



MIGRATION INTEGRATION EMPLOYMENT THE ITALIAN EXPERIENCE IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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1. PAST AND PRESENT MIGRATION IN ITALY

European migrations from 1846 to 1932 were of huge dimensions if compared to the residing population: 18 million Englishmen and Irishmen, over 15 million Italians, 6 million Portuguese and Spaniards, over 2 million Norwegian and Swedes and more than 5 million citizens of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire in only 90 years.

During the first 100 years since its unity (1860-1960) Italy – leaving out returns – lost 8 million inhabitants who – according to the natural population growth – would have amounted to 14 million units in 1981 (*i.e.* 1/4 of the national population). That contributed to the creation of a memory as well as of a wide network of relations and exchanges: a kind of antidote to mistrust towards new migratory phenomena.

Since the end of the 50's, Italy ceased to be a country of migration to some North European countries, Americas and Australia. In the 70's and 80's, migration flows from Europe faded away and restrictive policies were introduced as regards migration from outside the continent.

In Italy – one of the countries, together with Spain, which were most recently affected by migration – the citizenship for foreigners is subject to a quite long lapse of time. Migrants are allowed to apply for the Italian citizenship after legally residing for a period of 10 years. Theirs sons, if born and residing in Italy since birth, can apply for the Italian citizenship after turning eighteen. In the last 30 years, applications for Italian citizenship have increased from 1 in 1975 to 30,000 in 2004.

In 1995, the estimated number of migrants in Italy was about 1,500,000, equal to 3% of the entire population: the penultimate place in Europe as regards migrants' presence.

The four amnesties granted from 1986 to 1998 regularized the status of about 800,000 migrants. Law n. 189/2002 (the so-called «Bossi-Fini Law») introduced an important new provision: no more a simple admission of an irregular situation but the admission of those migrants having **a fixed-term employment contract**.

In a little more than one year, out of about 700,000 applications, **641,638 temporary residence permits** were issued (equally divided between domestic workers/home helpers and dependent workers) and granted to: Romanians, Ukrainians, Moroccans, Albanians, Ecuadorians, Chinese, Poles, Moldavians, Peruvians and Egyptians

Today there are approximately **2,200,000 legal migrants in Italy**, namely: 60% dependent workers; 24% migrants for family reunification; 5.5% self-employed workers; 2.2% clergies and 1.9% students. They constitute about 4% of the entire population, with a reduction in migration flow compared to the past.

The entry into Italy for reasons of dependent work – including seasonal labour – as well as of self-employment is allowed within the context of **annual entry quotas** defined by a decree of the President of the Council of Ministers.

Italy was one of the first European countries to envisage an annual planning of migration quotas, followed by other countries with a more recent tradition in this field, such as Spain and Greece. The overall quotas were: 89,400 in 2001 and 79,500 from 2002 to 2005. The maximum annual quota comprises the so-called **preferential quotas**, *i.e.* quotas reserved for nationals of countries that have signed or are about to sign specific co-operation agreements in the field of migration (see n. 3).

2. CHALLENGES TO PRESENT ITALIAN MIGRATION POLICY

During the Italian semester of EU Presidency (second half of 2003), Italy promoted a far-reaching migration policy, based on three points:

1. integrated management of European land, sea and air borders through burden sharing, fight against illegal migration as well as against criminal organizations ruthlessly exploiting this phenomenon;
2. regulation of legal migration flows through adequate agreements between the involved countries;
3. aid to development of the origin and transit countries.

The burden of illegal migration needs to be equally shared among all EU countries. This approach eventually reached a general *consensus* and now is totally reflected in the new Multi-annual Programme approved by the European Council in The Hague in November 2004.

In this context, the **European Border Agency (EBA)** is one of the most important Italian initiatives. Officially operative since 1st May 2005, the EBA is **based in Warsaw** (according to a Decision of the JHA Council of last 14th April). This Agency, which satisfies the need to create an integrated system for EU border control, has the following tasks:

1. to simplify and enhance the implementation of existing and future community measures;
2. to ensure standard coordination and application of control measures
3. to deter single countries from undertaking specific actions when activities at community level have already been started;
4. to guarantee the fair burden sharing of responsibilities – including financing costs – among member States.

Italy, forming a considerable part of the Union's sea borders for the length of its coasts, attaches great importance to **Euro-African dialogue** on migration matters. Therefore, the experience gained at national level has been the precondition for promoting a more intense and fruitful dialogue – both political and technical – between Europe and the North African Mediterranean countries. Such a dialogue is aimed at enhancing the fight against illegal migration, while guaranteeing aid to development and bilateral co-operation through a series of agreements and assistance programmes.

Italy contributed to the **lifting of the embargo on Libya** (adopted by Europe in 1986), thus allowing that African country to co-operate in countering illegal migration through prevention, control and assistance activities.

Moreover, Italy promoted a series of joint **programmes and operations**, such as **joint patrolling activities** in Central and Eastern Mediterranean sea («**Progetto Nettuno**», «**Operazione Triton**» and «**Operazione Tetis**»). These surveillance operations were

aimed at monitoring an extensive sea area, traditionally intersected by illegal migration routes connecting North Africa to Sicilian coasts, through the joint and coordinated use of vessels and aircrafts from Italy and EU countries (France, United Kingdom, Malta, Greece and Cyprus, in co-operation with Libya and Tunisia).

Moreover, Italy has proposed a concrete measure relating to the issue of the common rules for repatriation procedures, which was adopted with a Council Decision (April 2004) concerning the organization of joint flights for repatriating third countries' citizens illegally staying in the territory of two or more member States.

Thanks not only to the above-mentioned initiatives, but also to the new legislation as well as to significant preferential quotas granted to co-operating origin countries, illegal migration flows to Italy have sharply decreased. There were about zero illegal arrivals by sea in Apulia and in Calabria and a considerable reduction of arrivals by sea in Sicily. It should be stated that illegal migrants arriving in Italy by sea are no more than 15% of the total amount, while today 1 out of 2 migrants to Italy comes from East Europe. In fact, Italy is a transit country for 70-75% of illegal migrants, *i.e.* of 100 people arriving in Italy, 75 move on to other European countries, underlining the fact that the this phenomenon is a European problem, according to statistical *data*.

But that is not enough. It is necessary not only to monitor or combat illegal migration, but also to open new channels to legal migration, taking account of the different needs of the economic and production system of each country.

In Europe, there is an ongoing debate on the issue of establishing common criteria for the admission of economic migrants. The aim is defining the main problems and finding possible solutions for reaching standard legislation and rules on this matter (*Green Paper on an EU approach to managing economic migration*, 11th January 2005).

A prudent migration policy is the best instrument for combating illegal migration

3. CO-OPERATION WITH COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN AND TRANSIT

The Italian legislation on migration establishes that humanitarian programmes (co-operation and aid) in favour of non-EU Countries shall be implemented provided that these Countries show strong commitment in preventing illegal migration, trafficking in human beings and illegal re-entry of their nationals into Italy after being repatriated. Third countries' commitment is required not only to combat criminal organizations trafficking in illegal migrants (which are devoted to pandering and to the smuggling of drugs and arms too), but also in preventing and suppressing illegal migration flows.

Educational and vocational training programmes in the countries of origin of migrants have been foreseen by the Italian government and also proposed by Italian regional administrations and approved by the Ministries of Education and of Welfare. Their aim is providing training to workers who may wish to work in Italy and the teaching of specific skills to those foreigners who wish to work in specialised sectors.

Since 1996, Italy has signed a number of **bilateral readmission agreements** with the countries of origin and transit.

Italy has signed 29 bilateral readmission agreements with third States (Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Philippines, Georgia, Macedonia, Morocco, Moldavia, Nigeria, Serbia and Montenegro, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tunisia), with EU States (Austria, France, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary) and with candidate States (Bulgaria, Romania).

There are also co-operation agreements for the fight against illegal migration and the smuggling of human beings between the Italian police forces and those of the Balkan countries, North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, *i.e.*: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Romania, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Nigeria, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey.

As regards the practical planning of migration flows, bilateral agreements are useful to assign **preferential quotas** to migrants coming from countries who have signed agreements with Italy.

Italy has persuaded the EU to allocate financial resources from **Aeneas Fund** to the origin countries for minor aid and development projects. The amount of money a European country spends to repatriate 5 or 6 illegal migrants coming from sub-Saharan Africa would be enough to dig a well that could provide water for an entire village and would be enough to irrigate tens of hectares of cultivated land.

A prudent migration policy requires limited resources

4. MIGRANTS' INTEGRATION

The **Ministry of Labour and Social Policies** promotes activities in favour of foreign minors as well as experimental initiatives and pilot projects to promote integration of migrants, with the aim of identifying good practices and encouraging their spreading. It also finances reception measures in case of extraordinary events, Italian language courses, intercultural education, initiatives to help migrants find lodging and to promote social integration.

The Committee Foreign Minors undertakes actions to protect the rights of non-accompanied minors, in conformity with the provisions of the Convention on Children's rights.

The **Non-EU Citizens Service** decides the limit for the quotas of foreigners which are allowed to enter into Italy. It also manages SILES, a computerised network which streamlines red tape for non-EU seasonal workers and allows checks of their effective departure when their contracts expire. SILES links the different actors involved, thus allowing on-line proceedings as well as the assessment of migration flows in real time. This computerised system has been in place since 2002 and it is managed together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior.

Since the early Eighties, the Italian branch of **Caritas**, which operates within the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI), has been dealing with migration and has officially been working with the European Monitoring Body for Migration. It has had a leading role in dealing with social protection, not only from the point of view of assistance, but also, and especially, through an active participation in the awareness and integration process in Italy and through an accurate monitoring and statistical assessment of the main related problems. The **Statistical Report** drawn up by Caritas, which provides every year an accurate overview of migration, is an important instrument not only to interpret the phenomenon, but also to stimulate the political and civil debate, which is needed to identify the necessary actions to favour and guarantee the integration.

The National Organization for the Coordination of Policies on the Social Integration of Foreign Citizens at the Local Level (ONC) was set up in 1998 within the National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL) with the aim of identifying the most adequate measures to be adopted in order to implement an integration policy for foreign citizens. It is made up by representatives of Italian municipalities and regional administrations, representatives of local associations (both unions and entrepreneurs) as well as by representatives of migrants' associations and by the regional general directors of public education and health service. It conducts research and organizes local and national seminars. In September 2004, ONC, together with Caritas, published the **Index of migrants' integration in Italy**, a very useful overview which compares the various regional indices. The activity of this body is of great value in planning social integration at local level.

It is worth of mentioning the **large growth of entrepreneurs**. Small non-EU businessmen have increased by 170% in 5 years from 67,000 in 2000 up to 181,000 in March 2005. They are mainly from Morocco, China and Switzerland (according to the Chamber of Commerce Association's *data*). If compared to the firm's total growth in Italy of just 2% in the same period, these figures are even more significant and give the size of the migrants' integration at the local level. This is as well an important step in reinforcing social cohesion and integration of cultures in Italy.

The **Ministry of Interior** has promoted and supported the «**Statement on inter-faith dialogue and Social Cohesion**», which was adopted by the Heads of State and Government and subsequently included in the Action Plan to combat terrorism approved in the aftermath of 11th March. Later on, after being incorporated in the EU-US Joint Declaration on terrorism, the above-mentioned Declaration was included in the Conclusions on the Implementation, worked out by the recent EU Dutch Presidency.

Italy has started to work in this direction. We have promoted **groups of inter-faith dialogue** within the *Prefettura* (*i.e.*: the highest government authority in the province) of some Italian provinces, with the aim of encouraging a continued dialogue between the different religious communities and between these religious communities and governmental and local institutions.

The first steps have been taken, and this may lead to the setting up of **an Italian Islamic Council** in the near future. But, it must be emphasized, only on certain terms: in order to start a dialogue, it is necessary to have, at least, one common denominator, *i.e.* Italy's democratic legal system and legislation. Those who don't like our democratic system and laws should leave. On the other hand, if they accept them, dialogue is possible, always respecting each other's identity. There is no dialogue without identity.

Different faiths shared values