

**The co-review
of the educational services
in the City of Bologna:
A pilot action**

April 30, 2025



Overview and local context

Project UNITES - UrbaN InTEgration Strategies through co-design (2022-2024):

- **Partners:** Eurocities (Leader), Athens, Bologna, Düsseldorf, Grenoble, Prague, Oulu, Zaragoza, Zagreb, MigrationWork, UNITEE, Women Connectors
- **Main Goal:** develop co-design processes involving migrants / people with migrant background
- **Bologna Action Plan:** develop an experimental co-review of the educational services of the Municipality by involving families and parents with migrant background

Bologna has a **long history in participatory processes**. However, it still is a challenge for us to reach the target of the so-called “new citizens”. With the support of the UNITES Project consultants, we developed an innovative model of participatory process, a **co-review of existing municipal services**.

Three main goals:

- to reach **migrants / people with migrant background**
- to improve the services of the Municipality, making them **more accessible and inclusive**
- to **build a model** which we hope to employ and replicate in different contexts

Main actions of the pilot in Bologna

1. *Definition of the field of intervention*
2. *Composition of the Audit Panel / Working group*
3. *Elaboration and dissemination of the tool for needs analysis (questionnaire)*
4. *Data analysis and recommendations*
5. *Lessons learned and success factors*



1. Definition of the intervention field

After **internal meetings** with directors and representatives of Areas and Departments, we finally opted to involve in the experimental process the **Educational Area**.

The reasons were mainly the following:

- The educational services are crucial for **all the families**
- Given their daily work with parents, teachers and students, colleagues from the Educational Department are more familiar than others with **experimental approaches** and are more open to discuss with different actors
- It was easier to identify and **define programmes and procedures to be reviewed**

2. Audit Panel / Working Group

Audit Panel was composed by:

- 2 coordinators from the Rights, cooperation and New Citizens Unit (even in charge of the UNITES Project for the Municipality)
- 1 referent person from the Educational Area
- 6 referent persons from the Socio-Educational Services - 1 for each district
- 3 Diversity Managers
- 6 people with migrant background selected through a Public Call. No specific competences required but having experience with the educational services of the Municipality (google form + individual interviews)

Further actors involved in the pilot:

- Associazione Interculturale Universo: selected by a Public Call in order to support the Audit Panel in the elaboration of the questionnaire and its dissemination, even thought the coordination of a team of volunteers
- 1 expert anthropologist for the critical analysis of the data collected

3. The Questionnaire: elaboration and dissemination



Elaboration of the Questionnaire:

- The referent persons from the Rights, cooperation, new citizens Unit and from the Educational Area prepared a **first draft of the questionnaire** to be shared with the Audit Panel
- The Audit Panel worked on the draft, evaluating in particular: linguistic aspects; structure; and accessibility



Siete **un genitore straniero** oppure **una famiglia con background migratorio** e state utilizzando i **Servizi Educativi del Comune di Bologna** (nidi, scuola materna, mensa, pre/post-orario, centri estivi)

Raccontateci la vostra esperienza e la vostra opinione su cosa vi piace di questi servizi e/o cosa vorreste migliorare. Il vostro aiuto è importante per capire come rispondere al meglio ai bisogni di cittadine e cittadini!

Per compilare il questionario digitale, scannerizzare il Qr code della sezione per l'età del/la vostro/a figlio/a



Nidi (0-3 anni)



Scuole di infanzia
/ scuole materne
(3-6 anni)



Mensa



Pre-orario e
post-orario
(6-11 anni)



Centri estivi (3-14
anni)

Dissemination of the Questionnaire:

- **QR Codes** disseminated online and at schools, civic libraries, districts and other places attended by families
- **Focus groups**: to support parents/families with the compilation
- At **initiatives** contact points were organized

4. Data analysis and recommendations

After a period of 2 months, 100 people responded to the survey.

*All the results were analysed by an expert and discussed during the last two meetings of the Audit Panel. Considerations, suggestions, practical inputs were collected and **a list of recommendations** was shared with the Educational Department.*

- **Translate** the main sections of the forms into a second language (at least)
- Rationalize the **deadlines** for different types of applications
- **Facilitate applications** for parents who have more than one child using services
- Introduce the **intercultural perspective**
- Provide **training** on intercultural issues for staff
- Avoid a repetitive diet for menus that exclude meat
- **Keep informed families**, also through informal channels, about experimental projects
- Promote activities among **parents / families** to overcome mutual prejudices

5. Lessons learned and success factors

- **Coordination role:** the coordination of **the Intersectoral Working Group** was a strategic factor in identifying the Area which to share the experimental action with
- **Composition of the working group:** it was pivotal to maintain a **numerical balance** between the technical staff from the municipality and people from civil society
- **Organizational aspects:** clearly define from the very beginning the commitment required to the participants: the number of meetings, their frequency, the time slot (taking into account the needs of working people), a manageable number of hours for each meeting with a well-defined structure
- **Concrete tools:** it was crucial to **share a first draft** of the questionnaire
- **Mapping:** have a clear overview of initiatives/events that may involve the target of the co-review
- **Building trust:** an effective participatory review should take place into a broader and consolidated set of actions

[See the video of the Project](#)



Thank you for your attention!

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Improvement actions identified by the Audit Panel

- The **linguistic complexity** of forms and documents (for instance, the registration forms and tenders)
- The need to structurally include an **intercultural perspective** in activities
- The importance of **training** the staff of the educational services on intercultural issues
- The issue of **food / lunch** as a central factor of inclusion
- The lack of knowledge of other experimental projects taking place in different schools
- The low **participation** of parents / families with migrant background during important municipal appointments (for instance, on the occasion of the Open Day sponsoring summer centers and activities)
- The emergence of racist incidents in **school chats** (parents)
- The fear of including personal information in the questionnaire that would have been useful for the evaluation
- The difficulty in reaching some **communities** living in our City (for instance, the Chinese community)