

Overview of Public Policies and NGOs Services for Immigrants' Integration in Italy¹

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Introduction: 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 occurred in those countries. Italy is undoubtedly the most relevant example of the "Mediterranean model of migration"² which encompasses Spain, Greece and 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 still a large number of their citizens live abroad. Furthermore, these countries became mostly 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, 2003).

Migrants from underdeveloped countries started to enter Italy by the mid-1970s, but the migratory inflow became important only during the second half of the 1980s,

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² The Mediterranean model include 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 average; (5) the demand for immigrant labour is very high; (6) there is a tendency to "reserve" unpleasant jobs to newcomers (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); (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).

when it was estimated at more than 100,000 people per year. In the 1990s the foreign population grew more slowly.

Few migrants entered Italy holding a permit to work and to stay³. Its short history as a receiving country is marked by five amnesties involving a total of 790,000 people as far as the concluded amnesties are concerned⁴. According to Caritas-Ministry of the Interior data, on 1 January 2000, 565,596 legalised migrants were still present in Italy; to this figure one should add at least 130,000 persons who came to Italy through family reunification with regularised immigrants. Legal residents in Italy from emigration countries amount to 1,362,630⁵ (December 31, 2001) which means that the large majority of regular immigrants is made of people who have undergone a regularisation process or who have joined their families.

With respect to the countries of origin of immigrants, the data reflects a variegated universe made up of numerous different nationalities, some represented by substantial numbers, other more modest⁶. In 2002 the first nationality, namely Moroccan, accounts for 14% of the foreign population in Italy, followed by Albanians 12.7% who like the Moroccans are the only group to reach double figures. None of the other national groups reaches 10%, though the presence of Romanians, Filipinos and Chinese should be considered (Blangiardo and Farina, 2003). Neither is there a prevailing religion: on 31 December 1999 there were 27.4% Catholics; 22.1% other Christians; 36.5% Muslims⁷.

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 the Ukrainians, Poles, Romanians, and those coming from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CSI); among the latter are the Ecuadorians, Cubans and Columbians (Blangiardo and Farina, 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, started on 9 September 2002 and ended on 11 November 2002, saw the presentation of 702,156 applications for legalisation overall. Source: Ministry of the Interior, 2002.

⁵ Source: Ministry of the Interior, 2002.

⁶ The different migratory flows have created what the literature defines a "polycentric immigration" made of a mixture of ethnic groups, languages, cultures, social traditions, and religions. See Caritas (2003).

⁷ Source: Caritas, 2001. However, these figures improperly assume that the religion prevailing in the country of origin is also the religion of individual immigrants. Nonetheless, this can be taken as a rough indicator of religious affiliation, even if it underestimates religious minorities and secularised attitudes.

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 the figure increases appreciably in the northern areas, where other 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).

Purpose of this paper is to give an overview of public policies and NGOs services set up for the integration of migrants in the Italian society. After providing a sketch of the Italian legislation on immigration and its recent transformations, it focuses on few areas of concern for immigrants' integration. The analysis aims at demonstrating in a critical and constructive way peculiarities and deficiencies, when the latter occur, of the integration measures adopted in Italy. Finally, few recommendations for implementing policies aimed at civil dialogue and widespread social cohesion are suggested.

1. 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 between two laws. 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).

It has been argued that the existence of *systematic integration* of the entire society and its broader subgroups has been observed when the various groups, the local people among themselves, and the foreigners deriving from various countries and cultures are able to find balanced relationships to one another which are relatively free of tension, even if not exactly "harmonious", whatever the "relations" are about

(Esser, 2000). The Italian model of integration seems to be inspired by a similar pragmatic and realistic principle.

The law-making process sought to benefit from the shortcomings of other models of integration adopted in European countries that already experienced immigration processes of their own. The Single Act and other bills aimed at 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 immigrants 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 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 (law 286/98) envisaged that measures for "social and cultural integration" are included in a 3-year planning document on migratory policies to be drawn by the Cabinet. The 1998 framework law created a variety of actors at all levels in implementing 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 needs. 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 (Chaloff, 2003).

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 immigrants associations in providing support and integration to immigrants.

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 not reinstated Commission for Integration and Consulta.

1.1. Legislative Framework: Entrance, Residence, and 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. 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).

• Entrance

A planned *quota system* was introduced only in 1998 with the adoption of the first organic law (no. 40/1998) addressed to tackle immigration in a comprehensive way. The quota must be determined by one or more annual decrees. According to the new reform the annual decree must be approved by the 30 November of the previous year; if there is no timely decision, the Prime Minister can autonomously decide to confirm the previous year's quotas.

After the 1998 law, legal entry for job reasons was granted for 58,000 people in 1998 and 1999, 63,000 in 2000, 83,000 in 2001. The timing of the decrees came by the end of the year. Only in 2000, 2001 and 2003 were such measures approved in the first half of the year. According to the new law, special quotas can be used to reward or penalize co-operative or non co-operative behaviour; preferential quotas should be assigned also to foreign workers of Italian origin. Some countries that have signed re-entry agreements (such as Morocco, Tunisia, and Albania) had the right to special quotas, which were reduced in the case of Morocco for the lack of sufficient co-operation.

In 2002, the annual influx decree was subordinated to the approval of the Bossi-Fini law. Since this was delayed, the decree was only approved in mid-October and permitted the entry of 20,500 people. Ad hoc decrees, introduced to anticipate the new law, allowed the entrance of seasonal workers (33,000 in February, 6,400 in March, 6,600 in May, 10,000 in July). In the meantime it was agreed that a new legalisation was called for, with a broad debate over how far it should be extended. Consequently the conviction prevailed in the government's ranks that, apart from limited "anticipations", the entry quotas should be decided after defining the terms of this legalisation, taking into account how many legally resident foreigners this would add to the labour market. As a result, it was only in November that a few thousand entry permits were issued for dependent non-seasonal employment.

In 2003, the annual influx decree was approved on 6 June 2003, included seasonal and dependent non-seasonal workers at the same time and allowed the entry of 19,500 people (pertaining to the following categories: 8,500 seasonal workers, 800 among

researchers, entrepreneurs and highly specialised professionals, 200 Argentinean citizens of Italian origin, 10,000 non seasonal workers).

The Centre-Right 2002 reform assigned a more significant role in deciding and managing the influx to Regional authorities (also under the pressure of the Regions governed by the same centre-right political coalition); a more important role is also assigned to employers and labour unions. Family reunifications in Italy are outside the quotas: there were 48,000 people in 1998, 45,000 in 1999, and 56,000 in 2000.

The Single Act of 1998 had introduced the *job - seeker visa* i.e. it provided for the allocation of an annual quota of residence permits to people in search of a job. 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. The 2002 Bossi-Fini law repealed the sponsorship mechanism and embodied 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 contract and employment, on the one hand, and the residence permit, on the other.

• Residence

The *residence permit* for work is made dependent on a combined employment and residence contract¹⁰. The residence permit cannot last more than the contract and no more than nine months for seasonal workers, no more than one year for temporary workers, no more than two years for non-temporary workers. It can be renewed only for the same time (and no longer for double the time). Renewal applications must be presented 30, 60, 90 days before the stay permit expires according to the kind of permits; it used to be 30 days for any kind of permit.

An integrated office for immigration has been introduced in every district within the prefectures to simplify the procedures. This office seeks to match the supply and demand of immigrant labour, having previously determined the lack of national or EU workers available for the same job (this requirement had been abolished by the 1998 law). Incentives for job training in the countries of origins means trained workers will have priority in receiving work permits in Italy. Education and job training programmes can be set up in the countries of origin by public authorities, regional bodies, NGOs. Foreigners who take part in these programmes have a priority entitlement to receive a visa to work in the sectors concerned by the training.

Workers who lose their job and become unemployed have the right to be registered in the job placement lists and legally reside in the territory for six months (and no

¹⁰ The so-called "contratto di soggiorno-lavoro".

longer for one year as used to be the case under the Turco-Napolitano 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 limited parents' rights to reunification: they are entitled to family reunification only if they can prove that no other child can provide for them in the native country. Handicapped siblings and third degree relatives are no longer entitled to family reunification. However, children even if no longer under age are entitled if not self-sufficient or seriously handicapped. Stay permits for family reunification reasons cannot last for more than two years and no longer for the same span of time of the relative they join, as used to be true under the 1998 law¹¹. The law also provides that a residence permit issued to a spouse may be revoked if marriage is not followed by co-habitation. Six years of documented residence are now required to be entitled to receive a permanent residence card (five years under the 1998 law).

• Legalisations

The Bossi-Fini law (no. 189) together with the issue of the supplementary decree-law providing for *measures of legalisation* (no. 195 of 9 September 2002, effective as law from 10 September) modified significantly the framework for immigration.

When the deadline expired (11 November 2002), over 700,000 applications for "regularising" residence had been presented. About half the applications were for domestic workers and the other half for other jobs in dependent employment. Because of the long time requested in processing the applications, starting from 2003, there are hundreds of thousands of foreigners illegally present in Italy but awaiting "regularisation". There is, first of all, the difficult challenge to define their legal status, in part due to possible changes in their employment position. For instance, many people-minders are already unemployed due to the death of the person assisted, and so without the work which they applied to regularise in 2002. 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.

All the same, it remains undeniable that, when the individual applications are all dealt with, there could be some 700,000 "new" foreigners in possession of residence,

¹¹ The required resources to apply for family reunification are: 1) housing that meets the minimum regional requirements for public housing (in terms of quality and dimensions), as well as the permission of the landlord in case of children under 14; 2) minimum legally earned income of at least the "social benefit" for one family member, double for 2-3, and triple for 4 or more.

who have emerged from illegality. This could be a positive result for both the beneficiaries of the law and the society as a whole. However, the experience demonstrates that repeated legalisation programmes –and this is the Italian case– did not solve the problem and they seem instead more likely to attract new illegal migration than to drain the basin of illegality¹². Furthermore, 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 the previous amnesties since 1986, and (b) the growth of the underground economy¹³ and the benefits it generates for those who have an interest in migratory flows, providing those flows remain illegal (OECD Secretariat, 2000).

Another thorny issue that should not be undervalued is that the newly regularised immigrants, unlike many other foreigners, will have a residence permit valid for only one year. This will make their position highly precarious, for example it will prevent them from applying for public housing because a longer permit is a pre-requisite for this. If we add that the letter of the law seems to limit the permit to the specific job for which it was released, it is 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

¹² 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.

¹³ 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 payments 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).

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 stem from the protracted inability to offer reasonable and timely opportunities for regular entries through decrees programming the flows of immigrants, despite a steady demand for foreign workers. As a result, the gap between planned legal quotas and demand for immigrants' labour continuously reproduces large strata of illegal immigrants.

1.2. Naturalisation, Political Participation and Pluralism

Italy is caught between two contradictory policies in relation to citizenship: a liberal policy aimed at encouraging immigrants to take up citizenship, and on the other a "protectionist" policy which imposes strict conditions in relation to the level of integration required of applicants. Thus, the country looks out of line if this policy is compared to the more open promoted by other European countries (Caritas, 2003).

Italian citizenship is based on Law no. 91 of 5 February 1992 ("The Nationality Law"), abolishing the previous law of 1912. The new law had reinforced the *jus sanguinis* principle, foreseeing three years of residence for aliens of Italian origin (four for aliens from EU countries) and 10 years for aliens originating from non-EU countries¹⁴. By contrast, the previous 1912 Law did not make any distinctions and foresaw five years for all foreigners. Under the same Law, nearly 150,000 aliens of Italian origins (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 a loyalty oath 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 important, foreign nationals wishing to acquire Italian nationality must renounce their original citizenship¹⁵.

¹⁴ 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 at least three years to an Italian citizen.

¹⁵ The number of naturalisations in Italy is still quite low. There were between 11,000 and 12,000 in the two years before 2001, i.e. one third of the average European naturalisation rate. However, it should be noted that because of all the legal obstacles mentioned, the acquisition of citizenship is not a good indicator of integration. Thus, the low number of naturalisations does not reflect the extent of integration. See Caritas (2003: 68)

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

A number of experiments in representation that have taken place within the mentioned constitutional limits insofar did not succeed. In October 2003, Mr. Fini, vice-premier and leader of National Alliance, the right wing party in the Centre-right ruling coalition, "unexpectedly"¹⁶ advanced the proposal to allow foreigners the right to vote in local Italian elections¹⁷. This bipartisan proposal not included in the original government programme and 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.

Lastly, the new 2002 immigration law has not altered 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 whereas support for the learning of 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 eventually:

The 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

¹⁶ 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 tactical and political aspirations.

¹⁷ The proposal recognises the right to vote and to stand in the local elections to those immigrants 1) who have been residents in Italy for 6 years; 2) have a valid permit of stay, proper income and no pending trial for crimes punishable under arrest. Besides, according to the proposal, the right to vote is to be recognised to those who make a request and swear to respect the Italian Constitution.

with Islamic associations too divided among themselves and often too much under the control of foreign countries (2001b).

2. 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.

2.1. 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). Concentration happens in sectors as hotel and restaurants with over 87,000 hiring, in agriculture with some 60,000, in building with 49,000, in property and cleaning with 43,000. As a proportion of all hiring, there is however a marked concentration in certain industrial sectors: tanning (20% of hiring) while the rubber industry, metalworking, textiles and woodworking are all between 16% and 17%.

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 be also noted that, above all 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 rather infrequent in the employment field.

Discrimination in employment is, in first instance, of “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, with agriculture, construction and service industries the most affected sectors. In 1996, half of the migrant population was employed in the shadow economy, even though 70% of them had a legal status¹⁸, rendering them extremely vulnerable.

Thirdly, even migrants with proper employment contract 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 in the shadow economy the best jobs always go to nationals. Direct discrimination also take place at the point of hiring, affecting particular black applicants.

While male migrants are mainly employed in the industrial and building sectors, female migrants tend to occupy domestic services and care positions.¹⁹ 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 conditions²⁰. Even though there is an increasing insertion in the regular labour market, mainly due to legalisation process made possible by successive amnesties, the path towards regular employment is neither automatic nor irreversible.

2.2. 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 181,767²¹. Currently they are 2.31% of the total school population. This fast 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

¹⁸ Reyneri (1998) argues those immigrants employed in the shadow economy account for 40% of all jobs in domestic services and outnumber nationals in most other sectors.

¹⁹ One out of five domestic workers is a migrant.

²⁰ See for instance the seclusive conditions in which the Ukrainian women, who work as people-minders live in Italian cities like Naples, passionately described by Rumiz (2003: 52-53).

²¹ Source: ISTAT and MIUR (previously Ministry of Education) information system.

is much due to the young age of migrant children, but they are growing fast when compared to the 6,410 non-national pupils enrolled in 1995/96²².

Exclusion is visible when comparing the significant lower pass rates of migrants pupils confronted to the 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-cultural dialogue to facilitate the integration of migrant children and to promote the right to difference. Indeed, the common-sense 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).

2.3. Health

After five years since 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 relative not just to the promotion and substantial recognition of the right to health, but above all the ability of the health service to respond to the health requirements of users with specific cultural traits that distinguish them from Italians²³.

The multi-centric researches conducted into immigrants' state of health confirm that it is definitely not alarming when they arrive in Italy. All the same, the condition of physical and mental well-being is powerfully affected and can easily be undermined by factors such as poor housing, the 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.

²² Source: Information system of Education Ministry and MIUR. Include state and non-state schools.

²³ Reference goes here mainly to first-generation immigrants while their newborn children will likely enjoy a health development similar to that of Westerners.

Therefore there are 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 needs for health education and prevention to control significant phenomena like the large number of abortions among foreign women and the incidence of HIV caused largely by prostitution (Pasini, 2003).

2.4. Housing

The recent migration flows have transformed the structure of several cities and neighbourhoods and, thereby, 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 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.

Housing continues to be a crucial problem: for individual migrants this informal public revitalisation sometimes implies 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 as well. These include the marked increase in the demand for home-ownership, which emerged from the research conducted by 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 sharing housing towards rental of independent accommodation and culminating in the purchase of a home for the family²⁴ (Granata, Lanzani, Novak, 2003).

²⁴ Even the "intention to purchase" can be interpreted as an evident signal of the intention to remain for a prolonged period in Italy.

3. The Challenge of Integration: NGOs Services and Migrant Organisations 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 four laws passed respectively in 1986, 1990, 1998 and 2002. Traditionally in Italy the state has always shown little commitment to the various social policies and actions which, on the other hand, have been carried out by the private social sector linked to the Catholic Church and, less frequently, to other churches²⁵ or non-religious associations.

The welfare reform carried on by governments since the end of the 1980s has also greatly benefited from the big development of voluntary work that has taken place in Italy at the time of deep crisis of activities traditionally linked to political parties and trade unions. Lastly, the laws on immigration and above all the 1998 one, 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 belong to the area of associations linked to the Catholic Church. The commitment by many Catholic associations and NGOs can be explained not only by the well-known attention of the Church in helping 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 into contact with the parishes or the NGOs that in Italy helped them on arrival to find accommodation, work and places where they could socialise²⁶.

However, while it is true that NGOs and associations of 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,

²⁵ For instance, the Waldensian church.

²⁶ See the monographies by C. Lainati on Filipinos and by G. Luna on Peruvians in Palidda (2000).

the "less fortunate" immigrants with fewer resources have ended up by slipping into the ranks of social exclusion.

3.1. NGOs 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 insofar 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 giving to the poor rather than of actions aimed at encouraging the emancipation and fight against discrimination. The offer of services conceived as an action to stimulate the valorisation of resources of the individual or the network of immigrants is 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.

- **Housing**

NGOs responses to housing problems have been insufficient. While around 20% of organisations (mostly Catholic ones) offer temporary accommodation facilities, no action has been taken to help migrants fight discrimination in the housing sector and 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, which set up special surgeries treating more patients than the public health system. They also raised awareness among medical and nursing staff in public structures.

- **Employment**

Officially no NGO deals with this problem, also because current laws and regulations do not allow it. In actual fact, all the NGOs make use of the networks of relations and acquaintances to help immigrants who are looking for job. The Catholic NGOs are the most active by 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).

3.2. 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 is not only taking place 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 also at this level mechanisms of the integration process apply.²⁷ In this regard, the two following sections show few research findings on the difficulties and problems encountered in daily practises of grass-root actors involved at different level and through various support activities in the Italian migration field.

- **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

²⁷ In addition, there is the level of *institutions*, which belong to the receiving societies and cities or to the immigrant groups themselves like the religious or cultural institutions. See Penninx (2003).

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 solely for their own benefit use the many well-funded research studies on migrants. 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 minorities' 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 a division regarding political agendas and strategies for lobbying the authorities.

• Relations between NGOs

In the expansive field of NGOs servicing migrants' needs, especially in the Northern Italy, many organisations find the resources to survive and sometimes even to expand. It is, however, a very difficult "economy of survival", far from 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 national level. Furthermore, according to the same perspective a future cohesion seems quite difficult.

It is certain that amongst the NGOs there are great differences in their approach to problems and at times ideological and political divergences. On the other hand, it is also true that in a context of de-structuring the traditional socio-political organisation, the 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 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*). Additionally, an organisation such as FILEF, the Italian Federation of Emigrant Workers and Families, 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).

5. Conclusion

The Italian experience, together with that of other European countries, suggests some interesting models for the integration of immigrants.

First of all, moving from the few considerations that we made on the historical role of the private-social sector in Italy, one can certainly argue 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).

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

Thirdly, access to public services needs to be made easier for newcomers, and these should be restructured so that they can respond to the needs of these groups. Immigrants have greater needs and insecurity due to their unfamiliarity with the administrative structures of the new society. This 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, 2003). 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 multi-cultural socialisation should be improved by further developing a culture of mutual exchange and reciprocal acceptance.

Finally, inclusion remains the great challenge of the coming decades, hence it is necessary to experiment new forms of coexistence in a context of well-defined rights and duties, which reassures natives without penalising newcomers (Caritas, 2003). There is no integration model which works for everybody, thus in the light of our fast-changing social environments it is necessary to develop own models of integration fit to the needs of that specific societal system but at the same time respectful of common European standards.

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