inhibitory factor of social integration involves increasing social groups and population targets in situations of particular fragility (related to income, but sometimes also to physical, psychological and socio-cultural aspects) that, in many cases, can lead to real and serious material deprivation.*

The Specific Objective of the Program is to support the active inclusion starting from access to a home and/or to its maintenance over time, for individuals and families in conditions of vulnerability or housing emergency. This intervention is activated jointly with paths aimed at work, social, educational and/or health inclusion "

Through the '3.1.1 Action', the Programme *'supports the strengthening of services for housing poverty reduction to be realized through a multi-dimensional and integrated approach of active inclusion consistent with the "Housing First" paradigm . The model considered as a reference for the structuring of this type of service is the Social Housing Agency, a model already tested in Italy, particularly in the cities of Turin, Genoa and Bologna.*



The city of Catania, in order to deepen and better understand the crucial and complex theme of social housing - considered as central for the equitable and inclusive growth of cities - has organized an event, inviting cities that have already achieved successful results or are going to start similar paths.

This event, held on **14 May 2018** aimed at:

- opening a debate and views exchange among people – within municipality – dedicated to this theme
- showing cases and ‘*best practices*’ realized in other national contexts (inspiration)
- collecting feedbacks and advices – by cities with advanced models – for a ‘successful start’, for the *governance* of the Housing Agency (bottom-up processes, etc.), the specific approach of the ‘*Housing First*’, and the Transition Housing service
- confront with cities that - like Catania - are in the start-up phase, both as regards the content of the specific projects and the procedures
- favoring a moment of constructive collaboration among Italian cities

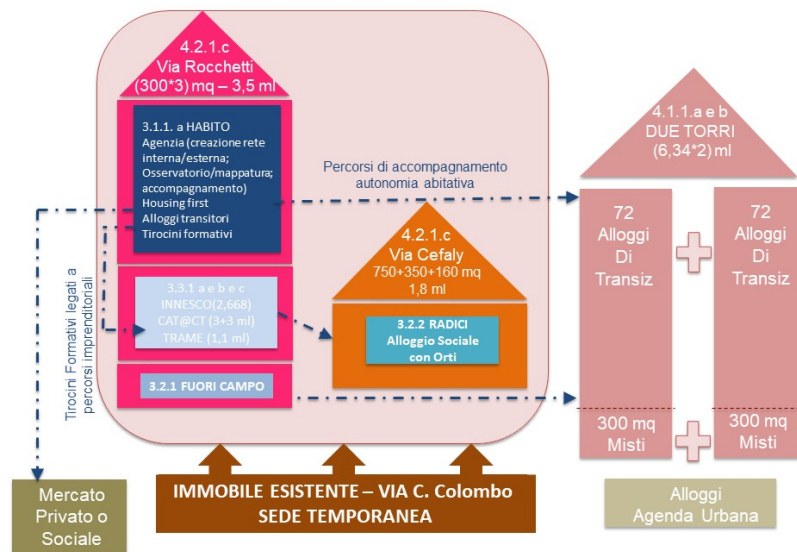
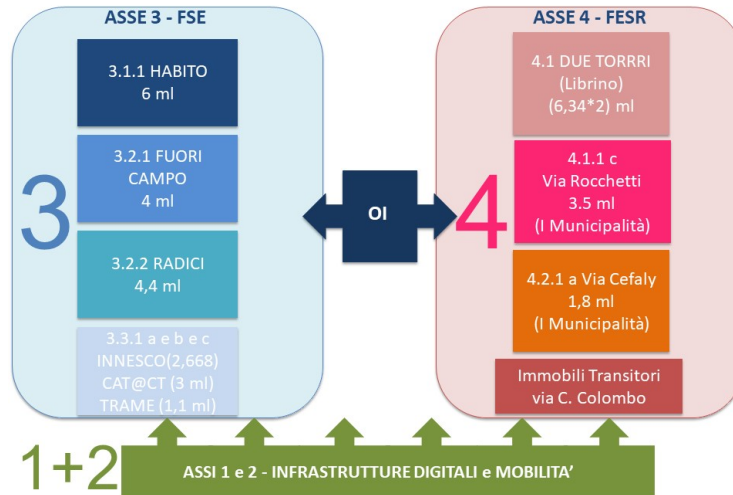
The seminar was also an opportunity to experience an active dialogue among peers (peer review method) of Italian cities, which are facing the housing poverty challenge in their contexts, in order to receive ideas and suggestions from other cities.

In detail, in addition to the National Agency for the Territorial Cohesion Policies, the invited cities were:

- Bologna, which successfully launched the Housing first model
- Cinisello Balsamo, which has experimented with a fully ‘public’ model of the Agency for Temporary Housing
- Cagliari, which is starting a prototype model of the Agency and HF
- Reggio Calabria, with different projects on social housing
- Caritas of Siracuse, whit an HF model promoted by their association

The italian **Agency for the Territorial Cohesion** has illustrated the national programme for metropolitan cities (PON METRO 14-20): objectives, aims and resources of a 'unique' programme, updates in terms of expenditure, targets, etc.

Catania has illustrated its Operational Plan for Metropolitan Cities, highlighting how the Axis 3 (Social inclusion) strategy is strictly correlated with the Axis 4 (Infrastructure for Social Inclusion) (see image below).



The axis 3 of the OP, according to the Guidelines, includes the action 3.1.1 - called Habito: the Social Agency for Housing. This Agency aims to connect, in an organic and stable way, the diverse departments dedicated to the housing issues, in order to create a single service system able to share and exchange information and resources and, as needed, to manage the needs of citizens. Within it, services such as Transition Accommodation and the Housing First model will be experimented and tested. With the aim of defining the structure of the Agency and its governance model, the city of Catania has already established a working table and prepared the call for 2 multidisciplinary teams that will work in the Agency.

In fase di ingaggio viene valutata un'intensità educativa sulla base di item specifici; ogni semestre le vengono verificate le intensità e se necessario rimodulate.

The city of **Bologna** presented two projects: Housing First and Social Agency for the Rent. The Housing First Co.Bo - inspired by the original model - has been entrusted by a call to the 'Piazza Grande' association, which also acts as guarantor. However, monthly coordination meetings with the ASP and the Municipality of Bologna representatives are organized. The target is: homeless adults but also couples, newcomers, LGBT, people in discharge from detention paths. Nowadays there are 73 people, mainly in cohabiting housing. An educational programme (2,4 or 6 hours per week) is defined during the engagement phase and monitored every semester.

Each apartment has operators who mediate the relationships between the tenants and facilitate the decision-making process related to cohabitation. In addition, each person work with a reference operator on specific areas (job, health, legality, sociality, etc.) according to a principle of self-determination and empowerment. One of the cardinal principles is the distinction between living and the clinical aspects.

The connection with the specialized services is considered very important: a collaboration with other entities provides support for two nurses who, together with the HF team, take care of people with psychiatric illnesses. This type of approach facilitates the engagement of this target to specialist services and acts as support for the project team.



The project does not establish a residence period, because the person can choose to stay as long as she/he wishes, but respecting 3 rules:

- Respect for civil cohabitation rules (with roommates and neighborhood)
- Accept meetings with operators, both individual and domiciliary
- Pay a rent contribution of € 150 for those who receive income equal to or less than € 550 or 30% of income for those who have more than € 500

The Housing office deals with:

- Finding housing from the private market, disseminated in the territory (as required by the HF principles)
- Intermediation with the owners and the neighborhood if problems arise
- Housing coach actions

For the research of apartments, the 'social rental housing methodology' is used: the need to find low-cost apartments for tenants with very low economic capacity meets the need of owners to have guarantees on their rental contracts. The tenants will be supported during the move into new houses, giving them the opportunity to choose new furniture at the Piazza Grande market or to bring their personal items with them.

The association - with its multidisciplinary team - pays attention to the issue of integration and to relations with the neighborhood and the local community. The model has been adapted to the local context, in particular to a reality in which the availability of housing is a big problem).

With regard to the **Transition Housing and Social Agency for the Rent**, the choice was to entrust the service to the ASP City of Bologna (Public Company for Services to the person). The diverse services for Emergency Care and Transition Housing were illustrated, clarifying their differences (skills, investigations, recipients, etc.).

The Social Agency for Rent has been founded on the will of the City of Bologna and ASP in order to answer to the major problems and difficulties encountered by anyone looking for a rental accommodation in Bologna and province, due to recent changes in the rental market.



The main phases for its establishment have been: the mapping of the territory; initial assessment, individual project, monitoring and evaluation of the path, as well as support to families in finding accommodation on the free market.

Cinisello Balsamo: the process for the establishment of the Housing Agency was linked to a political, administrative and economic situation. From the beginning it has been chosen to completely review the services and policies dedicated to housing emergencies, in order to create a multidisciplinary structure capable to responding, in an innovative and integrated way, to the housing issue. Some important choices have been also taken, such as: avoiding accommodation in hotels, spreading an 'agreed rent' policy (using experimental funds from the Region of Lombardy), carrying out accompanying courses. The approach followed consists in an integrated model between citizens, institutions and the third sector

The institutional model chosen, since 2015, is 'fully public' Agency, as part of the municipal organization. As regards the organizational model, however, there is a strong integration between the Social Service and the Housing Agency.

Different collaboration tools are used with different partners.

Reggio Calabria. In this case, the strategy to face housing problems is declined with elements that make the difference compared to other contexts:

- Innovative social housing interventions through the recovery of underused public goods and assets confiscated to organized crime;
- recovery of assets confiscated for social housing to support families in difficulty
- Recovery of disused structures for innovative second reception and self-recovery/self-building projects

The 'Confiscated Goods' approach, among other things, provides the creation of an ad hoc municipal office for the coordination of the diverse offices involved (ERP, Welfare, Equity), financial instruments available as well as the very important standardization of the acquisition procedures for such goods.



Among the key elements of the project, based on the participatory approach, there are: the promotion of a multidisciplinary approach for 'taking in charge' people; the sensitization of public and private operators regards to the meeting between supply and demand of moderate-rent housing; good programming; citizen involvement - from the beginning - through design laboratories (with the support of the university).

Another element of innovation is the establishment of the Social Housing **Metropolitan** Agency. Crucial elements are: the database and the signed protocols.

Cagliari: The city of Cagliari described the economic context highlighting the presence of different forms of poverty and exclusion as well as new policies and projects in progress. Specifically, the new phase of experimentation started through a public call of the Municipality of Cagliari, with a pilot project on the "Social Housing Agency ", for the assignment of services and technical-administrative support services. The strategy includes the realization of multi-dimensional and active inclusion projects, according to the Housing First paradigm. It has been implemented through a methodological approach inspired by the following principles: empowerment and proactive role. The Agency is aimed at designing, implementing and verifying the services for housing, and in particular re-housing, support and 'taking in charge' of people in conditions of social and socio-economic distress. The assignee will have the double task of starting the pilot action and to elaborate the executive project for its functioning, following the experimental pilot phase.

The aim of the experimentation will be: to verify the effectiveness of the tool and the response of citizens to the proposal; start a multi-professional service which carries out specific matching actions between supply and demand for accommodation.

Caritas: The Housing First project, launched in the Siracusa area, aims to face the housing problems, favoring the exit of beneficiaries from their original status of People Without Abode.

Starting from the main assumption that the house is a primary human right, the taking in charge of direct beneficiaries starts from the Diocesan Listening Center, a pastoral place where disadvantaged people express their socio-economic problems, while the Caritas give concrete and psychological answers.

The target group is: homeless people sleeping in the street, in cars/other means of locomotion, in dormitories or other reception facilities; families under executive eviction; families living in unsafe accommodations or housing structures characterized by unacceptable living conditions; separate couples/parents. Concerning to the critical housing problems, as a growing phenomenon, the Diocesan Caritas of Siracusa, as a representative of the Third Sector, promoted a collaboration with the institutional-public bodies responsible for this topic. This led to the subscription of diverse Agreements with the municipalities of: Siracusa, Priolo Gargallo, Buccheri e Florida.

The objective of the agreements are the planning of effective interventions, giving particular emphasis to the "Public-no-profit" network and the coordination / implementation of shared actions and initiatives. Thanks to the flexibility offered by the HF approach and the positive results obtained, currently the Caritas Diocesana of Siracusa supports 27 families, for a total of 98 people (including 54 adults and 44 minors).

With regard to the results achieved, it should be noted that, thanks to the Caritas experience in the HF area, concrete manifestations of generative welfare were born.

Relevant Notes:

- Model of Agency: it is essential to start the establishment of an Agency, having a clear idea of the model. In other words, it is necessary to decide whether we want to maintain a "centrality" of the Agency within the Municipality, with a model that remains predominantly public, or if we prefer to "outsource" part or all the services (See Cinisello or Bologna example).
- It could be interesting to start with an experimental-prototype model, applied in a part of the city or directed to a specific target in order to test the effectiveness of the model conceived (see Cagliari case).
- During the startup phase (if data are missed) a mapping activity is necessary. A PHASE OF KNOWLEDGE should be followed by a continuous MONITORING PHASE, in order to adapt the program and the (flexible) services, according to the needs of an evolving society

- A participatory and co-planning approach involving citizens, which leads to a cultural change and a new focus on NEEDS is necessary. The relationship with the third sector network is fundamental (see also Caritas experience)
- For homeowners, in some cases, incentives could be given, like: tax relief, different contributions based on incomes, facilities for building restoration, rental agreements, etc.

Housing First / Transition Housing

- How to find accommodation: some Agencies has an operator dedicated to research of housing (in the private market), with agreed rents (i.e. Bologna). The agency can choose whether to act as a guarantor or not. It could be also possible to contact associations/bodies etc. that already owns real estate assets. The Pon Metro Programme gives also the opportunity to use the funds as contributions for the beneficiaries or for the owners (see Program Guidelines, page 20)
- The Housing First model should be perceived and implemented as a citizen model
- Communication: the creation of a website could be very useful to this aim

Further details can be found in the attached presentations



Programme of the Event

10-13,30

Welcoming

Enzo Bianco, Mayor of the City of Catania

The national PON METRO programme

Giorgio Martini, Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale

The Axis 3 in the PO of Catania

Antonella Liotta, General Director/Secretary of the Municipality of Catania

Carmela Campione, Axis 3 manager

Inspirational Talks:

L'Housing First and Transition Housing in the city of Bologna,

Margherita Neri e Laura Compagno, Servizio Contrasto alla Grave Emarginazione Adulta e Servizio Transizione Abitativa- Azienda Servizi alla Persona Città di Bologna- Comune di Bologna.

The Agency model in Cinisello Balsamo,

Barbara Dal Piaz, responsabile del servizio

Social Housing Agency and confiscated goods: the approach of Reggio Calabria

Tommaso Cotronei, PO PON Metro Reggio Calabria

The *Housing First* in Siracusa

Caritas Siracusa, ing. Fontana

The Social Housing Agency in Cagliari

Francesco Cocco, Assistenza Tecnica EY

13,30 – 15,00

Break

15,00 – 17,00

Debate

Ore 17,00

Conclusions and Next Steps

Fortunato Parisi, Social Policies Councillor