

## **Neighbourhood Houses - Case del Quartiere**

### **Turin (Italy)**

#### **EU-MIA REPORT SUMMARY**

##### **Introduction**

The Functioning Practice 'Neighbourhood Houses – *Case del Quartiere*' was implemented in Turin, Italy. The practice was investigated by the EU-MIA consortium partner FIERI.

##### **Operational context**

Turin has historically been a major industrial and manufacturing centre in Italy. Ever since the 19th century, Turin has been a 'city of immigration', attracting workers and families firstly from the surrounding rural areas, later (especially after the World War II) from Southern Italy and more recently (starting in the 1970s) from foreign countries. Notwithstanding the de-industrialisation process and the resulting shift from industrial production to service industries which, since the 1990s, have progressively changed Turin's socio-economic system and city planning, the immigration phenomenon has never stopped and the number of foreign residents living in Turin has been constantly increasing.

##### **The Functioning Practice**

###### **Objectives**

The 'Neighbourhood Houses - *Case del Quartiere*' is a project initiated in 2012 by the Municipality of Turin aimed at establishing a network between the seven already existing Case del Quartiere (CdQ). The CdQ might be roughly defined as neighbourhood community centres, but they are characterised by a number of peculiar features (e.g. their origin, spirit, functions, management model, relationship with the neighbourhood, etc.) that make them something more than community centres. For this reason they were called 'houses', because they were created to be felt, used and lived by everyone as their own house.

The gradual process that brought to the creation of seven CdQ started in the early 2000s as a neighbourhood-level initiative: in some cases it was a bottom-up process initiated by civil society organisations, in other cases it was the result of a municipal plan, and more often a combination of both the local community and associations activism and the Municipality support. In any case this process was, at first neither planned nor coordinated at city level; each neighbourhood house was established independently from the other CdQ and often in very different ways, whilst the idea of connecting them in a network was a consequent step, strongly promoted by the Municipality.

The CdQ are public spaces with a social function: they host and offer the most diverse educational, cultural and social activities, as well as public services and help desks. They are places that stimulate situations of aggregation and socialisation, allowing people, ideas and projects to meet and develop. They are also spaces of active citizenship and participation that host, assist and support community associations, local NGOs, migrant associations and informal groups of citizens in planning and implementing their initiatives.

## Partners

As regards stakeholders, all CdQ have an important partnership with their *circonscrizione*,<sup>1</sup> in the form of both a small financial contribution and a tight cooperation in planning and implementing a number of initiatives. As concerns private foundations, some CdQ have been created with the direct support of private company foundations, such as *Fondazione Vodafone Italia* and both *Fondazione Vodafone Italia* and *Fondazione Umana-Mente Allianz*.

## Chronology and funding

Although the creation of the CdQ started in the early 2000s, the Network of Neighbourhood Houses was established in May 2012; therefore, as such, this FP is a rather young and still developing project, that interviewees also described as 'embryonic'. The network is funded by *Compagnia di San Paolo*, a bank foundation. The Municipality plays a relevant role in this funding system: it has co-funded the CdQ until 2012, while nowadays it acts as a promoter of the Network and a mediator between the CdQ and *Compagnia*, sitting at the same table with both stakeholders and supporting the financing of the CdQ as part of its welfare policy. Furthermore, the Municipality supports the project of the Network and the single neighbourhood houses through contributions in kind.

## Outcomes and the next steps

The positive elements, which determined the success of this practice, are the following:

- A mixed management model based on a partnership between public sector and the local community
- Particular attention paid to the issue of economic sustainability
- The importance of the physical space
- The non-exclusivity of the place
- The informality of the Network, which is intended to be a light structure, able to foster cooperation and free exchanges between CdQ, while avoiding their institutionalisation
- Being so close to the people, the CdQ have the capacity to immediately detect the needs of vulnerable individuals, of specific groups, as well as of the whole community, and give a very first reply to such demands or address them to the proper service, contributing to the well-being of the neighbourhood

The main upcoming development of this Functioning Practice consists in the enlargement of the Network of Neighbourhood Houses to include two new ones.

The issue of transferability of the 'CdQ model' has been discussed with several Piedmont and Italian municipalities. According to interviewees, certain elements of this Functioning Practice may be transferred in other contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> A *circonscrizione* is an administrative unit comprising a number of neighbourhoods within a Municipality. The City of Turin is divided into 10 *circonsrizioni*.