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**Public policies and community services for immigrant integration:
Italy and the European Union**

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Global Commission on International Migration

In his report on the 'Strengthening of the United Nations - an agenda for further change', UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan identified migration as a priority issue for the international community.

Wishing to provide the framework for the formulation of a coherent, comprehensive and global response to migration issues, and acting on the encouragement of the UN Secretary-General, Sweden and Switzerland, together with the governments of Brazil, Morocco, and the Philippines, decided to establish a Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM). Many additional countries subsequently supported this initiative and an open-ended Core Group of Governments established itself to support and follow the work of the Commission.

The Global Commission on International Migration was launched by the United Nations Secretary-General and a number of governments on December 9, 2003 in Geneva. It is comprised of 19 Commissioners.

The mandate of the Commission is to place the issue of international migration on the global policy agenda, to analyze gaps in current approaches to migration, to examine the inter-linkages between migration and other global issues, and to present appropriate recommendations to the Secretary-General and other stakeholders.

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Potential contributors to this series of research papers are invited to contact the GCIM Secretariat. Guidelines for authors can be found on the GCIM website.

Introduction

The starting point of this work was a review of legislation and proposals of legislation of the European Commission, Directorate 'Justice and Home Affairs' and 'Employment and Social Affairs', on employment and integration policy. This research activity allowed us to acquire a satisfying legislative framework on EC programmes of social inclusion adopted before and after the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997).

In particular, article 13 of this Treaty and the subsequent directives gave a strong impetus to the fight against discrimination, the adoption of race equality policy, the recognition of fundamental rights and thus the issue of social inclusion in its wider scope. Moving from these few considerations and recent EC proposals of legislation (CEC, 2003a) linking employment strategies with integration policies for third country nationals, our research focused on the measures for immigrant integration in host societies.

Building upon the acquired research experience in migration and its policy management at EU 'old' and 'new' Member States level, we opted for a comparative method of analysis implying two levels of governance: national and supranational. Moreover, the fundamental importance of social dialogue, expressed not only in the 1993 'Green Paper' on European social policy but strongly reaffirmed in recent EC Communications such as 'On a Community Immigration Policy' (CEC, 2000) and 'On an Open Method of Coordination for the Community Immigration Policy' (CEC, 2001b), urged us to look carefully at the role of NGOs and migrants' associations in combating social exclusion. This paper carefully reviews the immigrant integration practices implemented by public and private actors in Italy. The overview of the Italian case allows us to identify critical points, but also to observe how a quite recent national experience in managing migration makes it possible to outline comparable explanatory models.

Finally, notwithstanding the similarities between countries, the lack of a single model for implementing integration policies emphasizes the peculiarities of geographical contexts and different migratory experiences, such that it is necessary to call for some common standards. The second part of this paper, 'Immigration, integration and employment: the current EU state of play', focuses on legislative proposals and EC trends in the harmonisation of integration policies. A number of conclusive recommendations aim to match the Italian and EU countries' experience.

Outline of Italian immigration features and flows

The Italian experience of immigration differs from that of the traditional countries of immigration in Europe. In fact, Italian colonial history was very short and did not shape immigration as it did in those countries. Italy is undoubtedly the most relevant example of the "Mediterranean model of migration"¹ which encompasses Spain, Greece and

¹ The Mediterranean model includes the following characteristics: (1) these countries act as a 'bridge' to the South, and, in Italy's case to Eastern Europe; (2) they have negative population growth; (3) they still have significant emigrant communities abroad; (4) unemployment is much higher than the European

Portugal (even though the latter is not strictly a Mediterranean country and decolonisation fuelled, to a certain extent, its recent immigration history). All of these countries experienced strong emigration in the past and a large number of their citizens still live abroad. Furthermore, these countries mostly became countries of immigration at the end of the 1970s, when the Northern European states had fully adopted restrictive immigration policies and the factors fuelling their own mass emigration had been exhausted (Caritas, 2003b).

Migrants from underdeveloped countries started to enter Italy by the mid-1970s (there were 156,179 legally resident foreigners in 1971). The migratory inflow became important only during the second half of the 1980s, when it was estimated at more than 100,000 people per year. The immigrant population has almost doubled every ten years to date. On 1st January 2003, legally resident foreigners numbered around 1.5 million². Estimates - including applications for regularisation, residence permits not yet registered, minors counted in parents' permits and newborn foreigners - bring the total number of regular foreigners in Italy to 2.5 million at the same date (Caritas, 2003a: 100).

Few migrants entered Italy holding a permit to work and to stay³. Its short history as a receiving country is marked by five amnesties (1986-88, 1990, 1995-96, 1998 and 2002) involving about 1.5 million people⁴.

With respect to the countries of origin of immigrants, the data reflects a variegated population made up of numerous different nationalities, some represented by substantial numbers, other more modest⁵. At the end of 2002, the most prevalent nationality, Moroccan, accounts for 11.4% of the foreign population in Italy, followed by Albanians (11.2%) who are the only other group to reach double figures. None of the other national groups reaches 10%, though the presence of Romanians, Filipinos and Chinese should be considered (Ministry of the Interior, 2003). As far as religious affiliation is concerned, recent estimates made by Caritas (2003b: 75), which rely on the percentages in the countries of origin, show that the majority are Christians (50%), slightly more than a third are Muslims (35.4%) and less than one in ten (6.4%) belong to Eastern religions⁶. It should be noted that Muslims are not only the second largest group but also the fastest growing.

average; (5) the demand for immigrant labour is very high; (6) there is a tendency to 'reserve' unpleasant jobs (or even whole sectors, such as domestic services in Italy, or particular types of work such as particularly exhausting jobs, seasonal labour, shift-work, or agricultural labour) for newcomers; (7) trafficking of labour is widespread, which contributes to illegal working; (8) public opinion does not accept immigrants as belonging to their society; finally (9) they have received little support from EU migration policies, which have been based on the notion of zero immigration. See Caritas (2003: 33).

² Source: Ministry of the Interior, 2003.

³ Most of the "irregulars" resident in the country entered legally (with a tourist visa or for work) and their legal justification for residence subsequently expired.

⁴ The last legalisation, which started on 9 September 2002 and ended on 11 November 2002, mirrored the others in that, of 705,000 applications, 694,000 were accepted (98,4%). Source: Ministry of the Interior, 2004.

⁵ The different migratory flows have created what the literature defines as a "polycentric immigration" made up of a mixture of ethnic groups, languages, cultures, social traditions, and religions. See Caritas (2003).

⁶ For every ten Christians, 5.5 are Catholic, three are Orthodox and 1.5 Protestants.

An examination of the new arrivals in relation to the main nationalities at the end of 2001 reveals interesting changes among some of the communities present. In fact, in decreasing order of the ratio between new arrivals and the total number of permits issued, fairly high levels for some groups of immigrants from East European and Latin American countries are found. Among the former are Ukrainians, Poles, Romanians, and those coming from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); among the latter are Ecuadorians, Cubans and Columbians (Blangiardo and Farina, 2003).

The foreign community is not distributed uniformly over the Italian territory. In fact, about 56% of the foreigners legally present are currently found in the Northern areas of Italy. The marginal presence of immigrants resident in the Southern regions is correlated to the potential demand in the labour markets of the Northern areas, both in industry and agriculture. This attraction is further confirmed by the distribution of permits according to type. Of the total, 58.9% of residence permits are granted for work and this figure increases appreciably in the Northern areas, where over 60% of permits are issued for this reason.

Moreover, a substantial proportion of the other motives are familial. The flow that produces them is secondary, at least in the first phase of settlement, and prevalently concerns females, especially in the case of citizens from countries of the Southern shores of the Mediterranean (Blangiardo and Farina, 2003).

The purpose of the first section of this paper is to provide an overview of public policies and NGO services for immigrant integration in Italy. The analysis aims to critically demonstrate the peculiarities and deficiencies, where the latter occur, of the integration measures adopted so far.

The challenge of integration: political answers

The bulk of the legislation that governs immigration and integration matters in Italy is the result of the conflation of two laws dating back to 1998 (law 286/98, i.e. Turco-Napolitano) and 2002 (law 189/2002, i.e. Bossi-Fini)⁷. The Italian model of integration seems to be inspired by a pragmatic and realistic principle. It has been argued that the existence of systematic integration of the entire society and its broader subgroups has been observed where the various groups, the local people and the foreigners from various countries and cultures are able to achieve balanced relationships with one another which are relatively free of tension, if not exactly “harmonious”, whatever these “relations” are about (Esser, 2000).

The law-making process in Italy sought to benefit from the shortcomings of other models of integration adopted in European countries that had already experienced immigration processes of their own. The Single Act (law 286/98) and other bills aimed

⁷ The Single Act no. 286 of 25 July 1998, which was essentially based on Law no. 40 of 6 March 1998, called the Turco-Napolitano (after the names of the then Centre-Left Government Ministers of Social Affairs and of the Interior) and Law no. 189 enacted on 30 July 2002, called the Bossi-Fini (after the names of the two Centre-Right Government Vice Prime Ministers, respectively leaders of the Northern League and National Alliance).

to embody what can be defined as a “reasonable model of integration” (Zincone, 2001b). The model singled out two main goals of integration policies: 1) low conflict interaction between nationals and immigrant minorities 2) respect of immigrants’ personal integrity. Each of the two main political goals to be achieved can in turn be divided in two sub-goals: low conflict through 1) safety and security measures meant to reassure Italian citizens and 2) pluralism and communication measures meant to produce mutual respect and understanding; integrity through 3) full rights for legal immigrants and 4) basic rights for illegal immigrants (Zincone, 2001b).

At the operational level, the Single Act envisaged that measures for “social and cultural integration” would be included in a 3-year planning document on migratory policies to be drawn up by the Cabinet. The 1998 framework law created a variety of actors at all levels to implement the national strategy⁸. The reorganisation of the Italian ministries and sub-ministries in the past three years has meant that some of the governmental institutions that pass and implement policy have changed or have not been reinstated⁹. In general, all the existing bodies, especially the local organisations, are charged with publicising their role and providing information on integration measures. Specific initiatives may be developed at the local level for women and second-generation migrants, based on identified needs¹⁰.

Over and above central and local power institutions, the Italian legislation framework on immigration confirms the important role of the “third sector” and the trade unions together with a minor involvement of immigrant associations in providing support and integration to immigrants.

A ‘back door’ management: from entrance to legalisations

From the early 1980s, at the beginning of the migratory flows to Italy, the migratory system was marked by a strong demand for foreign workers (from the informal economies, families and small and medium sized companies) and, at the same time, by the absence of real possibilities of legal entry. Irregular entry has become an endemic factor in the Italian immigration history. The majority of immigrants presently in Italy have undergone a period of irregularity at one point or another of their migratory experience. Until very recently, and even today to a certain extent, Italian policy has mainly concentrated on managing the ‘back door’ of illegal entry (Sciortino, 2000).

A planned quota system was introduced only in 1998 with the adoption of the first organic law (no. 40/1998) to address immigration in a comprehensive way. The quota

⁸ Three national bodies were created: the Commission for Integration Policies, at the then Ministry of Social Affairs (art. 46); the National Coordinating Body at the Labour and Economics Council (CNEL) (art. 42, par. 3); and a special advisory council at the Prime Minister’s office (Consulta) (art. 42, par. 4). The law also created local Immigration Councils (art. 3, par. 6) in each province, later entrusted to the prefect.

⁹ This is true, for instance, for the Ministry of Welfare (formally entitled the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy), and the non-reinstated Commission for Integration and Consulta.

¹⁰ The local strategies promoted by adult education services, and less frequently by municipal and provincial authorities, provide language and cultural training, but without any benchmark so that the structure is decided by the promoter. See Chaloff (2003).

must be determined by one or more annual decrees¹¹ (family reunifications are outside the quotas). The Single Act of 1998 introduced the job-seeker visa, which provided for the allocation of an annual quota of residence permits to people in search of a job¹². The Bossi-Fini law (no. 189/2002) significantly modified the framework for immigration by repealing the sponsorship mechanism and embodying the rigid principle that immigrants cannot enter to look for work but only if they already have work. Thus, the new law tightened the relation between work contracts and employment, on the one hand, and residence permits on the other.

The residence permit for work is made dependent on a combined employment and residence contract (*contratto di soggiorno-lavoro*). The residence permit cannot last longer than the contract: no more than nine months for seasonal workers, one year for temporary workers and two years for non-temporary workers. It can only be renewed for the same time (and no longer for double the time, as used to be the case)¹³. A worker who loses his job and becomes unemployed has the right to be registered in the job placement lists and to legally reside in the territory for six months (not for one year as used to be the case under the previous law) with a legal residence permit.

Family reunification is immediately possible for holders of at least a one-year renewable visa. Family members have the right to work. The new 2002 law restricted parents' rights to reunification¹⁴. They are entitled to family reunification only if they can prove that no other child can provide for them in the native country. Six years of documented residence are now required in order to be entitled to receive a permanent residence card (five years under the 1998 law)¹⁵.

The issue of a supplementary decree to the Bossi-Fini law provided for measures of legalisation (no. 195 of 9 September 2002)¹⁶, which resulted in the massive immigrant amnesty that Italy has adopted to date. When the deadline expired (on 11 November 2002), over 700,000 applications for "regularising" residence had been presented. About half of the applications were for domestic workers and the other half for other jobs in dependent employment. Because of the length of time involved in processing the applications, from 2003 there were hundreds of thousands of foreigners illegally present in Italy but awaiting "regularisation". A primary challenge was to define their

¹¹ According to the new law, special quotas can be used to reward or penalize co-operative or non co-operative behaviour; preferential quotas should also be assigned to foreign workers of Italian origin. Thus, some countries that have signed readmission agreements (such as Morocco, Tunisia, and Albania) had the right to special quotas; these were reduced in the case of Morocco because of a lack of sufficient co-operation.

¹² Such workers could enter the country sponsored by private individuals, regions, municipalities and associations listed in a register. Sponsors had to deposit a guarantee, demonstrate a sufficient income, offer decent accommodation and pay the contributions for public health insurance.

¹³ Renewal applications must be presented 30, 60 or 90 days before the stay permit expires according to the kind of permit; it used to be 30 days for any kind of permit.

¹⁴ Stay permits for family reunification reasons cannot last for more than two years, rather than for the same span of time as the relative they join, as was the case under the 1998 law. The law also provides that a residence permit issued to a spouse may be revoked if marriage is not followed by co-habitation.

¹⁵ This provision is overtly in contradiction with the recently approved EU Council Directive concerning third country nationals who are long-term residents, who receive permanent status after a period of 5 years. See CEU (2004).

¹⁶ Effective as law from 10 September 2002.

legal status, in part due to possible changes in their employment position. For instance, many people-minders were unemployed due to the death of the person assisted, and so without the work which they applied to regularise in 2002¹⁷.

Despite this difficulty, when the individual applications were all dealt with, there were some 635,000 “new” foreigners in possession of residence who had emerged from illegality. Certainly, this seems a positive result for both the beneficiaries of the law and the society as a whole. However, the experience seems to demonstrate that repeated legalisation programmes – as in Italy - did not solve the problem of illegality, and they seem instead more likely to attract new illegal migration¹⁸. Two OECD studies on illegal immigration in Italy (Palidda, 1996 and 1999a) show the amnesties to be an increasingly endogenous phenomenon, due to a combination of two factors: (a) the non-renewal of residence permits and employment contracts of immigrants who had benefited from previous amnesties, and (b) the growth of the underground economy¹⁹ and the benefits it generates for those with an interest in migratory flows, providing that those flows remain illegal (OECD Secretariat, 2000).

Recent enquiries on the last legalisations, carried out in Lombardy by the ISMU Regional Observatory on Integration and Multi-ethnicity, seem to indicate a positive outcome of these programmes of decreasingly frequent slipping back into irregularity (only 2% of the regularised foreigners interviewed had problems in renewing their residence permits, lacking some requirements)²⁰. Thus, it has been argued that the increase of the irregular foreign population - and its reproduction after any amnesty has taken place - should be ‘mainly’ attributed to the arrival of new immigrants who make use of entry channels which, after the arrival, do not entitle them to any valid residence permits (Sciortino, 2004: 110).

Another issue that should not be underestimated is that the newly regularised immigrants, unlike many other foreigners, have a residence permit valid for only one year. This makes their position highly precarious, for example by preventing them from applying for public housing because a longer permit is a prerequisite for this. If we add

¹⁷ It will also be difficult to assess the position of those who have been dismissed from their jobs before presenting an application or those whose employers have refused to apply for regularisation. So there are still many grey areas in the regulations, as is clearly shown by the multiplication of circulars to clarify their application.

¹⁸ Abella (2000: 208-9) argues that the principles to be taken into consideration when developing strategies for regularisation are that: (1) the policy must have broad political support; (2) the cut-off point for eligibility must be fixed in a way that would not encourage anticipatory clandestine flows; it must have been designed to have maximum response from the target population; (4) eligibility rules for regularisation must be based on the principle of equal treatment; (5) the post-regularisation status must be assured; and (6) it must include a broad-based advertising and information campaign.

¹⁹ The informal or underground economy in Italy is particularly developed, steadily employing some 17% of the labour force. In addition, it is not necessarily based on open exploitation: even if degrading working conditions are common, there are also many cases where there is a positive trade-off between higher wages and greater employment insecurity, thanks to the possibility of avoiding payment of taxes and social security contributions. Thus, this trade-off can look very attractive even from the point of view of the recently arrived immigrants, interested in maximising their immediate income and not thinking of staying in the country until they can enjoy a pension. See Sciortino (2000).

²⁰ This hypothesis seems confirmed by the analyses carried out at national level on single files of residence permits. See Carfagna (2003).

that the letter of the law seems to limit the permit to the specific job for which it was released, it's easy to understand the risk of creating a category of "second class" immigrants, with serious effects on their quality of life and their chances of integration (Cesareo, 2003).

Precariousness is one of the most troubled aspects of the situation created by the rules introduced in 2002. Critics have insisted greatly on the "precariousness" caused by a marked reduction in the average duration of residence permits, as well as the government's marked preference for allowing foreigners in only as seasonal workers. In particular, those who lose their jobs will have great difficulty in finding new employment in time to renew their permits, while many "seasonal" workers tend to stay in Italy beyond the fixed term. This could lead, in the fairly short term, to the formation of another sizeable group of foreigners without residence permits. This outcome, clearly in contrast with the stated objectives of the law, also stems from the protracted inability to offer reasonable and timely opportunities for regular entry through decrees programming the flows of immigrants, despite a steady demand for foreign workers.

The gap between planned legal quotas and the demand for immigrant labour continuously reproduces large strata of illegal immigrants. Legalisation programmes have thus become a substitute for an active policy of legal entry.

The struggle for recognition: civic and political rights

Naturalisations and mixed marriages should not be considered good indicators for integration as far Italy is concerned. In fact, there are low numbers of both, somewhat in contrast with the ongoing process of integration in the country. There are only about 10,000 mixed marriages a year. Their frequency is higher in the Northern regions where the process of integration is more advanced, and lower in Southern regions which are usually a point of entry from which migrants later move on (Caritas, 2003b: 67). Naturalisation, by providing access to the same legal rights as the natives, offers more opportunities for cultural exchange. However, in Italy several legal obstacles make the acquisition of citizenship difficult and move the country out of line with the more open policies promoted by other European countries. There were between 10,000 and 11,000 naturalisations in 2001 and 2002, which represents one third of the average European naturalisation rate²¹.

In this regard, the country is caught between two contradictory policies: a liberal policy aimed at encouraging immigrants to take up citizenship, and a "protectionist" policy which imposes strict conditions on the level of integration required of applicants (Caritas, 2003b). Italian citizenship is based on Law no. 91 of 5 February 1992 ("The Nationality Law"), abolishing the previous law of 1912. The new law reinforced the *jus sanguinis* principle, requiring three years of residence for aliens of Italian origin (four for aliens from EU countries) and 10 years for aliens originating in non-EU countries²².

²¹ It should be noted that, on 31 December 2002, of a total of 10,645 naturalisations 9,728 were for mixed marriages (Caritas, 2003a: 162).

²² The new law reduced the required residence period to five years for refugees and stateless persons and to six months for persons who have been married for at least three years to an Italian citizen.

In contrast, the previous 1912 Law did not make any distinctions and required five years of residence for all foreigners. Under that Law, nearly 150,000 aliens of Italian origin (one grandparent was sufficient) who had lost their Italian nationality by adopting a foreign one could reacquire their former nationality.

Furthermore, naturalisation is not easy to obtain. It requires an oath of loyalty to the Republic of Italy and its President, and can be refused in case of a prison sentence of more than one year and for so-called attempts to undermine the security of the Italian Republic. Most importantly, foreign nationals wishing to acquire Italian nationality must renounce their original citizenship.

A subsequent provision (Constitutional Law of January 2000, No. 1, modifying art. 48 of the Constitution) gave to those Italians who had reacquired their nationality, and to other Italian citizens living abroad, the right to vote for their own representatives (to the Chamber of Deputies and to the Senate). However, all non-national residents remain ineligible to vote in local, regional or national elections. Given the extremely low number of naturalisations, migrants remain basically disenfranchised.

A number of experiments in representation that have taken place within the aforementioned constitutional have not succeeded. In October 2003, Mr. Fini, vice-premier and leader of National Alliance, the right wing party in the Centre-right ruling coalition, “unexpectedly”²³ advanced the proposal to allow foreigners the right to vote in local Italian elections²⁴. This bipartisan proposal, which was not included in the original government programme and was thoroughly debated in the political arena and in the national media, unbalanced the already difficult tenure of the government coalition by creating another clash between National Alliance and the autonomist and anti-immigrants party of the Northern League.

Finally, the new 2002 immigration law did not alter the Single Act provisions concerning pluralism and communication measures. Respect for cultural diversity has been recognised, the use of cultural mediators and the promotion of multicultural programmes have been funded and support for learning the language of the country of origin provided. Furthermore, the law promoted communication measures by providing special support for learning the host language, i.e. Italian, in schools and in special classes for adult migrants.

Giovanna Zincone, who until May 2001 headed the non-reinstated Commission for Integration Policy, argues that the

²³ Surveys show that Italians do not want more immigrants, but also that they are prepared to give rights (for instance local voting rights and easy access to naturalisation) to those already resident in Italy. See Zincone (2001b). This recorded pro-voting-rights attitude of the Italian population might have fuelled Mr. Fini’s tactical and political aspirations.

²⁴ The proposal recognises the right to vote and to stand in the local elections to those immigrants 1) who have been resident in Italy for 6 years; 2) have a valid permit to stay, proper income and no pending trial for crimes punishable by arrest. In addition, according to the proposal, the right to vote is to be recognised for those who make a request and swear to respect the Italian Constitution.

... goal of pluralism would have been served by passing the 'Religious Liberty Bill', which would have given more liberties and benefits to religious minorities in Italy, thus enabling the Government to circumvent the difficulty of signing conventions with Islamic associations too divided among themselves and often too much under the control of foreign countries (2001b).

The challenge of integration: areas of concern

After underscoring some significant features of the Italian legislation for managing immigration while providing measures for migrants' integration, we now turn to specific aspects concerning the lives of immigrants in Italy. They range from employment to housing, from education to health.

Employment

Migrant labour in Italy supports a labour market characterised by instability, unhealthy working conditions, low wages and a high demand for temporary or seasonal work. The main occupational sectors to which migrant workers have access offer only unskilled, low paying and poorly protected jobs – jobs rejected by Italians. These jobs are the so-called “five-p jobs”: *pesanti, precari, pericolosi, poco pagati, penalizzati socialmente* (heavy, precarious, dangerous, poorly paid, socially penalised) (Ambrosini, 2003: 76). There is a concentration of migrant workers in the hotel and restaurant sector, with over 87,000 employed; in agriculture with some 60,000; in building with 49,000; and in property and cleaning with 43,000. As a proportion of all employment, there is a marked concentration in certain industrial sectors: tanning (20%) while the rubber industry, metalworking, textiles and woodworking constitute between 16% and 17% of the total.

These data show that certain economic and productive sectors would be in serious difficulty if they could no longer count on immigrant labour (Ambrosini, 2003). It should also be noted that, particularly in the North-East, the arrival of immigrants is viewed as an aid to the survival of whole sectors of manufacturing, while in people-minding jobs, the availability of foreign workers has proved not just essential but has also saved hundreds of millions of euros, thanks to the lower number of admissions to hospitals, nursing homes and other institutions. The segmented structure of the labour market partially explains why incidences of racism and ethnic conflicts have been relatively infrequent in the employment field.

Discrimination in employment is, in the first instance, of a legal nature, caused by the fact that most migrants do not hold Italian citizenship. Non-EU nationals are excluded from a variety of jobs and professional fields, in particular the Civil Service, which employs about 3.6 million people. Instead, a large number of non-nationals work for public authorities without being employed by them or receiving associated benefits, for example as subcontracted labourers in cleaning services or the construction industry.

Secondly, discrimination arises from the structure of the labour market, with its demand for workers in the shadow economy. Italy's shadow economy is extremely important, the most affected sectors being agriculture, construction and the service industries. In 1996, half of the migrant population was employed in the shadow economy, even though 70% of them had legal status²⁵, rendering them extremely vulnerable.

Thirdly, even migrants with proper employment contracts face poorer working conditions than Italian nationals. For instance, in the formal job market the majority of employment contracts for work permit holders are for low-paying jobs in domestic services, manufacturing and agriculture, and even in the shadow economy the best jobs always go to nationals. Direct discrimination also takes place at the point of hiring, affecting black applicants in particular.

While male migrants are mainly employed in the industrial and building sectors, female migrants tend to occupy domestic services and care positions²⁶. Migrant women have become essential for maintaining the Italian economic and social system by providing much-needed work in domestic services, care and industrial cleaning jobs, which tend to lock them into patterns of dependency and isolated working conditions²⁷. Even though there is increasing migrant involvement in the regular labour market, mainly due to the legalisation process made possible by successive amnesties, the path towards regular employment is neither automatic nor irreversible.

Education

Between the school years 1995/96 and 2001/2002 the number of non-national pupils enrolled in state and private schools more than tripled, rising from 50,322 to 181,767²⁸. Currently they constitute 2.31% of the total school population. This rapidly growing proportion indicates that migrant groups in Italy are developing a more permanent presence. Enrolment figures at senior high schools are lower (24,063 in 2001/02), which is mainly due to the young age of migrant children, but they are growing fast when compared to the 6,410 non-national pupils enrolled in 1995/96²⁹.

Exclusion is apparent when comparing the (significantly lower) pass rates of migrant pupils to those of Italian nationals. In Lombardy, for example, the failure rate is highest in the junior high schools, where it is 10-15%. At the same time, one should not overlook the fairly significant percentage of pupils on the national level not promoted in primary schools: 3.36% (Besozzi, 2003).

While not free from discrimination, schools have a lot of hope invested in them. A crucial Ministry of Education document (no. 73/1994) stresses the importance of inter-

²⁵ Reyneri (1998) argues that those immigrants employed in the shadow economy account for 40% of all jobs in domestic services and outnumber nationals in most other sectors.

²⁶ One out of five domestic workers is a migrant.

²⁷ See for instance the seclusive conditions in which Ukrainian women, who work as people-minders, live in Italian cities like Naples, passionately described by Rumiz (2003: 52-53).

²⁸ Source: ISTAT and MIUR (previously Ministry of Education) information system.

²⁹ Source: Information system of Education Ministry and MIUR. Includes state and non-state schools.

cultural dialogue to facilitate the integration of migrant children and to promote the right to difference. Indeed, the commonsense attitudes of some teachers, if not of institutional structures, seem to provide a practical basis for creating a multi-cultural environment. It is possible that schools could develop into agents of multi-cultural socialisation, devising educational strategies to find ways of expressing respect and appreciation of diversity (Ruspini, 2001).

Health

Five years on from the promulgation of the Single Act 286/1998, there is good reason to question whether one can speak of true integration of immigrants into the national health system. The emergency phase in this sphere can be considered largely ended, while a new phase is emerging, relating not just to the promotion and substantial recognition of the right to health, but above all to the ability of the health service to respond to the health requirements of users with specific cultural traits that distinguish them from Italians³⁰.

Multi-centric researches conducted into the state of health of immigrants when they arrive in Italy confirm that it is definitely not alarming. However, physical and mental well-being are powerfully affected, and can easily be undermined, by factors such as poor housing, lack of protection and safety in the workplace, precarious employment and finally by problems bound up with access to the health services caused by relational difficulties.

There are therefore two areas of particular significance for purposeful intervention in health policies. On the one hand it is advisable to increase inspections of workplaces so as to avoid accidents and occupational illnesses (in 2002 alone, accidents involving immigrants in the workplace increased by 23%). On the other hand, particular care should be devoted to the reproductive phase of the life cycle, where the health of both baby and mother is at stake. Hence the need for health education and prevention to control significant phenomena such as the large number of abortions among foreign women and the incidence of HIV, caused largely by prostitution (Pasini, 2003).

Housing

The recent migration flows have transformed the structure of several cities and neighbourhoods and, consequently, of public life. The historic centres of some larger Northern cities have become important areas of migrant settlements. In some cases, this repeats an earlier pattern of settlement by internal migrants from Southern Italy. In others, the new settlements follow a long process of depopulation and degradation of inner city areas, leading to the re-use by migrants of otherwise abandoned property. This initiates a process of use, appropriation and re-signification of urban public areas, which are rediscovered and brought back to life by new communities.

³⁰ This is mainly applicable to first-generation immigrants, while their newborn children will be likely to enjoy a health development similar to that of Westerners.

Housing continues to be a crucial problem: for individual migrants, this informal public revitalisation sometimes involves a life in highly dilapidated and overcrowded flats located in ghettoised areas. Single workers often live in boarding houses and dormitories, and new arrivals first stay with relatives or fellow migrants. Direct discrimination is also prevalent, most significantly in the refusal to rent or sell property to minority ethnic groups, particularly blacks, and in overcharged rents.

However, there are some new developments. These include a marked increase in the demand for home ownership, which was noted in research conducted by the ISMU Foundation in 2002. More precisely, the evolution in patterns of settlement, migratory models and the degree of consolidation of certain segments of the immigrant population have profoundly modified the demand for housing in recent years, gradually shifting attention from the search for shared housing towards the rental of independent accommodation, culminating in the purchase of a home for the family³¹ (Granata, Lanzani, Novak, 2003).

The challenge of integration: NGO services and migrant organisation practices

There is widespread agreement between Italian migration scholars that the great majority of actions in the field of assistance and aid given to immigrants in Italy has been provided in the first place by associations in the so-called “private social” sector, both before any laws had been passed on immigration and after the four laws passed respectively in 1986, 1990, 1998 and 2002. Traditionally in Italy, the state has shown little commitment to the various social policies and actions which have been carried out by the private social sector, linked to the Catholic Church and, less frequently, to other churches³² or non-religious associations.

The welfare reform carried out by governments since the end of the 1980s has also greatly benefited from the development of voluntary work that has taken place in Italy at a time of deep crisis of those activities traditionally linked to political parties and trade unions. In addition, the laws on immigration, and above all the 1998 law, give local authorities and voluntary associations an important role in the field of assistance for immigrants.

The vast majority of NGOs that offer services or various types of assistance to immigrants are linked to the Catholic Church. The commitment of many Catholic associations and NGOs can be explained not only by the well-known aspiration of the Church to help the poor and immigrants, but also by the specific involvement of the Catholic Church in a number of migratory flows towards Italy since the early 1970s, particularly women from the Philippines, Peru and Latin America in general and more recently immigrants from Eastern Europe. Italian missionaries in various countries of emigration helped the aspiring emigrants to choose their destination, putting them in

³¹ Even the “intention to purchase” can be interpreted as a sign of the intention to remain in Italy for a prolonged period.

³² For instance, the Waldensian church.

contact with parishes or NGOs that on their arrival in Italy helped them to find accommodation, work and places where they could socialise³³.

However, while it is true that NGOs and associations of a religious or non-religious inspiration have played and continued to play a leading role in assisting immigrants in Italy, according to other observations, the great majority of immigrants have not benefited from any help. On the one hand, they have often relied upon their own resources or small groups formed through local networks or chains of support, mainly along ethnic or national lines (see for instance Ambrosini, 2003). On the other hand, the “less fortunate” immigrants with fewer resources have ended up slipping into the ranks of social exclusion.

NGO services for migrants

The potential demand for services by immigrants in Italy is particularly high precisely because in this country the concrete possibilities of legal entry and insertion have always been extremely limited. The Italian governments have so far adopted five amnesties (in 1986-88, 1990, 1995-96, 1998 and 2002) because the production and reproduction of illegal immigration are structural (Palidda, 1999a). In fact, these are due not only to new illegal arrivals, but also to the multiple causes that drive some legal immigrants into an illegal situation: precariousness of accommodation and employment, strong pressure towards undeclared work and accommodation, or destitution and therefore the impossibility of renewing the residence permit (Palidda, 1999b and 1999c). In reality, a good part of immigration in Italy is due to the demand for illegal work in the shadow economy.

The offer of services by the various NGOs, including non-religious ones, has always been of a predominantly welfare or humanitarian nature, or involved giving to the poor, rather than aimed at encouraging emancipation and the fight against discrimination. Offers of services conceived to stimulate the valorisation of resources of the individual or the network of immigrants are poor and still rare (Palidda, 2000). Furthermore, the vast majority of immigrants who benefit from the services offered by NGOs are not the poorest, but individuals who have nevertheless achieved a minimum degree of insertion or interaction with the host society. To address the main areas of exclusion faced by migrants, NGOs intervene as follows:

Legal assistance

NGOs have provided assistance during the amnesties. They also assist with residence and work permit procedures, family reunification and access to all public and private services. However, legal casework including representation at court is seldom offered. Only cases of migrant women forced into prostitution and minors awaiting rehabilitation are taken up.

³³ See the monographs by C. Lainati on Filipinos and by G. Luna on Peruvians in Palidda (2000).

Housing

NGO responses to housing problems have been insufficient. While around 20% of organisations (mostly Catholic) offer temporary accommodation facilities, no action has been taken to help migrants to fight discrimination in the housing sector and to find accommodation on the private property market.

Health

In theory, health care is guaranteed for all by law. As observed in the literature on this field, very often the immigrants arrive healthy and fall ill in Italy, precisely because of the conditions in which they are forced to live and work (Pasini, 2003). There have been important efforts by hundreds of voluntary doctors and social workers, who set up special surgeries which treat more patients than the public health system. They have also raised awareness among medical and nursing staff in public structures.

Employment

Officially no NGO deals with this problem, because current laws and regulations do not allow it. In actual fact, all of the NGOs make use of networks of relations and acquaintances to help immigrants who are looking for jobs. The Catholic NGOs are the most active, taking on a role of selection and guarantee for the employers. As far as the protection of the foreign worker is concerned, the action of NGOs and trade unions remains fairly poor (Palidda and Petti, 2000).

Practices of dialogue between organisations in the migration field

Communication and co-operation between different actors operating in the migration field is an important pre-requisite for successful integration practices. The process of integration of immigrants takes place, on the one hand, at the level of the individual immigrant, whose integration is then measured in terms of housing, employment, education, and social and cultural adaptation to the new society. It also takes place at the collective level of the immigrant group. Organisations of immigrants are the expression of mobilised resources and ambitions, and at this level the mechanisms of the integration process also apply³⁴. The two following sections summarise a few research findings on the difficulties and problems encountered in the daily practices of grass-roots actors involved at different levels, and through various support activities, in the Italian migration field.

³⁴ In addition, there is the level of institutions, which belong to the receiving societies and cities or to the immigrant groups themselves, such as religious or cultural institutions. See Penninx (2003).

Relations between NGOs and migrant organisations

Even though many NGOs provide assistance to migrant communities, hardly any support the development of sustainable services and networks run by migrants themselves. Consequently, many migrants and organisations led by migrants regard the help offered by NGOs as an act of paternalism. NGOs tend to see migrants as beneficiaries of services, not partners in dialogue and action.

A survey carried out in 2000 for a European research project showed, for instance, that the Association of Senegalese in Milan (*ASMP, Associazione dei Senegalesi di Milano e Provincia*) believed that mainstream research centres use the many well-funded research studies on migrants solely for their own benefit. At times, they feel the same is true for some publicly funded projects to support migrants, which are proposed and carried out by mainstream NGOs and satisfy the self-serving objective of ensuring the NGO's economic well-being (Palidda and Petti, 2000).

Most minority organisations have only been in existence for a comparatively short period of time and their structure is still fragile and subject to frequent changes in leadership. Sustainability is a major problem. The scene is also characterised by differences between groups from various ethnic or national backgrounds, which leads to divisions around political agendas and strategies for lobbying the authorities.

Relations between NGOs

In the extensive field of NGOs servicing migrants' needs, especially in Northern Italy, many organisations find the resources to survive and sometimes even to expand. It is, however, a very difficult "economy of survival", not a "business" of pro-migration activism. Indeed, the struggle for resources is so fierce that relations between NGOs suffer from excessive competition:

It is partially the scarcity of resources devoted to these services up to now that explains so many jealousies, rivalries, unfair competition or, in the best of cases, the absence of communication and understanding, not to mention the lack of co-operation or collaboration between NGOs or even individual volunteers (Palidda and Petti, 2000).

Economic survival is ensured at the cost of communication and co-operation, particularly at a national level. Furthermore, a future cohesion seems quite difficult. It is certain that there are great differences in approaches to problems, and at times ideological and political divergences, between the NGOs. On the other hand, it is also true that in a context of de-structuring the traditional socio-political organisation, dispersion, waste, overlapping or duplication of initiatives are probable, whilst it is hard to understand how there could be recomposition and the possibility of common action (Palidda and Petti, 2000).

At a local level, communication structures are somewhat better developed. In Milan, for example, many organisations working in the field of migration are part of the

Milanese Antiracism Coalition (*Coordinamento antirazzista milanese*). In addition, FILEF, the Italian Federation of Emigrant Workers and Families, for example, has developed its own large network of working relationships aimed at exchanging information and solving problems by referring people between organisations (Palidda and Petti, 2000).

Immigration, integration and employment: the current EU ‘state of play’

Decision-makers increasingly regard the successful integration of migrants into EU societies as a priority. A debate has emerged on what EU framework should be put in place to ensure the coherence of integration strategies in the Member States. At the Thessaloniki European Council in June 2003, the heads of state and government pointed out that integration is primarily the responsibility of the Member States, while at the same time acknowledging that policies should be developed within a EU framework (CEU, 2003a).

As a result, the EU needed to look at the existing policies of the Member States in order to define a coherent EU integration framework. The creation of the National Contact Points on Integration in March 2003 to develop cooperation and the exchange of information and best practice was the first step in developing a coherent framework for integration³⁵.

An incremental and holistic approach

No Member State has a uniform definition of integration. For the purpose of this study, the definition and scope of integration can be found in the June 2003 Communication from the European Commission (CEC, 2003a). Here, integration has been understood

as a two-way process based on mutual rights and corresponding obligations of legally resident third country nationals and the host society which provides for full participation of the immigrant. (CEC, 2003a: 17)

Member States do agree to a certain extent that integration is composed of different elements which can be summarised as follows: (1) respect for fundamental values in a democratic society; (2) the right of the migrant to maintain his or her own cultural identity; (3) rights comparable to those of EU citizens and corresponding obligations; (4) active participation in all aspects of life on an equal footing (economic, social, cultural, political, civil) (CEC, 2003a: 44-45).

The application of an “incremental approach” means that the process of integration involves the development of a balance of rights and duties over time such that the longer a third country national resides legally in a Member State, the more rights and obligations that person should acquire. It implies that integration measures should be available to all third country nationals as early as possible after their arrival and in any

³⁵ The National Contact Points are currently developing a handbook on integration for practitioners and policy makers to be published in autumn 2004 (CEC, 2004a).

case as soon as their stay acquires a degree of permanence and stability, without precluding the application of similarly specific measures to other types of immigrant, for instance, second and third generation immigrants.

The Communication points to the need for a “holistic approach” which takes into account not only the economic and social aspects of integration but also issues related to cultural and religious diversity, citizenship, participation and political rights. This approach acknowledges differences in priority between countries and regions, but at the same time stresses the importance of planning integration policies “within a long-term, coherent overall framework” and making them “responsive to the specific needs of particular groups and tailored to local conditions” (CEC, 2003a: 18).

Key challenges to integration deriving from national experiences

The need for a holistic approach calls for comprehensive integration policies. Key challenges to comprehensiveness collected from the work, amongst others³⁶, of the National Contact Points on Integration, are listed in the EC First Annual Report on Migration and Integration (CEC, 2004a: 5-6).

The report examined the main trends in the Member States’ integration policies and identified key factors and remaining barriers to integration. One of the report’s main aims is to ensure that the needs of immigrants are properly streamlined in all EU policies affecting them and to inform the Council on the progress made. It had shown that the most important political priority and challenges in national integration policies arose from a commitment to reduce the employment gap between nationals and non-nationals and to improve migrants’ language skills and educational attainments. Its main findings and key challenges are discussed hereafter.

Lack of access to employment has been identified as the greatest barrier to integration and thus the most important political priority within national integration policies. In this regard, the importance of the recognition of professional skills and qualifications of immigrants across the EU is another focal point for the Commission. The potential of immigrants to become entrepreneurs is also increasingly recognised.

In 2005 the Commission will continue to identify and evaluate policy measures with a view to identifying good practices to assist ethnic minority entrepreneurs, and at the same time encourage networks among policy makers and seek the involvement of representative bodies of ethnic minorities (CEC, 2004b). Finally, another issue to be considered is the inaccessibility of many occupations for non-EU nationals on the ground of nationality.

Other identified key challenges are language skills and the improvement of educational attainment. Currently there are no specific Community measures to fund language courses for individual migrants, as the responsibility for the organisation of education and training systems rests with Member States (CEC, 2004a). Language abilities and

³⁶ The National Action Plans for Employment and the National Action Plans for Social Inclusion (for instance, CEU, 2004b).

specific language tuition for newly arrived immigrants and refugees are increasingly becoming the focus of Member States, especially in countries where the newcomers do not yet have knowledge of the local language through colonial and other ties³⁷.

In this regard, several countries aim for introduction programmes where language classes are integrated with other, especially labour market, content. For instance, research from the Official Report to the Swedish Government on language training indicates that participants benefit most from language training where it is placed into a context of higher education or vocational training. Newcomers reach goals faster if they are allowed to do many things at once; programmes should therefore run in parallel rather than sequentially (EC, 2004).

Member States are devoting increasing attention to civic education or orientation for new immigrants, such as information about fundamental rights and obligations, including the equality of men and women and the basic norms and values of the host society. Courses should start as early as possible in order to be successful and cover topics such as the fundamental elements of the constitution as well as more practical elements. For instance, the Dutch integration programme includes courses to familiarise participants with the Dutch healthcare, education and welfare systems, as well as national customs. The planned citizenship classes in the UK will include information on how to obtain services, how to access the labour market, knowledge of the different communities and faith groups in the UK and the norms of the society.

With regard to values, it is important to notice that the resident population is also very diverse in terms of values and behaviours, and does not always live up to the standards presented to migrants. As a consequence, it should be useful to frame an introduction to values as “a common endeavour in which both newcomers and the receiving society must strive to meet the standards set by the country’s norms and rules” (EC, 2004: 8).

Participation in the political decision-making process represents an important formal step to granting foreigners similar rights and obligations to EU nationals. The EESC called upon the Convention for the European Constitution

to provide a new criterion for granting Union citizenship: citizenship should be linked not only to nationality of a Member State, but also to stable residence in the Union

and for “European citizenship [to be granted] to third-country nationals who are stable residents” (EESC, 2003: 81). This would make easier for them to exercise their political rights and thereby improve integration.

In its Communication “On Immigration, Integration and Employment” (CEC, 2003a) the Commission states that legislation enabling immigrants to obtain the nationality of the Member State in which they are resident is highly favourable to successful integration. It therefore suggests that the naturalisation process should be swift, sure

³⁷ The acquisition of language skills of the host country brings to the surface the equally important value of promoting in the educational system the mother tongues of immigrants either for those speaking them or for the host society (EESC, 2002).

and non-discretionary. The EESC supports this idea and advocates for the harmonisation at a European level of the legislation governing access to nationality, bearing in mind the principle of subsidiarity. The plural, inclusive and participatory European citizenship proposed by the EESC (2003: 80), including the right to vote (active and passive) in municipal and European Parliament elections, would offer a solid basis for the many integration processes involving immigrants (EESC, 2004: 97).

While immigrants are generally identified by the Member States as those particularly at risk of poverty and social exclusion, many countries still fail to provide an in-depth analysis of the factors leading to them. Under the European common objectives to combat poverty and social exclusion adopted in December 2002, emphasis was placed on the need to tackle the specific social risks experienced by immigrants. An analysis of the National Action Plans for Social Inclusion for 2003-2005 shows the importance of a more energetic and determined action. Weak points include the scarcity of attention given to “promoting access to resources, rights, goods and services, in particular to appropriate healthcare” (CEC, 2004a: 20).

The urban settlement and housing of immigrants remains a great problem. The spatial distribution of immigration varies considerably across Member States and regions, with a relatively higher concentration in urban and industrialised areas. The location of employment clearly impacts on the choice of residence, which may also be explained by the patterns of earlier immigration and the presence of established communities (CEC, 2003a).

Ethnic residential concentration, or so-called ghettos, tends to isolate communities and prevent their participation in the wider society. Although tight community networks can bring new life and regeneration to neglected neighbourhoods, for example with the setting up of small businesses, ethnic and social segregation in the cities can also be a major barrier to integration. High concentration and spatial segregation also create many of the conditions on which illegal immigration and trafficking can feed, just as these phenomena stimulate the development of discriminatory attitudes in the host society (CEC, 2003a).

A number of Member States are still struggling to provide affordable housing and to address the negative consequences of segregation and deprived urban areas, where immigrants tend to be over-represented³⁸. Comprehensive urban and regional planning strategies, taking into account infrastructure, housing, leisure, shopping, health services, transport and schools and the needs of the local labour market, among others, can reduce the negative consequences of urban segregation. For instance, the EESC, referring to the Commission Communication on integration (CEC, 2003), calls for urban planning which eradicates rundown, low-quality urban ghettos, and advocates for the inclusion of such actions in the URBAN II programme (2002-2006) (EESC, 2004).

³⁸ Some Member States are trying to overcome the housing problem by linking housing and admission policies. As we have seen above, Italy has recently introduced into the legislation on immigration a system where the employer has to guarantee housing under a “contract of stay for work” (contratto di soggiorno lavoro).

The integration of immigrants into society, based on equal rights and obligations, is very closely linked to the fight against discrimination and racism. The Commission has recently acknowledged that policies to combat discrimination and racism are not always connected to the integration strategies pursued by the Member States (CEC, 2004a).

The EU has adopted a legal framework to combat discrimination, as well as common minimum standards to promote equal treatment and to combat discrimination on grounds of racial and ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, disability and sexual orientation. Directives approved at EU level in 2000 (CEU, 2000a and CEU, 2000b) give new rights both to arriving migrants and to established ethnic minorities in the EU. Directed towards banning racial discrimination, they do have a wide scope, covering employment, education, social security and healthcare as well as access to goods, services and housing. Though the directives do not cover discrimination on grounds of nationality, and are without prejudice to the conditions relating to the entry and residence of third country nationals and to any treatment that arises from their legal status, they do apply to all persons resident in the Member States, including third country nationals (CEC, 2003a).

The Communication on immigration, integration and employment calls upon the Member States to guarantee the transposition of the two anti-discrimination directives into their national legislation. The process of transposition of the 2000 EU legislation banning discrimination has certainly acted as a catalyst for progress by forbidding discriminatory attitudes, behaviour and practices, and establishing in each Member State specialised bodies responsible for promoting equality and combating racial discrimination (CEC, 2004a). However, much remains to be done in this field at the national level. For instance, the EESC pointed out that, although the deadline for transposing the directives has passed, several of the Member States have failed to fulfil their obligations in this respect (EESC, 2004).

Overall, it is difficult to assess whether there has been progress in developing comprehensive integration strategies at national level. The first report shows that in some major policy fields the mainstreaming of immigration issues remains slow and that further efforts are needed to develop effective policies (CEC, 2004a: 9-11). Though since the adoption of the Communication on immigration, integration and employment³⁹ some positive trends are noticeable at the national level, for instance the development of integration courses targeted at immigrants and refugees, most commitments still need to be translated into action.

There is a growing understanding of the need to mainstream immigration aspects into all policies and to mobilise stakeholders through greater cooperation among national, regional and local authorities, as well as civil society. Moreover, developing a more systematic and comparable collection of information and data at the Community level is crucial for better monitoring of the impact that policies have on immigrants (CEC, 2004a).

³⁹ Particularly within the European Employment Strategy (CEC, 2003b) and the Social Inclusion Process.

The exchange of experiences within the National Contact Points on Integration is thought to be very useful in ensuring the mainstreaming of immigration concerns at both the national and the EU level, as well as the development of good practice which addresses the specificities of the target groups. Finally, it seems that mainstreaming of gender considerations is lacking in most Member States when dealing with immigration, both in terms of policy and data.

The future European Employment Strategy

The integration of disadvantaged groups, including migrant workers and ethnic minorities, and the fight against discrimination have been key features of the employment guidelines since the launch of the European Employment Strategy (EES) in 1997. The European Commission adopted proposals for employment guidelines and recommendations that better tackle immigration on 8 April 2003 (CEC, 2003d) following the Communication on the future of the EES of 14 January 2003 (CEC, 2003b).

The Commission proposes three overarching objectives for future employment guidelines: full employment, quality and productivity at work, cohesion and inclusive labour market. It also calls on the Member States and the social partners to address these questions and insists on the need to support integration and combat discrimination in the labour market for people at a disadvantage, as well as to combat undeclared work. Since the Communication on integration, immigration and employment of 3 June 2003, immigration has been seen as an important factor in the development of the EES.

In this context, elements of the EES strategy to be taken further include: (1) sustainable integration of third country nationals into the labour market which involves, among other measures, access to training and employment services; (2) combatting undeclared work, and the reduction of the informal economy by developing a combination of sanctions and preventive measures to transform undeclared work into regular employment; (3) closer monitoring of the needs of the EU labour market and the role of immigration in filling current and future labour shortages; (4) contributing to increased job mobility of third country nationals in the EU, in particular through the further development of the EURES network⁴⁰, so as to facilitate their admission into the EU for employment purposes; (5) exchanging experiences and good practice in the field (CEC, 2003a).

Revised employment guidelines were adopted in July 2003 calling for action to improve the integration of immigrants into the labour market and including a target on reducing the unemployment gap between nationals and non-EU nationals. The guidelines also recognise the role of immigration in filling current and future labour shortages, and they insist on action to transform undeclared work into regular employment. A European Job Mobility Portal⁴¹ has been launched to provide information on available jobs as well as on living and working conditions in the EU (CEC, 2004a).

⁴⁰ See <http://europa.eu.int/eures>

⁴¹ Ibidem

Which EU framework on integration?

The need for an EU integration framework has recently been brought forward in symposia and discussed by European migration experts and stakeholders (see, for instance, EPC, 2004). The shape of this framework and its legal or political nature remain an open issue for debate.

Indeed, in 2001, the Commission proposed an open method of coordination for the EU immigration policy. This would be based on an exchange of information about how legislation is put in place, about the effectiveness of chosen policy solutions and about the impacts that their implementation has on different European countries.

For the first time, the open method of coordination left room for the active involvement of a variety of European actors such as scientists, policy makers, international organizations, NGOs and migrant associations, at both national and European levels, as the target actors for the success of the policies and the achievement of the goals set out in its guidelines (CEC, 2001b). The OMC set a number of goals in different policy fields, and was designed to help Member States progressively design their own policy and do so in a coordinated way. The OMC was an independent political process that supplemented the community method. It was based solely on voluntary cooperation from Member States and therefore sanctions could not be enforced if criteria were not respected (EPC, 2004).

In fact, the Council of the European Union has not considered it opportune to implement it so far (EESC, 2004). However, there is a general agreement among migration experts that the OMC, being a mechanism 'in between' the legal and political frameworks, could further a learning process about the challenges of integrating migrants into society (Süssmuth and Weidenfeld, 2004).

In its Opinion of the Communication on immigration, integration and employment, the EESC pointed out that

proper coordination of immigration and integration policies and the exchange of good practice are a prerequisite for the development of an appropriate immigration policy.

It added that

experience with the European Employment Strategy and the social inclusion plans are a reference point for EU coordination of immigration and integration (EESC, 2004: 102).

Overall, it can be argued that any coordination process at EU level can only facilitate integration processes that take place at a local level and are culturally specific. In this regard, the role of the OMC in leading the way to a competitive integration policy and to a comparison of best practices between the Member States should not be neglected.

Selected recommendations and fields of action matching the Italian and the EU countries' experience

A few selected models for immigrant integration resulting from the analysis of the Italian and the EU countries' experience are listed below. They aim to suggest a few areas that need attention and a general framework of action for policymakers at the European and national levels.

Firstly, an appropriate, comprehensive framework for integration should be provided by governments, bearing in mind their overall responsibility for the introduction of newly arrived immigrants and refugees and to ensure the efficient coordination of efforts between different branches and tiers of government in policy development (EC, 2004).

However, the few considerations on the historical role of the private-social sector in Italy, for instance, have suggested that the public sector cannot be expected to solve the integration puzzle without relying extensively on, and leveraging the resources of, the private and non-governmental sector. These sectors - employer and worker groups, church groups, civic, ethnic, and immigrant organisations, private foundations, and the various community-based non-profit entities - typically amass extensive experience with various aspects of newcomer integration and can serve as crucial resources for immigrants (Papademetriou, 2003). The role and impact of volunteers and community action could be further enhanced by providing frameworks and access to infrastructure and capacity building, for instance by establishing 'host' programmes (EC, 2004).

Secondly, even though many migrants rely on their own resources and/or informal networks, the newly forming immigrant communities are a future source of strength and support for the non-governmental sectors. Dialogue and interactions, built on mutual confidence, between these organisations and between them and the public institutions should be empowered and improved. Experience teaches that

when public institutions and the private sector make joint efforts to adapt positively to newcomers, the gains to both newcomers and the host community grow geometrically as the process of integration advances (Papademetriou, 2003: 4).

At the EU level, the Commission encourages immigrants, together with all the key actors, including civil society, to take an active part in discussion and public debates on integration. The First Annual Report on Migration and Integration (CEC, 2004a) has shown that integration policies and religious and cultural issues continue to be major challenges in most Member States. In this regard, the Commission priority for 2005 will be the creation of networks and cooperation under the INTI preparatory actions⁴² so as to enhance dialogue with migrant organisations as a means of overcoming prejudices, ignorance and intolerance as well as religious extremism (CEC, 2004a).

Thirdly, access to public services, including health services, needs to be made easier for newcomers, and these services should be restructured so that they can respond to the

⁴² See http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/funding/inti/funding_inti_en.htm

needs of these groups. Immigrants have greater needs and greater lack of security, especially the most vulnerable such as young women, workers employed in certain sectors (in particular the informal sector) and the undocumented. Their unfamiliarity with the administrative structures of the new society requires on the one hand a simplification of the bureaucratic processes and, on the other hand, facilitators to interpret and explain the system in the host society (Caritas, 2003b). Cultural mediation is already well established in many countries of immigration and their experience can be very useful.

Fourthly, the role of education and schools as potential agents of multicultural socialisation should be improved by further developing a culture of mutual exchange and reciprocal acceptance. A priority for future work at EU level will be a more in-depth focus on the obstacles that migrants face in education and training.

The EESC has argued that presently some Member States do not guarantee access to education for all children of immigrant families, regardless of their legal situation, and on equal terms and of equal quality compared with children of nationals (EESC, 2004). According to the EESC, there is also a need in some Member States to revise teaching material still containing xenophobic elements and negative views on ethnic, cultural and religious minorities and to replace them with pluralist texts. Generally speaking, an intercultural approach should be adopted in the education system to reflect the two-way nature of integration (EESC, 2004).

Fifthly, there is no integration model which works for everybody. It is therefore necessary for each state to develop its own models of integration to fit the needs of its specific societal system but at the same time to respect some common standards. Inclusion remains the great challenge of the coming decades, and it is necessary to experiment with new forms of coexistence in a context of well-defined rights and duties, which will reassure natives without penalising newcomers.

Finally, the construction of civic identity remains an open issue for debate in Italy as well as in the new Europe being reshaped by the widening and deepening process. In this context, it is again worth recalling that integration is a bi-univocal process. The outward opening-up of European citizenship should go hand in hand with inward inclusion (EESC, 2003).

Thus, what is at stake today is adapting the political role of European societies to the new realities of immigration. What is necessary is to forge the way towards a normative achievement of national' and 'European' self-understanding that will no longer be based on ethnicity but founded on citizenship⁴³.

⁴³ For citizenship, i.e. European citizenship, we mean a broader definition than the mere legal one stressed by the article 8 of the Treaty of Maastricht. It is a definition which takes into account references to ethno-cultural diversity, religious pluralism and the fight against all sort of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, sexism, etc.

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