



The target area is the Centro district, corresponding to the historic centre bounded by the 16th-century town walls.

The area (about 9 hectares), which possesses a heritage of considerable historical, artistic and environmental value, has witnessed a great reduction in its population in the last few decades (almost 70% in the last twenty years) with a consequent progressive decline: today there are only 6,000 inhabitants, just over 6% of the total city population.

A not insignificant component of the population living in the historic centre consists at present of non-EU nationals (members of as many as some 40 different ethnic groups), and in some parts they amount to even 20% of the inhabitants.

The specific nature of the urban context

The URBAN programme for LECCE pursues the general objective of achieving a lasting improvement in the conditions of life in the historic centre of the city, where environmental dilapidation, economic disarray and disruption of social relations are mostly concentrated.

From this standpoint it has been considered of priority importance to carry out coordinated measures of a varied nature (economic, social and environmental), but which are complementary, and to obtain the cooperation of social workers involved in the processes of urban development (public agencies, firms, non-profit bodies). The concentration of the programme in the area of the historic centre receives some particularly important elements of strength from the specific nature and the singularity of this urban sector.

- the richness of the town planning and building heritage, not only in terms of the monuments but also the minor fabric, together with the considerable potentials as tourist and cultural attractions, which project the historic centre beyond the city dimension;
- the vocation of the town planning and building fabric to accommodate traditional local handicraft activities, and to act as the natural physical site for social aggregation;
- the initiatives already started by the administration for the physical-morphological, social and functional safeguarding of the target area;
- the possibility for URBAN activities to intercept and upgrade the strategic lines of long-term development outlined in the Master Plan and in the detailed plan of the historic centre.

Communication strategies

To channel so much “URBAN potential”, distributed over the various action sectors, in the right direction, a communication strategy in which all categories of the media have been involved has been adopted. A programme trade-mark, “URBAN LECCE”, has been assigned and the communication strategy started, wholly concentrated on the “human” element. Terms such as Art, Architecture, Handicraft, Culture and Tradition have been used as the institutional message. Apart from the institutional campaign (press conference, posters, TV and radio spots, notices in the press, photographic and TV surveys, postcards and diaphanies), promotional campaign actions have been conducted in concomitance with the publication of the bid notices for the various measures, through the launching of video spots, posters and folders, as well as choreographic effects. In this case, too, all the material diffused has had a totally coordinated graphic image.

Integration between measures of a physical and a socio-economic nature

Measure 4 foresees the restoration of architectural and monumental works, as well as the functional restructuring and equipping of three publicly owned buildings, in perfect integration with the other programme measures, to make them suitable for the allocation of the activities foreseen in Measures 2 and 3 (holding of training courses and the creation of an Information and Assistance Office in favour of women, and an office to foster the integration of immigrants).

a. Rehabilitation and functional reuse of two publicly owned buildings: Palazzo Turrisi and Conservatoire of S. Anna

A systematic ensemble of building rehabilitation, architectural restoration, and functional upgrading and restructuring works have been carried out on these buildings and they have been provided with furnishings to make them suitable for the allocation of the activities foreseen in Measures 2 and 3 (creation of an Information and Assistance Office in favour of women and of an office for activities and services directly serving the integration of immigrants), creating a mix of different activities (restoration of infrastructures and environment, training and promotion of local employment; start-up of new economic activities and social services; health; law and order). These activities form the basis for the establishment of a Centre for equal opportunities for women and disadvantaged persons, as well as a reception centre for non-EC immigrants. The rehabilitation of the former Conservatoire of S. Anna becomes, apart from an episode of artistic and environmental safeguarding of an element of historical-monumental importance, the driving force in the integration of the monument with the urban fabric to which it belongs, in an ambitious challenge to overcome in an emblematic manner the historical dichotomy between the monument, isolated in its role as such, and the ordinary fabric that surrounds it. With the rehabilitation of the former Conservatoire of S. Anna women are called upon to reinterpret peculiar vocations of the site, offering them the chance to obtain cognitive instruments and material resources able to have an effect on the autochthonous weaknesses of their degraded urban surroundings and to carry out an exemplary measure of enrichment of the city's cultural identity.

Through the rehabilitation of Palazzo Turrisi – Palumbo, situated in the heart of Giravolte, the programme has sought to promote a series of initiatives so as to bring about the social and economic integration of the immigrants by the creation of an Assistance and Reception Centre where they may count on a wide range of information, on how to request residence permits, on job openings, and on finding lodgings, together with a series of cultural activities and possibilities of socialising with the inhabitants of the historic centre and of the city.

b. Building rehabilitation, architectural reinstatement and functional restructuring of the former Theatine Monastery

The operations are targeted on making the important historic building owned by the municipality suitable to accommodate the pilot activities and initiatives for the start-up of an equipped Centre intended to provide real, qualified services in favour of the craftsmen concerned by Measure 1. It is also intended to reinstate a number of rooms and spaces, some out of doors (cloister), which will be made available for setting up a permanent and a temporary exhibition of products. Inside the building complex spaces have been identified in which periodic exhibitions will be held. The allocation of these activities in the container in question will automatically mean that other important objectives have been reached, such as the physical rehabilitation of a noteworthy testimony and the renewal of a significant item of the historical building fabric.

The former Theatine monastery in the centre of Corso Vittorio Emanuele offers a visible frontage that starts from the “Saraceno” kindergarten and continues as far as the church of the Theatines.

Its main doorway was precisely in that stretch of road: the entrance to the former “Oriani” junior high school. But for many years all that vitality of adolescents had ended and, with that doorway closed, the whole building experienced a long period of abandonment and of structural decline, to the point that its very existence was half forgotten.

Having planned for this building a structural measure, with another intended use, aimed at revolutionising the town planning system of the whole area of reference, explains the size of the strategic commitment intended to start the process of a “new conceptual channel”, as in the people’s imagination that building, now silent and without influence, played a passive role, expressive all the preceding administrative neglect of the public heritage.