

Professional integration of migrants and asylum seekers

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Reference context

Repeatedly, statistical surveys confirm that immigration from less developed countries or in situations of conflict constitutes, for Europe, an increasingly important structural question from a social, political, demographic, economic and cultural point of view.

Traditionally, economic prosperity and political stability in the EU have been significantly attractive. This is not due to diminish and will result in a further increase in the influx of people entering the continent, making it ever-more necessary, at a community level, to define the shared **integration pathways**. This will enable the identification of strategies and measures for an absorption of migratory flows by the host countries that is sustainable and profitable for all involved.

According to a recent report by the European Parliament,¹ there is a widely shared consensus among experts that **participation in the labor market** is the most important step towards successful integration and a positive economic impact into host societies, as it is presumed a large number of asylum seekers and refugees will remain in the EU for several years.

This requires large investment in human capital, especially in countries where the influx of migrants can be considered an opportunity to cope with the aging population. In many parts of the EU, it is estimated that between now and 2050, 30% of the population will be over 65 (Projection Eurostat 2004/2050) and that for every 100 people of working age, in 2050 there will be 53 people aged 65 and over or more, compared to a ratio of 29 elderly people per 100 working-age adults in 2015. This will inevitably lead to changes of an economic and social nature, produced by the reduction in the active population and the difficulty of recruitment in sectors that cannot be relocated, with an inevitable decline in their growth rates.

The fact that international migrants comprise a greater percentage of people of working age than the total European population has in the past pushed some countries - like France, whose percentage of over 60s was 20.85% in 2005 and which will increase in 2050 to 27.2% - to discuss "replacement immigration" over a decade ago. A report published in 2006 by the government Center d'analyse stratégique entitled "The need for labour and migration policy"², talks for the first time about how to turn immigration into a "replacement" resource to fill the vacuum left by the demographic decline and mitigate as much as possible the negative effects of aging on the economic activity of the country. The report reads, "the use of immigration can be a transitional solution to these difficulties, provided that the work force guidance mechanisms are effective and that the sectors of activity pursue parallel efforts to improve the labor market".³

¹ European Parliament, directorate general for internal policies, study for the EMPL Committee 2016: *Labour market integration of refugees: strategies and good practices*.

² Centre d'Analyse strategique, Rapport *Besoins de main-d'œuvre et politique migratoire*, Mai 2006

³ It should be noted that the French birth rate ranks among the highest in Europe, the highest birth rates in 2016 were recorded in Ireland (13.5 per 1,000 inhabitants), Sweden and the United Kingdom (11.8 %) and France (11.7 %). On the contrary, the lowest were recorded in the South: Italy (7.8%), Portugal (8.4 %), Greece (8.6 %), Spain (8.7 %), Croatia (9, 0 %) and Bulgaria (9.1 %). In the EU, in the same

The same concept was addressed years later in a UN report from 2017⁴ which foresaw a dramatic increase in the world population. In particular, it is estimated that, between 2017 and 2050, the population of 26 African countries will almost double. According to the UN report, "the movement of people between countries can help to mitigate some of the negative consequences of an aging population" will not be enough to fully compensate for the population decline, especially in the European region.

After a few years of monopolizing the issue of 'landings' and the organization of reception, **the issue of the professional integration of migrants and asylum seekers** in Europe is beginning to take hold. Member States' priorities have moved from the first reception to longer-term actions aimed at the social and economic integration of migrants into the European productive fabric. In 2016, the European Commission set up an action plan to integrate third-country nationals⁵ that established the basic principles for responding to the challenges of integrating migrants into the labor market. Since then, the issue has been at the heart of European debate. According to the document, education and training are among the most powerful tools to promote employment, and access to them should be guaranteed and promoted as quickly as possible.

However there are still many **differences in working conditions** of third-country nationals compared to native citizens in most of the Member States, which also present very different conditions, policies and experiences.

According to statistics released by the EU, in almost all countries third-country nationals are employed without recognition of their **qualifications** or professional skills and they work in less favourable conditions, with lower career prospects than the natives. **Women** tend to have particularly low rates of employment and activity and, therefore, particular attention is needed to their integration into the labour market. This can be achieved by facilitating on the one hand, the training and acquisition of new and specific skills, and on the other hand, recognition of existing qualifications.

A fundamental aspect of promoting access to the labour market is the **certification of skills**; an open debate, though not yet fully structured.

Pilot projects exist; for example, the "Building Inclusive Societies"⁶ action plan, an initiative that brings together the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs and Qualification Recognition Centers in Greece, Italy, Norway and the United Kingdom with the UNHCR Office in Greece, to define the "European refugee qualification passport". This is a document providing an assessment of higher education qualifications on the basis of available documentation and a structured interview. It also reports the candidate's work experience and linguistic competence, reliable information for integration and progression to employment as well as admission to further studies, even for those who cannot fully document their qualifications.

year the number of births and deaths was equivalent and the increase of 1.5 million inhabitants was due to migration. 2016 Eurostat data.

⁴ World Population Prospects: 2017 Revision, UN report on world population.

⁵ European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals*, 7th June 2016.

⁶ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications>

Finally, the push-factors of emigration may change over time and, although some prefer to remain permanently in the country of arrival, others wish to return home after a certain period of time - or move between the two countries giving rise to the phenomenon called "**circular migration**". A modality which sometimes accompanies the start of business initiatives that make the most of economic, social and family ties and the possibilities to act on two countries.

Topics

The following topics will be covered:

- Analysis and comparison of active labor policies adopted by some EU countries;
- Policies and statistics on the professional integration of migrants in Europe;
- The overlap of demand and supply. How to integrate migrants and refugees: positive elements, critical issues, good practices.
- Labour policies in force in other countries. Organizations Dealing with Unemployment and Precarity;
- Certifications and recognition of qualifications and skills. European recommendations and examples of other countries;
- Professional training;
- Possibilities and opportunities offered in the context of self-employment for migrants and their contribution to the European economic fabric;
- Discrimination in the world of work and criticality of the insertion path. Consequences of ethnic classifications. The gender issue.
- Circular migration and the development of the countries of origin.

Deadline for submissions:

The proposals (max. 400 words) must be submitted no later than **April 30th 2018** to the following email addresses s.federici@africaemediterraneo.it; m.scrivo@africaemediterraneo.it.

The editorial committee will examine the proposals. If the proposal is accepted, the complete article with the related abstract (abstract max. 100 words, preferably in English) and a short biography of the author must be submitted by **June 20th 2018**. Africa e Mediterraneo is a peer reviewed journal.

The articles and the proposals can be submitted in the following languages: Italian, English and French.