



ASSOCIATION APOLIE' DROP-IN CENTRE

PRESENTATION

www.apolie.it



Apoliè was born in 1999 at the end of a vocational training organized by SMILE with the EU funded HORIZON programme.

Apoliè started its activities from 2000 to 2002 with the project “the Gate” of the city of Torino, inside the action “*se l’economia è sociale*”.

After the experience with that project, Apolié is still carrying on independently its activities to facilitate integration and social development, offering information on employment matters and identifying opportunities for employment, encouraging the creation of small business through information and initial consultation activities.

The centre employs 8 part-time workers which are: 4 employment counsellors, 2 “cultural mediators”, 1 legal consultant and 1 enterprise counsellor.



The drop-in centre, which is the core activity of Apolié, has been financed by the Province of Torino and the bank foundation “Compagnia San Paolo” (partners in “the Gate”) until 2004; since 2005 it has received 75% of its core funding from the bank foundation Compagnia San Paolo, and the rest from the Province of Torino and from Apolié’s own resources.

The Apoliè drop-in centre is located in Porta Palazzo, which is a core city area of Turin with lot of social and economic challenges.

The main challenges the Apoliè centre deals with are difficulties for people with low studies background and/or immigrated to find a regular job and all problems related to the subject.



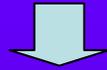
The solution proposed by Apoliè through its drop-in centre is the following:

The services are:

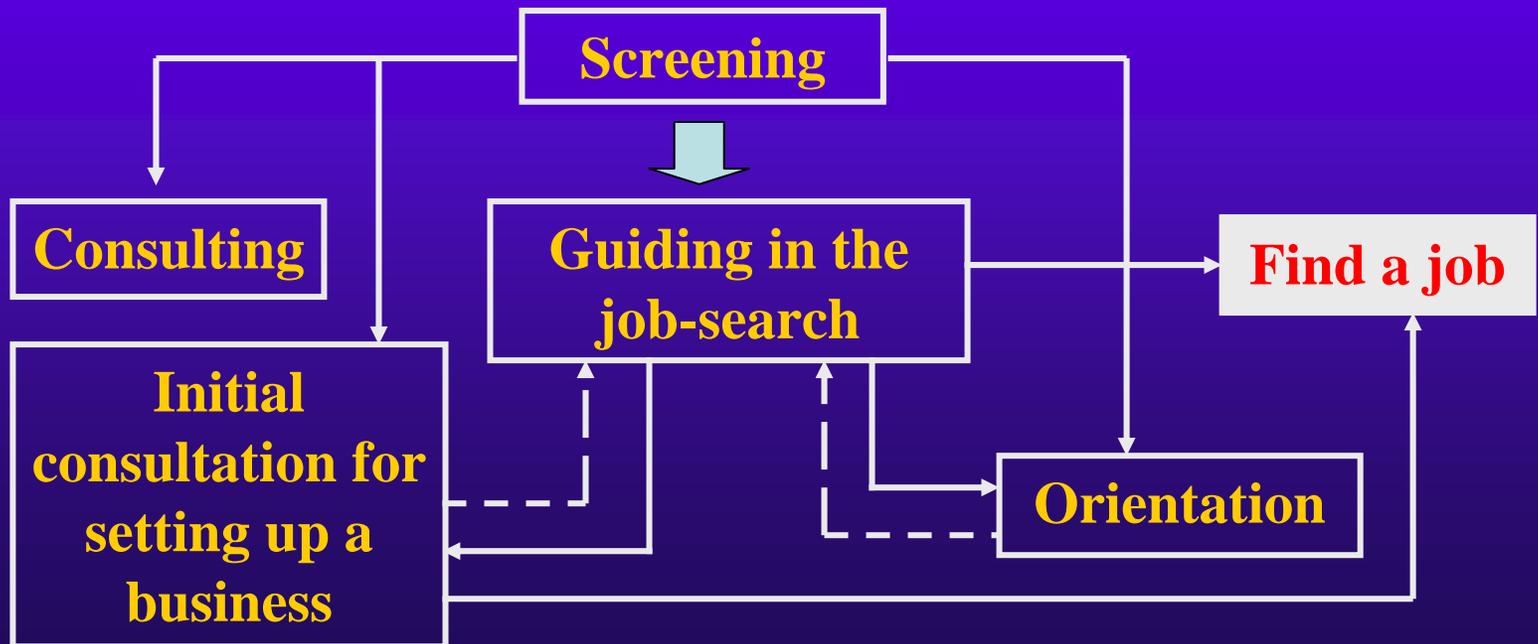
- 1) Welcome (the first contact with users)**
- 2) Guiding in the job-search**
- 3) Orientation (providing information about employment)**
- 4) Initial consultation for setting up a business**
- 5) Initial legal consulting**

How the drop-in centre works:

Welcome
(the first contact with users)



One-to-one interview, to analyse their needs and filling up the form





These are some of the usual and specific challenges the Apoliè drop-in centre deals with, and its responses.



Users' difficulties in accessing employment information

The drop-in centre provides a wide range of printed information from newspapers and web sites on available jobs and vocational trainings, and an employment counsellor is always on hand to guide users in their search.

The centre gives job-seekers access to computers, telephones and faxes (most do not own these), which they may use to identify and respond to job advertisements.



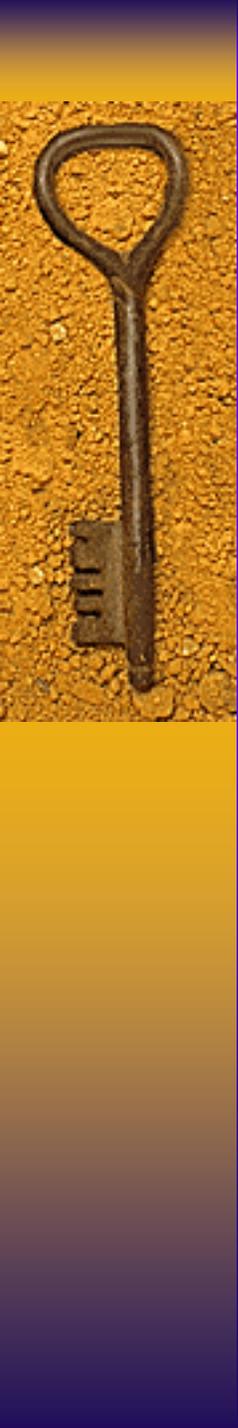
Preparing inexperienced job-seekers for the job-search

The drop-in centre aims to give job-seekers all the information and skills necessary for them to find suitable, sustainable employment.

One-to-one interviews with advisors are scheduled for each individual. These begin with a simple conversation about the job-seeker's educational and working career, their current experience and their aspirations. This identifies:

- ◆ Specific experience and skills
- ◆ Work interests
- ◆ Areas requiring further development (see 'brokering basic skills training', below)

The identified skills and interests are used to guide the job-search.



Preparing job-seekers for submitting applications

The job-seeker is carefully supported in writing a CV and covering letters based on information shared during the initial consultation, and the counsellor / adviser supervises and monitors application-related telephone calls and sending of emails in order to help when needed.

Eg.: In the first 7 months of this year it has been draft 649 CV and 82 covering letters.



Helping job-seekers gain access to and experience of specific skills and careers

Brokering basic skills training through links with a provider network.

The association has forged a strong link with an EU-funded network of training providers to whom it can refer job-seekers for skills training. It collaborates with most accredited training agencies in the city-region.

It also feeds back requests for particular types of training to the network, and helps formulate new training programmes that better meet users' needs.

The last example that we can remember is a group of 4 refugees from the Ivory Coast who attended a 160 hours vocational training for welder and are now working from the 5th of September in a factory.



Overcoming the resource and information limitations of a small, on-the-ground association.

Formation of a network of projects and services dedicated to employment promotion:

- 'Extranet.Work' Apolié is the lead partner.
- Progetto "CO.ME." Apoliè is a partner.
- PrimeAli. Apoliè is a partner.
- Single agreement for a year with the Province of Torino to help 20 immigrants to get a job.
- Coordination of the local public and private agencies.

This network gathers and shares information on the employment needs of businesses in the city, is building up several databases of users and their characteristics to inform future work and recommendations and reunites its member organisations for sharing best practice.



Helping users who want to start their own businesses

The centre has employed an enterprise counsellor to advise and support users who express a desire to become an entrepreneur. It can thus conduct basic feasibility assessments and hand-hold the first steps in entrepreneurship.

1. Initial scoping and advice: The enterprise counsellor discusses the realities of running your own business with the potential entrepreneur, and together they evaluate the feasibility of the business idea.
2. Assistance: In the drafting of business plans.
3. Coordination: If the user wants to set up a cooperative or go into partnership, the counsellor uses centre's database to identify and contact potential business partners with similar skills and/or interests. The centre can be used as the meeting-place for these groups, with centre staff on hand to advise and facilitate.
4. Funding: It links potential entrepreneurs to organisations that provide support and help identify sources of funding

Eg.: *The last year two businesses and two associations were created; this year Apolié supported the creation of two businesses (one selling ethnical cosmetic products and the other is a cooperative for care of old people and disabled).*



Helping job-seekers achieve basic work-readiness

Developing an on-site service for dealing with the three most commonly-occurring issues users face:

1. **Bureaucratic obstacles.** The association has hired a part-time legal consultant who assists users in the renewal of their visas (*permesso di soggiorno*) and work permit; the length of this bureaucratic process often prevents immigrant job-seekers from working, and the lawyer is able to conduct basic checks with the issuing agency to speed up the process
2. **Housing issues.** Increasing number of users are homeless. *The association has presented "Un asilo in famiglia", a new project on UNNRA program, which will be able to offer affordable housing options involving Italian and foreigner families to welcome 10 refugee "users" in their houses for six months, just the time to get their own accommodation. All the families involved in the project will get pay for their availability.*
3. **Childcare.** Most of women got lot of difficulties to combine job hunting and problems related to children care, mostly for immigrants with more than 2 children. Apoliè gives them the information about the opportunities from the public administration (*eg. Vouchers from the province of Torino*)



Overcoming the cultural barriers faced by immigrant workers who don't:

- 1. Speak the Italian language**
- 2. Understand the Italian system**

A 'cultural mediator' (mediatore interculturale) talks with users experiencing these difficulties. They will:

- Assess the skills and needs of the user
- Explain the system as it applies to them, and discuss the job options available
- Hand-hold the person in a job-search and help with the first attempted job applications
- Give information about language learning school for foreigners in the city of Turin
- Recently Apoliè has held a language course in the drop-in centre to give the basic linguistic tools for job searching



Overcoming cultural barriers associated with working

Through their good personal relationships with centre users, staff are able to discuss and often resolve cultural issues such as male immigrants' unwillingness to allow their wives to work or to attend vocational training.

Staff explain the advantages of formal work and help find practical solutions to other difficulties such as childcare.

Sometimes the whole family is involved in the one-to-one interview and together we just try to overcome the problem.



The high proportion of immigrants who work informally/illegally (with low pay and few rights)

During the initial consultation, the employment counsellor explains the benefits of working legally. Where appropriate, the idea of forming a cooperative with other centre users is suggested.

Eg.: Apoliè has got in touch with 19 women from Morocco selling informally bread in the streets of Porta Palazzo; these women are right now attending a vocational training to learn how to make and sell bread in Italy. It has been prevented the creation of a cooperative at the end of this training, to give them the possibility to hold their own business (there are 40 hours left to complete the training).

This project has been financed by Equal PrimeAli project.

Another group of 10 women from different countries who worked illegally as care of old people or disabled people has been involved in the creation of a cooperative; after a mentoring, they are now starting their activity.

This project has been financed by the Italian government through "Legge 10 aprile 1991 n. 125 e D.M. 22 dicembre 2005 sulle pari opportunità"

Outcomes of the year 2006

Age	Gender	Number of users	% who are immigrants
16-24	Female	26	84
	Male	122	79
Over 25	Female	259	82
	Male	323	81
TOTAL		730	

- A survey of 100 users conducted in December 2006 showed that 75% had found work.⁷
- During 2006, two businesses and two associations were created