

## **SIRACUSA**

The programme concerns the island of Ortigia (50 hectares), on which Siracusa was founded.

Until the unification of Italy, Ortigia was also the functional centre of the city; subsequently, with the rapid process of urbanisation of the mainland, there was a great population exodus from the area (today there are 5,000 inhabitants).

Linked with the population drift away from the island there are phenomena such as the ageing of the population and the further deterioration of the quality of housing, now largely abandoned.

The island, with its historic, architectural and environmental heritage of considerable importance, still possesses administrative services and facilities at urban scale.

### ***Measure 1 – Start-up of new economic activities***

Measure 1 foresees both actions of building rehabilitation and the assignment of services. In particular the work of *restructuring the former municipal market*, to be used as a tourism terminal, contracted out in September 1997, was completed and handed over in June. Due to bureaucratic delays caused by the political instability occurring in Siracusa between the end of July and December 1999, the municipal administration was unable to decide on the awardee of this project by 31/12/99, but undertook to complete the initiative with its own funds. July 2000 is the date of the adjudication of the service. The same problems of execution were encountered for the action of *promotion of extra-hotel tourist accommodation*. For the tourism sector, furthermore, the municipality formally adheres to the initiative named “Villages d’Europe”. This is an international association charged by the European Commission with creating a network of some 30 European tourist localities, in order to market on a unitary basis their supply of tourist services linked with the attractions and the specific features of the individual territories. Lastly, the administration has started an experimental initiative, aimed at providing incentives for the development of tourism in the island, authorising the construction of a *solarium* covering 400 sq.m near the bastion called Forte Vigliena. This action has achieved a considerable success both among residents in Ortigia and tourists, enabling the coast of the island to be exploited in a better way.

Particular attention has been given to the problem of setting up economic activities in the island through the action of *support for handicraft or traditional activities and the start-up of new economic activities*, with which 91 enterprises have been financed.

### ***Measure 2 – Social activities: training and promotion of employment***

As social degradation in Ortigia is the island’s biggest problem, a series of measures and activities have been set in motion through the creation of *animation centres for children, for the elderly, and integration centres for young persons*. Another series of activities have been carried out aimed at the integration of children and young persons in Ortigia, the objective being to diminish situations of malaise in the weaker sectors of the resident population through a series of activities of aggregation, assistance and training for the purpose of gaining the knowledge and competencies essential to become inserted in the socio-economic fabric of the island and to reduce such phenomena as dropping out from school, petty crime and drug addiction. Lastly, a number of formative activities have been decided, intended for the tourism and social sector, which represent an indispensable support for the other measures and actions of the sub-programme. This last initiative has been carried out in partnership with the Regional Province of Siracusa.

### ***Measure 3 – Territorial services: social, health, law and order***

With Measure 3 it has been sought to find a solution to the problem of building rehabilitation compatible with anti-seismic upgrading works. In particular, a study of stones and façades in Ortigia has been promoted, with the assistance of the National Research Council (CNR). Two conventions have been drawn up pertaining to the reduction of earthquake vulnerability in Ortigia. Furthermore, a *Territorial Information System (SIT)* has been set up. The restructuring of the *houses in Via Mario Minniti*, intended to house the *District Services Centre*, is nearing completion. The question is to identify a subject able to set up and run an information office dealing with “Claims”, providing assistance to citizens regarding their problems and relations with the institutions.

### ***Measure 4 – Infrastructures and environment***

The restructuring projects for the former convents (San. Francesco di Paola, San Francesco d’Assisi and Sant’Agostino) intended as cultural organisations have been shelved because of the considerable problems that emerged, not least those of technical type for the rehabilitation of the buildings. However, in view of the great interest of a historical and artistic nature which they possess, the administration will, in the near future, be pressing on with the restructuring works using its own funds. Regarding the *rehabilitation of Palazzo Cardona Midiri, of the former church of Spirito Santo, of Casa Monteforte, of Palazzo Impellizzeri and of the former Verga Theatre*, all intended for cultural and social activities, works are proceeding apace. For the reuse of the former Verga Theatre, the procedure and the contents relating to the modalities of management of the building, to be used for activities of cultural interest, have already been defined. The assignment procedure has been agreed between the municipality and the Regional Province of Siracusa (which owns the building). The municipality has furthermore started and in part completed a series of initiatives aimed at the *renewal and furnishing of urban spaces* (Piazzetta Bellomo, Isolato Bottari, Porta Marina and the Corte dei Minimi, Via Giudecca and Piazza San Giuseppe; purchase of benches, flower boxes and pots, plants, waste baskets, deviators and dissuaders for traffic and road signs and markings). Also in this direction the works for the *improvement of city lighting and energy saving, and the services for the hygienic reclamation and safety measures for the buildings of the island* have been contracted out.

### ***Measure 5 - Implementation and dissemination of results***

For the action of disseminating and promoting the results the public bid notice has been published to identify an actor able to conduct a campaign for the maximum dissemination of the objectives, strategies and results of the URBAN programme for Siracusa. In particular, the initiative foresees the production of information brochures, audiovisuals and both telematic and paper-based publicity material of a varied nature, to provide citizens and operators in full detail of the complex of URBAN actions.

Special attention has been devoted to the action of *participation in meetings and exchanges of experiences*. The organisation is in fact foreseen of targeted meetings with those politically and technically responsible for the revitalising of historic centres of European cities which have come up against the same problems as those of Ortigia, such as Lyon, Barcelona, Berlin and/or Lisbon. The results will be made available to the other URBAN cities concerned with the same problems.

Finally, as far as the *technical assistance* action is concerned, provision has been made to renew the assignment for technical assistance to the management of the programme throughout its duration, recognising the undoubted professionalism displayed and the experience acquired by the technical support in carrying out the activity pertaining to the URBAN programme.