

Stakeholder Partnerships for the Integration of Migrants - INTEgreat

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Section I. National Plan on Migrant Integration

1. Overview of Italy's National Migrant Integration Strategy

The Italian case is characterized by a considerable delay in the development of a model of integration: for a very long period immigration and integration were managed mainly through administrative regulations, for example through administrative acts of the Ministry of Labor concerning the employment of foreign workers. It was during the mid-1990s that Italy started to approve specific legislative acts to regulate migrant integration processes (Ibrido & Marchese, 2020)¹.

More specifically, at National level the Consolidated Act on Immigration lays down some fundamental provisions on integration law that concern the migrants civic, social, and political rights (Camera dei Deputati, 2021)². The Legislative Act identifies a plurality of activities and interventions aimed at ensuring the social integration of foreigners residing in Italy and establishes that it is the task of the State, regions, and local autonomies, in collaboration with associations of foreigners and with organizations permanently working in their favor, to promote integration (Italian Constitution, 1998)³. Moreover, it defines integration as the process aimed at promoting the cohabitation of Italian citizens with foreigners, respecting the values sanctioned by the Italian Constitution, with the mutual commitment to participate in the economic, social, and cultural life of the society⁴. To this end and to evaluate the level of integration of migrants, the Integration Agreement, a pact between the migrant and the State with specific integration objectives, has been implemented to be followed by the foreign citizen during the period of validity of the residence permit (Chiorco & Criscolo, 2018)⁵.

Despite this initial and generic pact, over time a need emerged for a National Programming Document dedicated exclusively to persons entitled to international protection to define a common strategy and identify effective instruments to promote their full integration within the economic and social system in Italy (Italian Ministry of Interior, 2018)⁶. This necessity has to be read in the light of the condition of initial disadvantage and particular vulnerability of international protection holders who do not enjoy the protection of their country of origin and must start their life over in a new Country, without the possibility of choosing whether to return home, at least in the short term⁷. Therefore, on September 26, 2017, the Ministry of Interior,

¹ Ibrido & Marchese, Integration Policies, Practices and Experiences - Italy Country Report, Paper 2020/54, 2020: p. 14

² Camera dei deputati – Servizio Studio, Diritto di asilo e accoglienza dei migranti sul territorio, 2021: p. 6

³ Italian Constitution, Legislative Decree no. 286/1998, Art. 42, 1998

<https://web.camera.it/parlam/leggi/deleghe/98286dl.htm>

⁴ Italian Constitution, Legislative Decree no. 286/1998, Art. 4bis, 1998

https://www.esteri.it/mae/normative/normativa_consolare/visti/d_lgs_25_luglio_1998_n_286.pdf

⁵ Chiorco & Criscolo, L'integrazione delle persone migranti: un'introduzione ai problemi, 2018: p. 25

⁶ Ministry of the Interior, National Integration Plan for persons entitled to international protection, 2017: p. 10

⁷ Ivi 6: p. 9

within the framework of the National Coordination Board, presented the first **National Integration Plan**.

The National Integration Plan “identifies the lines of intervention for the effective integration of persons entitled to international protection, regarding socio-economic and employment inclusion, by promoting specific programs reinforcing access to employment, access to healthcare and social assistance, housing, language training and education as well as combating discrimination. The plan needs to indicate an estimate of the recipients of the measures of integration, as well as the implementation measures based on programming pertinent to European funds and programs”⁸.

The principles which have guided the development of this Plan are:

1. Integration is a complex process which starts from the first reception and has as its main objective the attainment of personal autonomy.
2. Integration requires the engagement and awareness raising of the host population and must be based in local communities and integrated in the existing local welfare.
3. Specific attention will be dedicated to persons with greater vulnerability, such as refugee women, victims of trafficking and unaccompanied foreign minors⁹.

On the one hand, as we can see from the general principle, integration is defined as a “complex process” that cannot count only on an initial reception but needs to establish specific disposition to facilitate the inclusion into the host society. On the other hand, in line with the above-mentioned Legislative Act, throughout the entire Plan the importance of the commitment to respect the Italian law and values, learn the Italian language, and participate to the social, cultural, and political life of the Country is strongly emphasized. Integration is consequently defined as a pathway that cannot exclude the acceptance of the principles and values of the Italian Constitution and of gender equality, respect for the secularity of the State, and respect for personal freedom (Fondazione ISMU, 2018)¹⁰. Therefore, it is interesting to notice how the learning of the language and civic courses are at the core of the Italian integration process that can consequently be defined as part of a “civic integration model”. It is important to underline that in this kind of model the emphasis is on the responsibility of migrants and their commitment to integration, while the role of the host communities in the integration process remains marginal¹¹.

In this respect, we can notice two major limits of the Italian integration system. First, integration policies may have an assimilative approach because they focus on the requirements that immigrants must satisfy to integrate, whereas there are few or no references to the protection of immigrant cultures and languages (Caneva, 2015)¹². Secondly, the commitment of the host community is not valued enough: integration should not be perceived as a one-way process but

⁸ lvi 6: p. 8

⁹ lvi 6: p. 10

¹⁰ Fondazione ISMU, The Twenty-third Italian Report on Migrations 2017, 2017: p. 118

¹¹ lvi 5: p. 35

¹² Caneva, The integration of migrants in Italy: an overview of policy instruments and actors, Research Report 2014/05, 2014: p. 19

as a two-way process in which migrants are helped to integrate in an inclusive manner and, in turn, make an active effort to achieve an inclusive integration (European Commission, 2020)¹³.

1.1. Priority Areas

The First National Integration Plan is a first step towards the construction of a system of integration for beneficiaries of international protection (that include refugees and subsidiary protection holders) in Italy and it identifies national priorities to achieve an effective integration and remove obstacles that may prevent it¹⁴.

In accordance with the model of multi-level governance, several actors contribute to its planning and implementation: Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and many other Ministries together with UNHCR, IOM, UNAR, Regions, Local Authorities, and subjects from the Third Sector¹⁵.

To better understand the focus and objectives of the plan it is important to examine thoroughly the priority areas:

1. Promote tools for training, professional development, and access to employment opportunities

The Plan considers a priority the socio-economic integration, based on access to employment, of international protection holders. To the extent in which it is work that makes the person an active part of the economic and social system of the community.

For this reason, through an effective collaboration between the national reception system, the private sector, employment services, trade unions, and employers' associations the Plan aims to:

- Create homogeneous guidelines and instruments across the whole Country.
- Promote training and orientation apprenticeships, underlining the importance of the participation of women and the most vulnerable.
- Encourage access to micro-credit services to support the creation of private enterprises and business start-ups, thus fostering the self-employment of third country nationals.
- Incentivize the participation of holders of international protection in the National Civil Service.
- Standardize procedures for the recognition of previous skills and competencies to better orientate pathways for professional requalification and training¹⁶.

¹³ Commissione europea, Comunicazione della commissione al parlamento europeo, al consiglio, al comitato economico e sociale europeo e al comitato delle regioni - piano d'azione per l'integrazione e l'inclusione 2021-2027, 2020: p. 2

¹⁴ lvi 6: p. 35

¹⁵ lvi 6: p. 10

¹⁶ lvi 6: pp. 25-26

2. Facilitate the access to the National Health System

Access to healthcare is a right ratified by the Italian Constitution. All citizens of States not belonging to the European Union, legally resident in Italy and registered with the National Health Service (SSN), are guaranteed parity of treatment and full equality of rights and duties, in line with Italian citizens, in terms of access to healthcare. However, the offer of and access to health services by international protection holders proves to be heterogeneous, with inequalities which burden the most vulnerable subjects, such as victims of trafficking, torture, rape, exploitation, unaccompanied minors, and survivors of shipwrecks¹⁷.

To overcome the obstacles, that will be described in more detail in the sections below, and guarantee an adequate treatment to international protection holders, the Plan aims to:

- Enhance the training of health care staff regarding topics and legislative/cultural aspects connected to international protection holders to build a better worker-patient relationship and increase the use of cultural mediators and intercultural staff in hospitals and health clinics.
- Improve the quantity and quality of information regarding the right to healthcare in Italy but also the appropriate use of healthcare services.
- Reinforce the organization and offer of health services, by defining specific pathways dedicated to each clinical condition, with particular attention to psychiatric cases and post-traumatic stress disorders, by augmenting the number of free services offered, and by enhancing prevention programs with reference to vaccinations, screening, and protection of the health of both mother and child¹⁸.

3. Promote access to education and capacity building activities

Learning of the Italian language represents a right but also a duty, since it constitutes an essential prerequisite for a concrete path towards social integration, fundamental for the interaction with the local community, for access to the labour market and public services. The objective is to incentivize the learning of the Italian language in the entire migrants' reception system, with particular attention to the design and implementation of the "Regional plans for linguistic training", funded by the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)¹⁹. In this regard the main objectives of the Plan are:

- To better evaluate the level of literacy and linguistic capacity of the student an initial test must always be arranged to help define the level and most suitable teaching methods.
- Providing specific support initiatives for those who are illiterate.
- Making mandatory the participation of the hosts, starting from the system of first reception, in the language courses provided in these centres, adopting all the measures necessary to improve participation, including the provision of incentives linked to paths of social-work inclusion and by providing economic penalties.

¹⁷ Ivi 6: p. 26

¹⁸ Ivi 6: pp. 26-27

¹⁹ Ivi 6: p. 23

- Incentivize the participation in language courses available outside of the centres, often offered by adult training centres or by civil society organisations.
- Providing language courses with teachers specialised in the teaching of level L2 Italian, with the use of interactive and experimental methodologies.

Together with the learning of the Italian language, the possibility of accessing education is one of the pillars for a true path of integration. In this respect, the Plan suggests that the Italian school system, which is universal and free, should address some of the challenges connected with the access to public education by implementing actions aimed at supporting the families of people entitled to protection and by facilitating the recognition of degrees and qualifications obtained in the Country of origin²⁰.

Apart from training migrants in the Italian language, the Italian National Plan does not highlight the significant role of vocational and professional training in the integration of third country nationals.

4. Support Interreligious Dialogue

This is considered a fundamental instrument of integration also to prevent the phenomena of radicalization on one side and the spread of racism and the risk of Islamophobia on the other. Especially with regards to Islamic religion, it is worth mentioning the National pact for an Italian Islam established in 2017 that provides, a series of clear undertaking in the path of integration. Among these, it is of fundamental importance to train a class of recognized imams who conduct their sermons in Italian and who shall be able to ward off the dangerous phenomenon of “do-it-yourself preachers”. The Pact establishes that mosques shall be open to the participation of all citizens, in such a manner as to favours mutual knowledge, as well as providing transparency and information on the birth of new communities, and their sources of funding, both internal and international. In line with this Pact, the National Plan aims to:

- Continue the path of dialogue and reciprocal awareness.
- Promote a greater awareness of the institutional and social reality in Italy for those members of religious communities who have not signed agreements with the State.
- Support the opening of places of worship in conditions of total transparency and following the right to religious freedom²¹.

5. Promote paths for access to housing and residence

Acknowledging how access to housing in Italy remains a challenge for a high number of low-income Italians and foreigners, the objective for the next two-years is to allow holders of international protection to access the welfare services made available by Regional and Local Governments and to guarantee them, across the entire Country, the right to obtain municipal residency²².

²⁰ lvi 6: p. 24

²¹ lvi 6: pp. 22-23

²² lvi 6: pp. 27-28

6. Support family reunification

The Plan recognizes, the fulfilment of the right to family unity, and therefore, to reunification²³. Family reunification, with the possibility of reconstructing a family unit, creates the foundation for true integration. The separation of members of a family, in fact, can have devastating consequences for the psycho-physical well-being of individuals. For a person entitled to protection this separation is often accompanied by the absence of news on their family members and uncertainty regarding their safety. This condition of insecurity leads to a profound psychological distress which can represent a strong obstacle to the path of integration.²⁴

7. Implement participatory processes and active citizenship

The creation of opportunities of direct encounter between holders of international protection and the Italian society can support the development of a sense of belonging and, at the same time, improve the exchange and mutual knowledge with the Italian citizens. Socializing activities such as sports, artistic and cultural events, as well as forms of civic participation such as volunteering, are important integration tools for international protection holders²⁵.

8. Prevent and fight discrimination

In 2015, Italy promulgated the "National Action Plan against Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance". According to the National Office Against Racial Discrimination (UNAR), cases of direct and indirect discrimination concerning persons entitled to international protection are increasing. In this regard, the Plan intends to prevent, document, and combat the most common forms of discrimination²⁶.

In all the sectors above analysed it is essential to keep in mind the importance of gender issues and the necessity to consider the vulnerabilities deriving from gender-based violence. Specific attention must be reserved to women victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It is necessary that the actions envisaged by the "National Action Plan against trafficking and the serious exploitation of human beings", adopted in February 2016, are implemented in full. Most of these women arrive in Italy after a journey characterised by abuse, violence, and various types of exploitation. Therefore, they need special support in overcoming their traumas, with dedicated medical and psychological support, the presence of staff with experience dealing with gender-based violence and the involvement of social services and various civil society actors²⁷.

The following points in the National Plan highlight some actions to support vulnerable women:

- Create standard procedures and guidelines for the prevention and immediate response to sexual and gender-based violence for the staff who work in reception centres.

²³ lvi 6: p. 7

²⁴ lvi 6: p. 28

²⁵ lvi 6: p. 32

²⁶ lvi 6: p. 30

²⁷ lvi 6: p. 18

- Revise the structure of most reception centres and provide separate accommodation, as well as toilet facilities, for women together with other initiatives aimed at improving their safety and well-being.
- All reception centres must include female reference staff for cultural mediation services, as well as lawyer and doctors to inform women of the services offered, to promote their health, including reproductive health and rights, and to facilitate access to specialist services for victims of violence and trafficking.
- Guarantee special support for women with reception needs, such as pregnant women, mothers with young children and other vulnerable categories²⁸.

2. Alignment with Plan European Action on Integration & Inclusion 2021-2027

The National Integration Plan for persons entitled to international protection in Italy mirrors the new European Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 in several ways.

The Italian National Integration Plan (INIP) addresses the four main dimensions of the INTEgreat project: training and capacity building, healthcare, employment, and social cohesion to foster the integration of the target group, TCN (Third Country Nationals).

Following the structure proposed by the European Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021- 2027 (EAPII) the similarities and differences will be highlighted to point out the main elements from both documents and provide a better understanding of the relatively good practices.

2.1. Capacity Building & Training

The mass migration faced recently in 2015 with the arrival of middle eastern nationals in Europe and the current wave coming from Afghanistan and Ukraine in 2022, has highlighted the importance of education and training in the hosting societies as key to integrate the newcomers into a new reality. One of the pillars of this dimension is the linguistic sphere, in this regard the INIP mentions that learning of the Italian language represents a right but also a duty, since it constitutes an essential prerequisite for a concrete path towards social integration, fundamental for the interaction with the local community, for access to the labour market and public services²⁹. In a similar way the EAPII states that learning the language of the host country is crucial in order to successfully integrate. However, this should not stop a few months after arrival. Language classes should be supported also for intermediate and advanced courses and tailored to the needs of different groups. Combining language training with the development of other skills or work experience and with accompanying measures like childcare has proven to be particularly effective in improving access to and the outcome of language training³⁰.

²⁸ Ivi 6: p. 19

²⁹ Ivi 6: p. 23

³⁰ Ivi 13: p. 10

In terms of education and training the INIP states that the education system, in its universal and free existence, represents for young refugees the natural path for the full insertion into Italian society and for the possible attainment of citizenship³¹. For the EAPII, from early childhood education and care (ECEC) to tertiary and adult education and non-formal education, education and training is the foundation for successful participation in society and one of the most powerful tools for building more inclusive societies. The EAPII considers the effects of COVID-19 in relation to the inclusion and equal opportunities for migrants regarding education and the urgency to improve the levels of equality among the students.

EAPII states that by knowing the language and being accepted in the educational system, the migrants should also learn and gain an understanding of the laws, culture, and values of the receiving society as early as possible, through civic orientation courses, to guarantee their participation into society. The INIP's approach gives attention to enhancing the opportunities of gatherings and dialogue between persons entitled to international protection and natives, to support the development of a sense of belonging and stability in the exchange and mutual knowledge with Italian citizens³².

The local and regional authorities play a big role in the inclusion of training and capacity building in the hosting societies. EAPII states that building the capacity of local and regional authorities involving local communities in the design and implementation of integration measures and programs is a key aspect. The following is exemplified in the financing of projects that promote volunteering actions co-designed by migrants and host communities. It is also seen in the promotion of mentoring and buddy programs between local communities and newly arrived migrants³³. The INIP mentions the importance to enhance communication strategies that favour dialogue between persons entitled to protection and host communities to dismantle false perceptions. The various levels of government – national, regional, and local – should develop a coordinated communication strategy both towards holders of international protection and towards the public, initiating also new initiatives of internal communication among the institutional actors working in this field³⁴.

Both documents highlight the importance of deploying EU funds efficiently and wisely in the education and training area at regional and national level.

2.2. Healthcare

According to the Italian National Integration Plan, access to healthcare is a right ratified by the Italian Constitution³⁵.

Despite that, the European Plan states that insufficient access to healthcare services can be a major obstacle to integration and inclusion, affecting virtually all areas of life, including employment and education. Migrants are confronted with specific persistent barriers to accessing healthcare services, including administrative hurdles, fears linked to uncertainties

³¹ Ivi 6: p. 8

³² Ivi 6: p. 32

³³ Ivi 13: p.17

³⁴ Ivi 6: p. 34

³⁵ Ivi 6: p. 25

about the duration of their stay, discrimination, lack of information and of familiarity with the healthcare system, and linguistic and intercultural obstacles. Migrant women face additional challenges as they tend to have lower proficiency in the host country language, weaker social networks, and greater responsibilities for childcare and family.³⁶

The contingency generated by the COVID-19 brought a new challenge to the world which exacerbated the difficulty of migrants in accessing healthcare services. The INIP does not consider the pandemic since it was written before the outbreak, while the EAPII highlights the inequalities the pandemic brought regarding access to healthcare and the urgency to facilitate it to migrants.

Migrants' needs vary considerably depending on various factors such as gender, culture, creed etc. and addressing them is key to foster their integration. For example, the EAPII gives particular attention to the different phases of pregnancy in women and how their access to specific health services and rights should be facilitated. The INIP emphasizes the importance of increasing the protection of the health of both mother and child but does not clearly mention pregnancy.

Both the EAPII and the INIP highlight how, local health personnel should be trained to address the most common challenges migrants have previously faced such as human trafficking, gender-based violence and trauma. For instance, most migrant women arrive in Italy after a journey characterized by abuse, violence, and various types of exploitation³⁷.

When dealing with vulnerable populations such as TCNs, addressing mental health access is vital. As mentioned in the EAPII migrants, especially refugees, may be at higher risk of developing mental health problems due to trauma experienced in their Country of origin, difficulties encountered during their migration journey or post-arrival experiences, such as social isolation or discrimination. However, they often face obstacles in accessing mental health services³⁸. In this area, the INIP suggests the importance of offering a systematic survey of the needs of the most vulnerable sections of the population, including holders of international protection, with the involvement of migrant communities and associations and a particular focus on mental health and disability, minors, women, female genital mutilations (FGM), gender – based violence (GBV), and LGTBI people.

Overall, as observed in the analysis of the INIP and the EAPII, providing and enhancing the training to healthcare personnel is essential to address migrants' needs. Both plans focus on engaging the Member States to “foster equal access to affordable healthcare using EU funds” through a multi stakeholder approach as a strategy to guarantee the best management of funds.

2.3. Employment

When economic crises hit societies, the most vulnerable are more exposed to the collateral effects. Engaging migrants in the local economy becomes pivotal for integrating them in the host society. An active participation in the local economy is a way to start the integration process. Both the EAPII and INIP recognize the fundamental role migrants play in the EU workforce. On

³⁶ Ivi 13: p. 13

³⁷ Ivi 6: p. 18

³⁸ Ibidem 36

the one hand, EAPII highlights that many migrants arrive with skills that are highly needed in our labour markets, but they often face difficulties in having them valued and finding jobs that reflect their skill level. Above a quarter of migrants are highly educated but, in many cases, they can't put their skills to use since their qualifications are not recognized. Due to this situation almost 40% are overqualified for the job they do³⁹. Migrant women are at particularly high risk of being over-qualified for their job, which may lead to depreciation of their skills. They tend to face greater obstacles and more limited access to support. Also, the challenges migrants with disabilities face in accessing jobs should be addressed so that they can participate in the labour market like everyone else. To this end, INIP stresses the importance of verifying and recognizing previous work experience of international protection holders, in order to favour their access to the labour market⁴⁰ by standardizing the procedures for the recognition of previous skills and competencies to better orientate pathways for professional requalification and training. Overall, skill recognition is equally highlighted in both documents, indicating the urgency to deploy availability of this option in an efficient and affordable way that, in the end, will benefit both the migrants and the hosting Country⁴¹.

The promotion and support of entrepreneurship plays a significant role in both the INIP and the EAPII. The INIP indicates that in innovative sectors, offering instruments such as micro-credit, services supporting business start-ups, and improving general access to credit for international protection holders would improve migrants' entrepreneurial abilities⁴². Similarly, the EAPII states that migrants' entrepreneurs contribute to economic growth, create jobs, and can support the post COVID-19 recovery. However, they face several challenges, such as a lack of networks, difficulties in accessing credit and insufficient knowledge of the regulatory and financial framework. Access to financial information and increased financial literacy can play an important role in overcoming these challenges. The availability in accessing financial services is essential for all migrants to fully participate in a country's economy or build a stable life for themselves and their families, including sending remittances. Digital finance can help in making financial services more accessible. Effective inclusion of migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background into the labour market requires the active collaboration of a large variety of actors, including public authorities at local, regional, national, and European level, civil society organizations, economic and social partners, and employers⁴³.

2.4. Social Cohesion

In recent years Europe has witnessed a significant arrival of migrants who brought with them cultures, religions, and traditions from their Country of origin. This phenomenon has triggered the need to adopt diverse ways to integrate migrants in host societies. The INIP highlights a model of integration inspired by what is provided by the 1948 Italian Constitution, which leaves the regulation of relationships between the State and religious faiths to a process of reciprocal understanding. The constituent, consistently with the principles sanctioned in article 2, supports a logic of open dialogue and exchange with minorities of all kinds, a precious paradigm for today's

³⁹ Ivi 13: p. 2

⁴⁰ Ivi 6: p. 24

⁴¹ Ivi 6: p. 23

⁴² Ivi 6: p. 26

⁴³ Ivi 13: p. 17

governance of integration of foreign residents. In this way, any dialogue or interaction, in order to be authentic and effective, must be based on a common language and defined principles. In order to be real communication, it is necessary that the interlocutors agree on the rules of the shared language: in this case these are represented by the guiding principles and values of the Republican Constitution, a non-negotiable pillar upon which our citizenship pact is founded⁴⁴. The EAPII, describes social cohesion as giving equal opportunities to all to enjoy their rights and participate in community and social life, regardless of the background and in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights. It also means respecting common European values as enshrined in the EU Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, including democracy, the rule of law, the freedoms of speech and religion, as well as the rights to equality and non-discrimination. These fundamental values are an essential part of living and participating in European society. They are also the reasoning behind the creation of the 'Promoting our European way of life' portfolio within the European Commission – defending the simple but essential premise that everybody matters, that no one should be left behind, and that all should be able to effectively exercise their rights and have access to opportunities and security⁴⁵.

In both documents, the social cohesion dimension takes in consideration the migrants as actors with agency, meaning that they are entitled to receiving the benefits offered by the hosting Country but as part of it they are accountable for the obligations within the Country in terms of learning the language, civic rules and participating in the economy. EAPII clearly states that ensuring effective integration and inclusion of migrants in the EU is a social and economic investment that makes European societies more cohesive, resilient, and prosperous. Integration and inclusion can and should be a win-win process, benefiting the entire society. The integration process involves the host society, which should create the opportunities for the migrants' full economic, social, cultural, and political participation. It also involves adaptation by migrants who all have rights and responsibilities in relation to their new Country of residence⁴⁶. In the case of INIP, in article 3 of the Italian Constitution the equal social dignity of all those who reside in Italy is recognized before the law, ensuring that integration leads, alongside holding of the same rights, to the obligation to respect the same duties and the assumption of the same responsibilities. Therefore, not simply commitment to respect Italian laws, but also a commitment to learn the language and to participate in the economic, social, and cultural life of the Country⁴⁷.

The religious sphere is crucial when understanding the backgrounds and creed of the migrant population as well as the local culture in the host countries and both plans on integration, Italian and European, dedicate a section to this area. As mentioned in Section I of this document, the INIP proposes the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue to foster the creation of new opportunities for reciprocal exchange within local communities, as well as between the communities and the broader society, also for the purpose of preventing and countering the spread of racism and islamophobia. This is shown in the National Pact for an Italian Islam signed in 2017, as an expression of an open, integrated community, which adheres to the values and principles of the national legal system⁴⁸. The EAPII seeks to strengthen inter-religious dialogue

⁴⁴ Ivi 6: p. 5

⁴⁵ Ivi 6: p. 1

⁴⁶ Ibidem 45

⁴⁷ Ivi 6: p. 5

⁴⁸ Ivi 6: p. 6

among communities, support cities in preventing radicalization by providing funding, guidance and training to practitioners and local actors, including the Radicalization Awareness Network and the EU Cities Against Radicalization initiative⁴⁹.

According to the EAPII around 34 million inhabitants were born outside the EU (around 8% of the EU population) and 10% of young people (15-34 years) born in the EU have at least one foreign-born parent, hence the importance of fostering a multicultural understanding of diverse backgrounds. The Italian National Integration Plan does not mention the role that the diaspora plays in the inclusion of newcomers in the host society with regards to including them in businesses, promoting new investments, innovation, and development, while the European Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion clearly states that: “local level plays a key role in welcoming and guiding newcomers when they first arrive in their new Country. In addition, civil society organizations, educational institutions, employers and socio-economic partners, social economy organizations, churches, religious and other philosophical communities, youth and students’ organizations, diaspora organizations as well as migrants themselves play a key role in achieving a truly effective and comprehensive integration policy”⁵⁰.

The EAPII states that integration is a societal process where the responsibility rests not with one particular group but rather with many: migrants, host communities, public authorities and institutions, social and economic partners, civil society organizations, churches, religious and other philosophical communities and the private sector. Empowering both migrants and host communities to actively engage in the integration process is essential to achieve sustainable and successful integration. It is also important to ensure that all levels of governance – European, national, macro-regional, cross border, regional and local – are fully involved in designing and implementing integration strategies, so as to maximize the effectiveness of the actions. In the INIP, integration represents that process aimed at promoting the coexistence of Italian and foreign citizens, respecting the values ratified by the Italian Constitution, with the reciprocal commitment to participate in the economic social and cultural life of society⁵¹.

3. Role of the local authorities and third sector

The approach of the National Integration Plan designs a systematic multi-level and multi-sectoral action to which regional governments, local authorities and civil society have to contribute to, through increased coordination, to allow the full inclusion of foreigners within the host community.

On the one hand, in Italy organizations of the third sector working on the protection and promotion of the rights of migrants and of those entitled to protection, are well established and active across the Country. Some of these organizations are represented and coordinated by the Tavolo Asilo, an instrument for civil society in governmental processes, which is included in the National Coordination Council⁵².

⁴⁹ Ivi 13: p. 16

⁵⁰ Ivi: 13p. 8

⁵¹ Ivi 13: p. 8

⁵² Ivi 6: p. 16

These organizations are very different in terms of type and dimensions, and in terms of the activities that they undertake: from local or national associations born with the specific objective of working on immigration and/or the rights to asylum, to large scale networks of associations, of religious or secular inspiration, which have started to work on migration more recently, up to the Italian articulations of international networks of associations and international and/or inter-governmental organizations⁵³. All of them perform a significant role in the following contexts:

Informing and raising the awareness of the Italian public on the right to asylum, the causes of migratory flows, evacuees, asylum seekers, refugees, and displaced persons, as well the details of their presence in Italy, Europe, and the world.

Reception, assistance, information, and orientation at local and national levels, with actions aimed at supporting persons seeking protection in Italy. NGOs and CSOs perform a central role in constructing the conditions for the starting and consolidating positive processes of social inclusion and integration.

Protection and promotion of human rights, supporting the intervention of specialized operators and cultural mediators, as well as specialized lawyers, often from the moment of arrival at the border, to allow potential asylum seekers to access the procedure of international protection.

Influencing the choices and procedures of local, regional, and national authorities, as well as international and EU institutions⁵⁴.

Therefore, we can affirm that the Plan recognizes the centrality of civil society organizations in the process of social integration.

On the other hand, regions, and local authorities play an important role, not only in the management, but also in the planning of most policies and programs. Specifically, in what is essentially a highly decentralized system, the central level has a general direction and coordination role, while regions and local authorities plan and implement all policies related to the socio-economic inclusion of migrants. Moreover, the intensification of the migration phenomena and new priorities in terms of inclusion and integration of newcomers have led many regions to update their laws: in general, regional governments are responsible for planning, managing, coordinating and evaluating regional policies and allocating financial resources for their implementation, and have a central role in defining policies related to welfare and access to social services. More recently, regional legislation has called for a greater role for municipalities and local governments in the area of immigration and, specifically, integration. Local governments, in fact, are no longer conceived exclusively as terminals of regional policies, but as true protagonists of their elaboration and implementation, particularly with regards to welfare interventions. The areas of direct responsibility of the Regions and local authorities range from health care, education and social services to Italian language training, promotion of cultural mediation services, access to housing and access to work and training⁵⁵.

In this regard, it is important to underline that the Italian administrative decentralization took place starting in the early 1990s and culminated in a proper political devolution with the 2001

⁵³ Ivi 6: p. 15

⁵⁴ Ibidem 52

⁵⁵ Ivi 6: pp. 15-16

reform of Title V of the Constitution. The reform envisaged a quasi-federalist state structure and assigned to the regions complete authority on matters of social policy, immigrant integration included: regions became fully responsible for deciding which lines of intervention to prioritize in the social policy field and, therefore, if and to what extent to engage in supporting immigrants' integration. At the same time, relations with local authorities became more complex due to the social assistance reform approved in 2000 (Law n. 320/2000), which envisaged a participative process in formulating local welfare policies: the regional territory has been divided in "social zones" (task-specific units composed by local authorities) that have to approve their own social plans (Piani di Zona), following the regional guidelines. Nevertheless, since the mid-2000s, the national government has sought to regain some influence over the immigrant integration policy field. This re-centralization has led to the main current problem of Italian integration policies: national and regional policies often contradict or are in conflict with each other. Notwithstanding these contradictions, the regions and the local authorities remain crucial institutional nodes for the shaping of immigrant integration policies (Compomori & Caponio, 2017)⁵⁶. Moreover, since integration policies are decided and implemented by regions and municipalities, their implementation is not homogeneous across Italy. It depends on various factors, e.g., the socio-economic conditions of regions or their willingness to implement interventions for immigrants. In general, their implementation is more effective in the northern regions, where social and welfare services are more efficient and where most immigrants live⁵⁷.

Another aspect to be highlighted is the urgency to overcome the system of emergency reception centres (CAS- Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria) and to enhance the adhesion of municipalities to the SPRAR system. As the national reception system moves towards, adopting the smaller, locally distributed SPRAR model, it is urgent for emergency reception centres to align their provision of services and activities aimed towards socio-economic integration (primarily language and professional training as well as general orientation to public services) to those offered in the SPRAR system. Further, the emergency centres must be distributed on the basis of the recent "National Distribution Plan" agreed with the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), which provides for the direct engagement of local authorities in the design of a reception system spread across the Country, lining the services of the reception centres to the local welfare system, and involving local communities and civil society actors in a wide social support network⁵⁸.

While awaiting the full implementation of the SPRAR system across the Country, services aimed at integration should be included in all reception centres, with particular attention to the emergency reception system, especially in the cases in which these perform the role of centres of second reception (where people tend to spend longer periods of time)⁵⁹.

To conclude, a most recent document issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, which aims at outlining some priorities for the period 2021-2027 in the light of the experience gained so far after the implementation of the National Plan, stresses the importance of strengthening

⁵⁶ Compomori & Caponio, Immigrant integration policymaking in Italy: regional policies in a multi-level governance perspective, *International Review of Administrative Science* Vol. 83(2), 2017: p. 308

⁵⁷ Ivi 12: p.15

⁵⁸ Ivi 6: p. 17

⁵⁹ Ivi 6: p. 18

the inter-institutional cooperation with Regions and Social Authorities and reinforcing the partnership with social partners, public and private sector, third sector bodies and associations that carry out activities in favour of migrants. It suggested to:

- Improve the services offered to migrants by increasing the interaction between different types of services (labour, social, etc.) and between different actors involved in the provision of these services (regions, local authorities, third sector actors, employment centres, educational agencies, etc.).
- Improve the cooperation between local administrations through dialogue on the different topics of intervention.
- Promote the availability of data and tools for improving the knowledge of the migration phenomena in Italy and, more specifically, of integration, also by promoting cooperation between public bodies holding data on integration policies (Italian Ministry of Labor, 2022)⁶⁰.

Section II. Literature Analysis

4. Legal & Politic Framework Relating to Migrants on the Four Dimensions

4.1. Healthcare

The Italian healthcare system adopts the so-called “universal healthcare model”, which is funded mostly through general taxation and provides essential care to anyone in need. In theory, foreigners, refugees, and asylum seekers should have the same right of access to health services as Italians: Article 32 of the Italian Constitution provides that health is both a matter of public safety and an “individual right”; the same article states that the Italian Republic “guarantees free treatment to the most deprived (Villa et al, 2018)⁶¹. However, Articles 34 and 35 of Legislative Decree No. 286/1998 introduce a distinction between foreign nationals enrolled in the National Health Service and other foreign citizens⁶².

The first group includes some categories (foreign nationals with a regular residence permit, unaccompanied minors, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection) who are required to register with the National Health Service and can benefit from its services to the same degree as Italian citizens⁶³. In this regard, the Consolidated Act on Immigration states that foreign citizens with a regular residence permit, once registered with the National Health Service “have the right to equal treatment and the same rights and duties of Italian citizens⁶⁴. Registration entitles them to the following services: (i) choice of a general practitioner from the list of the Local Health Board; (ii) free hospitalization in public hospitals and some private subsidized

⁶⁰ Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, Programmazione integrate pluriennale in tema di lavoro, integrazione e inclusione, 2022: pp. 29-30.

⁶¹ Villa et al, Migrants and integration: a challenge for the future, 2018: p. 41

⁶² Ivi 1: p. 45

⁶³ Ibidem 76

⁶⁴ Ibidem 75

facilities; and (iii) gynaecological and midwifery visits. However, access to the SSN is not always easy: medical personnel usually only speak Italian and the language barrier as well as the lack of cultural mediators can hinder mutual understanding between patient and health care worker, moreover, bureaucratic delays in the issuance of health cards and renewal of residence permits have made access to health care more difficult⁶⁵.

Whereas the second group – which is composed of other foreigners, irregular migrants in particular – are eligible to receive urgent or essential outpatient and hospital treatment in public facilities, as well as prolonged treatment for diseases and injuries, and may access programmes of preventive medicine for the protection of individual and collective health according to Article 35, that states that foreign citizens illegally living on Italian soil “are insured [...] emergency outpatient and hospital care or any other essential care for illness and injury”. It guarantees the protection of pregnancy and maternity, the protection of the child’s health, vaccinations, and the treatment of infectious diseases. These services “are provided without charge to the applicants if they lack sufficient economic resources”. To further protect irregular foreigners, Article 35, paragraph 5, establishes that access to health facilities by irregular foreigners “may not involve any kind of reporting to the authority, unless the report is mandatory”⁶⁶.

Finally, the National Health System provides specialized services to support migrants with mental problems. According to Article 1 of Legislative Decree No. 18/2014, which implements EU Directive 2011/95, the Ministry of Health must adopt guidelines concerning assistance and rehabilitation interventions, as well as the treatment of mental disorders of refugees and asylum seekers. Such guidelines were adopted on March 2017 and attempted to harmonize the various approaches already taken in the national territory. Although the guidelines identify all refugees as a “vulnerable group”, they devote special attention to the needs of 2 vulnerable subgroups: women and minors (especially unaccompanied minors)⁶⁷.

To respond to the above-mentioned gaps in the access to the Public Health System, several actions have been implemented at local level. From the experience of Ballafon we can mention:

- agreement with Banco Farmaceutico, in order to guarantee the provision of a certain set of medicines for the persons who live in the reception centres.
- creation of free medical centres that can provide first consultation and, if needed, referrals to other structures.
- presence within the CAS of Psychologists that can be available for the persons in need.

4.2. Employment

According to Article 22 of Legislative Decree No. 142/2015 of the Italian Constitution, asylum applicants can already start working 60 days after they have submitted an asylum application. Moreover, Article 25 of Legislative Decree No. 251/2007 clarifies that foreign nationals who have been granted refugee or subsidiary protection status “are entitled to the same treatment provided for Italian nationals regarding paid employment, self-employment, and inclusion in

⁶⁵ Ibidem 76

⁶⁶ Ibidem 75

⁶⁷ Ivi 1: p. 47

professional registers, vocational training and on-the-job training”⁶⁸. With regards to the labour integration at national level, the main responsible body is the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies that coordinates policies for the social and labour integration of foreign immigrants and finances projects with national and European funds, such as the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (FAMI). In 2011 it launched an integrated program of measures and interventions, entrusting most of their implementation to the technical agency “Italia Lavoro”, which, with the project “Planning and management of migration policies”, has carried out a series of actions aimed at structural improvement of the system's capacity, strengthening inter-institutional cooperation, and improving the planning of migration, labour and integration policies at central and territorial level (Accorinti, 2017)⁶⁹.

In the framework of the new programming of Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020, the National Operational Program of the ESF provides for actions aimed at identifying models of social intervention and pursuing the active inclusion of groups at risk of exclusion, among which are included beneficiaries of international protection. Specifically in regard with the employment sector, the Operational National Program outlines a strategy aimed at increasing participation in the labor market, promoting social inclusion and improving the quality of human capital of the most vulnerable (women, elderly workers, immigrants, and persons at risk of social exclusion and poverty)⁷⁰. At national level, the new document of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies for an integrated multiannual programming on employment, integration and inclusion suggests several guidelines in order to improve the quality of work by strengthening employment and maintaining the conditions of regularity of the most vulnerable categories of third-country nationals and potential victims of exploitation⁷¹.

At regional level, program agreements have been signed with the regions for the planning of actions that follow the priorities identified by the Ministry of Labour. In this sense, the two main authorities responsible for the integration of refugee and asylum seekers into the labour market at local level are the Public Employment Services (PES, Centri per l'Impiego) and the System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR – SIPROIMI)⁷².

On the one hand, the Public Employment Services (PES) are administrative bodies to which asylum seekers and refugees with residence permits have the possibility of registering. Among other things, registration enables them to be informed about job placement opportunities, also with the support of cultural and language mediators⁷³. Despite the utility of these services, their weakness results in a difficulty in assessing and recognizing education certificates and the skills of immigrants from abroad, as already highlighted in both the Italian National Integration Plan and the European Action Plan for Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 in Section I of this report. Official documents from an immigrant's homeland are required, and they have to be translated by a professional translator authorized by a courthouse. After recognition of the validity of a foreign diploma, the Italian authorities require that an immigrant overcomes several exams in an

⁶⁸ Ivi 1: p. 24

⁶⁹ Accorinti et al, Politiche e pratiche sociali per l'integrazione socio-lavorativa dei beneficiari di protezione internazionale/umanitaria in Italia, 2017: pag. 31

⁷⁰ Ivi 62: pp. 31-32

⁷¹ Ivi 60: p. 31

⁷² Ibidem 61

⁷³ Ibidem 61

Italian university. For refugees, it is often particularly difficult to obtain the original diploma from their homeland and to afford the costs of the procedure (Ambrozini, 2017)⁷⁴.

On the other hand, SPRAR– SIPROIMI offers a wide range of services, which are also aimed at fostering the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into the labour market. In particular, an active labour policy is implemented through extracurricular traineeships, a measure which aims to favour contact between the labour market and potential workers through a learning experience⁷⁵. Similarly, also the CAS system (Extraordinary Reception Centres) offers at local level work orientation initiatives, aimed at both the direct search for employment or the support during the different phases of the process (contact with the company, preparation for the interview, skills assessment, CV writing, monitoring of the job, etc.), and the activation of traineeship in collaboration with municipalities or private actors (Italian Ministry of Interior, 2017)⁷⁶. Other than in vocational training, asylum seekers and refugees can also be involved in volunteer activities, such as cleaning or gardening in urban public spaces. There are a great variety of local ad hoc activities promoted by municipal authorities and by third sector organizations, diversified in terms of the number of asylum seekers involved, duration, and management. However, a common feature is that the asylum seekers benefitting these projects cannot receive any compensation for their commitment. In fact, the main limit of these initiatives in terms of fostering asylum seekers access to the labour market, lies in the fact that these activities are mostly perceived to be a form of giving back in exchange for the reception granted by the Italian State, and as a tool to mitigate local population resistance to refugees' reception, rather than a way to improve refugees' professional skills and increase their possibility to find regular employment⁷⁷. Finally, also the civil society is actively engaged in labour market integration and the efforts of such organizations complement those of the public authorities. In particular, they offer several fundamental services (language courses, cultural mediation, identification of skills and aptitudes, volunteer work, training and education, education about the rights and duties of workers, internships, legal assistance, etc.) which facilitate integration into the labour market⁷⁸.

Specifically, in the Lombardy Region and Varese province it is interesting to mention the agreement signed on June 22, 2016, by the Ministry of the Interior and Confindustria in its capacity of representative body of the national business reality. The agreement aimed at the implementation of training internship projects in favour of refugees and holders of international protection, to enhance their professional skills and orient them towards job placement. The agreement is being implemented in several provinces, including Varese, where the respective Prefectures, in synergy with the local SPRAR representatives, identified the companies and beneficiaries who took part in the internships. The initiative is an example of how the phenomenon of migration can be taken as an opportunity to respond effectively to the challenges of the changing economic and social scenario of the country, giving centrality to the

⁷⁴ M. Ambrozini, Peer Review on "Integration of refugees into the labour market", European Commission, 2017: p. 6

⁷⁵ Ivi 1: p. 25

⁷⁶ Ministry of Interior, Le iniziative di buona accoglienza e integrazione dei migranti in Italia, 2017: p. 38

⁷⁷ Ivi 67: p. 5

⁷⁸ Ivi 1: p. 28

synergy between institutions and the productive world for social, civil, and economic development⁷⁹.

Anyway, despite all the above-mentioned laws and practices, ensuring access to the labour market remains a challenge, given both the economic recession of recent years and the specific difficulties of particularly vulnerable people who, in addition to the language barrier, often cannot demonstrate previous work skills, do not enjoy the support of a social network, do not have a stable housing situation, may suffer discrimination and have physical and psychological health problems⁸⁰. Moreover, the uncertainty related to the outcome of the asylum application is another big obstacle for the labour integration. This difficulty is particularly amplified due to the length of the procedure, which can last up to two years or more. In this regard, the national government recently intervened to speed up the procedure, increasing the number of evaluation commissions for asylum applications and restricting the possibility to appeal against a negative decision. The legal service of the Italian Ministry of Labour also specified that asylum seekers can keep their jobs until the end of the procedure, even if they have received a negative answer to their first application. However, at the local level authorities have often allowed employers to dismiss asylum seekers at work after a first rejection⁸¹.

4.3. Capacity Building & Training

Alongside measures for beneficiaries of protection, migration policies have been managed through the implementation of capacity building projects for a better planning and organization of local services⁸².

Knowledge of the services provided on the territory (health services, population registers, the school system for minors and educational courses for adults, but also banking and postal circuits, shopping centres, places of cultural interest, etc.) represents the strategic link for regaining autonomy. Therefore, starting from the need to inform, orient and accompany migrants, many Prefectures have focused on the strengthening of existing services or the creation of new tools, mostly with the help of the ESF and FAMI funds (Capacity Building Action). Similar interventions of introduction of intercultural mediation service, training and updating of the staff of the Single Desk for Immigration, strengthening of guidance and advice services for administrative procedures, as well as production of information materials of various kinds (brochures, cartoon guides, electronic diaries, guides to services in different languages, interactive maps, dedicated platforms, etc.) have also been carried out by the Prefectures⁸³. These services also include the matching of job offers and job seekers, as well as job trainings and internships that have already been mentioned in the employment section⁸⁴.

Here is also important to reiterate the importance of the Italian language skill for a better integration in the society: basic level A1 and A2 Italian courses, organized at a regional level, are financed by MIUR (or through European funds) and are held in public schools where Permanent

⁷⁹ Ivi 62: p. 44

⁸⁰ Ivi 62: p. 30

⁸¹ Ivi 67: p. 4

⁸² Ivi 62: p. 182

⁸³ Ivi 69: p. 42

⁸⁴ Ibidem 92

Centres for Adult Education (CPIA) have been activated. There are also courses promoted by non-profit organizations. However, language learning is sometimes hindered by an insufficient number of hours provided, by the individual's previous language skills, by his or her level of schooling, by inappropriate teaching methods, by a lack of motivation or by the objective difficulty of attending courses for work reasons. The successful initiatives related to language training that have been reported aim, on the one hand, to improve the offer, the supply, and the use of the services present, and, on the other, to use innovative or more effective methods of teaching⁸⁵.

At the same time, the capacity building intervention are not to be understood as something addressed just to migrants, but also as something that concern the associations and entities that work with migrants: Prefectures, Territorial Councils for Immigration, local authorities, health facilities, educational institutions that must be informed and trained on how to manage certain specific situation related to the migratory condition. In this sense is important to underline the role of the Territorial Councils for Immigration as bodies of analysis of the migration phenomenon on a local basis and as promoters of territorial networks of intervention in favour of the integration of migrants⁸⁶. In this framework, it is also important to highlight the importance of vocational training for the empowerment of skills and capacities of migrants: courses are designed and delivered by higher secondary education establishments, accredited vocational training institutions, universities, and companies. They are intended to train specialized competences, strengthen basic and cultural skills, and develop specialistic, technical and professional skills. Classroom and lab activities are supplemented by traineeship periods, allowing participants to have a first-hand experience with the acquired skills in a company setting, to become familiar with a working environment and to understand relational dynamics⁸⁷. In Italy the jurisdiction in this field is assigned to the Regions; however, most regions have decided to dismantle the vocational training system, preferring to redirect young people to the national education system. In this system a professional branch does exist, but without the flexibility and the practical orientation that vocational training requires⁸⁸.

4.4. Social Cohesion

According to the European Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 of the European Union, promoting social cohesion means fostering the autonomy of those who are disadvantaged, while ensuring the unity and the inclusiveness of our communities. It means giving everyone an equal opportunity to enjoy their rights and participate in social and community life, regardless of their background and in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights. Integration and inclusion can and should be a win-win process that benefits society. But for integration and inclusion to be successful, it must be a two-way process that involves, on the one hand, the host society which should create opportunities for the full economic, social, cultural, and political participation of immigrants and, on the other hand, the migrants who have both rights and responsibilities towards their new Country of residence⁸⁹. Anyway, for newly

⁸⁵ Ivi 69: p. 33

⁸⁶ Ivi 69: p. 33

⁸⁷ Ivi 62: p. 203

⁸⁸ Ivi 67: p. 7

⁸⁹ Ibidem 13

arrived migrants, integrating into European societies often involves several difficulties depending on how they arrived, their skill level, their language skills and where they come from. Policymakers should provide targeted and tailor-made support mechanisms within each policy area to help newcomers integrate⁹⁰.

In particular, the Plan underlines some main areas of intervention: a) formal and non-formal education, which creates the basis for successful participation in society and is among the most powerful tools for building more inclusive societies; this also includes the importance of Italian language courses; b) civic education courses for acquiring an understanding the laws, culture, and values of the host society, which is crucial for migrants to fully participate in the social life⁹¹; (c) adequate and affordable housing, since inadequate housing conditions and segregation can exacerbate divisions, which undermine social cohesion⁹²; d) creation of opportunities for migrants and local communities to meet and interact; e) promotion of intercultural dialogue, including interreligious dialogue among communities of believers; f) participation in education, culture, and sports activities that have the power to bring people closer together. All these interventions help combat xenophobia, exclusion, radicalization, and the “us versus them” narrative by building mutual respect and fostering migrants' sense of belonging within the hosting society⁹³.

In the Italian context, in order achieve the objective of fostering social cohesion, close collaboration between the State, Prefects and Mayors is fundamental. The latter, in particular, must play a crucial role since the territories that receive immigrants have the difficult task to help them integrate. Therefore, in all decisions, Mayors must be the active protagonists of the policies on the territory, always considering some fundamental aspects of people's lives: work, health, housing, education and all the other fundamental rights. In this sense reception and integration are to be considered two sides of the same coin, where each finds its limit in the good implementation of the other: there is no good integration without good reception, but the opposite is also true, in fact it is not possible to welcome if one has not been able to integrate those who are already in our Country⁹⁴. For all these reasons, the strategies and measures planned at the national level must take into account the individual territorial realities and, in particular with regard to the reception of migrants and asylum seekers, the role of the Prefecture in the management of widespread reception must aim to maintain social cohesion, according to the principle of collaboration with local actors. This task takes place within a framework of political and economic dynamics that are not easy, in which conflicting positions may prevail. The Regional Coordination Tables and the Territorial Councils for Immigration have the main role of mediation and involvement of the territory, always in consideration of the figure of the Prefect, who must govern and guide the transformation of the local society resulting from migration dynamics⁹⁵.

⁹⁰ Ivi 13: p. 7

⁹¹ Ivi 13: pp. 9-10

⁹² Ivi 13: p. 16

⁹³ Ivi 13: pp. 22-23

⁹⁴ Ivi 69: p. 4

⁹⁵ Ivi 69: p. 24

Within the reception system of the CAS and the SPRAR several activities have been organized to foster the social cohesion in line with what recommended by the European Action Plan:

- Social, cultural, and educational activities are implemented within the reception projects, including in cooperation with local organizations operating in these areas. The aims are to prevent social exclusion and marginalization; enhance intercultural dialogue within and outside the reception project; promote participation in the life of the local community and the use of and respect for common goods from a viewpoint of reciprocity and sharing with local populations⁹⁶. The activities reported include art-therapy and music therapy workshops for therapeutic purposes, involvement in local festivals or events, sports competitions, volunteer days, meetings in schools, and gastronomic events with the preparation of typical dishes. Some involve the active participation of migrants in the entire organizational phase, while others promote the adherence of several local authorities and direct contact with the resident population⁹⁷.
- Educational programs offered by the civil society that also include the training of the teachers which work in contexts characterized by a high number of foreign students and the closer involvement of migrant families in the school community⁹⁸.

5. Main Challenges for Local & Regional Authorities

In the aforementioned context the role of local and regional authorities appears to be crucial: as already said, in what is an essentially highly decentralized system, the central level has a general role of direction and coordination, while the regions and local authorities plan and implement all policies relating to the socio-economic inclusion of migrants, including healthcare, education and social services, training in the Italian language, promotion of cultural mediation services, access to housing and access to work and to training.

Together with local authorities, NGOs and CSOs also work to influence political and parliamentary groups to change legislation towards more effective protection of the rights of people seeking international protection who already hold a residence permit. In this regard, the sociologist Maurizio Ambrozini speaks of an "implicit model" of inclusion of immigrants in our country, characterized by the frequent use of informal practices and policies, which are usually partial and try to respond to emergencies; while official policies are slow to be formulated and, in any case, still struggle to find their coherence and farsightedness. (Pennix & Martiniello, 2007)⁹⁹.

In short, it is possible to affirm that the Italian policy style regarding the integration of immigrants has been characterized by being contingent and based on short-sighted responses to the emergencies that have arisen from time to time. The indolence of national governments, and the consequent weakness in the indications on this issue, however, did not prevent the regions, and above all local authorities, from taking action, albeit voluntarily and with their own resources

⁹⁶ Ivi 69: p. 191

⁹⁷ Ivi 69: p. 44

⁹⁸ Ivi 1: p. 34

⁹⁹ R. Pennix, M. Martiniello, Integration processes and (local) policies: state of the art and policy lessons, "Mondi migrants", 2007, 3: pp. 31-59

(Caneva, 2014)¹⁰⁰. All the challenges experienced by local and regional authorities have been discussed in more detail in paragraph 3 of section I and in paragraphs 1 and 5 of section II.

5.1. The Role of Civil Society / Community in the Local Policy

Civil society is the ecosystem that influences social change outside the family, the market, or the government. Often referred to as the space in which we act for the common good, civil society aims to connect poor or marginalized people with groups who can mobilize support to help. At various times in history, civil society has taken the lead in major change movements, including civil rights, gender equality and other equality movements.

In Italy, however, the role of civil society is not yet well specified in local policies. There is a tendency to talk a lot about political institutions, bureaucracy, refugee entry times and politics in a "broad" sense, but the fundamental role of civil society is not well highlighted. Despite that, civil society organizations play an important role in relation to the integration of migrants and their efforts complement those of the public authorities.

They offer several fundamental services (language courses, cultural mediation, legal assistance, voluntary work, internship, etc.)¹⁰¹ which facilitate labour and social integration, they give a voice to the disadvantaged and voiceless segments of society and raise awareness of social issues and promote change by enabling local communities to develop new programs to meet their needs. Therefore, if social integration takes place, it is also largely thanks to civil society organizations which work hand in hand with the government, trying to develop policies and implement new strategies. Beyond that, civil society builds so-called social capital by providing with a way to build relationships and establish connections based on their values, behaviours, and beliefs.

¹⁰⁰ E. Caneva, The integration of migrants in Italy: an overview of policy instruments and actors, INTERACT Project, 2014

¹⁰¹ Ivi 1: p. 28

5.2. Main Debates in Public Policies about Migrant Access to Social Rights

According to the study by Holmes and Sunstein on the cost of rights, all rights cost because protecting them costs and it costs above all to guarantee them uniformly and fairly: they depend in fact on the collective willingness to contribute to them, since their protection is financed by tax revenues (Holmes & Sunstein, 2000)¹⁰². However, such rights should be granted as a rule to every human being, with some possible exceptions related to the specific factual background and the peculiar nature of some rights.

According to Article 3 of the Italian Constitution, all citizens have equal social status and are equal before the law, without regard to their sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, and personal or social conditions. Although Article 3 refers to citizens only, the Constitutional Court has ruled that, when the respect of fundamental rights is at stake, the principle of equality also applies to foreign nationals. The Court's reasoning is based on more than a simple parity between citizens and foreigners. Hence, the different legal status of foreign nationals may justify a different treatment under the law (Decision No. 104/1969) insofar as matters of security, public health, public order, international treaties and national policy on migration (decision no. 62/1994) are concerned, but not when it comes to the protection of inviolable rights (Decision No. 249/2010), since such rights belong "to individuals not as members of a political community but as human beings as such".

¹⁰² S. Holmes & C. R. Sunstein, *The cost of rights*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2000: p. 25



The Constitutional Court maintains that foreigners are entitled to social rights, such as the right to health and healthcare services (Decision No. 269/2010) and to “essential social benefits”, such as disability benefits in cases of impaired mobility, blindness, and deafness. In particular, the Court clarified that specific social benefits which constitute “a remedy serving to satisfy the primary needs for the protection of the human person” must be considered “fundamental rights because they represent a guarantee for the person’s survival” (Decision No. 252/2001)¹⁰³.

But access to social rights is not just that, it includes a wider discourse on the dignity of migrants that is often hindered by the lack of solidarity within and between States of the European Union and the international community. It is precisely in the management of mass migration flows that we can observe the limits of our solidarity: even if a lot has been done to help those who risk drowning in the sea, giving them support and offering hospitality, even if in questionable forms and conditions, too much remains to be done in order to allow migrants to cultivate a “free and dignified” life. In fact, the final goal of inclusion and, therefore, of integration within the state community in which these people would like to settle is hindered by the unavailability (and, in some cases, real hostility) in this regard manifested by some member states of the Union; and it is worth asking, as many have been wondering for some time, if the Union is really what the name says it is, since today neither an effective and overall satisfying solidarity towards the States, especially those most directly hit by long waves of migration, nor towards the people who should be the first and most direct beneficiaries. In the long run, the highest and most mature form of solidarity is, in any case, the one that translates into the provision of all the necessary conditions to enable migrants who have become immigrants to be able to preserve their cultural identity and, at the same time, to integrate with that of the place where they settle. It is then necessary to remove the veil hypocritically placed to cover the attitude of selfish closure in oneself, that is, to dismantle the alibi of the cost that any solidarity service entails in any case, exhibited by those who argue that it would not be sustainable. On the other hand, we can argue that the resources are actually there, despite the crisis, and that they have always been there, even when the crisis had reached its peak.

The point is that there has been (and there still is) a lack of will to find them by trying to contain at least in part, if not completely eradicate, what appear to be the two authentic structural failures of society and of the legal system: widespread corruption and inequitable distribution of wealth. If only to put a stop to such massive and devastating phenomena, the problem of the cost of rights in general and social rights would be greatly reduced, if not completely resolved. As it is often the case, the knot is political and it is up to politics to resolve it; jurisprudence and doctrine, then, each can offer useful indications in view of achieving this purpose, with the awareness, however, that the summit to be climbed is high and the way that leads up to it is steep.

5.3. Main Ideological Changes Affecting Public Discourse & Migration Policy

Since the end of the 1980s, the transformations brought about by immigration have produced a process of intense politicization, which has been accompanied by the flourishing of copious legislation on the subject.

In the past, migration was considered a fact of life in an increasingly globalized world and considered a necessary (although not necessarily welcome) development needed to sustain the Italian economy. In contrast, the discussion around migration in Italy has been deteriorating especially since 2014, when the steadily increase of mass arrivals has made this a hot topic in the media and in political discourse. According to a recent Eurobarometer survey, 49% of Italians believe that immigration is the main political issue facing the European Union, well above terrorism (by 8% of Italians) and the economic situation (24%). In this context, the attitude of Italians towards immigrants is becoming less and less tolerant. Mistrust and, in some cases, hostility is increasing. According to a national survey of 2017 the share of Italians who agree with 'accepting only a pre-defined quota and not more' rapidly increased from 46% in September 2016 to 50% in January 2017, while the 'open' position 'we need to host everybody' decreased from 26% in September 2016 to 19% in January 2017 (Lodovici et al, 2017)¹⁰⁴.

Nowadays the majority of the population thinks the impact of immigration on the country (57%) has been negative, and for several reasons: the effect migrant workers are supposed to have had on overall salary and employment conditions; the widespread perception that migrants are primarily a burden for the country; the perception that migrants make Italy less safe (Ipsos 2018)¹⁰⁵. Today, newly arrived asylum seekers – and with them also longer-term residents – are portrayed on one hand as poor and worthless “victims” fleeing violence and chaos in their home countries, while on the other they are depicted as a threat to Italy’s social order, cohesion, cultural values, and moral integrity.

The political and media discourse has clearly played a crucial role in shaping and feeding these negative social perceptions and representations, contributing to forging a widespread anti-immigration sentiment regardless of geographic area, social class, educational level, profession, and even political ideological affiliation (Ceschi et al, 2019)¹⁰⁶. In this context, it is necessary to take into consideration the emergency and securitarian approach that have characterized Italian political discourse from the Bossi-Fini Law to the Salvini Law, as described in section 4. It is also possible to observe a huge discrepancy between the rhetoric of public discourse - articulated in the Bossi-Fini law¹⁰⁷- according to which entry and stay in our Country are inseparably linked to an employment contract, and the implicit admission of an even larger number of immigrants selected based on criteria such as gender, nationality and type of occupation. Furthermore, as

¹⁰³ Ivi 1: p. 54

¹⁰⁴ Lodovici et al, Integration of refugees in Greece, Hungary and Italy – Comparative analysis, 2017: p. 81

¹⁰⁵ Ipsos, Un'Italia frammentata: atteggiamenti verso identità nazionale, immigrazione e rifugiati in Italia, 2018: pp. 8-9

¹⁰⁶ Ceschi et al, Common home – Migration and development in Italy, Caritas Italiana, 2019: p. 27

¹⁰⁷ Italian Constitution law 30 July 2002 no. 189

recently shown by a study on security policies in Italy¹⁰⁸, even a heavily restrictive provision such as the introduction of illegal entry and stay in the territory of the State considered as crime, created to reassure citizens that the government pursues irregular immigration and guarantees security, in reality “it had no effect on the share of actual expulsions, while it increased the number of foreigners reported”.

This certainly does not mean that the securitarian swerve of Italian migration policies starting from Bossi-Fini has not caused negative effects and even contrary to human rights recognized by the international community (e.g., the refusals of migrants at sea towards Libya in 2009, for which Italy in 2012 was sanctioned by the European Court of Human Rights). The likelihood that an unwanted immigrant who entered Europe illegally or resides without authorization will become legal is far greater than that of being deported and forcibly returned to their Country of origin. Probably, also this inconsistency between policy and reality have contributed to shape the diffidence towards migrants.

The theme of public speeches on immigration compared with the measures implemented should be addressed with reference to immigrant integration policies, which have always been left to the competence of peripheral levels of government and to regions and municipalities. The objective is to try to reconstruct, on the one hand, how the national government level has defined (or not defined) the integration policies and, on the other hand, how the regions have interpreted their role in relation to the integration of immigrants (also with reference to the relevant national laws), or how they responded in their territories to the issues raised by the inclusion of newcomers.

5.4. Public Policy Tools to Fight Discrimination

In the Consolidated Law on immigration, two articles¹⁰⁹ are dedicated to the fight against discrimination.

Article 41: Discrimination on racial, ethnic, national, or religious grounds¹¹⁰.

1. For the purposes of this chapter, discrimination is any conduct that, directly or indirectly, involves a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, ancestry or national or ethnic origin, beliefs and practices religious, and which has the purpose or effect of destroying or compromising the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on equal terms, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social and cultural fields and in any another sector of public life.

2. In any case, it carries out an act of discrimination:

- a) a public official or a person in charge of a public service or a person exercising a service of public necessity who, in the exercise of his functions, performs or omits acts towards a foreign citizen who, only because of his or her status as a foreigner or belonging to a specific race, religion, ethnicity or nationality, discriminate unfairly.

¹⁰⁸ Law of clandestinity, Italian Constitution, Law no. 94, 2009

¹⁰⁹ Italian Constitution, Art. 41 and art. 42

¹¹⁰ Law n.40 dated 6 March 1998, art.41

- b) anyone who imposes more disadvantageous conditions or refuses to provide goods or services offered to the public to a foreigner only because of his or her status as a foreigner or belonging to a specific race, religion, ethnicity, or nationality.
- c) whoever unlawfully imposes more disadvantageous conditions or refuses to provide access to employment, housing, education, training, and social and social welfare services to the foreigner legally residing in Italy solely because of his condition a foreigner or a person belonging to a specific race, religion, ethnicity, or nationality.
- d) whoever prevents, through actions or omissions, the exercise of an economic activity legitimately undertaken by a foreigner legally residing in Italy, solely on the basis of his status as a foreigner or belonging to a specific race, religious confession, ethnicity or nationality.
- e) the employer or his supervisors who, pursuant to article 15 of law no. 300, as amended and integrated by the law 9 December 1977, n. 903, and by the law of 11 May 1990, n. 108, carry out any act or behaviour that produces a prejudicial effect by discriminating, even indirectly, workers on the basis of their belonging to a race, to an ethnic or linguistic group, to a religious denomination, to a citizenship. Indirect discrimination constitutes any prejudicial treatment resulting from the adoption of criteria that disadvantage workers belonging to a specific race, to a specific ethnic or linguistic group, to a specific religious confession or to a citizenship and concern non-essential requirements for the performance, work activity.

This article and article 44 also apply to xenophobic, racist, or discriminatory acts committed against Italian citizens, stateless persons and citizens of other Member States of the European Union present in Italy.

Article 44: Civil action against discrimination¹¹¹.

2. When the behaviour of a private individual or the public administration produces discrimination for racial, ethnic, linguistic, national, geographical, or religious reasons, it is possible to appeal to the ordinary judicial authority to request the cessation of the prejudicial behavior and the removal of effects of discrimination.

Article 28 of Legislative Decree no. 150.

3. The tribunal in monochromatic composition, having heard the parties, omitting any formalities not essential to the cross-examination, proceeds in the way it deems most appropriate to the indispensable instruction documents in relation to the conditions and for the purposes of the requested measure.

4. The tribunal in monochromatic composition provides by order for the acceptance or rejection of the request. If it accepts the request, it issues the requested measures which are immediately enforceable.

5. In cases of urgency, the tribunal in monochromatic composition provides with a reasoned decree, having obtained, where necessary, summary information. In this case, with the same decree, he fixes the hearing for the parties to appear before him within a term not exceeding

¹¹¹ Law n.40 dated 6 March 1988, art.42

fifteen days, instantly assigning a term not exceeding eight days for the notification of the appeal and of the decree. At this hearing, the tribunal in monochromatic composition, by order, confirms, modifies, or revokes the provisions issued in the decree.

6. Complaint to the court against the magistrate's measures is permitted under the terms set out in article 739, second paragraph of the code of civil procedure. Articles 737, 738 and 739 of the code of civil procedure apply, insofar as they are compatible.

7. With the decision defining the judgment, the judge can also order the defendant to pay compensation for damage, including non-pecuniary damage.

8. Anyone who eludes the execution of the magistrate's provisions referred to in paragraphs 4 and 5 and of the court's provisions referred to in paragraph 6 is punished pursuant to article 388, first paragraph of the criminal code.

9. With the decision defining the judgment, the judge can also order the defendant to pay compensation for damage, including non-pecuniary damage.

10. If the employer engages in a discriminatory act or behaviour of a collective nature, even in cases in which the workers affected by discrimination cannot be identified immediately and directly, the appeal can be presented by the local representatives of the trade unions. more representative at national level.

11. Any ascertainment of discriminatory acts or behaviours pursuant to Article 43 carried out by companies to which benefits have been granted pursuant to the laws in force of the State or of the regions, or which have stipulated procurement contracts relating to the execution of works public services, services or supplies, is immediately communicated by the Pretore, in accordance with the procedures laid down in the implementation regulation, to public administrations or public bodies that have arranged for the granting of the benefit, including financial or credit facilities, or the contract. These administrations or entities revoke the benefit and, in the most serious cases, exclude the person responsible for two years from any further granting of financial or credit facilities, or from any contract.

12. The regions in collaboration with the provinces and municipalities, with immigrant associations and social voluntary work, for the purposes of applying the rules of this article and studying the phenomenon, set up observation, information and legal assistance for foreigners who are victims of discrimination on racial, ethnic, national, or religious grounds.

In 2015 Italy launched the “National Action Plan against racism, xenophobia and intolerance”.

According to the National Office against Racial Discrimination (UNAR), cases of discrimination regarding persons entitled to international protection are on the rise. These include direct and indirect discrimination, cases of online harassment and hate speech, but also violence and aggression against reception centres as well as individuals or associations that run them.

The objective is to support the implementation of the aforementioned Plan and invest at a national level a system capable of preventing, documenting, and combating the most widespread forms of discrimination. In particular:

1. Commit regional and municipal governments to strengthen national networks of anti-discrimination centres, ensuring the presence of such centres within the municipal offices of large cities.
2. Make more systematic and deepen the training of police forces, especially border police, and create training courses for the Municipal Police in discrimination, mediation, and international protection legislation.
3. Create and offer training opportunities for social workers and centre staff on the socio-cultural background of most countries of origin and transit, on discrimination, mediation, intercultural communication, and current legislation on international protection.
4. Strengthen the coordination and support between the protection systems for victims of trafficking and the reception system for asylum seekers, as required by art. 10 paragraph 1 of Legislative Decree 24/2014, in line with the actions identified by the National Anti-Trafficking Plan established by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.
5. Strengthen cooperation between associations and civil society organizations by working on the rights of women, victims of trafficking and severe labour exploitation, sexual and gender minorities (LGBT people) and people with disabilities, allowing them to offer training opportunities to reception centre staff on their issues of competence.
6. Pilot initiatives of community or neighbourhood mediation of local communities with a high presence of reception centres for migrants.

6. Main Approach to Migrant Integration

From the previous sections, it can be noticed that the main Italian approach to migrants' integration is a holistic one, since all the four dimensions are usually considered as intertwined or interconnected in both the policies and the literature we examined related to Italy, except for literature strictly focused on one of the four dimensions.

In this sense, it is very interesting to observe how the process of "integration" contains a multitude of elements from striving to achieve economic independence in the labour market through access to training programs to gaining a feeling of belonging based on cultural mediation, political participation, and social acceptance/engagement. Access to healthcare is a fundamental condition and right that allows the migrant to become fully integrated in society.

The multidimensional approach is also noticeable at governance level, as it includes a plethora of actors and a multistakeholder perspective. Indeed, "it is crucial to recognize that the issue of integrating migrants and refugees requires establishing links and connections between differentiated services [...] to offer a more global approach to the different needs of the person" (Catarci, 2014)¹¹². Despite the basis of this approach, in reality the outcomes are not optimal, since the legal framework on which they are based, results disorganized and fragmented, as it emerges from our analysis of policy tendencies in point 4, Section II of this report.

¹¹² Catarci, Considerazioni critiche sulla nozione di integrazione di migranti e rifugiati, REMHU - Rev. Interdiscip. Mobil. Hum., Brasília, Ano XXII, n. 43, p. 71-84, jul./dez. 2014: p. 74

Also, when analysing the literature, particularly in the country report on Italy by Ibrido & Marchese¹¹³, it is possible to observe that all the four dimensions are clearly taken into consideration and addressed. The authors have formulated a set of recommendations in the following areas: labour market, education, psychosocial health, housing, citizenship, and civic participation. For example, with regards to the labour market, they state that Italian authorities have never aligned the quota of work permits to the actual needs of the Italian labour market. This has given rise to problems in terms of the quality of jobs and (legal) inclusion in the labour market itself. Baldoni et al.'s view is that one of the main active job placement measures is investment in training, starting from the skills, expectations, and professional skills of the single person, as well as the opportunities offered by the local context. In fact, professional training plays a key role for applicants/holders of international protection as it aims on one hand to improve language skills, and on the other hand to provide qualification, retraining, updating and specialization, seeking to enhance, compatibly with the needs of the local market, the previous experiences of the worker" (Baldoni et al., 2017)¹¹⁴. Clearly the literature states that there is a link between the training and capacity building offered to the migrants and their chance of finding a job.

Beyond professional training in the literature, it emerges that "language training and psychological support are highlighted as crucial for the effectiveness of integration"¹¹⁵.

In fact, "It is hardly necessary to reiterate the importance of learning the Italian language as the first step of the integration process: inadequate knowledge of the language leads to restrictions in access to information, in the use of services, in the expression of needs and in the opportunity to enter into a relationship with the social context and feel part of the local community"¹¹⁶.

Furthermore, with regards to the social sphere, according to the report "Initiatives for the good reception and integration of migrants in Italy", "social inclusion, understood in the largest sense of the term, necessarily involves, alongside the orientation activities and accompaniment to the services already described, investment in socio-cultural educational actions, in collaboration with the territorial realities involved in these areas, to foster mutual knowledge and develop a sense of belonging to the community. This type of actions makes it possible to enhance the expressive capacities and abilities of the beneficiaries, to create opportunities for socializing, to participate in community life and share values, to promote exchange and intercultural dialogue inside and outside the reception project, to prevent conflicts and a sense of social exclusion. Some provide for the active participation of migrants in the entire organizational phase, others promote the membership of several local authorities and direct confrontation with the resident population"¹¹⁷.

Finally, Campostrini et al. explain that "when a health promotion approach is taken, the generally negative combination of migration and lower socio-economic status can be effectively reduced or eliminated. Combining this observation with the results coming from the analyses by the

¹¹³ Ibrido & Marchese, Integration policies, practices and experiences – Italy Country Report, Paper 2020/54: p. 64

¹¹⁴ Baldoni et al, Le iniziative di buona accoglienza e integrazione dei migranti in Italia. Modelli, strumenti e azioni, 2017: p. 35

¹¹⁵ lvi 62: p. 33

¹¹⁶ lvi 114: p. 33

¹¹⁷ lvi 114: p. 44

Country of origin allows one to conclude that migrants have great potential for increasing the overall population health of the country of immigration, at least regarding NCDs: they arrive generally with better health attitudes and behaviours, some (depending on the country of origin) substantially better. Results presented here argue for appropriate policies on migrant health: for example, those that would take into consideration cultural differences as an opportunity and not as a limitation when actions are taken” (Campostrini et al, 2019)¹¹⁸.

To achieve integration some cross-sectoral priorities need to be considered, e.g., INTEgreat four dimensions. From this point of view, Italy needs to reorganize its legal and policy instruments, as well as develop new tools for a systemic evaluation of public integration policies. The lack of such tools has also been noted at EU level¹¹⁹. Within this reorganization of the legal and policy instruments, Ibrido & Marchese state that, the Italian authorities – also considering some foreign models – could introduce a Strategic Plan concerning integration and citizenship. The plan should be approved by the government after a wide consultation of sub-national authorities and stakeholders.

7. Governance Approaches, Administrative Levels & Actors

As already mentioned, integration policies in Italy are subject to a complex multi-level system of governance (MLG). The MLG refers to the intersection between two dimensions: the centre-periphery or vertical dimension, which signals increasing interdependence between governments at different territorial levels, that is, the ‘multi-level’ aspect of the concept; and the state-society or horizontal dimension, emphasizing the growing interdependence between public and non-public actors at a specific level of government, that is, the ‘governance’ aspect of the concept. These two dimensions are crucial to describe and analyse MLG dynamics in their complexity: the vertical dimension can assume either a top-down or bottom-up direction, while the horizontal dimension can be operationalized by looking at the level of involvement of NGOs in the decision-making process, that is, the degree of collaboration or separation between public and private-sector organizations¹²⁰.

In the case of Italy, the absence of strong tools of coordination have caused considerable overlap and uncertainty between the “vertical” interactions (between state, regional and other sub-national authorities) and “horizontal” interactions (between private and public actors). Concerning the “vertical” interactions, the absence of harmony between national and sub-national policies should be pointed out, which often implies a “reciprocal unloading of responsibilities”. In the past security policies implemented by the national government have been, at times, balanced by regional and local actions designed to extend the tools for the social inclusion of migrants. In other periods, by contrast, some regions and sub-national authorities have developed anti-immigration initiatives which highlighted the distance from the pro-integration policies of the national government. In terms of governance, the contradictory nature of these policies has had the effect of enhancing the arbitral role of the judicial authorities and the Constitutional Court. In addition, with regards to the horizontal interactions, partial overlaps

¹¹⁸ Campostrini et al, Migrant Health in Italy: a better health status difficult to maintain-country of origin and assimilation effects studied from the Italian risk factor surveillance data, Population Health Metrics, 2019: p. 9

¹¹⁹ Ivi 113: p. 65

¹²⁰ Ivi 56: p. 306

derive from the existence of a myriad of stakeholders, funding providers and services without suitable mechanisms of coordination with the public authorities. In particular, the field of language training has been considered as a paradigmatic case of this risk of overlap due to the lack of coordination¹²¹.

Practically, at national level the two main government actors in the field of integration are the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Ministry of Interior. In particular, the first - through the General Directorate of Immigration and Integration Policies - coordinates the policies and financial resources for the integration of foreigners and migrants into the labour market, while the second - through the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration - deals with issues related to asylum, citizenship, religion, and immigration, including the civil rights of migrants. A further government department involved in the governance of integration processes is the Ministry of Health that adopts guidelines concerning assistance and rehabilitation measures, as well as the treatment of mental disorders of refugees and asylum seekers. Moreover, in 2015 the National Coordination Board was created with the aim of involving civil society and sub-national authorities in the governance of integration processes. The National Coordination Board is an interinstitutional network chaired by the Minister of the Interior, and whose participants include the main civil society organizations which promote the right of asylum. In particular, it defines the programmes and guidelines for improving the reception system and the quotas for the distribution of asylum seekers among the regions. At local level, a further network is the Territorial Councils for Immigration (“Consigli territoriali per l’immigrazione”) which, in each prefecture, monitor the presence of migrants and promote integration initiatives. The councils are chaired by the local Prefect and include representatives of sub-national administrations, trade unions, employers’ associations, chambers of commerce, NGOs, and various other stakeholders¹²².

If this is the general framework, it is also important to observe the specific dynamics of governance of Lombardy Region. On the one hand, until 2005, the vertical dimension was characterized by a decentralized and bottom-up approach: a large share of the regional social policy budget was regularly assigned to the Local Health Units, which are administrative branches of the regional health system. These Local Health Units were requested to take the immigrant integration issue into account in their social services plans. In 2005, the social assistance reform (Law n. 328/2000, see earlier) started to be implemented: the regional social budget was assigned to the newly created social zones with no mandatory commitment to spend it for any specific social policy priority. Furthermore, and again since 2005, on the basis of an agreement with the Ministry of Welfare and Labour Policies, the region began to promote a special project for learning the Italian language, “Certifica il tuo italiano” (Certify your Italian). This has been implemented primarily by the Provincial Centres for Adult Education, which are public institutions responsible for the development of vocational training programs at the provincial level, together with local authorities and third-sector organizations. Hence, since the mid-2000s, the region has been displaying a more top-down style, introducing its own ‘special projects’ to be implemented in the entire regional territory. Nevertheless, local tiers of government continue

¹²¹ Ivi 1: p. 20

¹²² Ivi 1: pp. 20-21

to be responsible for the drafting of local social services plans and are therefore autonomous in deciding if and to what extent to consider immigration issues. Furthermore, coordination between the region and the local authority in the decision-making process appears to be almost non-existent. On the other hand, as far as the horizontal dimension is concerned, the Lombardy region, and in particular the bureaucratic staff of the social services department, is on top, and NGOs are on tap. Only a few selected third-sector organizations are admitted into the decision-making and implementation process; control rather than collaboration prevails. A highly centralized policy-making style can be therefore observed¹²³.

Practically, at regional level a key actor in decision-making processes is the Regional Observatory for Integration and Multiethnicity (Osservatorio Regionale per l'Integrazione e la Multiethnicità - ORIM), established by the region in 2000 and run on the basis of an agreement with the Institute for the Study of Multi-ethnicity (Istituto per lo studio della multiethnicità - ISMU Foundation), a research institute that was founded in Milan in 1992. ORIM has a mandate not only to analyse the development of migration phenomena in the region, but also to identify, along with regional officers, priority actions for funding and selecting applicant NGOs and monitoring the projects realized at the local level. In its role as the overseer of ORIM, ISMU has intertwined and preferential relationships with regional officers, in contrast to most NGOs, which, as pointed out earlier, experience difficulties in having their voice heard¹²⁴.

To summarize, we can say that in Lombardy, in the middle of the decade, the vertical dimension assumed an increasingly top-down direction while the horizontal dimension remained characterized by a separation between public and non-public actors, in the sense that these latter are regarded primarily as policy executors and far less as stakeholders¹²⁵.

8. Main Tendencies in Public Policy Relating to the Integration Strategy

Integration policies are not a new concept: before the increase in the number of arrivals of migrants and refugees in recent years, many European states had already faced the question of how to best respond to the presence of non-European residents established on their territories. Most of the states with a colonial past developed their own national models of integration policies, which are mainly distinguished in two types: the assimilationist and the multicultural. The former requires immigrants “to actively take on the culture and language of the majority population and renounce their own ethnic or cultural identity”; the latter, instead, recognizes the intrinsic diversities of individuals, hence promoting regulations that grant equal opportunities to all but still expects them to conform to a set of core values (Patriarca, 2018)¹²⁶. Progressively, the assimilationist and multicultural models have been surpassed by a new paradigm of integration policy: the civic integration model. “Civic integration emphasizes the importance of immigrant’s integrating more fully into mainstream society”, ability to be proven through the succeeding in certain tests or the compliance with specific agreements. As a matter of fact, “civic

¹²³ Ivi 56: pp. 310-311

¹²⁴ Ivi 56: p. 312

¹²⁵ Ivi 56: p. 317

¹²⁶ Patriarca, Integration policies for refugees – Italy as a case study, Maastricht University, 2018: p. 39

integration policies express the idea that successful incorporation into a host society rests not only on employment (economic integration) and civic engagement (political integration), but also on individual commitments to characteristics typifying national citizenship, specifically country knowledge, language proficiency and liberal and social values¹²⁷.

We already mentioned that several integration policies promoted by the Italian Government, especially the focus on the necessity and duty to learn the Italian language, fall into the above-mentioned civic integration model. But, at the same time, Italy also perfectly fits within the migratory and integration model of those countries of most recent immigration, known also as Mediterranean or South-European model. In fact, Italy, as other South-Mediterranean countries, has gone through a transformation in the last decades, transitioning from being a Country of emigration to one of immigration: the Country is indeed characterized by a “relatively recent nature of the switch from an immigrant-sending to an immigrant-receiving society, with major waves of immigrants arriving only in the 1980s, and in relatively low numbers”. This model is characterized by the absence of a solid integration approach: in other words, a lack of clear and defined integration policies¹²⁸. We can indeed observe that, over the years, its discipline of immigration has neither been coherent nor comprehensive, whilst attention towards integration has been almost non-existent. The fact that “Italy thinks of itself primarily in terms of being a transit country” certainly contributed to the reinforcement of such an approach. However, the unexpected and continuous influx of migrants over the last few years, altered this course and imposed a redefinition of traditional models and a greater attention on the integration issue¹²⁹.

The heavy legacy of the securitarian and emergency approach that have characterized Italian immigration and integration policies for a very long time is still influencing the modern policies. For this reason, in order to fully understand the most recent tendencies in public policies, we need to take them into consideration: since the Bossi-Fini law (Law 189/2002), the concept of integration has been gradually debased and reduced to an individual issue. Two main aspects have contributed to this process: firstly, the residence contract introduced by the Bossi-Fini law (art. 5 bis TUI), and secondly the integration agreement (art. 4 bis TUI, Presidential Decree no. 179/2011), based on the ability of the foreigner to reach a sufficient degree of acculturation, through a points system. In this context fits the “Plan for integration in security. Identity and encounter”, launched in 2010 by the Berlusconi government, where it is strongly underlined both the securitarian approach and the vision of integration as a one-way process: foreigner versus community. The set of legislative measures adopted in the security era on the basis of ideological proclamations, supported by a distorted representation of the migratory phenomenon by the media, have also generated in the Italian public opinion a perception of the migratory phenomenon divorced from reality, which has contributed to prepare fertile ground for the growth of ignorance and racist and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours (Dall’Oglio, 2021)¹³⁰. In this context, the political reaction to the so called “refugee crisis” followed a similar

¹²⁷ Ivi 126: p. 31

¹²⁸ Ivi 126: p. 43

¹²⁹ Ivi 126: p.6

¹³⁰ Dall’Oglio, Le politiche di integrazione in Italia: quali prospettive per il futuro?, Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, 2021 <https://www.cespi.it/it/eventi-attualita/dibattiti/integrazione-senso-unico/le-politiche-di-integrazione-italia-quali>

pattern: since the crisis began, Italy has received the highest number of non-EU citizens looking for economic opportunities and international protection in its history. Although the perception of an “invasion” of immigrants is inaccurate, the negative portrayal of the recent refugee inflows after 2011 and 2014 put the Italian authorities under pressure. The government responded by intensifying border controls (making an arbitrary distinction between applicants for international protection and irregular migrants at border crossings) and deprived many immigrants of important services and integration measures. For example, the so-called “Salvini decree” (Decree-Law No. 113/2018) established major changes in citizenship law, by including an increase in the application fee and introducing the possibility of revoking citizenship acquired by naturalization or marriage in the case of people convicted of specific criminal offences (e.g., terrorism-related offences). Moreover, the exclusion of asylum seekers by the System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR – SIPROIMI) – established by the Salvini decree – has resulted in a disruption of the processes of integration which affects a wide number of migrants¹³¹. We can therefore observe that the dramatic refugee crisis faced by Italy and its position as receiving rather than destination country, has meant that from 2014 the focus of its public actions has been characterized by an emergency approach, mainly focused on reception rather than integration (Lodovici et al, 2017)¹³². Only in 2020, with the approval of the Decree Law 130/2020, the legislator makes a decisive shift in the direction of the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. It inaugurates a phase of renewal in which the close interconnection between the reception system and integration of migrants is strengthened. The system related to the network of local authorities (which from SIPROIMI has been renamed to the Reception and Integration System - SAI) is once again placed at the centre of the reception model. The novelties introduced with the Decree Law 113/2018 are eliminated (the local authorities of SIPROIMI could take care of welcoming and activating integration paths only for the holders of international protection and unaccompanied foreign minors, while the territorial government offices of the Ministry of the Interior, the Prefectures, guaranteed a minimum system of assistance services and initial reception for asylum seekers). In addition to intervening on the categories of beneficiaries who can access the reception and integration system, the measure also affects the services and benefits to be guaranteed to the applicants of international protection and the relationship between the different levels of government involved in the implementation of policies (Giovannetti, 2021)¹³³.

To conclude, we can say that, despite the most recent improvement of integration measures and the fact that Italian institutions are trying to overcome the emergency logic in favour of a more organic reception policy, the current integration policies, based on a multi-level governance, remain disorganized and fragmented, as disorganized and fragmented as the regulatory basis on which they are based.

Regarding specifically the Lombardy region and its public policies relating to the integration of migrants, it is important to underline the influence of the political party in power: since 2000, Lombardy has been governed by a centre-right majority including the Northern League, a highly vocal anti-immigration party. Throughout the 2000s, the Lombardy region has framed immigrant integration mainly in terms of assimilation, putting particular emphasis on access to general

¹³¹ Ivi 1: p. 14

¹³² Lodovici et al, *Integration of refugees in Greece, Hungary and Italy – Comparative analysis*, 2017: p. 37

¹³³ Giovannetti, *La riforma del sistema di accoglienza e integrazione per richiedenti e titolari di protezione internazionale*, *Diritto, Immigrazione e Cittadinanza* – Fascicolo n.1/2021: p. 1

services and, since 2008, on issues linked to language learning and civic integration. In contrast, projects considering immigrants' cultural background, for instance, community link workers in public services, have been undertaken more stealthily, because, as said by the Caritas Ambrosiana of Milan, "some things cannot be openly disclosed". This scarce emphasis on cultural issues appears to be consistent with a more general philosophy that conceives immigration as a cross-cutting social issue with regards to social services. The approach is that of promoting inclusion into general policies while avoiding specific measures. For instance, general policies for minors de facto also apply to the foreign ones; there is no need for ad hoc actions. Then, of course, there are also specific and targeted projects, but the rationale is one of pursuing general social policies for all the population living in the region¹³⁴.

9. Barriers to Accessing Services

Accessing services in an equal and effective way is an essential part of the integration path. As already said in previous sections, in Italy many initiatives have been put in place through both the National Plan and the local authorities to facilitate the access of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to different services. Yet, many barriers and obstacles still exist as we illustrate in the following sections related to the different areas.

Education services: migrants face a series of structural barriers and problems in accessing the educational and academic system. Recognition of diplomas, certifications and skills gained abroad remains complicated. Schools, teachers, and the educational system more in general are not well equipped to manage multi-ethnic classrooms and pupils, and they struggle to deal with issues linked to multiculturalism. Foreigners only have very few opportunities when it comes to accessing high skill qualifications, specialized training courses or grants. In general, most young migrants or second-generation pupils struggle to get access to high schools (*Licei*) that prepare students for a university track; instead, they are often "confined" to technical and training institutes¹³⁵. At the same time, attending CPIA (Provincial centres for adult education and training) Italian courses present some difficulties as well. CPIAs are located in urban centres, while asylum seekers reception centres are often located in rural or suburban areas. As a result, asylum seekers face logistical challenges, and often are not supported or encouraged by reception centre managers to attend CPIA's Italian language courses¹³⁶. In contrast with the literature, Ballafon works daily to avoid such challenges by promoting and encouraging its beneficiaries to attend CPIA classes and supporting them in the enrolment process, paying the tuition and the books they need. It is worth mentioning that, even when migrants live in the city (Ballafon's housing are located in the city centre) and they benefit from the support of the reception centres, the language learning is sometimes hindered by an insufficient number of training hours provided, by the individual's previous linguistic abilities, by the level of schooling, by inappropriate teaching methods, by a lack of motivation or by the objective difficulty of attending courses for work reasons.¹³⁷ Moreover, from Ballafon's direct experience, we have noticed that for single mothers it is particularly difficult to attend Italian classes: the lack of a safe

¹³⁴ Ivi 56: pp. 309-310

¹³⁵ Ivi 106: p. 28

¹³⁶ Ivi 67: p. 5

¹³⁷ Ivi 69: p. 33

space where to leave their children makes it harder for them to leave the house and attend the classes.

Employment: the literature highlights and discusses several labour market barriers, namely the lack of language skills, lack of recognition of qualifications, lack of institutional support, gender and cultural differences, lack of accommodation, social factors (e.g., illegal hiring “caporalato”, exploitation, black economy), lack of networks and social contacts, inefficiency of administration and bureaucracy, structure of the labour market, economic crisis, existing policies (e.g. immigration law). According to the discourse, these barriers affect all groups of migrants: refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants (regular and irregular). However, some specificities emerge: for refugees and asylum seekers, other significant barriers are their personal-psychological conditions (e.g., physical and psychological trauma experienced in their country of origin or during the migration journey), lack of information (e.g., about the possibility to work), lack of contact with local employers, differences in the quality of integration services depending on the type of reception centre. In general, it is worth noting that the discourse regarding labour market access and integration focuses insistently on a need for more efficiency and coordination between different actors involved in the integration process. The leitmotiv of Italian ineffectiveness in migration governance reflects the general perception of a certain inadequacy in the overall “machinery” of public administration, whereas most of the actors stress the importance of accelerating the whole “integration machine”: the asylum application procedures, the language learning process, the process of improving migration management and infrastructure, and education paths. The lack of skills and qualifications’ recognition is another central topic in the discourse, which addresses and frames it in different ways. These qualifications are considered as an important resource, and it is emphasized that educated migrants may significantly contribute to the Italian labour markets. Conversely, the lack of recognition of qualifications acquired abroad is diagnosed as a barrier to a labour market equal access (Lillie, 2020).¹³⁸ Another huge obstacle of an equal access to job opportunities is that the great majority of immigrants are still confined to low-wage and menial occupations. The Italian model of downward labour inclusion has hampered, or at least limited, migrants’ access to better paid, more protected, and more qualified jobs. In addition, migrant entrepreneurs often have no other option than to enter poor niche or already saturated economic sectors – placing their business activities into a position of weakness and dependency. While there are of course successful exceptions to this rule, immigrant independent workers, as well as dependent ones, generally face several visible and invisible barriers in their path of social and economic affirmation.¹³⁹ Finally, also gender differences are identified as a barrier to labour market equal access; indeed, many papers highlight the low employment rate of migrant women, especially in some ethnic communities, also due to the lack of familiar networks of support, as well as cultural barriers such as religious and cultural background.¹⁴⁰ In addition, single mothers face multiple challenges for the same reason explained above, they need to take care of their children.

¹³⁸ Lillie, Policy barriers and enablers, Horizon 2020 project “SIRIUS”, 2020: p. 403

¹³⁹ Ivi 106: p. 27

¹⁴⁰ Ivi 138: p. 404

Political and citizenship rights: third-country nationals still have very limited access to political and citizenship rights. The right to vote at national level is granted only to Italian citizens, and only citizens of EU member states are entitled to vote in local elections. The extremely limited political participation of migrants impacts priorities in national politics. Political parties and politicians have no interest in gaining the support of a population that has no voting powers, and rather prefer to give in to public fears and to the social unease of the Italian lower classes. The current Citizenship law, last amended in 1992, incorporates a conception of nationality based on a “right of blood” or parentage, and therefore strongly penalizes foreign residents as well as persons born in the country from third-country nationals.¹⁴¹

Healthcare services: Italy has developed one of the most inclusive models of migrant access to healthcare. Inter alia, also the irregular migrants are eligible to receive urgent or essential outpatient and hospital treatment in public facilities. Moreover, the National and the civil society organizations provide specialized support to migrants with mental problems. However, the right to healthcare still finds some practical and bureaucratic obstacles. In particular, medical personnel usually only speak Italian and the language barrier as well as the lack of cultural mediators can hinder mutual understanding between patient and health care worker.¹⁴² Moreover, asylum seekers should benefit from the medical ticket exemption E02 under the same rules applied to unemployed Italian citizens and yet very often the exercise of this right is hindered and delayed. Pending enrolment, asylum seekers only have free access to health treatment ensured to irregular migrants (emergency care and essential treatments) or, in case of other services, should pay the medical ticket¹⁴³. From the field experience of Ballafon, some other challenges can be observed: lack of information on the availability of cultural mediators within the hospitals, lack of communication between different health units, and difficulties linked to the bureaucratic lethargy in renewing the “Permesso di Soggiorno” or other documents connected to the validity of the health card. Moreover, for newly arrived persons it is also difficult to obtain medical prescriptions: with the first document acquired at the arrival called Article 15 or invitation letter, no paediatrician or general practitioner is assigned. This is particularly challenging for kids, who face different obstacles to obtain the vaccination certificate paper, because they have no paediatrician that can prescribe them vaccination checks and tests, and thus cannot start the kindergarten.

Information: lack of access to information can impede an equal and effective access to several services. For example, language translation services are usually quite expensive, and in many cases, migrants do not know where to go and which places offer cheap services. In addition, the highly recommended match of demand and supply in the labour market also depends on having access to information about where to go. For example, ‘the career counselling in many countries is done through the local integration centre and vocational training by the employment office’. Within the context of institutional ambivalence and institutional conflict of interest, low-educated refugees often do not know which organization to turn to. Often, they may refer to the wrong organization for help.¹⁴⁴ The lack of access to information is also strongly connected

¹⁴¹ Ibidem 140

¹⁴² Ivi 1: p. 49

¹⁴³ Ivi 106: p. 63

¹⁴⁴ Ivi 138: p. 75

with the lack of networks that can offer migrants the necessary opportunities and information to successfully integrate into Italian society. Nevertheless, most migrants lack close ties with native Italians. This is generally framed as an issue especially regarding asylum seekers, since it may lead to frictions between different groups in society.¹⁴⁵

10. Examples of Relevant Actions

In Varese most of the projects in the four dimensions are implemented by local non-profit organizations, such as Fondazione Comunitaria del Varesotto, Ballafon and other organizations that provide services to asylum seekers and holders of international protection.

We identified an interesting but rather controversial project in the “progressive” mid-sized city of Bergamo, in Lombardy, the same region where Varese is located. The project is a local experimental integration model called “Accademia per l’Integrazione” [Integration Academy], that utilizes a “scout/militaristic” approach, seeking to lay the foundation for asylum seekers’ successful integration upon arrival. The initiative touches upon three of the four INTEgreat dimensions: training and capacity building, employment, and social cohesion, excluding healthcare.

The Academy is designed within the national asylum reception and integration framework, providing integration services for asylum seekers that go beyond the current established national first-stage reception centres (CAS). By employing a contentious “scout/militaristic” approach, the model seeks to provide “minimum integration measures”, which means obligatory Italian lessons and civics, unpaid “socially useful” work, professional traineeship, and possible work placement after the apprenticeship to the asylum seekers upon arrival, to build the necessary conditions for a possible integration based on autonomy and legality.

Integration is seen as a “process” that begins with asylum seekers having successfully submitted their asylum applications after arrival, not after gaining protection status. Asylum seekers indeed must communicate in the new language, use services and interact with the local people as they encounter a new culture. In this context, asylum seekers cannot avoid integration. Integration is a multi-dimensional process that starts upon arrival into the host society. As R. Penninx states “integration does not follow a linear pattern. It can take many forms, as it is not a quantifiable outcome but a process – a long-term process that must be sustained.”¹⁴⁶

Bergamo has a long history of serving as a site of migrants’ reception and there is substantial concentration as a result, both internal and international migrants: 16.8 per cent of the total population of the city as of January 1, 2019, was represented by foreign residents, accounting for almost 20,420 people. The city’s political tradition has recently developed towards a centre-left political attitude, as evident in the election of centre-left-leaning mayor after several years of centre-right dominance. These attributes mark Bergamo out as a somewhat “progressive city”, thus making it an ideal context for relatively easy integration for migrants. While we have seen recent openness of the institutional setting or policies enacted by local political authorities and

¹⁴⁵ Ivi 138: p. 404

¹⁴⁶ Senyo Dotsey: “Seeing like integration”: an exploratory study of Bergamo’s integration model, Italy, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 2021: p. 8

institutions, it is notable that the city's political and cultural tradition and discursive discourses are not leftist. The project has thus faced opposition and criticisms from a segment of the public, particularly the far-right opposition party, the Northern League (Lumley-Sapanski & Dotsey, forthcoming)¹⁴⁷.

The academy's founding is due to the "migration emergency" in recent years, which has particularly affected cities. This resulted in the mayor, Giorgio Gori, creating an experimental alternative "intermediate model" of reception and integration between the SPRAR and the current "dysfunctional" CAS system. It is a one-year program with similar characteristics of CAS, though with additional rules and features. The model focuses on the "minimum integration measures" illustrated earlier. In theory, the first six months are dedicated to volunteering, training, Italian language classes and civics. In the third quarter, professional training is carried out by the Azienda Bergamasca Formazione to match the needs of companies to the skills of each asylum seekers. The City Council has assumed the leading role in formulating the experimental model for asylum seekers' reception and integration, in partnership with the local Manufacturers' Federation (Bergamo Confindustria), and the third sector (the Diocese, through the Diakonia association and Social Cooperative Ruah). The City Council coordinates the partners, scouts asylum seekers, and liaises with the Confindustria for internship and job placements. The Confindustria plays a facilitatory role in aligning the partners on the training needs of the companies, promoting contacts for the internship phase and simultaneously indicating to their associates the names of those who have completed the training course and are therefore ready for possible job placement.¹⁴⁸ The academy is run by the director (the mayor's Chief of Staff), two educators, two operators, one coordinator and two language instructors (all from the Cooperative), and specialized trainer(s) (engaged in teaching the usage of tools, security, first aid and accident prevention).

Using the same budget allocated for CAS structures, the experimental model intends to demonstrate that changing migration governance is possible and that, without additional economic resources, it is feasible to build integration pathways that allow the asylum seekers to share the rules and culture of the host society, to be "useful" to the communities through voluntary activities and to prepare themselves, should their asylum request be accepted, for the world of work. The academy shares the structure with CAS (the largest reception centre in the city, hosting about 250 asylum seekers), with most of its students coming from this centre. Asylum seekers voluntarily join the academy after orientation and having passed three selection processes: one with the municipality and the other two with the Cooperative. During the interview process, they are evaluated mainly on their knowledge of the Italian language and readiness to follow the academy's rules. The academy is governed by strict rules aimed at the discipline, containment, and cohabitation of the students. In general, the student is obliged to behave formally. Therefore, he is required to formally greet the staff (director, coordinator, educators, tutors, operators, and class leader) and visitors, standing on his feet if he is in the bedroom, classroom or sitting in the table football hall; during lunch and dinner, the student is required to behave courteously and observe table manners. There are rules prescribing attires for the various activities of the week except for Sundays, thus making the asylum seekers look

¹⁴⁷ Ivi 146: p. 9

¹⁴⁸ Ivi 146: p.11

more like cadets or scouts than students¹⁴⁹. The students follow a strict timetable, thus radically changing their way of life. The day starts at 6.30 and ends at 23.00.

Regarding the minimum integration measures, the academy considers language acquisition as the first goal because anyone living in a foreign country must know the host country's language, as this is the first element that allows that person to be free. The progress has been quite notable, thanks not only to the school but also to the internship and job placements of many asylum seekers and other measures, including the incorporation of the obligatory use of Italian as the only medium of communication, use of qualified instructors in teaching Italian as a second language, bi-weekly assessment, and extra assignments.

Asylum seekers are obliged to undertake unpaid “socially useful” work during their initial stage in the academy to help the city and build networks, get occupied and have work experience, in theory, for six months. On the one hand, they undertake voluntary activities in the city: e.g., cleaning of parks, oratories, neighbourhoods, local market ground, cemetery, roads; picking and collection of leaves; maintenance of bike lanes; and painting. About three-quarters of asylum seekers have undertaken voluntary activities¹⁵⁰.

To the academy, integration comes from the economic autonomy of the asylum seekers. They have previous work experience as house painters, coachbuilders, bricklayers, tilers, general workers, window makers, plumbers, and tailoring. Currently, the academy has three main areas for traineeships: industries, catering, and cleaning. The academy aims to prepare the asylum seekers for the job market, based on the local economy's labour market needs, through apprenticeships with local industries and possible eventual work contracts. The goal here is to give them the necessary tools to face life in Italy: training plus the internship that will put them in front of companies and, if at the end of the internship, the employer is satisfied with their work, then they will offer them a work contract. This will allow asylum seekers to go to the Territorial Commission or the appellate court with a resume that contains a “real job”, facilitating their chance of obtaining a residence permit for “proven integration”, as the acquisition of legal status is not guaranteed at the end of their integration process in the academy.

10.1 Outcomes

The most successful outcome of the model, based on the findings, is the Italian language course, particularly for asylum seekers who had no prior “education”. Language instructors are, however, cautious about the strong emphasis on the “compulsory element” as it can equally have negative impacts on students' language acquisition in the long run; hence, the need to find the right balance. Also, asylum seekers have expressed displeasure at the obligatory content, though they think it is necessary¹⁵¹.

The traineeship and employment outcomes of the model's integration domains are below expectations. The research reveals that asylum seekers find it difficult in getting internship and employment placements. There is thus a significant discrepancy between the model's rhetoric and the practical outcomes on the ground. Several reasons explain it. The academy makes

¹⁴⁹ lvi 146: p.12

¹⁵⁰ lvi 146: p.16

¹⁵¹ lvi 146: pp. 17-18

language proficiency an essential component of the internship placements. Additionally, the Confindustria, which is supposed to play a critical role in matching skills to internship placements and job opportunities, was absent for a large part of the project until recently. The delay has increased anxiety among the students, some of whom are yet to undergo internships after a year in the structure. However, some asylum seekers did find internships and jobs.

In addition, asylum seekers with employment contracts often face uncertain and precarious legal conditions as this is not guaranteed at the end of the integration process even if they are fully integrated with proof of a permanent work contract, language acquisition, civics and “socially useful” work. All interviewees who did the first Commission have received negative decisions on their asylum determination process during the research period. And it takes an average of 1.5 years for the asylum seekers to go for the appeal. While the judges at the Territorial Commission are aware of asylum seekers integration process in the academy, as the participants who went to the Commission during their first asylum determination process documented, they were only interested in their “migration story”, not in their experience in the academy. One of the asylum seekers, however, received a humanitarian status after going to the second Commission with permanent work contract. While the academy hopes the asylum seekers can secure legal status with a regular work contract, it is difficult to establish here if there is any relationship between the asylum seekers’ integration experience, particularly having a job contract, and legal recognition.

Thirdly, the use of unpaid “socially useful” work presents mixed results. The research shows that some asylum seekers have done eight months or more of voluntary work due to delays in finding traineeships and work placement. While introducing the voluntary activities for asylum seekers is not a bad thing in itself, codifying it into law, with the academy recently making it obligatory, however makes it a highly contentious element of an integration model. The academy sees voluntary work as a way of contributing to the free services rendered them. Some asylum seekers are critical of this viewpoint.

Another critical aspect according to the asylum seekers is the academy’s restrictive measures, as one of them states: “You can’t wear your own clothes, only on Sundays. You need to wear the academy’s uniform when you go out from Monday-Friday. When you wear this to go out, our friends laugh at us and call us names. They’ll say the prisoners are here. We don’t like that. But they say we’ve to always wear them. Always the same dress. No, no, no [...]. Even prisoners don’t like wearing the same outfit.” (Butrous, interview, May 2019).

The foregoing analysis reveals the good intentions of the model; however, the “scout/militaristic” approach adopted makes it a highly controversial model, fuelling critiques. From a practical point of view, the approach is moderately successful in civic education. Yet, the method is highly contentious from critical reflections in all integration domains.

The current study does not find any direct linkage between language acquisition and job placements. This finding concurs with Svantesson and Aranki’s (2006) study, where they found statistically insignificant Swedish language practice for immigrants and its effect on the probability of finding employment. One of the most significant findings to emerge from the research is the model’s conceptualization of integration as a multi-faceted process that begins with the filing for asylum, not after receiving international protection status. This is contrary to

the national integration framework that seeks to provide full integration services only to international protection status holders.

The research shows that the model's "minimal integration measures" are insufficient for promoting broader integration outcomes. While cities have been proactive in forced migrants' reception and integration policy formulation, their scope of action is conditioned by national contexts (de Graauw and Vermeulen 2016), such as the national citizenship and legal policy framework. This somewhat underscores the continued centrality of the nation-state in the lived experiences of immigrants (Gill 2010). Here, Italian cities can have good integration process and policies at the local level as in the case of the academy, but if they do not have national legal backing and resources – national asylum policy – the thrust of these local integration processes and policies are frail and consequently do not usually survive in the long run or contribute to any meaningful integration outcomes. Cities lack appropriate policy and normative tools as asylum and immigration policies are primarily formulated at the national and supranational (and to a degree regional) level(s) with resources and legal sovereignty highly concentrated at the national level. It remains the case that the academy intends to build necessary conditions for a possible integration based on autonomy and legality. Yet, the research finds no relationship between asylum seekers experiences in the academy and legal status acquisition. This has significant implications for other integration domains, migration policy and broader integration, as legal status considerably shapes all facets of forced migrants' lived experiences – access to the labour market, education, health, housing, basic sustenance, social inclusion (Ager and Strang 2008; Castles et al. 2002; Da Lomba 2010; Dotsey 2018). The current Bergamo's experimental model reaffirms the assertion that local levels are no longer at the receiving ends of national integration policy frameworks, but rather increasingly becoming environments for asylum policy innovation.¹⁵²

Most large-scale projects in local cities of Lombardy are funded by the European Union or intergovernmental organizations like the UN, while smaller projects are usually either self-funded or funded by local large foundations through grants. Examples of EU-funded projects in the area of training and capacity building which are being implemented by the City of Milan are:

"Equal(c)ity": the City of Milan joined the "Equal(c)ity" project as a trainee city with a view to strengthening Milan's services to better cope with sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in migrant communities (in line with GCM Objective 7). The other cities participating in the project are Brussels, Amsterdam, Ghent, and Leipzig. Milan aims to learn from IOM's expertise and the good practices shared by partner cities, with a view to applying the SGBV toolkit developed throughout the project for the improvement of the capacity of frontline workers and volunteers to set up safe spaces for LGBTQI+ in migrant communities in Milan.

The Equalcity project supports local authorities in the EU in fostering inclusion and protection of migrants who are at risk, or who survived sexual and gender-based violence. The project aims at building capacity of urban frontline workers to better reach migrants – including 2nd and 3rd generation - and to improve identification, referral, protection, and recovery of migrant survivors of SGBV. The project is implemented in 4 EU cities: Brussels, Luxembourg, Rome, and Gothenburg and should reach 250+ EU cities in total. It is led by the International Organization

¹⁵² Ivi 146: pp. 21-23

for Migration (IOM) Belgium and Luxembourg, and is implemented by 6 project partners, in collaboration with IOM Italy.

The Equalcity project is a 24-month EU-funded project. It is implemented by a team of IOM staff and 6 partner organizations based in 4 EU cities. The project activities can be summarized in 8 distinct phases: 1. Desk research and needs analysis: focus groups and surveys to define the content of the training and awareness raising material 2. Development of training tools, guidelines and awareness raising material in 4 EU cities 3. Review of the toolboxes by a diverse thematic panel of international experts 4. Roll-out and evaluation of the training in the field in the 4 EU cities 5. Review of the tools by 40 trainee cities who joined the project 6. Finalization and translation of the tools 7. Dissemination of the tools across the EU through city networks 8. Sharing of best practices through online webinars and an international.¹⁵³

“ADmin4ALL - Phase 2” is a project financed by the European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) and implemented by the IOM in over 30 municipalities across 7 EU countries: Italy, Austria, Poland, Romania, Spain, Greece and Malta. This project aims to strengthen the capacity of local social service providers; to enhance political engagement and support coordination among local integration stakeholders to improve services for the successful integration and social inclusion of migrants at local level; to promote the exchange of experiences among local authorities across the EU, document and disseminate good practices.

The main objective of the programme is to increase the capacity of municipal administrations and other service providers at the local level, with particular attention to their front-line staff, in dealing with the multiple dimensions of long-term socio-economic inclusion of migrants and refugees at local level. This will be done through:

1. Delivery of a series of capacity-building and training modules to municipal social policy staff.
2. Support to the enhancement of coordination and engagement on integration at the local level.
3. Organisation of international peer exchange visits and regional consultations to share good practices.

Project activities will ultimately focus on providing suitable and accessible social and administrative services for migrants, as well as promoting partnership approaches to migrant integration at the local level among various public, private, and non-profit stakeholders, while also consolidating an EU-wide community of cities committed to integration.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Equalcity Project, United Nations website <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/equalcity>

¹⁵⁴ Admin 4 All Website (2022), <https://admin4all.eu/programme/overview/>

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